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Consensus Decision Making
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Welcome & Introductions

Context of Decision-making




REVIEW: Legal Obligations for the Co-op Board of Directors

- 1) Duty of Care
- 2) Duty of Loyalty
- 1) Fiduciary Duty




REVIEW Duty of Care

“Prudent Persons” Standard:

- Act in good faith, in the best interests of the cooperative, and with such care—including reasonable inquiry, an ordinary prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances.



REVIEW Duty of Loyalty

- Make decisions based on what is good for the co-op (and therefore all members).
- Disclose & seriously consider excluding (RECUSING) yourself from any decision that might imply a bias.





REVIEW Fiduciary

- Review & Consider Financial Statements
- Ask Questions
- Budget
- Financial Plan
- Carefully manage co-op’s money & property (“Assets”)—don’t put assets at risk





Decision Making: Meeting Process

Consensus is compatible with Roberts Rules Process

- 1) Motion
- 2) Second
- 3) Discussion
- 4) Vote—Modifications

“Abstain” “Recuse”



Democratic Decision-making Methods/ Practices

BEST PRACTICE: Vary democratic methods to fit situation & strengths & weakness of method

- Majority
- Unanimous Vote
- Consensus




WRITTEN BALLOTS: + & -





Simple Majority

50% + 1

Critique: Plusses & Minuses

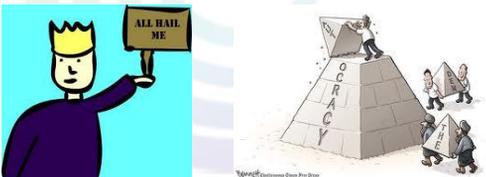


Unanimous Vote



100% Agreement; all in favor

Risk:




Consensus Decision Making



Takes into account all members' personal opinions and results in a decision that all members can live with (Goal=General Agreement)

- Values Diversity of Perspectives
- Avoids Win: Lose Situations
- Personal Accountability
- Avoids Giving-in Merely to Avoid Conflict



Encouraging a Positive Culture

- Acknowledging the unspoken
 - What promotes a positive feeling in a meeting?
 - What happens in meetings that turn you off?
 - a. Getting outside of the meeting box
 - b. Promote "WE" within meetings



Positive Culture/Productive Meetings

- Promote camaraderie by recognizing individuals
 - Begin meeting with 30 second "check-in"
- Well organized, planned meeting with clear roles & responsibilities (details later)
- Good facilitation (with Separate timekeeper) (details later)



Maximize Engagement & Stay on Task



- Recognize hands raised by creating a "stack"
- Off-topic comments are validated by placing them in the "parking discussion"



Consensus Toolbox

Testing for consensus/survey (pre-vote)

- Talking Stick
- Fist of Five
- Up/Down Sideways
- Simple Voting & Blocking
- Rules regarding Blocking
- Supermajority voting



Consensus, general agreement is always the goal on decisions

TALKING STICK



Meeting Check-in





Fist of Five

5= For it & will work hard for it.
 4= For it, will work hard for it, have some reservations.
 3= Have serious reservations but will go along w/it.
 2= Don't like it, won't work for it but will not work against it.
 1= Don't like it, probably won't work against it, but unsure
 Fist= Will not actively work against it.

Discussion/Modifications?



ISSUE: Community Garden— Pesticides??




Thumbs up/Down/Sideways

Up= Yes vote
 Sideways = Unsure or have reservations
 Down= Against

Discussion/Modifications?



Consensus Decisions

Premise: Involvement → Commitment → better decisions
 = Respect; listening; consideration of dissent




- Motion with second is clearly presented
- Reasons are shared for dissent with majority
- Discussion
- Modifications--?




Simple Voting

Ultimately a decision must be made –
 work to consensus—a decision everyone can live with




Blocking Rules

Blocker MUST explain basis for block.
 ACCEPTABLE REASONS FOR BLOCKING:

- 1) Profound moral objection
- 2) Believing enactment of the proposal would cause grave injury to the co-op
- 3) Believing it is vital for the co-op to get more information and/or give more consideration before making a critical decision.





Member Majority & Blocks (Discussion may lead to a better Proposal)

Members listen & try to understand

Then: 1) Discuss & decide how to move forward

2) Modify/find common ground?

3) Have procedure to move forward at current meeting or table to next meeting:

- Vote to over-ride and move forward immediately (may be simple majority; suggest supermajority such as majority +2; two-thirds, three-quarters...);
- Vote to table to next meeting for consideration—have specific process if tabled to next meeting.



Effective Meetings Basics



- ❖ Commonly Understood Goals & Expectations
- ❖ Good Facilitation
- ❖ High Level of Participation
- ❖ Keep Minutes of Meeting



Commonly Understood Expectations



- Set time & location (Bylaws)
- Prepare Agenda—include estimated time for each agenda item (board approves: agenda, minutes from last meeting, all motions)
- Stick to standard decision-making process
 - Modify consensus methods according to proposals



Good Facilitation & Participation



- Have designated facilitator (can rotate)
- Have a timekeeper
- Someone to take minutes (can rotate)
- -Vibe-watcher/monitor?
- Begin board meeting with check-ins
- Stick to agenda topics — if someone brings up a new topic, group decides whether or not to add it to the agenda and how much time will be given to the topic (usually added as last item on agenda).
- Encourage diverse participation; goal=consensus



Increase Age of Individuals allowed in the community room w/out an adult from 15 to 18

(Facilitator & Timekeeper—7 min)



CONFLICTS

- Natural
- Ask, don't accuse
- Step back
- One-on-one
- Use outside mediator





Review & Evaluation

CONSENSUS DECISION MAKING

- Most Imp points?
- Linger questions?
- What should have Been covered?

THANK YOU!!



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Conflict Resolution Tips

- **Good working relationships** are forged with respecting the value of each person, using effective communication, including recognizing & resolving conflicts
- **Stop! Cool Off!**
 - Most of us repeat unhelpful behaviors and are unaware of what we are doing
 - We can only change habits through awareness
 - Plan what you say & how you say it
- **Respond from Sadness not Anger**
 - When we are angry, it is to protect our feelings of sadness
 - When we speak from our anger, we can scare people, make them defensive, and can negatively impact our relationships
 - When we speak from our hurt, we are sharing from a deeper and more truthful place and it is not as threatening to others
- **Speak directly to the person are having a conflict with NOT to others**--when you speak with others only, not only do you NOT resolve the problem, you create hurt feelings, divisions and more conflict.




Conflict Resolution Tips cont.

Conflict is not bad, wrong, or a sign of failure
When it is resolved conflict can help us learn and grow, and in some cases it can even strengthen our relationships

Be specific about what you need -- Resolution will not come if your goal is to win or to blame. Understand what you are upset about and what you want. Then, be open to listening to each other and find common ground and solutions.

Listen to Understand, ask Questions -- Respect the other person's feelings by listening to understand the trouble as they see it. Ask questions, be open. Find out what is most important to the person. Share what you heard and then ask him/her to do the same.

If you are unable to resolve a conflict, be open to help through mediation -- Conflict does not just affect 2 people, it effects the entire team. A mediator is an outside person who is trained to help people resolve conflicts.



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