

## **Conducting a co-op meeting**

### ***Rules of order for housing co-operatives***

#### **Debate.**

- Debate should be orderly.
- Members should talk about things that are relevant to the business being discussed.
- Members should listen to each other and be respectful of each other.

#### **Speakers lists**

The chairperson will maintain a speakers list. This list will have two parts – first time speakers and second time speakers. Members should raise their hand to indicate that they want to speak when the chairperson asks for speakers. Anyone who has not spoken will be added to the first time speakers list. Anyone who has already spoken will be added to the second time speaker's list.

The chairperson will call on all the first time speakers in order. When there is no one left on this list, the chairperson will call on second time speakers. When there is no one left on this list, the chairperson will ask if people are ready to vote. If the majority of members indicate that they are ready to vote, the vote will be taken immediately.

Members will be allowed to speak for two minutes on any motion or amendment.

#### **Voting**

Voting will normally take place with a show of hands. Voting in elections will take place by a secret ballot. Members may request a secret ballot for voting on motions for action. A secret ballot will be used if a majority of members want it. All procedural motions will be voted on by a show of hands.

A motion passes if the majority (or sometimes 2/3 majority) of all the votes cast say yes. This is not the same as the majority of people at the meeting. Sometimes members choose not to vote on a particular item. The calculations will be made on the numbers of votes actually made.

#### **Dealing with motions**

People should identify themselves when they make a motion. The motion should be clear about what the members are being asked to do. Most motions need to be seconded and the chairperson will ask if there is a seconder.

After all procedural matters have been dealt with; the debate on a motion will begin with the chairperson asking the mover if they wish to speak first or wait to speak to the motion.

### **Amending motions**

After a motion has been made by one member, other members may want to change the wording of a motion to make it clearer or to provide additional instructions for action. This is called amending a motion. A member may move an amendment when it is their turn to speak. Amendments need to be seconded. If the mover and seconder of the original motion both agree that the amendment is a good one, it can be accepted without a vote. This is called a friendly amendment.

The rules for speakers in debate on amendments are the same as for main motions. A new speakers list is started for the amendment. When debate on the amendment is over the chairperson will return to the main speakers list for the main motion

An amendment requires a majority vote to pass. This is true even if the main motion would require a 2/3 vote (like motions to change by-laws).

An amendment must be relevant to motion being discussed. It must be in the spirit of the original motion and cannot be made to try and change the result of the original motion.

### **Procedural motions**

Sometimes members do not want to discuss a motion when it is brought up. Members may want to debate it at a future meeting. They may want the board or some other committee to talk about the issues being raised in a motion and report back to the members. They may want to limit the amount of time for debate. Members may think that they should not have to consider a motion. Sometimes, once debate has started, the members may think that they should vote on the question without having to hear all the speakers.

Once an item for discussion has been introduced, the chairperson will ask if there are any procedural motions. This will happen before any debate takes place. Procedural motions will be dealt with first. A member may still make a procedural motion once the debate has started. They have to wait to do this until it is their turn on the speakers list. They must make the procedural motion without speaking to the main item for debate.

### **Motions to refer**

Members can move to refer an item to another group in the co-op for study and action. This can be the board of directors, a committee already in place to deal with the kinds of issues being raised in the item, or a special committee set up at the meeting.

A motion to refer should say what group the motion is being referred to and a timeline for reporting back to the members with recommendations for action.

A motion to refer can be debated. The debate has to be about whether or not it is good idea to refer the original item. Is the matter so urgent that it needs to be dealt with by the general members? Is the committee that it is being referred to the best one to do the job? The debate should not be about the merits of the original item.

A motion to refer requires a seconder and needs simple majority to pass.

### **Motions to table**

A motion to table means that the members do not want to consider the main item right now. A simple motion to table means that the item will be brought back after all the other business of the meeting is dealt with.

A motion to table can also say that the original item should be discussed at the next members meeting. This can be debated. Is the item so urgent that the members need to discuss it right away?

A motion to table requires a seconder and needs simple majority to pass.

### **Motions to limit debate**

Members may choose to limit debate to a certain time. They should say: "I move to limit debate on this item to 10 (or 15, 20) minutes"

A motion to limit the amount time for discussion requires a seconder. It is not debatable and needs a 2/3 majority to pass.

If the members decide to limit debate, the chairperson will ask who intends to speak for and against the motion and will select an equal number from each side.

### **Calling the question**

Members may decide that they can vote on an item without having to hear all the speakers. This is known as "calling the question". A member must be on the speakers list in order to call the question. The member should do so as soon as the chairperson asks them to speak. They may not debate the original motion before calling the question.

Once the question has been called, the chairperson will ask the members still on the speaker's list if they still want to speak or if the meeting can vote. If anyone on the speakers list says they do want to speak, the chairperson will ask for a vote of the members.

Calling the question does not require a seconder and is not debatable. It requires a 2/3 majority to pass.

### **Motions to not consider an item**

Sometimes members think that they should not have to deal with an item or proposal at all. They think that an item is being introduced that has been successfully dealt with at other meetings and does not have to be talked about again. They may think that an item is being introduced to address personal grievances and should not have to be dealt with by the general membership.

The Co-operative Corporations Act and normal rules of procedure allow for members to decide not to consider an item or proposal so that they may conduct their meetings in a way that is free of repetitive business, personal grievances or publicity seeking by individuals.

A motion to not consider an item requires a seconder. It is not debatable and needs a 2/3 majority to pass.

### **Appealing the ruling of the chair**

Sometimes members may feel that chair is wrong in the way that that he or she is handling the meeting. They can appeal the ruling of the chair by raising their hand and saying that they would like to appeal a ruling. The chair then explains the reason for the ruling and the person appealing explains why they think it was wrong.

The chair then asks for a vote to confirm the chair's ruling.

*Note: if the chair loses this vote they do not have to stop chairing the meeting.*

An appeal does not require a seconder and is not debatable.