

Discussions and Voting - The Dos and Don'ts -

Neighborhood associations must follow open meeting laws for discussions and decision-making as defined in the ONI Standards. Following these requirements can protect you and the board from challenges, legal or otherwise.

Please keep in mind that all NA correspondence must be made available upon request according to the Freedom of Information Act. While this situation is unlikely, consider your communications to be public.

VOTING:

All voting must be done at meetings open to the public, where a quorum of board members is present. Only elected board members are permitted to vote at meetings, with the exception of bylaw amendments, annual board elections, and dissolution of the board. For these three items, all members who have consented to membership in your NA are eligible to vote.

Board and general members must physically be present to vote. Voting by email, mail or by proxy is prohibited. Voting can be done orally, by show of hands or by written ballot. Check your bylaws to see if there are specific procedures in place for the general membership vote on elections.

DECISIONS THAT REQUIRE A VOTE:

- Approval of meeting minutes
- Election of board members
- Bylaw amendments
- Letters of support
- Budgets and the approval of expenses
- Organizing projects or events
- Any positions taken or policy recommendations
 - EX: land use issues, city budget positions, city policy recommendations, etc.

EXAMPLE MOTION & VOTING PROCEDURE

Board Member A: "I move that..."

Board Member B: "I second the motion."

Chair: "It has been moved and seconded that... (repeat motion verbatim, rely on secretary if necessary)"

Chair: "Motion open for discussion..."

At this point further discussion will ensue. If no further discussion is desired, or when discussion has closed, the Chair will proceed with the vote.

Chair: "All those in favor...All those opposed...Abstentions?"

Followed by a summary declaration of the vote.

DISCUSSION & DELIBERATION:

All discussions and deliberations toward decisions must be made at meetings open to the public, where a quorum of board members is present. Your NA should avoid online discussions on any matter that may be on a future meeting agenda and will require a vote. It's challenging to predict what issues may arise in the future, but we encourage you to err on the side of caution and limit electronic communication when there appears to be a grey area.

Remember, sharing your opinion with the whole board on an issue that effects the public outside of an open meeting (ex: via email) is a violation of open meeting law.

This does not mean that electronic communication can't be used for anything. In general, logistical decisions and the implementation of activities that have already been approved by the board can be done electronically or by committee. Additionally, the one-way distribution of factual background or reference information is allowed.

IS IT ALLOWED OVER EMAIL?

The following table provides examples of common conversations and decisions that can and cannot be made outside of an open meeting. This not an exhaustive list, if you have questions about specific situations, please contact your staff liaison.

Agenda Setting	Sending the chair an agenda item for an upcoming meeting	✓
	Sending the board your opinion on a topic on an upcoming meeting agenda	⊘
Meeting Minutes	Proposing edits to draft meeting minutes	✓
	Approving meeting minutes	⊘
Event & Project Planning	Coordinating logistics like who will bring snacks, what time volunteers should arrive, where to purchase balloons, etc.	✓
	The newsletter committee seeking advertisements (that fit within the policy approved by the board) and getting printing done (at a cost equal to or less than the amount approved by the board)	✓
	Discussing and/or deciding on organizing a new project/event and what the budget for it should be	⊘
Positions & Issues	Sending the board informational handouts / background documents relating to proposed actions or requests for support ex: Documents from a developer, land use applications, draft annual budgets, letters of support, committee proposals, etc.	✓
	Discussing and/or deciding on proposed actions or requests for support.	⊘
Annual Budget	Notifying the treasurer that they forgot to include expenses for an upcoming event in the draft annual budget they sent out for review	✓
	Sending the board your opinion that the annual budget should allocate more money towards one event over another	⊘
Meeting Logistics	Deciding who should take minutes at the next meeting due to the Secretaries absence	✓
	Deciding to change meeting frequency and/or structure	⊘