
Overview -Town Hall Meeting

The purpose of a town hall meeting is to hear members' views and understand their perspectives on a specific topic which then informs the direction the Board of Directors, or a specific committee will take. As it is not an official co-op meeting it is not subject to the same legal requirements and members do not vote on anything.

Sometimes your board will decide to hold an informal town hall meeting to hear from members about a topic of interest or concern or to discuss a policy. The main part of the meeting is to hear members' opinions, ideas, and concerns about the issue.

Examples of topics for a town hall meeting include the playground, redevelopment opportunities, community gardens, housing refugees or emergency response procedures. For example, your co-op may be considering introducing a smoking policy.

It is important that these meetings are relaxed, friendly and welcoming so that members feel at ease to express themselves and listen to others respectfully. No one member or members should dominate discussion – everyone should have a chance to have their say. It is a good idea to provide reading material ahead of time so that members have a chance to reflect on the topic beforehand. The directors will want notes taken of members' feedback to help guide them on the issue.

The format of a town hall meeting can vary. A town hall meeting needs a good facilitator to guide the meeting in a respectful and friendly way, and you can use a modified version of your meeting agreements. Usually there are opening remarks. Sometimes a guest will address the meeting. The presentation should be short – no more than 15 or 20 minutes. The main part of a town hall meeting happens when the floor is opened to questions and comments from members.

Sometimes members are asked to comment on specific questions. If the turnout is large members can be broken down into smaller discussion groups to make sure that more members have their say. Each small group appoints someone to note and summarize discussion of their group.

As it is not an official co-op business meeting it does not require an official notice of meeting. Though you are not required to follow the notice period specified in your Rules you will want to invite members well in advance to get a good turnout. The invitation should set positive, friendly tone.

There is no need for rules of order, quorum is not required (however if turnout is poor directors may decide to postpone the meeting), decisions are not made, and official minutes need not be taken. You will want to take good notes, and the main points should be shared with members.

At the end of the meeting, a director or committee member should thank members for their input and explain the next steps.
