



RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

Regular meetings are important to keep members informed and discuss neighborhood goals and concerns. Here are some key things to keep in mind to make your meetings as effective as possible.

- 1.** Agendas should be short and concise (please see the sample agenda provided on page 26). Have copies of the agenda available when members arrive so they can familiarize themselves with the topics and structure while waiting to begin.
- 2.** Sometimes a regular meeting will be scheduled without pressing issues to discuss. Don't cancel! It is important for groups to have consistent contact. This is an opportunity to bring in a guest speaker, have a neighborhood roundtable discussion, organize a neighborhood tour, or have a potluck. Get creative!
- 3.** Choose a central location that is familiar to the neighbors. Try to estimate the number of attendees so you can choose a space that is comfortable but not so big that people feel lost.
- 4.** The space should be arranged to encourage participation. Avoid having all the chairs face the speaker, like in a traditional classroom. Instead, place chairs in a semi- or full circle. Do not use tables unless absolutely necessary, since they can inhibit communication. However, sitting everyone around a large table can be useful if they need to write.
- 5.** Meetings should be orderly, democratic, and efficient. Your association should set some ground rules so meetings run smoothly. These could be included in the by-laws so all members are aware of them, such as one person speaks at a time (no cross-talk) and avoid all derogatory remarks. Many groups choose to use Robert's Rules of Order (see the cheat sheet on page 18), but use whatever method works best for your group.
- 6.** To prevent burnout, ideally meetings should not be longer than an hour.
- 7.** Offering cookies, coffee, or other snacks is a friendly way to have a more enjoyable meeting. Neighbors can take turns bringing in goodies, or if your budget allows, consider setting aside \$10 per meeting for refreshments.
- 8.** It isn't always necessary to gather the full group for minor decisions. In these cases, the executive committee or board is better. A scheduled, monthly board meeting is a great way to address these types of issues.