LevelUp
Co-op Learning Series

Chairing Skills

About LEVEL UP

- The LEVEL UP Learning Series is a partnership between the **Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto** (CHFT) and the **City of Toronto**.

- CHFT would like to thank the City of Toronto for providing financial support in bringing this series to the co-op housing sector.

Land Acknowledgment

Where we are has been the site of human activity for 15,000 years.

This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca and most recently, the Mississaugas of Credit River. The territory was the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, the meeting place of Toronto is still home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory. We are also mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.

Agenda

- Welcome and introductions
- Good meetings/bad meetings
- Before the meeting
- At the meeting
  - Role of the chair
  - Goals for chairing
  - Rules of order
- Summary

What makes a good meeting?

- Quorum
- Trusted and respected chair
- Knowledgeable and respectful members
- A reasonable agenda

What makes a good meeting?

- Good organization
- Keeping a positive atmosphere
- Patience
- Clear instructions

What makes a meeting bad?

- Not following rules of order
- No meeting guidelines (behaviour)
- Not enough information to make decisions
- Long and unproductive meetings
- Overloaded agenda
- No chance to be heard
- Lots of complaining

Adopt meeting guidelines

- include in the meeting package
- virtual meeting – type into the chat
- share screen at beginning of meeting
- post in the room

Suggestions: only address the chair, don’t interrupt, stick to the agenda, no side conversations (in-person or in chat), no personal attacks, be concise and to the point

Two keys to having a good meeting

1. Effective pre-meeting planning

- Create a checklist for logistics and details
- Plan the agenda
- Survey members – in-person, virtual or hybrid? Preferred time?

2. Effective chairing

- Educate the members and help them participate
- Achieve the goals for a good meeting
- Know your role

Pre-meeting planning

Use a checklist

- To cover all logistics from setting the date to getting donuts and raffle prizes.
- Assign technical person for chat, keeping speaker's list, virtual attendance.

Set the agenda

Review the meeting package

Assign roles

What goes in the package?

- Notice of meeting
- Virtual – how to access meeting and platform instructions
- Agenda
- Minutes of previous meeting
- Supporting documentation
  - Budget
  - Proposed by-law
  - Report from board or committee

Typical Agenda

- Call to order
- Approval of the chair
  (if an outside chair)
- Introductory and educational comments
- Approval of the agenda
- Approval of the minutes
- Business arising from the minutes
- New business
  (the reason for the meeting)
- Other business

Pre-meeting planning for the chair

What's on the agenda?

- Does it belong on the agenda?

Is it a legal topic for members' meetings?

What is the recommended decision?

What information should be included?

Where should it be on the agenda?

Who is responsible for presenting the item?

- Not the chair

Pre-meeting planning for the chair

Timing

- Make sure there is enough time to discuss each item
- Be realistic about what can be achieved

Pre-meeting planning for the chair

Think about

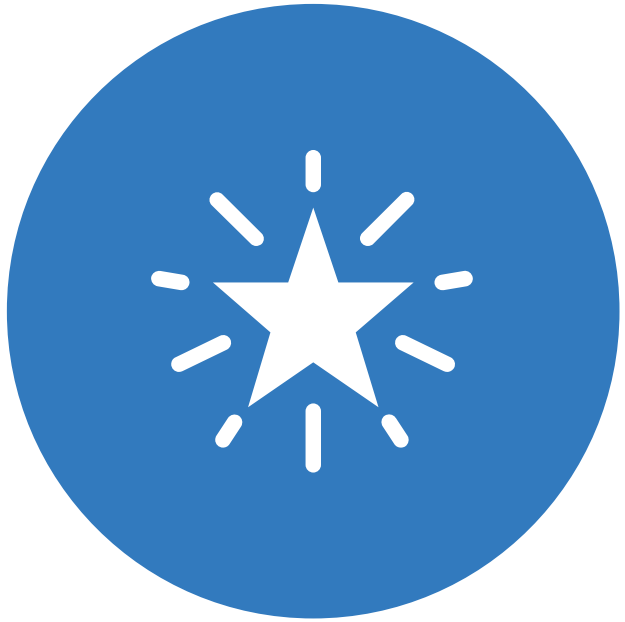
- possibly contentious items
- who will be speaking to each agenda item
- when motions are required
- what previous meetings have been like

If you have an outside chair …

- They don't know your co-op, so prepare them
- Send meeting package to them when you deliver it to members
- Have quorum and by-law information for them
- Have a detailed agenda with times and speakers noted
- Take time for a discussion before the meeting
  - What items could be tricky
  - What's happening at the co-op
  - What previous meetings have been like
- Who is responsible for logistics such as the speakers' list

You're prepared … now chair the meeting

- Educate the members
- Achieve the goals for chairing a good meeting



Educate the members

- New members at every meeting?
- Poorly behaved members?
- At the beginning of the meeting or when you are appointed chair
  - Review the rules of order
  - Describe how you will run the meeting

The goals for chairing a good meeting

- Start and finish on time
- Deal with every item on the agenda
- Help the members to make good decisions
- Make sure members have a chance to express their opinions
- Make sure members feel respected and satisfied with the process

Achieving the goals

The chair should:

- be prepared
- have basic co-op information
- set the tone
- involve everyone
- control the meeting and keep track of the time
- be aware of the mood of the meeting
- communicate well
- evaluate themselves

Fundamental co-op information

In order to help members make good decisions the chair should know:

- what is in the co-op's by-laws relating to items on the agenda
- what is in the Co-operative Corporations Act that applies to the items on the agenda
- how to handle the discussion by using the rules of order

Key rules of order

- Motions
- Amendments
- Voting

Motions

- Important motions should be put in writing on the meeting agenda
- Before discussion begins, the motion is made
- A seconder is needed to proceed
- Once a motion is moved and seconded, then members can discuss it
- Speakers must only speak about the motion

Amendments

- Used to change the wording of a motion before it is voted on
- “Friendly amendment” - if the mover and the seconder agree to the amendment then the amendment does not have to be voted on
- If it is not “friendly”, then the amendment is voted on before the main motion

Voting

- a simple majority
- some votes may require a 2/3 majority
- secret ballot

Procedural motions

- **Withdrawing a motion** – the mover can withdraw a motion before it is voted on if the seconder agrees
- **Calling the question** – a member can try to end the discussion on a motion by calling the question. Must be seconded and voted on. No discussion. Needs a 2/3 majority.
- **Defer the question** – the date or time must be included in the motion. Must be seconded, discussed and voted on.

Procedural motions

- **Refer the question** – refer the issue somewhere else (usually to the board or a committee). The motion has to state whom the issue is referred to. Motion must be seconded, discussed and voted on.
- **Table the motion** – end the discussion without voting on the main motion. Motion must be seconded and voted on. There is no discussion.

More on motions

The chair can rule a motion out of order if it:

- is absurd
- is wasting time
- is not worth the members' attention
- does not deal with something on the agenda
- is not legally the responsibility of the members

Rules of order exercise

1. Members can’t hear the discussion because other members are talking.
2. Estimates were not available for a motion on the cost of buying chairs for the meeting room by the meeting time.
3. Members have begun repeating the same points in discussion of a motion.
4. A mover of a motion believes that a proposed amendment runs against the intent of the main motion

Rules of order exercise

5. A member calls the question. 18 members vote to stop debate and 12 vote against.
6. A member making a motion has been persuaded by the discussion that the whole thing is a bad idea.
7. Some members want to change their mind about supporting a motion that was already passed after hearing a report on the matter.

Set the tone

- Warm and welcoming
- Unbiased – you care more about the decision-making process than the decision
- Confident and competent

Involve Everyone

In order to make sure that all members have the chance to express their opinions, the chair should:

- keep track of time
- make sure there is a speakers list that limits the number of times a member can speak on an issue
- help members to express their opinions
- keep a parking lot of new topics
- take straw votes

Control the Meeting

In order to make sure that members feel respected and satisfied with the process:

- enforce meeting guidelines and rules of order (gently)
- treat everyone the same
- do not take a position in the discussion
- try to stay within the time limits for each item
- help the members make decisions

The mood of the meeting

- Bored?
- Frustrated?
- Ready to move on?
- Ready to make a decision?
- Need a break

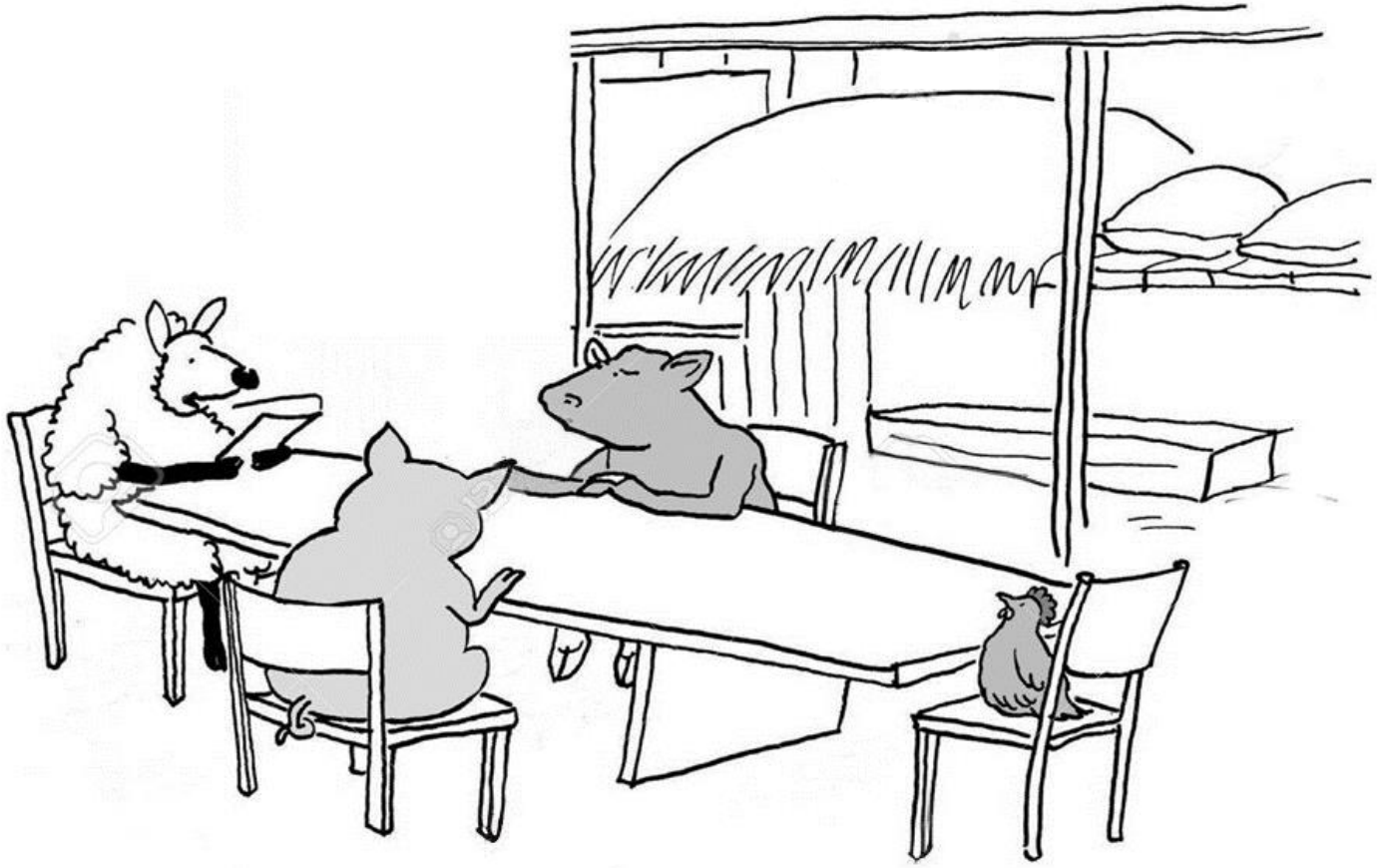
Communicate well

- Explain things clearly (especially motions and voting)
- Answer questions about procedure
- Adapt to changing situations
- Suggest new ways of proceeding
- Solve problems
- Be flexible
- Be creative
- Summarize and clarify

Evaluate

- Review your own performance and the meeting as a whole
- Learn for the next time
- Strive to always be better

Summary



"The cow mooed, the pig oinked, the chicken clucked, I baaed and then we adjourned."

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