

CONDUCTING MEETINGS



Meetings between committee members and general members are vital for managing a sporting organisation. They ensure transparent operations, open communication and democracy. The purpose of meetings is not only to share ideas and reach a common agreement among members, but also to solve problems, make decisions and assign responsibilities to the right individuals to carry out these decisions.

TYPES OF MEETINGS

There are different types of meetings that sporting clubs may conduct and these are often outlined in the constitution. These include:

- ◆ **General Meetings (GMs) and Annual General Meetings (AGMs)**

Open to all members (however, all members may not have the right to vote)

General Meetings are often open club meetings covering general and non-pressing matters to discuss and an agreement needs to be reached. It is important to ensure everyone is in agreement with the aims of the meeting, ensure everyone has a foundational understanding of what is to be discussed and that during the meeting everyone listens carefully and only one person speaks at a time. Attendees should be objective and keep discussion focused on the issue at hand. Each option should be examined objectively and a conclusion should be reached for that option. The occurrence of the meeting and outcomes should be recorded for later reference.

At the AGM, members review the club's activities over the past year and plan for the forthcoming year. The Constitution of all Associations will determine the notice of the Annual General Meeting required to be supplied to members.

- ◆ **Committee of Management Meetings**

Involve only elected or appointed decision makers to discuss and plan progress. These meetings take place on a regular basis to discuss and manage the organisation's affairs.

Committee Meetings should be conducted professionally. The Secretary should issue a notice of the meeting attaching the agenda, minutes from the previous meeting, the financial statement (if any) and any written material or readings related to important discussion items to be covered. Many clubs will have an established time for these meetings (e.g. 6pm at the clubhouse on the first Thursday of each month).

- ◆ **Special General Meetings**

An exception to the regularity of Committee Meetings is when a matter requires urgent discussion by the whole organisation. The organisation rules specify how, when and why these meetings are held. Special meetings are called for major and urgent changes to the constitution or rules and prevent the decision-making process from falling into the hands of only a few individuals. The club's rules should specify a quorum – the minimum number required to make decisions for the organisation.

MEETING PROCEDURES

Within any meeting, there are commonalities that occur and may require procedures to ensure consistency, such as motions, voting, minutes, etc. If meeting procedures are established and adhered to, meetings will flow smoothly, run on time, map organisational progress and provide the foundation of actionable plans within the organisation. Formal procedures give meetings a structure and can also help control large meetings or a single antagonist on a committee. Some organisations will choose not to have defined procedures whilst others will take a formal approach to managing their meetings. A small club might be able to dispense with the more formal agendas required by a national organisation.

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Meeting procedures serve the purpose of:

- ♦ improving the efficiency in the conduct of the business of the meeting while giving protection to the rights of members present
- ♦ providing every person in the meeting with a right to be heard and have the opportunity to have their views considered
- ♦ enabling people present to vote on the issues and help in the decision-making process

If there are defined procedures, it is important that these are communicated to your meeting attendees.

Prior to the meeting

- ♦ Make arrangements for the meeting place.
- ♦ Send adequate notice of the meeting to all concerned.
- ♦ The Chairperson should discuss with the Secretary the composition of the agenda and ensure it is circulated well before the meeting.
- ♦ Enclose agenda, relevant materials and minutes of the previous meeting if they have not already been distributed.

The Agenda

The agenda is prepared in consultation with the Chairperson. To prevent absenteeism, an interesting and varied agenda should be prepared. The agenda may have been set at the previous meeting.

At the Meeting

Quorum

The quorum is the minimum number of people required to attend a meeting to make decisions valid. The quorum is specified in your Association's constitution. The meeting may be formally declared open once there is a quorum present. If at any stage of the meeting the number of attendees falls below the quorum then no further decisions should be made.

Motions

The Rules of Debate require that all business be put forward as a positive statement of action called a "motion". A motion is a formal recommendation put to a meeting for debate and consideration.

All items of business or issues requiring a decision must be presented to the meeting as motions which if passed, will then become resolutions. All motions should be proposed by the "mover" in front of the chairperson and then supported (seconded) by another committee member before any discussion can take place on the item.

For example: "that Club fees should be increased by \$4 next year". The proposer then explains the motion to support it. The seconder has the right to speak immediately or wait till the end of the debate. The chairperson then calls for speakers alternately for and against the motion. At the end of the debate, the proposer can reply. A vote is taken. The Secretary should record the motion, who proposed and who seconded it and whether it was carried.

Once the motion has been seconded, the chairperson asks the proposer to speak to the motion. Other committee members can contribute towards the discussion. Once the discussion has finished or if there is no discussion, the motion is then put to the meeting for decision. Members vote on whether they agree or disagree with the motion.

All motions carried or otherwise must be minuted. If passed, the motion becomes a resolution. It should be minuted as follows:

"It was resolved that membership fees should be increased by \$4 next year".

MOVED: K. Michaels SECONDED: F.Clippard CARRIED.

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Amendments

Any speaker can move an amendment to the motion. When this happens, people speak for and against the amended motion. The amendment must be put before voting on the original motion. If the amended motion is carried, the debate continues on the amended motion. If the amended motion is lost, discussion moves back to the original motion.

Chairing meetings

When chairing formal meetings, the chairperson should ensure:

- ◇ The meeting starts on time.
- ◇ Some introductory comments are made and the meeting is declared open.
- ◇ Apologies are called for and read out.
- ◇ Confirmation is made of the previous meeting's minute (this may not necessarily be on the agenda).
- ◇ Correspondence (inward and outward) is tabled.
- ◇ Financial statements are presented.
- ◇ Committee reports are circulated and discussed.
- ◇ Any relevant reports are presented.
- ◇ Other matters are raised, if any, during general business.

Throughout the meeting the Chairperson:

- ◇ notes who wishes to speak, and indicates when a person may speak
- ◇ is responsible for keeping conversation to the subject
- ◇ decides when discussion should be brought to an end
- ◇ does not usually get involved in the discussion unless their opinion is sought
- ◇ should summarise the issue under discussion to aid in decision-making
- ◇ If it is apparent that a decision cannot be made - refer the item to a working group for a report at the next meeting.

The Secretary in meetings

Prior to the meeting:

- ◆ Arrange the meeting place, admission to the building and use of services such as photocopying, catering, chairs, etc.
- ◆ In accordance with the constitution, send adequate notice of the meeting to all concerned including the venue, time and date, together with a meeting agenda.
- ◆ Minutes of the previous meeting should be enclosed if they have not already been sent.
- ◆ At the AGM additional duties may include:
 - ◇ collecting reports from club officers
 - ◇ advising members of the meeting within a specified time
 - ◇ calling for and receiving nominations for club positions
 - ◇ arranging for printing of the completed annual report
 - ◇ arranging for guest speaker
 - ◇ arranging venue, date, times and hospitality
 - ◇ ensuring arrangements are confirmed in writing with copies made and filed

Taking Minutes

- ◆ List those present along with apologies given.
- ◆ Follow the order of the agenda. This can be varied to suit a particular situation.
- ◆ State the main issues, points of view put forward, and decisions made.
- ◆ Make sure the full texts of motions are recorded.
- ◆ List accounts for payments that have been approved, reports received, and main points of answers required for correspondence, etc.
- ◆ Be alert to take extra notes that may be needed by the chairperson.
- ◆ Write up minutes as soon as possible after the meeting.

Voting at Meetings

The chairperson must have a clear understanding of the voting rights of members (see your club's constitution). There are several ways of voting. Choose the one most appropriate to your situation. For instance, avoid using a secret ballot when you know everyone in the room agrees on an issue.

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General agreement - Why put it to the vote if it seems everyone is in agreement? The chairperson can say "Do we all agree that...? Does anyone disagree?"

Verbal - The chairperson asks people to say "yes" or "no" and decides the louder response. Suitable for larger groups.

Show of Hands - The chairperson asks people to raise their hand to either "yes" or "no" and counts the hands. This is useful where a precise vote count is required.

Individual vote - The chairperson asks each person to turn for their view. This is better suited to small groups - it prevents anyone from fence-sitting.

Secret ballot - Individuals vote on paper and two elected people - often committee members - count the votes. Suitable for elections.

Proxy - Individuals who are absent can give someone else the power to cast their vote. Proxy votes are permitted only if the constitution allows for them and are usually bound by strict rules to prevent unfair lobbying. I.e. votes may be cast only in writing a week or so in advance.

Postal - Again, these are only permitted if the constitution allows them. The members should be sure of their position on an issue as they will not get to hear all the arguments.

Conflict in Meetings

Meetings may be disrupted occasionally by conflict between members. This can be due to a variety of factors including competition over resources, ambiguity about responsibility, reward systems, personal communication and relationship-based conflicts. Conflict is natural and inevitable and is necessary for an organisation to perform effectively. Conflict has both positive and negative outcomes, but if managed well can yield the outcomes of exposing internal and external issues as well as alternate view-points. Means of managing conflict include negotiations, mediation and arbitration, and direct intervention by the chair.

Summary

This document has been supplied as a how-to guide for Associations in hosting their meetings and keeping adequate records in accordance with the Associations Incorporated Act 1981.

References

The Australian Sports Commission – Supporting Clubs
AFL Quality Member Program
NQ Quality Member Program