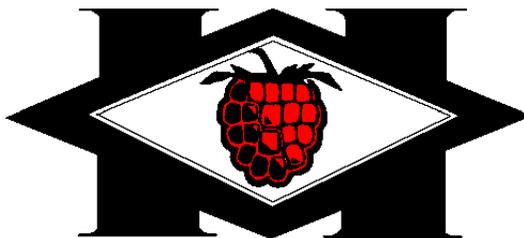


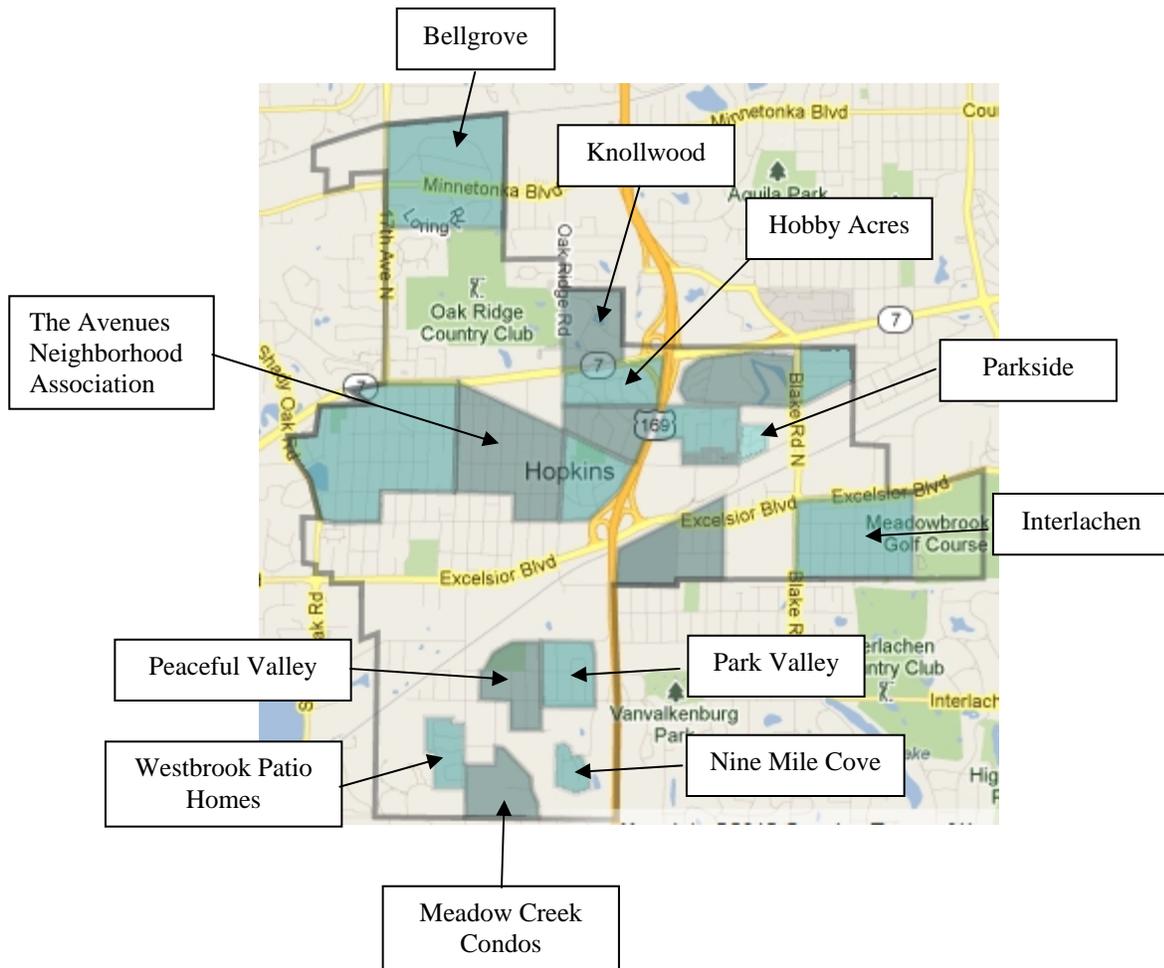
NEIGHBORHOOD HANDBOOK



www.hopkinsmn.com

April 2012

Neighborhood Associations - April 2012



Contents

Introduction.....	1
Organizing Your Neighborhood.....	2
Beginning the organizing process.....	2
Getting people out to the first large meeting	3
Getting to know your neighborhood.....	6
Publicity.....	6
Bylaws	7
Finances	9
Developing and Maintaining the Association.....	10
Introduction.....	10
Effective democratic leadership	11
Election of officers	12
The President	13
Recruiting New Members.....	15
Keeping New Members	16
Working with Volunteers	17
Conflict resolution	19
Newsletter	19
Website	20
Tips for effective neighborhood meetings	20
Agenda.....	22
Meeting set up.....	23
Running a meeting.....	23
Meeting Checklists	24
Goals and Objectives	27
Evaluation	30
Neighborhood Watch.....	30
National Night Out	30

INTRODUCTION

A neighborhood is the place where people live, play, work, worship, and go to school. A neighborhood association serves its members by working with various organizations and individuals to provide input on issues that affect the neighborhood and undertake efforts to address the concerns of the neighborhood. A neighborhood association can also serve as simply a fun way to get to know your neighbors.

The neighborhood association requires resident involvement, commitment, planning and organization. Neighborhood associations are usually directed by a steering committee or board of directors. The members of the steering committee or board of directors should have a long-term commitment of time and energy.

This resource handbook is designed to be used by neighborhood associations in various stages of development. The handbook contains instructional information on how to organize your neighborhood and how to develop a neighborhood safety program, and information on general things you should know about neighborhood organizing. Each group must address the specific needs of the neighborhood in which it is organized.

This handbook is primarily aimed at voluntary neighborhood associations. Townhome associations have legal and financial requirements that are not covered in this handbook. There is however, information about agendas, meetings, and suggestions on how to have a successful organization that can be valuable to any association.

This handbook is to be used as a guide and all instructional information is optional. Your group is encouraged to select items of interest, change them to fit your needs, or feel free to create and develop your own unique system for your neighborhood. If you need assistance please contact the City Manager's Office at 548-6303.

Role of Neighborhood Associations:

The purpose of neighborhood associations is to consider and act upon citizen needs. A main function of neighborhood associations is to encourage residents to get to know their neighbors. Associations also serve as a means to improve communication within the neighborhood and with City government. Neighborhood associations should be open to everyone within the boundaries of that neighborhood association and should be representative of those citizens who live in the neighborhood.

ORGANIZING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Beginning the organizing process

Starting a neighborhood group can be a big job. No one person can organize the area alone. It will take a steering committee. It is up to these people to seek out others who have some type of vested interest in the neighborhood to form a volunteer steering committee. As a rule, the most effective committees have no more than 25 members, with the ideal size around 16.

An effort should be made to solicit volunteer representation from each block in the area. A person with group organizing skills, whose commitment to the group is to only help it get organized, should take responsibility as the temporary chair of the group. There is no need to rush into electing officers. Another tip is that you may find it useful to elect officers after a set of bylaws has been written and adopted. This will give the committee time to build team cohesiveness and for each member to establish a role within the team. This is the time when preliminary goals and objectives can be developed for your neighborhood.

At the first steering committee meeting, a tentative agenda could include the following:

- Discuss each person's idea of problems and needs of the neighborhood.
- Discuss the positive aspects of the neighborhood; i.e., businesses, churches, parks, historical significance, well-maintained homes, tree-lined streets, schools, people, etc.
- Determine the boundaries of your neighborhood.
- Choose a temporary chair.

- Plan a larger meeting to announce the formation of your group to everyone within the neighborhood boundaries.

Through this process, you are formulating your neighborhood's goals, objectives, and policies as the framework for organizing.

Getting people out to the first large meeting

Once you have a steering committee, start planning your first large meeting. If people in your neighborhood do not have the opportunity to become involved in the planning process, they will not feel a part of the organization.

Remember the Golden Rule of Neighborhood Organizing: Do not allow any committee to become an elitist group. Each committee must truly represent the overall makeup of your neighborhood.

Always provide opportunities for people to become involved. Here are some tips:

- Arrange for the use of a church basement, school, or community center within your area. If you have a choice, choose a room that is a bit too small for the crowd you are expecting. This will create a greater sense of unity and closeness. It is also important to hold the meeting in the neighborhood because you will be building your organization within the neighborhood, not building the organization outside the neighborhood then selling it to the residents. City facilities are also available for use by neighborhood associations. It is necessary that accommodations for city facilities be made well in advance, if possible, to ensure that there is not a conflict.
- Prepare a colorful flier that states the time, place, date, and purpose of the meeting. The City of Hopkins can provide some assistance in making copies of your flier. Schedule the meeting during the early evening.
- The steering committee should personally hand deliver the fliers throughout the neighborhood. Be prepared to do a lot of talking. Check with the principal of the elementary school in your area about sending fliers home with children. Don't forget to include merchants, ministers, nonresident landlords, and others who work in your neighborhood.

- At this first meeting, it will help if special attention is given to the setup of chairs. Since it is possible that many people will need to get acquainted, arrange the chairs so that people have to look at each other.
- Post a map of the neighborhood with the areas of concern clearly marked. Consult with the City for maps. Have steering committee members donate refreshments or money to purchase coffee or other light refreshments and allow time for mingling.

(Tip: Have refreshments at all meetings. People like to snack and mingle after meetings. If you do not have residents who will donate food, take up a small collection from meeting attendees to help pay for the expense.)

- Consider inviting elected officials and City staff from the Police, Fire, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Community Development Departments to attend. Residents may have questions for these people to address. Also, give area clergy and school administrative staff personal invitations. This will help establish resources which may support your organization's future endeavors.
- Follow a prepared agenda and give everyone a chance to speak. Set ground rules: i.e., time limitations, no arguments, disagree respectfully, no talking while others are talking, etc.
- Obviously, some of the problems can be solved immediately while others will require months and maybe years of effort. It is best to have a steady stream of small projects to make the group feel successful, as well as one or two big issues.

End the meeting by giving committee assignments:

1. to assess the needs of the neighborhood through surveying the area, and
2. establish goals and objectives to deal with the problems identified.

If the tone of the meeting has been sincere and enthusiastic, you will have ample volunteers. A suggested agenda would be:

AGENDA
XYZ NEIGHBORHOOD
ORGANIZING MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2012
XYZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY
7:00 PM

1. Introductions and greetings - Pam Davis (7:00 PM)
2. Purpose of the meeting - John Green
3. A description of what a neighborhood association is and what kinds of things a neighborhood association can do in a community - Gene Bradley
4. Outline of organizing and goal setting steps to date - Ike Schecter
5. Refreshment break (7:45 PM)
6. Community needs as understood so far - Sue Wise (8:00 PM)
7. List residents' concerns - Rev. Paul Newman
8. Question and answer period - Rev. Paul Newman
9. Volunteers for neighborhood surveys
10. Schedule next meeting date - Pam Davis
11. Adjourn (8:45 PM)

Getting to know your neighborhood

In order to organize a neighborhood, it helps to understand how the people who live there relate to neighborhood associations and to each other. Each neighborhood is very unique and, as a structured human group, has its own personality. Assessing what those special features are is essential to developing the type of neighborhood association that will work successfully with its residents. It takes time and effort to assess what the special features are in a neighborhood. It also takes a good pair of walking shoes, because most of the survey work in neighborhoods is done door-to-door. To have total citizen input and to evaluate the residents' opinions, surveys must be designed, distributed, collected, and assessed. (Surveys should not contain confidential information such as health and economic situations of residents.)

Neighborhood interest survey

A suggested format for a neighborhood interest survey is as follows:

Neighborhood Interest Survey

1. Name; address; phone number(s); email address(es); best way to contact the resident(s)
2. Does your neighborhood conduct organized activities such as neighborhood clean-up days, garage sales, block parties, holiday parties, national night out, etc.?
3. What do you view as the most positive aspects of your neighborhood?
4. Are there aspects of your neighborhood which should be improved?
5. What are the key issues (problems, concerns) affecting your entire neighborhood?
6. What activities do you think a neighborhood association should sponsor?

Publicity

A good publicity network is absolutely essential to any group. Do not forget that your best communication media in a neighborhood association is word of mouth.

Bylaws

Bylaws are rules which identify the basic structure and operational characteristics of an association. Therefore, it is important to begin work on the bylaws early in the organizing effort. Neighborhood associations, as with other organized groups, are encouraged to develop organizational bylaws.

Bylaws establish rules for the following areas:

- the name, purpose, function of the association, description of members (including non-discrimination clause), the neighborhood boundaries, and frequency of meetings;
- the number, duties, and term of officers, the method of electing and replacing officers;
- the handling of the association's funds;
- a provision for amendments; and
- other functions and operations.

These items must be settled before an association can effectively function. Bylaws can also help your association over rough spots: the resignation of an officer, the continued absence of an officer, or the need to call a meeting very quickly without the usual period of advance notice.

Writing bylaws and thinking through the questions they raise is an important and necessary educational process for the steering committee.

Examples of bylaws are as follows:

Sample Bylaws Name

The name of the neighborhood association shall be _____

Purpose

The neighborhood association is organized exclusively for educational and charitable purposes. The purpose of the association is to promote a better neighborhood and community through group action.

Membership/Boundaries

Any person residing or owning property on _____ between _____ and _____ is eligible for membership.

Non-Discrimination

The neighborhood association will not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, disability, national origin, income or political affiliation.

Dues (if any)

Dues shall be \$ _____ per household per year. Business dues shall be \$ _____ per year.

Officers

The officers shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, who shall be elected in _____ of each year. The term of office shall be _____ year.

Committees

The membership may establish necessary committees at any meeting. The President may also establish such committees. Committee chair shall be appointed by the President.

Steering Committee

The officers and committee chair shall constitute the Steering Committee and may act for the group between meetings.

Meetings

Regular meetings will be held on the _____ of each month, or more often as deemed necessary. At the very least, one annual meeting will be held per year to provide for the election of officers.

Quorum

At least _____ percent of the membership must be present to conduct official business.

Amendments

The bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting. Two-thirds of those members in attendance must approve the amendment.

Please forward a copy of the bylaws established by your neighborhood association to the City Clerk's Office - 1010 1st St S, Hopkins, MN 55343

Finances

Although a neighborhood association does not necessarily need a lot of money, being able to purchase supplies for meetings and events can be important. Associations can raise funds through dues and/or fundraisers.

As soon as the Association raises any funds, someone will have to be elected or assigned to keep track of the money. An association checking account might have to be set-up.

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING THE ASSOCIATION

Introduction

People involved in neighborhood associations carry out a wide variety of activities together. Most people like to focus on improving the livability of their neighborhood, but it is also necessary and important to develop and maintain a healthy organization.

Some sections of the handbook address the formal structure of the association, others provide tips on how individuals can get involved. This section will provide information and ideas on how to keep your organization strong through the various cycles of involvement over the years. These pages are not intended to be an exhaustive list of a rigid how-to manual; rather, consider them as helpful hints. Use what works for you and your neighborhood, modify (or ignore) the rest.

Meetings are clearly one of the most common neighborhood association activities. The importance of well-run meetings cannot be overstated. This section provides extensive information about how to run effective meetings. There are also other activities that are important:

- **Choose strong leadership**, especially the President.
- **Build the community and be inclusive.** It is vital that your neighborhood is welcoming to new members and always anxious to include as many neighbors as possible in association activities. If the actions of the neighborhood association begin to cause interest to erode or focus on responding to only a few people, support will decrease and the organization will suffer. Celebrate the diversity of your neighborhood. Make goals to add a certain number of new people each year, and make a special effort to recruit those who have not participated in the past.
- **Develop a work plan.** Map out what you would like to accomplish in the given year. A little planning can go a long way to holding your association together.

- **Use creative approaches.** Have fun. Celebrate. Create rituals. Involve kids and senior citizens. Organize events for people who do not or will not attend meetings. Have parties. Honor volunteers. Partner up with businesses, other community organizations, and/or government entities. Raise money for a project to benefit the community. Create an identity for your neighborhood - signs, fliers, events that publicize the area. Brainstorm within your group about other creative ways to get people involved. Share your ideas with other neighborhoods.
- After some time, **evaluate your neighborhood's efforts.** Discuss what has worked and what hasn't. Again, celebrate your successes. Don't be too hard on yourselves. After all, you are volunteering your valuable time to your community.

Effective democratic leadership

An effective neighborhood leader must have the patience to think through problems, must be capable of gathering relevant neighborhood information, and must be able to guide other people in setting goals and taking steps to reach solutions. Importantly, an effective leadership style is one which takes into account differing views and encourages consensus.

Using effective democratic leadership techniques will result in the positive growth of the organization. Consider the following:

1. Set goals and hold expectations that are challenging, yet attainable. Low expectations and unrealistic goals result in apathy and frustration. Determine measurable steps toward meeting the goals so progress can be evaluated. This will yield a feeling of accomplishment or will demonstrate the need to revise the goals, if necessary. Be sure that a consensus is reached on organizational goals so the residents involved will want to participate in implementing them.
2. Whenever possible, delegate responsibility and seek volunteers to ease the burden of work. Take advantage of the skills and resources of other people. Project leaders should remain accountable, however, to the leader.
3. Use the committee system. It is a great way to promote participation and to train future leaders.
4. Communicate selectively, in addition to monthly meetings and newsletters, by talking to individuals or small groups and seeking opinions on issues and ideas. This promotes a feeling of commitment and teamwork and helps boost morale.

Still, there are situations when a leader must assume strong control, especially when the organizational goals are not being met or members are misrepresenting the association.

A good neighborhood leader must have the type of personality to judge what type of leadership style is necessary in different situations. They must also have a bit of natural intuition and use a lot of common sense.

Election of officers

Elections are the process by which members select a group of people to represent them. Once the election is held, the original steering committee ceases to exist. The new governing body will be called the Board of Directors or in some cases, the Steering Committee. The leadership of the organization will be decided by the membership. Well-run elections that guarantee the representation of a diverse membership are crucial since the Board of Directors is responsible for overall decisions and the ongoing activities of the neighborhood association.

Neighborhood associations can run its elections in a variety of ways. Before you plan elections, consult your bylaws to make sure the procedure you use is consistent with them. Voting and candidate eligibility should be outlined in your bylaws. Early in your election planning, decide whether members will vote at your annual meeting or vote at a special neighborhood election day. This should be dictated by the physical size of your neighborhood and the needs of the members and the association. This checklist can be used when planning an election:

1. Decide how Board candidates are to be nominated and set a cut-off date for nominations.
2. Determine who is eligible to vote. Anyone who lives in the neighborhood? Anyone who has signed up to be a member of the association? or for Associations with dues: you may want to require members who are eligible to vote for the Board to have paid membership dues to the association no later than two or three weeks before the election date.
3. Decide where to hold elections and related meetings, keeping in mind the issue of accessibility.
4. Provide a voting committee who will tabulate votes and referee disputes.
5. Publish an “election guideline” sheet which includes the names, addresses, and office all candidates are seeking. It may be helpful to include a brief quote from each candidate as to why they are interested in being an officer.

The Board of Directors of the neighborhood association will represent your neighborhood with government officials and business and community leaders. Make sure you elect leaders who are truly interested in your neighborhood and who will be the best representatives of the residents in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Association Board Responsibilities

by Arty Trost, Consultant, *Organizational Dynamics*

- **Planning** for the association: where will it go, what will it do, how to accomplish goals.
- **Organizing** the association: who will do what, what resources will be needed.
- **Directing** the efforts of the volunteers.
- **Evaluating** the work as well as the association.
- **Neighborhood Communication:** Be responsive to the neighborhood, seek input from people who aren't involved in the association, keep people informed about what the association is doing.
- **Public Relations:** develop a positive image in the community for the neighborhood and the association.
- **Resource Development:** Identify and solicit resources: active members, financial support, meeting space, supplies, etc.
- **Leadership and Member Development:** Recruit and train people to assume leadership responsibilities, help leaders and members to work effectively.

The President

Every meeting needs someone to facilitate the proceedings. This person is the key to the success of the meetings and the association. It is most important that this person be able to be a non-partial bystander. The President *never* monopolizes the floor or dominates the discussions. The President keeps the meeting running smoothly while allowing participation and is the person who makes sure that people keep to the agenda and the task, both in content and timing.

Tips to make the job of President easier:

- **Introduce yourself** at the beginning of a meeting. Don't assume people know who you are. If there is time and the group is a reasonable size, have the others present introduce themselves as well.
- **Review** the agenda and establish ground rules.

- **Direct the discussion.** Keep people on the topic. When issues are brought up that are irrelevant, remind the group that there will be a time for new business. If people are repetitive, recap the information that has already been shared. Limit your own options.
- **Facilitate voting and decision making.** Never assume there is agreement until it is put to a vote.
- **Do not abuse the power of the office.** Don't ignore those who want to speak and don't monopolize the floor because you are the President. A President facilitates discussion and does not dictate decisions. A President should remain neutral. If you want to speak, you may call on yourself, temporarily step out of your role as the President, then say your piece. Return to your role as the President. Do not continue to speak when your turn is finished.
- **Mediate arguments when they arise.** Remain impartial and fair. Give each side a chance to state its point of view.
- **Review what has to be done.** Review all discussions, decisions made, and the tasks to be assigned. Make sure that people leave the meeting with a clear understanding of what decisions have been made and which tasks are to be done by whom.
- **Be organized.** Use a watch and follow the agenda. When it is time to end a discussion, announce that time is almost up. Select the final speakers and their order from those still indicating a desire to speak. The discussion ends when those people finish speaking.
- **Follow up** after the meeting to encourage members to get things done and help them when necessary.

The President or his/her designee is responsible for:

- Preparing for the meeting; having an organized agenda;
- Encouraging participation from all;
- Keeping the meeting on the topic and time frame allotted;
- Mediating arguments among members;
- Bringing the issues to a vote as needed;
- Clarifying decisions made by the groups; reviewing task assignments;
- Following up on the decisions made at the meeting; and
- Ensuring that bylaws and procedures are followed.

A President is not just the facilitator of a meeting, but also is responsible for the following:

- Understanding, promoting, supporting, and interpreting the overall goals of the association, as well as the role of the board or committee;
- Knowing the association's bylaws;
- Scheduling and conducting meetings, and making sure people are notified about meeting times;
- Observing correct procedure for correspondence;
- Seeing that meeting proceedings are recorded;
- Delegating responsibilities among officers and committee members. Seeing that work gets done. Giving credit and recognition for accomplishment; and
- Meeting with your successor and transferring records, files, etc.

Recruiting New Members

Groups may initially attract members through well-publicized meetings on issues that concern many or projects that involve lots of people. If your group is in the public eye, it will certainly boost membership. After the publicity dies away and the problem is solved, active members may disappear.

Finding new members is crucial to keeping neighborhood associations alive. While many people appreciate what the group is doing for their neighborhood, they may not attend meetings or even come in direct contact with the neighborhood association.

Neighborhood associations often inadvertently restrict their numbers by having membership forms and sign up sheets only at meetings. Undertake a membership drive that directly reaches every household within your boundaries.

- Have volunteers go door to door calling on their neighbors. This can be a week long or one day blitz. Consider having a membership drive and then sponsoring a party for volunteers where they can have fun and share experiences later that same day.
- Arm volunteers with printed materials to encourage the residents to get involved. (Remember that printed materials should not be placed in mailboxes. Residential mailboxes are reserved for U.S. mail.)

- Neighborhoods can develop a block leader network as a foundation for a membership campaign, as well as other activities. Block leaders can pass out flyers and newsletters, welcome new residents, serve as a conduit for specific problems on the block, and place volunteers in activities. Work with organized Block Watches.
- Members can also be found at community gatherings. Sponsor a booth at a community festival or event. This is a great opportunity to talk to people in your area. Remember, have information and membership sign-up sheets at your booth.

Keeping New Members

Getting new members is only half the battle. The other half is keeping them involved. For every member who is active in the association, there are probably two who would be involved if they were properly motivated. The following ideas can be useful.

- **Help members find a place in the association.** Not everyone is a self starter. Many will offer to help, but have no idea where to begin. Develop a list of volunteer activities that includes a job description and approximate time commitment for each task.
- **Welcome new people.** Officers and board members should watch out for new faces and welcome them assertively. Each new member or guest should be introduced to someone who lives near them or who shares a similar interest. Have an official “greeter” at each meeting.
- **Avoid the appearance of cliques.** New members who see the same people running every project will feel excluded and may not return. Appoint people who are not part of the core group or steering committee to leadership roles.
- **Welcome new ideas and input.** This is often difficult for people who long have been involved in the association and are more knowledgeable than newcomers. People coming into a situation for the first time, however, are able to see things in a new light and can offer new solutions to old problems. They just might have the answer that you have been seeking!
- **Organize meetings.** Busy people will not attend meetings or involve themselves in organizations they consider to be a waste of time. Have a written agenda before each meeting and *stick to it*.
- **Maintain membership records.** Keep a file that lists members’ names, addresses, phone numbers, family member names, occupation, special talents, concerns, and areas of interest.

- **Have fun.** The work of the neighborhood association doesn't need to be boring drudgery. Sponsor parties and celebrations to get to know your neighbors better. Have events that appeal to all, including children.

Working with Volunteers

DO

- Involve each member in each step of organizing.
- Invite *all* residents within the boundaries to be part of the group.
- Be realistic about what the neighborhood association can do.
 - How much time is needed?
 - How many people are needed for this project?
 - What other projects are underway? Is it feasible to take on a new responsibility?
- Bring all activities to discussion and vote before the full membership *before* committing the group to a new project.

DON'T

- Have one person or a small group made the decisions for the entire group.
- Try to do everything yourself. The leadership of the neighborhood association is *not* the neighborhood association.
- Drop projects without a good reason. Make sure everyone knows why the project is being dropped.
- Scare off new members by asking them to volunteer for life. Start small.

Volunteer Burnout

Volunteers are special people who give their time and energy without receiving money in return. But without a paycheck to keep someone coming to meetings week after week, there must be other enticements. Volunteers remain active with associations they feel are contributing positively to the community. But volunteers also remain active when they are recognized for the effort they make within that association.

To prevent volunteer burnout, the positive feeling one has must remain high in spite of the many hours devoted to the work involved. This is especially true in neighborhood associations which often demand great commitment from their workers. Here is some insight into the causes of volunteer burnout and ways to prevent your association members from succumbing.

Why do people burn out?

- The association is lacking in clear goals and direction.
- There is too much work to be done. People are afraid to say “no,” thinking that it won’t get done otherwise.
- There is a popular notion that if you work for a public interest association (such as your neighborhood association), you have to give selflessly for the cause. People see it as a measure of their worth.
- There are often few rewards or recognition for a job well done in volunteer associations.
- All work and no play makes everyone tired and burned out!
- Too few people are involved.

Tips for burnout prevention

- Set realistic objectives that meet the association’s purpose and goals. It helps to have job descriptions or task outlines so people know what they are getting themselves into and what is expected of them.
- Different people are able to handle different amounts of types of work. Recognize different abilities and tolerance levels in handing out work assignments. Don’t let one person take on everything and then burn out. Get new members involved.
- Remind people that the quality of their work is what’s important, not the quantity.
- Recognize people for a job well done. You can verbally give thanks to people at meetings or develop an award system. This could be a certificate of appreciation, a gift given to a member who has worked hard for the group, or a yearly award potluck where members are publicly recognized. Nominate volunteers for recognition by the community.

- Organize fun events for your members. Creating a social network of friends and neighbors can provide support and also give people an opportunity to have a good time together.

Conflict resolution

At no time will all members of your neighborhood association agree on everything. That is the uniqueness of democracy, and the opportunity to be heard is the basis for all neighborhood associations.

Here are three options to resolving neighborhood conflicts:

I. Option one - Hear out the objectors

- Use dissent and disagreement to resolve neighborhood conflicts.
- Ask for disagreement openly, it gives people the feeling that they have been heard.
- Know where the objectors are and what their objections are.
- Listen attentively to both arguments.
- Understand the arguments of both sides.

II. Option two - Sit down and work it out

- Have the two people who most vocally oppose each other sit down and work out a common approach.
- Focus on the areas upon which they agree.

III. Option three - Establish common ground

- Defuse the argument by focusing on those things upon which there is agreement.
- Play down the areas of disagreement and play up the areas of agreement.

Newsletter

The neighborhood association may want to consider developing its own newsletter. Newsletters can be printed or sent out by email. Even if the primary delivery method is by email, make sure that residents without email receive a printed copy.

Examples of information which may be included in the neighborhood newsletter include:

- a. Notices of important meetings and group events
- b. Report on the progress of the group's activities
- c. Articles of community interest

Website

The neighborhood association may want to consider developing its own website. There are inexpensive or free methods to create a site. Search out association members who are familiar with websites and website design.

Tips for effective neighborhood meetings

Attitude

Remember that people come to community meetings because they want to, not because they are required to come. If your meetings are sloppily run, never start or end on time, or are dominated by a few people, it won't be long before some of your members get frustrated, stop coming to meetings, and finally drop out of the group. Many groups have lost valuable momentum because of poorly run meetings. With a little thought and some attention to detail, your meetings can be effective.

It is very important that members participate fully in the decisions made at a meeting. All of your meetings do not have to be "encounter sessions," but it is possible to have a productive meeting that also meets the human needs of your members.

Where

Establish a standard meeting place. Schedule your meeting at some central, well-known, public meeting place such as a school, neighborhood facility, library, or church. In those areas where a particular church serves a large percentage of the population, it may be wise to schedule the meeting there and ask for support and assistance from the clergy. The meeting space you choose should be comfortable, conducive to group discussion, and an appropriate size to accommodate the audience expected.

To help with the selection of a meeting site, compile a list of suitable locations. Include location, seating capacity, access for people with disabilities, parking capacity, hours available, cost, and contact person with telephone number on the list. City facilities are also available for neighborhood association meetings. Please call 952.548.6302 to arrange the accommodations well in advance to ensure that there are no conflicts.

When

Weekday evenings between 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. seem to be the best time to schedule meetings, unless you know for a fact that another time would be more appropriate for a given group. Check to be sure that the day and time you're considering does not conflict with other community meetings, holidays, or special events.

Advertising your meeting

If time and other resources permit, fliers, either mailed or hand delivered door-to-door to each household, are an effective way to get the word out about a community meeting. Fliers should be simple, clear, and eye-catching. They should briefly state the purpose of the meeting, the time, and place.

Word-of-mouth is another excellent way to get people interested. Ask community leaders and clergy to urge their particular constituents to attend. Personal contact with people is often the most effective way to draw in participants. If your neighborhood association is registered with the City, one of the services provided by the City is a quarterly newsletter. Neighborhood associations are encouraged to advertise their meetings in the newsletter.

Special efforts

There are several other things you can do to make it convenient and comfortable for people to attend your meetings:

- Offer transportation for people who would like to attend but have no way to get there.
- Offer baby-sitting or “day care” service to parents who must bring their children. A spare room, a volunteer, and some simple toys or games are a good beginning.
- Always serve coffee or some other sort of refreshments. It will create a more relaxed atmosphere.

Agenda

First of all, why are you meeting? It isn't always necessary to call a full membership meeting to make minor decisions; for that, you should use your executive or steering committee. Most groups meet once a month unless something important requires an additional meeting.

When listing agenda items, it's always good to put a time limit down. It's possible that you'll go over or under the limit on some items, but at best you'll have a frame of reference. Also, word the items so that people making reports will know what is expected of them.

Note: Don't overload your agenda. Try to stay within 1-1.5 hours and allow some time for coffee drinking, cookie eating, and mingling. Since most community meetings are held at night, the energy level of many members might be low.

If you have a regular meeting scheduled but don't really have anything to discuss, create something. Invite a guest speaker, take a neighborhood tour, or have a potluck. It is good for organizations to make contact on a regular basis, and it is sometimes necessary to reaffirm your "team spirit." Social events encourage that spirit.

An agenda states the purpose, time, and goals of a meeting. It outlines each topic to be covered and designates an amount of time allotted to each subject. List who is responsible for each topic and the type of action needed to clarify the goals and direction of the meeting.

When possible, send out your agenda in advance so people know what is expected of them and what will happen at the meeting.

Points to consider when preparing an agenda:

- Keep the agenda in the shortest form possible.
- Keep your meetings as short as possible. After about ninety minutes people get tired and restless and their attention span grows shorter and shorter.
- Plan the agenda to mix items of importance. Don't save big decisions for the end, when people are tired or have left the meeting.
- List each item. Include who is responsible for the presentation, what kind of action is needed (when appropriate), and the time allotted.

- At the opening of the meeting, ask for additions to the agenda.
- Include an ending time for the meeting.
- Get group approval for the agenda before you start the meeting.

Plan your agenda before the meeting and post or distribute it. A sample agenda might read like this:

AGENDA
ABC Neighborhood Association
Tuesday, November 12, 2010
[LOCATION]
7:00 PM

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting - 5 minutes
2. Correspondence - 5 minutes
3. Committee Reports - 20 minutes
4. New Projects - 30 minutes
5. Announcements - 5 minutes
6. Adjournment.

Meeting set up

Arrange the meeting room in such a way that it encourages people to talk. Set chairs in a semi or full circle so that everyone can be seen. Use tables when you will need to write. Hold the meeting in an appropriately sized room. Rearrange the room according to how many people attend.

Running a meeting

Start the meeting on time. Don't penalize those on time by making them wait 20 minutes for latecomers.

Although Robert's Rules of Order are effective for "getting things done" they shouldn't be used in community meetings unless everyone in your group understands them. If everyone is comfortable with Robert's Rules of Order, then by all means use it (condensed versions can be found at most libraries). If a group is not comfortable or is inhibited by Robert's Rules of Order, a special effort should be made to ensure that a vote truly represents the will of the group. Keep meetings orderly and democratic. Allow plenty of debate on important issues, but don't be afraid to set time limits. End each meeting with some concrete action. Have a list of things to be done and try to involve as many members as possible in doing them.

Make sure that someone takes the minutes or records them. If you don't have a secretary, then rotate this task. Be aware that the person who takes minutes will not be able to involve themselves in much discussion.

The minutes of the meeting become the official documentation of all discussions, committee reports, votes, and activities of the association. This is your recorded history. The minutes are a very important document. When bringing forth issues to be considered by the City Council, minutes and other pertinent background material should be provided in order to illustrate the view points of the neighborhood association on the issue, if possible.

Meeting Checklists

There is a lot to think about when conducting a meeting. Use this checklist as a guide to help you conduct meetings more effectively:

- Plan your meeting
- Start on time
- State the purpose of the meeting clearly on the agenda
- State ideas positively and show their relation to the overall issue
- Watch the pacing – keep it moving
- Find background information ahead of time or invite resource people to come to the meeting. Feel free to contact the City and request representatives of the police, fire, public works, or other departments to attend.
- Get everyone to contribute
- Get points of view by questioning or restating as you go along
- Make frequent summaries during the discussion
- Stress cooperation, not conflict

- Assign tasks and delegate responsibility as the meeting proceeds. Ask that they are recorded in the minutes
- Guide the meeting from problem to solution
- Wrap up the meeting:
 - Point out differences not yet resolved.
 - Summarize the decisions reached.
 - Outline future actions, next steps to be taken.
 - Set deadlines and review task assignments.
 - Set the next meeting date, time, and place.
- Evaluate the meeting

Before the Meeting

- **Set goals.** With the people on your planning committee, determine what you want to accomplish during the meeting. This should be clearly defined for all participants and included in your agenda.
- **Review the minutes of your last meeting:**
 - Who was assigned which task?
 - Are they prepared to make a report?
 - Where can they fit in the agenda?
 - How much time do they need for their presentation?
 - What issues were left unresolved?
 - On what issues are you now prepared to make decisions?
- **Collect Information:** Collect all new information which has been received by the committee. Put this in outline form so all committee members have the information in front of them during the meeting.

- **Resources and Information:**

- Do you need additional information or a resource person to help you meet your goals?
- Where can you get the information and how quickly?

- **Send Out Meeting Notices and Include:**

- Date
- Time
- Place
- Purpose

- **Set an Agenda:**

- Write the agenda before the meeting. Make changes only with the consent of the group. Make enough copies for all attending the meeting.
- Set a predetermined ending time.
- Set a timed agenda to get through all the information on your agenda.

At The Meeting

- Keep information items brief and relevant.
- Discuss decision items at a time when most group members are present.
- Know the limits of the group's decision making authority.
- Committee reports should recommend action with clearly stated proposals.
- Involve everyone who attends the meeting. Often newcomers are not recognized or taken seriously and then don't return to future meetings. Have them introduce themselves before they speak, or introduce everyone at the beginning of the meeting.
- Have a limit on how long any single issue will be discussed. If it is an issue of interest to the entire association, a special meeting might have to be held. If it is an issue that is of interest to a small number of residents, time can be set aside at the end of the meeting to continue the discussion. Sometimes if City staff are present, residents will want to discuss issues of personal concern. Request that City staff members stay after the meeting and ask residents to continue the discussion then.
- Use visual aids as much as possible. This includes charts, graphs, posters, etc. Visual aids give groups something to focus on during a discussion.

- Establish the next meeting time and place. People should walk away from the meeting knowing when and where they will meet next.
- Hand out new task assignments. Be clear about who is doing what, and what is expected of that person.
- Allow time for new business so that all participants have an opportunity to bring up issues.
- Minutes should include:
 - The persons attending and their capacity.
 - A summary of all items presented and discussed and the action to be taken.
 - A record of all decisions made, including a record of votes taken.
 - The votes on plans made, tasks assigned, etc.
 - All items which are referred to committees or to future meetings.

Goals and Objectives

Goals

A goal is a generalized statement about what you wish to achieve in your neighborhood at some undefined time in the future. You will have a goal for each of the topic areas which you feel are important. They represent an aggregate of the values and potential neighborhood changes which have emerged as important during the organizing process.

When deciding on goals, the following steps are encouraged:

1. Assess neighborhood problems and their root causes.
2. Develop organizational goals based on the needs assessment and resident input.
3. Develop specific objectives (measurable terms) for the achievement of goals.

The goals can be as general as:

1. Develop a neighborhood-based association which is representative of the people who live in our area to address their concerns.
2. Develop and maintain clean and blight-free housing in our neighborhood.
3. Maintain and develop adequate lighted residential streets in our neighborhood.

4. Develop a neighborhood communication system where all residents will be informed of neighborhood activities and concerns.
5. Develop a crime prevention program for our neighborhood.
6. Sponsor activities which will provide opportunities for neighbors to interact. Some examples include: Neighborhood garage sale, holiday house decoration contest, sleigh ride, sledding party, scavenger hunt in the spring, 4th of July picnic, a winter charity event, National Night Out party, publish a neighborhood telephone directory, put out a monthly or bi-monthly newsletter with news you may not find anywhere else; plant swap, and progressive dinner.

In the organizing process, the goals are formulated with no specific time frame in mind. They are general, as well as continuous, in nature.

Objectives

An objective is a specific measurable task within a given time frame which partially attempts to accomplish a stated goal.

Four separate objectives of organizing a neighborhood may be:

1. Design a mission statement.
2. Design organization bylaws.
3. Set up a block captain or block contact program.
4. Organize a neighborhood crime watch program.

Six objectives of the goal “Develop and maintain clean and blight-free housing in our neighborhood,” for example, may be:

1. Organize a property maintenance committee.
2. Educate property owners about city property maintenance codes and legal home occupations.
3. Educate property owners about animal control ordinances.
4. Provide gardening and landscaping workshops for the neighborhood.

Many objectives may be directed toward the same goal. Some may need to be reached first before others can be started. Others can be worked on at the same time. The steering committee should break down into smaller groups of five or six to address preliminary objectives and their tasks. Objectives may be viewed as the components of a ladder. Without the organization of the frame and steps into the structure of the ladder, the materials cannot get you to the roof, which is the goal.

After a list of goals and objectives has been compiled, it is suggested that you have a series of meetings with your larger group to set priorities for the work ahead. Be prepared to address a few goals at a time. Allow everyone to be heard. This will take time but is worth it.

People have a very difficult time setting priorities without some mechanism to help them arrive at realistic goals. It is like going to an ice cream store with 50 flavors and having someone tell you that you can have everything you'd like. It's fun, but it's not realistic!

Use a trade-off exercise to prioritize goals:

1. Break the large group into three or five smaller groups.
2. Have each individual write on a piece of paper ten issues of concern.
3. Then have each individual select five of the most important issues.
4. Next, have each individual select the three most important issues.
5. Ask each individual to share their three issues with the small group and have a volunteer to record each member's issues on a flip chart. Do not write the names of the individuals who stated the issues and do not write the same issue more than once.
6. From the flip chart list of issues, have each individual vote for three issues as being the most important. Tally the results of this vote on the flip chart. Select the top five issues from this vote.
7. Return to the larger group and have a spokesperson report each small group's five priorities. Tape the flip chart pages on the wall. Have a volunteer record these results on one flip chart for the large group.
8. At the next meeting, distribute an issue ballot. The ballot should have the top five issues from each of the small groups. Mix the issues on the ballot so that none of the small groups' issues are together. Distribute the ballot to all members and have each vote on their top three priorities. Select the top ten priorities from this vote.

Evaluation

- Regularly reassess the purpose(s) of the neighborhood associations and its priorities
- Develop realistic plans and activities
- Make sure the leadership is representative of the neighborhood
- Maintain ongoing communication with all residents, whether or not they are members
- Use the association to enhance “neighboring”
- Don’t let factions develop
- Celebrate success

Remember, neighborhood associations are formed for a variety of reasons. Don’t be discouraged if your association is struggling. It’s important to have an organized process for resolving issues, but your group shouldn’t spend all its time and energy on organizational problems. Build credibility and success one issue at a time and participation will grow.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

In other parts of the country, Neighborhood Watch is often referred to by some other name, however, its purpose is the same in every neighborhood; concerned neighbors who have joined together to help reduce crime in their community. Neighborhood Watch groups can be entire neighborhoods, a single block, an entire apartment complex or just a single apartment building. The Police Services Liaison meets yearly with Neighborhood Watch groups to discuss crime trends, problem areas, and neighborhood concerns.



If you are interested in forming a Neighborhood Watch group, please contact Anne Marie Buck at 952-548-6407.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

The Hopkins Police Department invites you to be a part of this great celebration of community, crime prevention, and strong police-community partnerships. The most important aspect of National Night Out (NNO) is getting neighbors together. Lock your doors and meet your neighbors in the street to give crime and drugs a going away party. National Night Out takes place on the first Tuesday in August.

A strong community makes for a safe community. Everything we do to strengthen the ties among neighbors of all ages and backgrounds makes our present and future that much brighter. Celebrating NNO with the Hopkins Police Department and your neighbors is a positive way to build and nurture our community by starting in your own back (or front) yard.

Start Planning NOW!

Your event doesn't have to be huge or elaborate - it can be as simple as lemonade and conversation in your neighbor's yard. The important thing is to talk to your neighbors - plan to GET TOGETHER AS A NEIGHBORHOOD!

Party Ideas for National Night Out

- * sip lemonade
- * barbecue
- * play croquet
- * tell block stories
- * visit old friends
- * play Bingo
- * serve watermelon
- * dessert buffet
- * play horseshoes
- * volleyball
- * baseball
- * collect for food shelf
- * Frisbee throw
- * ice cream social
- * pot luck
- * pet contest
- * bicycle parade
- * listen to music
- * sing-along
- * welcome new residents
- * exchange recipes
- * progressive dinner
- * youngest, oldest, longest resident award

Tips

- * Keep it simple and easy, yet make the event worth people's time
- * Name tags are helpful
- * Have a start and end time
- * Don't do all the work yourself - enlist help from the neighbors.

A registration form can be found on the City's web site: www.hopkinsmn.com. You can also get a copy from the Hopkins Police Department.

To register your party, even if you don't want a visit from the Police or Fire Department, please complete the registration form and return it to the Hopkins Police Department. If you have questions, please contact Anne Marie Buck at 952-548-6407.