

XXX Cluster Special Meeting Considerations

author

date

It has been proposed that next spring we have a special meeting of the general membership of XXX Cluster Association to decide the way in which we'll fund future expenditures. This document contains my thoughts on how we might plan for, and run, such a meeting.

To have a productive special meeting, I believe we'll have to be well prepared **before** the xxx board meeting. Given the short amount of time for board meetings and the other issues we have to discuss I think we all need to think through this process in advance of that board meeting, and circulate our concerns via email.

- 1. Purpose:** xxx
- 2. Date:** xxx (tentative). The by-laws require us to give no less than 10 days and no more than 50 days notice in advance. Allowing for 10 days after the xxx board meeting for us to wrap-up any outstanding issues from that meeting regarding this special meeting, xxx is at the extreme end of the 40-day window. (If we want to hold it later, we'll need to avoid Tax time and Easter.)
- 3. Time:** x pm through x pm (tentative). Frankly, I think this meeting has the potential to expand to fill the time available. If we are prepared and focused, we should be able to deal with the main issue in this time. I'd guess at 1½ hours for question time and general discussion, followed by the voting and counting. (Another reason to keep the meeting short rather than long is to avoid having to provide refreshments or taking breaks.)
- 4. Location:** xxx Middle School (tentative). We'll need to find out how to make this happen. We might also have to pay to have any janitor(s) stay and clean up after us.
- 5. Registration:** We'll need to have attendees sign in and for us to be able to identify them as owners. A simple sign-up sheet ordered by house number, containing owner name(s) and a place for one or two signatures should suffice. Recently, I updated (and circulated to board members) my list of current owners, based on our accountant's billing records. I will update this list again immediately prior to the special meeting.

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6. **Quorum:** The by-laws require x/y of the total membership; that is, $x/y = z$.
7. **Meeting Chair:** The corporation president will chair the meeting. Before the general discussion, the board will need to present the rationale and options for the financing options up for vote. If we do a good job with this, that will reduce the time needed for general discussion and may diffuse any potential anger if everyone understands why we're doing this. Whoever the chair is they will need to give all owners a chance to speak, in turn, without people talking over each other. (My experience has been that it's best to write down the names of people who wish to speak, maintained in order, and then give all other members a chance to speak before any speaker gets the floor a second time, the latter being required by Robert's Rules of Order).
8. **Parliamentarian:** It is common practice to appoint a parliamentarian whose job it is to know the by-laws and the rules by which the meeting is being run (which includes Robert's Rules of Order).
9. **Vote Counting:** It is common practice to appoint at least two *Inspectors of Votes*. These people count the votes and are usually not members of the board.
10. **Meeting Announcement:** We'll need to mail (or hand-deliver) to each owner a packet containing the following:
 - a. The meeting notice containing the date/time/location plus an overview of the need for the meeting and the projects we have planned or anticipate.
 - b. A ballot form (if we permit postal voting).
 - c. Supporting information, such as spreadsheets for each of the funding models.
11. **Voting:**
 - a. The owner(s) of each property is entitled to one vote, making xx votes in all.
 - b. Should owners who are delinquent in paying their cluster dues have the right to vote?
 - c. Voting by proxy (that is, having one owner give another owner the power to cast a vote for the first owner as the second owner sees fit) is disallowed by the by-laws.
 - d. We need a simple majority of members from the attendance list, for any binding decisions to be made. (Owners attending but abstaining have their votes excluded from the majority determination.)
 - e. I propose that we use written ballots. That is, each owner gets one ballot form, on which they cast their vote, they write their property number, and which they sign. This will make it much easier for the Inspectors of Votes to make sure that ballots are for actual owners, there are no duplicates, and all owners who signed in are accounted for.
 - f. I propose allowing postal voting (which implies meeting attendance for quorum determination) for the following reasons:

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- i. This allows all owners to participate regardless of calendar conflicts, which makes the vote more representative, as well as helping us to get a quorum.
- ii. It forces the board members to be very disciplined in their preparation for the special meeting, since ballot forms would go out with the meeting notice, and could be returned any time up until mail delivery of the day of the meeting. **This approach would not allow the question(s) being voted on to be changed after the ballots were mailed out**, which is not necessarily a bad thing.
- g. Regardless of whether we allow postal voting, how will voting be conducted?

ARCH Member Support Committee