



How do we help shape the future of our communities?

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ASK OUR BROKER

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Give Me My Minutes!

QUESTION:

Our HOA tends to limit the details of the meetings (whether regular or anything else) when they send the minutes to us homeowners. They are very secretive about most of the transactions that affect the Association. How can we homeowners require them to issue more detailed minutes?



Peter G. Miller

ANSWER:

Homeowner associations are a very big deal because they're virtually a layer of government. Battles between HOAs and homeowners are legendary; HOAs can have significant power and authority, and because they involve local real estate, HOAs can greatly impact the value of your home – for better or worse.

It's not clear that you can demand "more detailed" minutes if basic information is reported, but there are certainly things that can be done to assure better HOA transparency.

HOA rules vary by state, and the rules can also vary depending on whether you have a condominium, cooperative or homeowners association.

In general, all meetings should be open to the full membership, but there may be exceptions for such things as sessions with an attorney regarding litigation or meetings to discuss personnel, such as a performance review.

It is required that the HOA notifies members when meetings are held. How much in advance notice must be given varies, but the earlier the better.

Minutes typically include such information as where and when the meeting was held, when notice was sent out, who presided, whether there was a quorum, approval of the old minutes, new business, old business, reports, votes and adjournment. You can, if you like, take your own minutes.

However, we now live in the electronic era and it's perfectly possible for HOAs to offer more than written minutes. For instance, entire meetings can be audio or video recorded and then placed on the Internet.

And maybe that's solution – not only should HOA meetings be open and public, they should be broadcasted.

Perhaps requiring webcasts or podcasts in addition to minutes should be on the next HOA meeting agenda.

Ask a REALTOR®



MARK KITABAYASHI
PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON
ASSOCIATION OF
REALTORS®

What will your neighborhood look like in 20 years? With a public envisioning project called "Sustainable Thurston" you don't have to be the mayor or on the city council to take part and determine how our communities grow.

Thurston County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. The quality of life of our communities is what draws so many people here. We enjoy small town living surrounded by rivers, lakes, trails, mountains and ocean. We have the benefit of the jobs and cultural opportunities that a state capital brings. It is a quality of life we cherish and it is what makes buying a home and raising a family in Thurston County so attractive.

There are more than a quarter of a million residents living here now and the population is expected to increase by 120,000 by 2035. That is like adding the population of three Lacey's in the next 22 years! Where are they going to go and how are we planning for that growth so we maintain our quality of life?

Thurston Regional Planning Council's "Sustainable Thurston" provides opportunities for everyone in the community to contribute their ideas. Thousands of residents have already provided input by attending community workshops, answering surveys and

participating online. Ideas shared have been reviewed by leaders from throughout the region to help shape the plans and actions toward a more sustainable future.

REALTORS® know the community is a backdrop for the homes we help market; home buyers want a safe neighborhood with good roads and sidewalks and trails to walk on. Parks nearby increase home values and the preservation of the natural environment makes a neighborhood more attractive for families. Jobs close to homes help shorten commutes and increase family time. Plenty of housing options allow families to find a home that suits their needs and budgets.

For those reasons, I have served on a housing panel for "Sustainable Thurston" to provide insight for a housing plan that reflects community needs and values. This unique community involvement and visioning project provides opportunities for everyone in the area to contribute their ideas on roads, public safety, water, schools, human ser-

vices, economic development and more for the future of Thurston County.

Soon, there will be a regional plan published that has taken into account the public input. The plan will be released around the week of August 5, 2013 and you will be able to comment on it yourself. Help shape our community by getting involved. You can find more information at "Sustainable Thurston" at www.sustainablethurston.org.

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