

## *Managing property properly*

# Taming Disruptive People in Sectional Title Meetings

By Jennifer Paddock

**Show off, rambler, obnoxious, nitpicker, bore, latecomer, naysayer and just-plain-old-rude.**

These adjectives are often used to describe people at sectional title meetings. So how do we deal with these people effectively, allowing meetings to run smoothly with as little disruption as possible?

### 1. Group Agree Ground Rules

These are rule, agreed by the group, regulating how the meeting will run. Typical ground rules include:

- Meetings will start and end on time
- There is only one meeting – no side conversations
- One person talk at a time
- Stay on the subject (follow the agenda)

By getting everyone to agree on the ground rules at the start of the meeting everyone is effectively agreeing to be bound by them. Then, during the course of the meeting when someone strays off course the chairperson (or anyone else present) can simply remind the person of the ground rule, which is a neutral way of putting them back on track as the disruptive party has already agreed to the ground rules. For example when a rambler goes off topic the chairperson could say ``Folks, we agreed to stay on the subject...Let's get back to the topic at hand.'' Less confrontation. Makes sense right?

### 2. Prioritized Agenda

Another useful tool is prioritizing the meeting's agenda. Ordering the line items in terms of priority and importance as well as giving each line item an estimated time allocation. The trustees and/or managing agent could do this before the meeting when creating the agenda to send out with notice of the meeting, or this could be done at the meeting itself as the first order of business.

### 3. Always Start the Meeting on Time

As long a quorum is present. This sends the message that everyone's time is important and that you mean business. If a key attendee proves to be a chronic latecomer, have him or her facilitate the next meeting.

#### **4. Keep Group Notes of Major Discussions/Ideas/Decisions**

On a flipchart or white board. Refer to these group notes when people start covering material already covered.

#### **5. Park Petty or Insignificant Issues for Discussion Later**

Use your flip chart or whiteboard to jot down petty and insignificant issues under a 'parked' column for discussion later in the meeting if time permits.

#### **6. Give the Show-off/Naysayer/Obnoxious Person a Job**

Asking a usually rude and obnoxious attendee to keep time will give him or her something to focus on and should decrease the number of disruptive incidents caused by that person.

#### **7. For Very Disruptive People – Talk to Them Privately**

Calling a very disruptive person out in front of the group may be counter-productive to the desired outcome. Many of these characters thrive on conflict and attention so it can be more effective to pull them aside during a break or after the meeting and explain to them privately how their behavior affects the group dynamic negatively.