

Tips on Writing By-Laws for Neighborhood Associations

A good rule in writing by-laws is to keep them as simple as possible.

Many larger neighborhood associations operate with the use of a board of directors who conduct business monthly. General meetings for the entire neighborhood membership are then held annually or bi-annually and are often conducted around social events.

Smaller neighborhood groups operate with a few officers who meet with the entire membership monthly or bi-monthly, as desired, and make decisions at each meeting.

Homeowners associations that handle large amounts of money and have more of a potential to be sued should consult a lawyer before adopting by-laws. Smaller neighborhood associations usually choose not to consult a lawyer as long as the association has ample time to review the proposed by-laws before ratification.

An effective set of Neighborhood Association by-laws should include:

- Boundaries
- Official Name of Association
- Purpose of the Organization
- Membership Rights and Qualifications
- Election and Voting Procedures
- Officer titles, terms and responsibilities
- How to amend by-laws
- Dues: How much, how and when are they collected and by whom?
- Brief financial responsibilities: Monies are to be deposited in a bank account, how many signatures required on each check, who has access to the account, where records are kept, the amount that can be spent by board without membership approval.

Unless you incorporate with the Tennessee Secretary of State's office, you will not need to "file" your by-laws anywhere, but you should have an up-to-date copy of them at every meeting in case procedural questions come up.

In the very rare circumstance that your association would be called into court, your by-laws would probably be the most important document you have. Once passed, make sure your association follows the by-laws.