



The Future of Board Meetings

By Noah Maislin and Marko Lindhe

Virtual meetings have gone from a begrudged necessity to a comfortable new norm. With many of the technical difficulties associated with virtual meetings ironed out over the last year, condominium corporations are now finding that their processes can carry on as normal despite the limitations on gathering in-person.



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The flexibility and convenience of online technology ensure its continued use even after pandemic restrictions are lifted and face-to-face gatherings resume. And it won't just be a choice between an in-person or virtual meeting, but also a hybrid meeting combining the two.

So, what are the features of each?

All Virtual

The advantages of virtual meetings are many and will likely be the preferred format for post-pandemic board meetings.

More scheduling flexibility. Before virtual meetings became commonplace, participants were expected to be on-site, sometimes well outside regular office hours, and attendees often experienced scheduling difficulties – Now it's as simple as dialling in from home or work – log in, hold the meeting, and still have family time afterward.

Rescheduling has also never been easier should a last-minute conflict arise for one of the key members.

Always start on time. Eliminating the commute to a meeting also increases the chances of starting on time. Traffic jams or half-eaten meals are no longer issues – you're already at your workspace, and you're covered. (You may just want to keep your video off while you finish breakfast).

Increased efficiency. People love to chat when gathering face-to-face, extending the time required for the meeting and slowing the decision-making process during a meeting, especially for a larger board. Virtual interaction has become so commonplace in the past year for both the personal and business realms that

online work meetings now tend to cut to the chase. If we're going to spend extra time on a video chat, we'd prefer it to be with loved ones.

Dial-in from anywhere. Attendees can take part in virtual meetings from anywhere, even without Wi-Fi access. Most online meeting platforms even provide the option to dial in via telephone.

An influx of new knowledge. After nearly a year of restricted physical contact, even the most tech-reluctant now have some comfort level with engaging online, whether for work or personal socializing. These technological skills go beyond virtual meetings and add up to a better understanding of computers overall, which will lead to increased productivity in the workplace, whether you're at home or in the office.

Share screens, save trees. With screen-sharing becoming the new norm when discussing documents in online meetings, hard copies of management reports and supplementary materials have become obsolete. Paper waste is reduced when our minds are trained to accept these documents in their virtual form.



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Hybrid Meetings

Notwithstanding the benefits of virtual meetings, there are still scenarios in which face-to-face interaction is beneficial. Enter the hybrid meeting -- a combination of virtual and in-person contact. What does it look like, and when should you use it?

Guests dial-in. Board members can physically distance together in a large conference room while guests such as industry experts, owners, or minute

takers can dial in via teleconference in order to limit all in-person interaction to people who live in the building.

is where a hybrid AGM can make sense: features such as the approval of the previous AGM minutes and presentation of the president's report can occur virtually, while voting and the question-and-answer portion can be held in-person to retain a sense of community. When the weather improves, hybrid meetings will be even more desirable. There will be many opportunities for outdoor physical distancing for larger meetings or for items requiring in-person discussion or a vote.

rails. Without dedicated software and an objective third party monitoring the proceedings, important decisions that require a vote could be misrepresented or mishandled, which could put the corporation in legal jeopardy. Be sure to reserve your professional platform well ahead of time, though, because schedules for virtual governance platforms such as GetQuorum get filled months in advance. Many condos that postponed their AGMs early in the pandemic now rush to meet their AGM obligations as set out by Ontario law.

Consider passing a virtual meeting bylaw now. Before the pandemic, condos could only hold owners' votes and meetings such as AGMs virtually if the owners had already previously passed a bylaw allowing such online meetings. In light of the pandemic, the Ontario government gave condominium corporations until May 31, 2021, to hold electronic owners' meetings even without a bylaw. Therefore, many condominium corporations are taking the opportunity to pass this bylaw at a virtual owners' meeting while the special dispensation is in place so that in future, they can easily hold online meetings even after the exemption ends. ■

Noah Maislin and Marko Lindhe have been in the condo industry for over 7 years, focusing their attention on the professional minute taking space and having a strong understanding of all things condo from being involved with over 15,000 condo meetings. minutessolutions.com

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Final Tips

Consider keeping amenities off-limits to all. While it may be tempting to hold a physically distanced board meeting in an unused common-area amenity that's closed to the condo's residents under Ontario's latest lockdown restrictions, be aware that this makes for poor optics even if the gathering is strictly for conducting corporation business.

Advantages of a professional moderator. It may seem like a smart money-saving measure to host an online AGM yourself over a platform such as Zoom. Still, without a professional moderator from a virtual meeting platform, the meeting can quickly go off the

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Site visits. Some projects require engineers or other industry professionals to attend on-site to investigate issues, provide recommendations to the board, and undertake critical work. When multiple eyes must be on a project, an in-person investigation by one individual with the remaining meeting participants attending by video chat can get the job done.

AGMs. Some routine decisions to be made during an AGM are a no-brainer for the virtual platform, while others, such as the selection of new board members, can benefit from a personal touch. This



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