

Role Of The President / Chairperson

Weightlifting Ireland is governed by voluntary members, for the benefit of the members, as voted in by the members.

All directors are voted in at each AGM and are required to fulfil their duties to the best of their stated abilities and fulfil their statutory obligations to Weightlifting Ireland.

The chairperson will be so elected at the AGM as per the articles of the constitution as amended from time to time.

The chairperson not only chairs the meetings but also acts as principal officer throughout the year, making decisions whenever the need arises in consultation with other committee members.

Meetings are a valuable management tool where creating a forum for planning, evaluating and communicating can be achieved.

Holding meetings, although not a constitutional requirement, are an essential tool in fulfilling requirements placed upon the board by the constitution.

Meetings are the perfect forum for communicating information to a number of people. It means you save time; explain issues only once and everybody gets the same message rather than a distorted account of the discussion from other board members.

Meetings give the association the opportunity to come together as a team and make decisions on previously discussed issues and explore all options fully and in consultation with all relevant parties. This collective contribution is essential in involving all board members, helping them feel that their contribution is valued and also to develop ownership of decisions taken.

A good meeting will:

- ✓ motivate the 'team' of directors
- ✓ allow the message to be put across and clarification sought where required
- ✓ help forge good relationships between the board and their members
- ✓ promote sound decision making clearly communicate issues
- ✓ Clearly define the outcome of decisions and action required.

An unnecessary or unproductive meeting will:

- ✓ waste time and money
- ✓ be de-motivating and frustrating for members
- ✓ diminish the status of important meetings have no constructive outcome or action and therefore prevent the association from running effectively

Important issues to consider when chairing meetings;

Start meetings on time. Allowing a meeting to start late gives the impression that the business to be undertaken is not important, and inappropriate behaviour will be rewarded. Punctual members will be kept waiting, suggesting their time is not valuable. All these issues may result in a lack of respect for the chair and discontent among members. Do not allow the start time of the meeting to be dictated by latecomers. Ensure that, even as volunteers, such behaviour is addressed, should it happen regularly.

Indicate a finish time as well as a start time on the agenda. This acknowledges that members' time is valuable and gives everyone an idea of how much time they should allocate to the meeting. It will also help to prevent people from rushing decisions or leaving before the end of the discussions. The chairperson must be aware of the agenda items and roughly how long to devote to each one, thereby ensuring that all the important business is covered.

The chairperson should ensure that everybody has a reasonable opportunity to air his or her views during a debate. Care should be taken that the same point is not frequently repeated by one person, or persons, who wish to dominate the discussion.

Some people may hardly speak at all. There are a number of reasons why this could be:

They may have no interest in, or understanding of, the debate.

They may not wish to make a personal contribution, preferring to evaluate the arguments and reach their own conclusions.

They are nervous or shy.

They do not agree with the consensus view, but prefer not to say so at the meeting.

Try to involve these people, particularly if they have some specialist knowledge. They will feel you value their input, and will respect you for taking the time to ensure they understand the issue. It will also encourage them to participate and voice any opposition. Do not assume there is no opposition, just because none has been voiced.

Whenever possible, confirm a decision by common consent of the whole meeting, rather than by a majority vote. To get this consensus, round off the discussion by saying, 'Is it agreed then...?' or 'I take it we are all in favour.' Then restate the decision and wait a few seconds to give everybody a final opportunity to voice any opposition.

Decision making by consensus keeps the committee united and helps to prevent later complaints along the lines of: 'I didn't agree with the decision' or 'I didn't get a chance to have my say.'

Meetings do not always have to be formal or take place around a table – some of the best meetings take place standing up! In this way, the meeting deals with important business and finishes promptly.

Some people see meetings as a social occasion, an opportunity for a chat and to exchange ideas. Try to allow for that, but not in the main part of the meeting.

If people feel a meeting is pointless they will not contribute, or simply won't attend, so always ask yourself, 'Is this meeting really necessary?' before calling it. Unnecessary meetings make people feel negative towards volunteering their time. However, if everybody feels a meeting is essential they will be more alert and interested. They will feel their ideas and comments are not only welcome, but vital to the success of the project.

Rather than having numerous short meetings, which people feel wastetime, reduce the number of meetings you call. It may mean you delay the decision on a small number of items and arrange a meeting at a time when a number of issues have arisen so there is significant amount of business to discuss.

If a topic does not require detailed discussion, hand out a printed report rather than giving a verbal one. **Better still**, attach the report to the agenda and circulate it in advance of the meeting. This will give members the opportunity to review the information and plan for the meeting, which will result in a more efficient use of meeting time and a more informed and in-depth discussion.

A good chairperson should be:

- ✓ well-informed about the activities of the association, as well as its current financial position
- ✓ able to represent the organisation at local, regional and national levels or develop initiatives whereby such representation can occur as part of a structured development program.
- ✓ able to chair committee meetings and manage the general meetings, so that everybody has a chance to present their views
- ✓ well-informed about the agenda of the meeting and the items to be covered well prepared for the meeting
- ✓ able to ensure that the agenda of a meeting is followed, that all business is completed and that all decisions are properly understood and recorded
- ✓ able to keep a debate focused, avoiding any deviations
- ✓ able to ensure that planning and budgeting for the future are carried out in accordance with the wishes of the members
- ✓ unbiased and impartial and if personally involved in a matter prepared to give up the chair during that particular discussion
- ✓ a good listener, who is able to summarise the main points of a discussion
- ✓ able to communicate clearly and concisely to avoid confusion
- ✓ conversant with the constitution and procedures and policies of the association; and with recommended procedure for the conduct of meetings
- ✓ diplomatic and helpful, and able to get the best out of the other committee members able to maintain the harmony of the group, even when there is disagreement about the proposed course of action.

committee meetings

The board of directors is the workhorse of the association, meeting regularly to make decisions to ensure the efficient operation of the association.

The business undertaken during committee meetings can be divided broadly into:

1. Items for information
2. Items for debate

1. Items for information

This relates to events that have already happened or decisions already made. Verbal or written reports are given to inform other board members, who then have the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.

2. Items for debate

This relates to future events. This enables the whole team to discuss the issues and develop options for their resolution. Consultation with Board members often results in a better outcome and commitment to and ownership of the action to be taken.

Committee meetings can be less formal than general meetings, provided committee members do not take advantage of the informality to disrupt the meeting. The chair should deal with minor disruptions positively, but should they become difficult to resolve more formal meeting procedures should be adopted.

Most people have some idea of how a meeting should be run, and many successful meetings are run in a low-key way, with informal ground rules. Meetings such as the AGM; however, necessitate formal rules, for example standing orders, for conducting a meeting.

Annual general meetings (AGMs)

An annual general meeting (AGM) differs from a working committee as it involves some people who will have no prior knowledge of the matters being discussed. These persons attend as individual members of the association to safeguard their own interests, and may be unaware of the background to the discussions. They represent the grassroots opinion of their club, and are useful indicators of the average member's view.

The AGM is a particular kind of general meeting, which, normally, is specifically referred to in the constitution. The association has a statutory requirement to produce accounts, and the members have a right to view these accounts and the accompanying reports at the AGM.

The AGM is the forum where officers are elected and where amendments to the constitution or rules, and similar matters, are discussed and voted upon.

The AGM should also consider the previous year's annual report so that all members have the opportunity to say what they think about the way in which the association is being managed.

The AGM should not include matters of which prior notice has not been given. It is easy for a meeting to pass an ill-thought-out resolution, only to find the consequences are not what were intended.

Remember that calling everybody together is a good public relations opportunity. Make everyone feel they belong to and are contributing to the association, and not outsiders who are intruding, once a year, into a closed group.

How to run a formal meeting

Most meetings are informally run, with decisions taken by consensus. If there is a disagreement, it is important to follow a few simple rules to ensure a proper decision is made which cannot be challenged. This ensures that the meeting follows a structured and logical sequence.

The agenda is a list of topics to be discussed. Follow the items in the order they appear in the agenda and resolve one issue before moving on to the next.

A motion is a recommendation presented to the meeting for debate and approval. Some motions (eg to approve the minutes of the previous meeting) will be presented on the agenda by the secretary. Others will arise from members during the course of the debate.

The proposer is the person who presents (or 'moves') the motion. The seconder is a second person that expresses support for the motion. Some constitutions require motions to be proposed and seconded. In any case, standard procedure requires a motion to be seconded before it is open to general debate.

An amendment is a modification to a motion, presented and seconded by a third and a fourth person. The proposer of the original (or 'substantive') motion can choose to accept the amendment, in which case it replaces the original motion, or the proposer can decline to accept. If the amendment is not accepted, it is debated immediately and voted upon. If the amendment is approved ('adopted') it replaces the original motion and becomes the substantive motion. If the amendment fails, debate reverts to the original motion. In either case, the debate should end with a vote on the eventual substantive motion.

In a normal board meeting there is no limit to the number of amendments that can be proposed to a substantive motion, but they should be debated separately in the order in which they were proposed. The chairperson must exercise some control and should not allow amendments that simply negate the original motion.

Voting rights differ dependent upon the method of affiliation. The chairperson should study the rules of the association carefully and ensure they apply them correctly during voting procedures at general meetings.

There are different ways of voting at meetings, and the chairperson must ensure compliance with the constitution for the method in question.

Quick tips for the Chairperson

- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Stay alert
- ✓ Take notes
- ✓ Make sure: evidence, interpretation, action.
- ✓ Control 'chattering monkeys'
- ✓ Don't let discussion stray off the point
- ✓ Bring in another speaker
- ✓ Introduce new materials
- ✓ Cut in – 'good point Liam'.
- ✓ Control the strong, protect the weak –
- ✓ don't jump to conclusions
- ✓ Stop interruptions
- ✓ Don't compete or question facts – it will intimidate the weak
- ✓ Invite the weak to participate – praise good ideas.
- ✓ Check everybody occasionally (board Meetings)
- ✓ Start with the weak where appropriate – what do you think?
- ✓ Keep records – flip chart, stick on wall
- ✓ Suggestions in delegates' own words
- ✓ Commit to consensus view – don't impose solutions
- ✓ Harness creativity
- ✓ Acknowledge all contributions – build up ideas, even small ones.