



Questions to answer before instituting By-Laws

Organizational Mission

What is your organizational mission? What purpose will your organization serve?

General Membership

Who is a member? Some options are one adult member per household, a full apartment, and dues payers of the tenant association.

Tenant Association Leadership

What are the officers of the tenant association leadership? Some options are Chair, Vice Chair, Co-Chairs, Treasurer, Secretary, floor captains.

How do members select the tenant association leadership? When are elections? Does membership elect officers or should the board select its own officers? Which positions are elected and which are appointed?

How should the structure and the diversity of the building(s) be represented?

Types of Decisions (Powers) for the tenant association leadership and general membership

What types of decisions should the tenant association leadership be able to make? What, if any, decisions should be reserved for the general membership or tenant leadership (examples might be changes in by-laws, election of officers, approval of contracts, "major decisions", etc.)

Meetings

Frequency: The tenant association leadership should meet at least how often? The membership should meet at least how often?

Quorum: What number or percent of tenant association leadership members must be present to conduct business?

What number or percent of members of the tenant association must be present to conduct business?

Agenda: Should the membership be able to add items to the agenda? Should the membership receive copies of the agenda before the meeting or at the meeting?

Management: What are situations in which management will be contacted to participate in the meeting? What are the procedures that should be gone through for management participation?

Written Communications

Flyers: How much written notice or verbal notice should be given before a meeting is properly called? Examples could include 3 days, 5 days, and answers for different types of meetings.

How must this notice be given? Posted . . . where? Under every door? In the common areas?

Notes: How should notes of the meetings be disseminated amongst the members?

Vacancies and Removal of Board Officers

How should vacancies be filled? Should existing tenant association leadership members be able to fill vacancies without consensus from the general membership? Should there be an election to fill vacancies?

How should tenant association leadership members be removed, with or without cause? Should they be removed by majority or 2/3? What are the procedures for removal? An example could be removal for failing to attend 3 consecutive meetings without good cause.

Conflict of Interest

Are management employees prohibited from membership?

If management employees may be members, are there any provisions re: prohibiting management employees from serving on tenant association leadership? If so, how long after employment?

Finances

Should contract and check signing be restricted to certain officers? If so, who? Are there tenant association dues? If so, how much? What is the process for using dues to pay for tenant association projects?

Bylaws

By-Law Modification: How can by-laws be changed? What is the procedure for by-law modification?

Final Points

By-laws need not be very complicated; but they are extremely important to determine the governing rules and decision making structure of your tenant association. See the sample by-laws for assistance.

For more information contact Katie at Tenants & Neighbors
Call: (212) 608-4320, ext. 308 or email: Kgoldstein@tandn.org



10 Steps to Forming a Tenant Association

Step 1:

A tenant has a problem like harassment, bad conditions, or high rents and decides to take action to address the problem.

Step 2:

Many other tenants in the building have the same problem and they begin to talk to each other.

Step 3:

The tenants decide to form a tenant association.

Step 4:

The tenants hold a preliminary meeting to discuss their common problems.

Step 5:

The tenants who came to the first meeting knock on the doors of other tenants in the building to find neighbors who want to join them in forming a tenant association.

Step 6:

The tenants who are organizing the tenant association find volunteers who want to serve as officers in the tenant association. They then post flyers announcing the election date and time, and the names of the tenants who are interested in running for office.

Step 7:

The tenants hold elections in a public place for the officers of the tenant association. The officers are elected.

Step 8:

The tenant association officers decide when and where the tenant association should meet and how the decisions should be made. They create bylaws formalizing these decisions.

Step 9:

The tenant association leadership holds regular general membership meetings to decide the priorities of the tenant association. Through the feedback of the other tenants, they create a chart of short term and long term goals, and they plan their strategies and tactics for achieving those goals. The tenant association leadership coordinates the ongoing work of the tenant association.

Step 10:

The tenant association leadership continuously revisits the bylaws and holds regular elections.

For more information or to get help organizing a tenant association, contact
Tenants & Neighbors at 212-608-4320 or info@tandn.org