



OREGON STATE TENANTS ASSOCIATION
Manufactured & Floating Home Communities

Empowering Residents: Guide to Establishing and Managing a Tenants Association

The Power of Collective Action

In manufactured home parks (MHPs) and floating home communities (FHCs), residents live within a structural power imbalance: they own their homes but lease the land or slip beneath them. This "home owned/land leased" split creates an inherent individual vulnerability. Without organization, a tenant stands alone against a corporate landlord; with an Association, that vulnerability is transformed into collective power.

Organizing is not merely a social endeavor; it is a strategic necessity for long-term housing stability. It is the only structural mechanism capable of ensuring "safety and stability" in a community where one's equity is tied to another's land.

By standing together, residents provide a "stronger voice" at the legislative level, moving beyond reactive troubleshooting to influence the very laws that govern their lives. Collective action provides the infrastructure to protect against arbitrary rent increases and aggressive management tactics.

While the philosophy of organizing provides the vision, Oregon law provides the statutory armor necessary to make that vision a reality. And this guide will provide the practical steps that will take you from planning to implementation.

Legal Foundations and the Right to Organize

To preempt landlord interference, an Association must be grounded in statutory rights. These are not privileges granted by management; they are rights mandated by law. As the U.S. Supreme Court noted in *Martin v. City of Struthers*, the freedom to distribute information is **"essential to the poorly financed causes of little people"** and is vital to the preservation of a free society.

Under **ORS 90.750**, no provision in any bylaw, rental agreement, or facility rule can prohibit the following protected activities:

- **Peaceful Assembly:** Tenants may hold public meetings for any lawful purpose in community centers, common areas, or private homes at reasonable times (8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily).
- **Door-to-Door Canvassing:** Residents have the right to go door-to-door to share newsletters, post notices, and distribute information relevant to the Association.
- **Communication Rights:** You have the right to discuss facility matters, manufactured home living, and the formation of Associations without landlord interference.

Under **ORS 90.385** and **ORS 90.765**, it is illegal for a landlord to retaliate by increasing rent, decreasing services, or threatening eviction because you joined or organized an Association. **Strategic Tactic:** To make this shield effective, **always communicate in writing** and keep copies of every interaction. If retaliation occurs, you have the right to request mandatory mediation or seek help from the Eviction Defense Project.

Finally, **ORS 90.130** imposes a **"Good Faith"** obligation on all parties. Every duty and act performed under landlord-tenant law must be executed with honesty and fairness. This legal pillar ensures that management cannot simply "go through the motions" of interacting with your Association.

ORS 90.750

Right to assemble or canvass in facility

The landlord may NOT: Prohibit any person who rents a space for a manufactured dwelling or floating home from ... door-to-door contact, an oral or written request, the distribution, the circulation, ***the posting or the publication of a notice or newsletter or a general announcement or any other matter relevant to the membership of a tenants' Association.***

Structural Models for Tenant Governance

Choosing a structure is a strategic decision based on whether your goals are social, legal, or legislative. Oregon law allows multiple groups to exist simultaneously in one facility.

Association Type	Primary Function	Governing Rules	Strategic Impact
Unaffiliated Association	Resident Advocacy, Legal Negotiation	Independent	Most effective for rapid local issue-solving; high flexibility. Right to request a meeting with landlord, may initiate formal mediation (landlord is required to participate)
Committee of Seven	Formal Structure	Statutory (ORS 90.600)	Outdated model- all Associations now carry the same rights as this.
OSTA Chapters	Education & Advocacy	OSTA-affiliated	Direct link to statewide legislative lobbying and professional training.
Purchase Committee	Facility Acquisition	Statutory (ORS 90.842)	Preemptive right to transition from tenant to owner , ending the power struggle.
Social Association	Community Cohesion	Independent	Essential "burnout" prevention; builds the solidarity needed for legal fights.

Analysis:

Unaffiliated Tenants Association

Unlike more formal structures, these groups are often the most common and versatile because they can set their own rules and respond quickly to specific neighborhood concerns. Legally, they are protected by ORS 90.750, which guarantees residents the right to peaceably assemble in common areas, communicate freely with neighbors about park issues, and distribute information or newsletters without interference or retaliation from the landlord.

The Committee of Seven [ORS 90.600(9)] An outdated Model

The Committee of Seven was, previously, the only body with the statutory power to compel the landlord to meet twice per year to discuss non-rent issues.

Newer legislation now protects the rights of ALL tenants Associations to request formal meetings with their landlord to discuss park issues, without statutory limitation on the number of meetings the Association may request. There are some exceptions to the topics allowed, such as rent increase. If a landlord fails to meet or respond, ORS 90.769 provides a pathway to **Informal Dispute Resolution** or mandatory mediation which comes with penalties for landlord non-compliance.

OSTA Chapters

Associations which have one or more OSTA members may choose to start the process to become an official OSTA Chapter. Going forward, education for Chapter leaders will be provided by OSTA along with an opportunity to earn money for their Chapter as they grow in memberships. Chapter duties will include reporting to quarterly district meetings and hosting community-wide education events for all park or marina residents.

Purchase Committees

When park residents receive notice that their park will be listed for sale, the clock starts ticking for residents to take action if they wish to compete for the purchase of their park. A Purchase Committee is one of the first steps residents must take if they want their offer for purchase considered. If residents feel their park is at risk of being sold in the near future, they may choose to form this committee in advance, in order to be prepared.

Social Associations

Just as the name suggests, these Associations are formed simply for the purpose of managing social activities within the park. A Tenants Association may take on these duties as well, or may assign a sub-committee to handle community events. Social Associations can also exist outside of other types of committees or Associations within the same park.

Building Community Interest and Awareness

Door-to-door “canvassing” is a tool for building interest in the idea of forming an Association and to generate awareness, or collect information about, issues within the park. It ensures the Association represents the actual needs of the residents, not just a vocal minority.

1. **Preparation:** Carry clipboards with sign-up sheets and possibly have handouts with more information on what a Tenants Association is and why the park would benefit from forming one.
2. **The Engagement:** Introduce yourself as a neighbor. State the core issue (e.g., park rule changes, etc.).
3. **Issue Identification:** Ask about any issues they have had with the park and the park’s management, take notes.
4. **The Call to Action (CTA):** Offer an invitation to the upcoming scheduled community meeting. Let them know that whether or not they choose to participate, their presence alone is valuable.

The Psychology of Strategic Responses

Addressing objections with legal facts replaces the “**fear of the unknown**” with the “**certainty of statutory protection.**”

- **Retaliation Fear:** Cite ORS 90.385. Explain that being in an Association makes a tenant *less* likely to be targeted because there are witnesses and collective resources as well legal protection against retaliation.
- **"No Problems" Objection:** If they state they have no problems with the current management or the park, explain that a collective voice among tenants is insurance against *future* issues.

Defining Interest Levels

On your **Information Sign-up Sheet**, track residents using a 1–3 scale:

- **Level 1:** Highly Interested / Potential Leader.
- **Level 2:** Interested / Supporter.
- **Level 3:** Neutral / Needs more information.

Meet Community Needs

Now that you have valuable insights into what other residents view as potential issues, and you are more aware of their level of interest in forming an Association, you can tailor your meeting materials to speak directly to their needs.

Formalize The Election Process

A transparent, facility-wide election is the foundation of your Association's legitimacy. Without a clear mandate, management can claim you do not represent the "true" will of the park. For the Committee of Seven, the law requires a formal facility-wide election. This is not a requirement for a Tenants Association of any other kind, mainly because there is no limit to the number of seats, therefore no competition in who gains a seat. However, it is highly recommended that the number of seats be limited to 7-12 maximum, for the purpose of meeting efficiency. Larger groups may have difficulty in coming to a decision on matters, and tend to break down quickly.

OSTA maintains that holding a formal election is still important, even though it is not a strict requirement. A fair election will bolster a sense of "goodwill" and increase community involvement. Here is an overview of the steps required to hold a fair election followed by detailed guidance on how to carry out the tasks.

- **Nomination Protocol:** Self-nomination is **required** for key roles like Chairperson and Secretary to ensure commitment. However, residents are encouraged to nominate others for these roles as well, provided the nominees agree to serve.
- **Official Ballot Procedures:** All votes must be **strictly confidential**. For the Committee of Seven, the **"One Vote Per Unit"** rule is a statutory requirement to ensure equitable representation.
- **Election Committee Checklist:**
 - Publicize secure drop-off location and the 11:59 p.m. deadline.
 - Verify only one vote per space number.
 - Prepare ballots with clear "Yes/No" options for each candidate.

Building an election committee is a vital step to ensuring your Association is seen as legitimate and fair

Form the Election Committee

During your first community meeting, call for volunteers to serve as the Election Committee.

- **Neutrality:** Committee members should ideally be residents who do not intend to run for officer positions (Chairperson or Secretary).
- **Designate a Headquarters:** Select one committee member's home as the official drop-off location for all forms.
- **Hand-out Nomination forms** to all attendees at this meeting. Agree upon where the list of nominees will be posted, as well as where people should go to pick up and drop-off their ballot.

TIP: To ensure maximum participation, it is recommended to deliver the nominee list and an official ballot to each unit directly.

- Set the Timeline: Before the meeting ends, **the new committee must immediately establish two hard deadlines**: one for nominations and one for the final vote. This should be widely publicized around the park's common areas, laundry facilities, mailboxes or door-to-door if needed.

REMEMBER:

ORS 90.750

Right to assemble or canvass in facility

*The landlord may NOT: Prohibit any person who rents a space for a manufactured dwelling or floating home from canvassing other persons in the same facility for purposes described in this section. As used in this subsection, "canvassing" includes door-to-door contact, an oral or written request, the distribution, the circulation, **the posting or the publication of a notice or newsletter or a general announcement or any other matter relevant to the membership of a tenants' Association***

Manage the Nomination Process

The election committee is responsible for collecting Nomination Forms and for compiling a list of all nominees.

- Self-Nomination: Clearly state on the form that residents must self-nominate if they wish to serve as Chairperson, Secretary, or in an undetermined seat.
- The Deadline: All forms must be returned to the designated drop-off location by 11:59 p.m. on the chosen date.

The Fast Lane Election Process

For smaller parks, or for less interested groups, it may be advantageous to hold a less formal, faster version of the election process. Many times, there is only a small group of residents who are interested in serving on such an Association. The following process is very similar to the steps outlined for the formal election, with the following exceptions:

- Your community meeting invitations should explain that anyone interested in being on the Tenants Association should be present at the meeting, or express their interest by contacting ___ (phone/email). The list of nominees is then gathered by a show of hands at the initial meeting, along with the names of anyone else who has expressed interest.
- A neutral party (2 recommended for fairness), who do not intend to serve on the committee can be chosen to receive and count ballots.

- Set two firm dates, before the meeting ends: A firm date when the ballots containing the list of nominees will be available, as well as another firm date for when the voting will end.

Execute the Formal Election

Once nominations are closed, the election committee, or interested residents in a Fast Lane Election, prepares the Official Ballot.

- **Ballot Requirements:** Each ballot must include the Unit Number, Park/Marina Name, and a "Yes/No" vote option for each nominee.
- **Voting Rules:** Enforce a strict one vote per unit/household policy.
- **Confidentiality:** The committee must guarantee that all individual votes are kept strictly confidential to encourage participation and prevent any fear of interference.
- **Neutrality:** A neutral party (2 recommended), who do not intend to serve on the Association, should be selected to count the final ballots.

Announce Results

- **24-Hour Rule:** To maintain trust, the committee should tally votes and post the results within 24 hours.

Now, to make it official!

The One-Page Summary (ORS 90.510 & 90.680)

Associations have a powerful right to visibility. You should provide a one-page summary of your group's purpose and contact info to the landlord. NOTE: This is not explicitly required for Associations other than for the Committee of Seven- however we highly recommend following this protocol for all Associations

- **Annual Requirement:** Group chairs should provide an updated summary at one meeting each year.
- **Landlord Obligation:** The landlord is **legally required** to distribute this to all prospective tenants and include it in any directory they publish. This ensures every new neighbor knows the Association exists before they even sign a lease.

Sustainable Governance and Meeting Management

Transparency and Follow-Up

Post meeting notes in common areas within **24 hours**. These notes must be **clear, concise, and easy to read** for neighbors with varying literacy or time availability. This ensures those who couldn't attend remain invested in the collective's work.

Clear Input Channels

What good is an Association if residents feel they have no way to communicate their needs to the elected group.

- Have clear channels of communication set up for residents to bring their issues.
 - This may look like time for open community participation in the first 15 minutes of a meeting
 - Have a dedicated email set up or a drop-box available for written comments.

Association Governance

Association Bylaws (rules) should be one of the first collective decisions that an Association makes.

- How often to hold elections or what to do when a seat vacates?
- What are legitimate reasons for removing an Association member?
- How many votes are required to make a decision (i.e. 51%, 2/3rds)?
- What are the rules if you have to miss a meeting, do they wait for your vote?

Laying some very basic ground rules for your Association ahead of time can save you a lot of headaches later and prevent bad blood between neighbors should you run into problems. The idea is to set fair rules, so no one takes it personally when they are followed.

The Meeting Excellence Framework

Too many meetings, or worse, bad meetings cause "burnout." Strategic meetings maintain momentum.

- **Chairperson (Facilitator):** Keeps discussion on-topic and actively invites input from quieter residents.
- **Note-Taker (Accountability):** Records decisions and who is responsible for tasks.
- **Timekeeper (Efficiency): Starting and ending on time** is a respect-based strategy that prevents the fatigue that kills volunteer organizations.
- **Frequency:** Quarterly or, at most, once-monthly meetings are usually sufficient. It may be necessary for a short time to hold weekly meetings, but only when there is an urgent issue at hand.

Long-Term Advocacy and Community Integration

A tenants Association must be a permanent fixture in the community lifecycle, especially regarding new residents.

The "Strike Point" for Prospective Tenants: Under **ORS 90.510 and 90.680**, your Association has the right to provide a **One-Page Summary** to the landlord. The landlord is legally required to provide this summary to prospective buyers **along with their application to become a tenant**. This is a critical strategic moment: it allows a buyer to understand their rights and the value of the Association *before* they are legally bound to the park. This can also be a good opportunity to inform new residents of their unique rights as an owner of a manufactured home on rented land.

Small Wins as Proof of Concept: Solidarity is built through "Small Wins." Achieving a tangible goal—like a new bike rack or improved recycling—is **proof of concept** for skeptical neighbors. These wins, paired with social events like potlucks, create the cooperation needed for larger battles.

Keep Your Community Engaged

Continue to hold occasional community wide meetings to gather more input, share updates and build on the sense of community you have established. OSTA recommends holding a community wide meeting at least twice per year, open to all residents.

A community newsletter is another way to keep your neighbors engaged and to grow the sense of community that makes living in a manufactured home park something special.

Resource Directory:

- **OSTA Hotline:** 541-508-0404 (www.oregontenants.com)
- **OSTA Mailing Address:** 105 W. Bolz Rd. #1587, Phoenix, OR 97535
- **Eviction Defense Project:** 888-585-9638

Organized tenancy is the only way to protect your investment and your home. **The law gives you rights, but it is up to you to exercise them.** By combining legal knowledge with disciplined operations, you ensure your right to a safe, stable, and well-maintained park.

OSTA District Directors are available to provide hands-on support to guide you in starting your own organized tenant group.