

Preparing for Your Cooperative Interview

BEING INVITED TO A COOPERATIVE BOARD INTERVIEW IS A POSITIVE SIGN

An invitation means your application has passed an initial review. However, an invitation to meet the Board is not a guarantee of approval. This meeting gives the Board an opportunity to get to know you, clarify details, and ask any follow-up questions about your financials, background, or plans as a future resident.

INTERVIEW FORMATS CAN VARY

The interview format could be a casual gathering in a board member's apartment or a more formal setting with members seated at a table opposite you. Many Boards have shifted to conducting interviews virtually via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, so be prepared for a remote format as well.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR INTERVIEWERS

Board Members are not professional interviewers—they're residents of the cooperative community who volunteer their time to help manage and maintain the building for all shareholders. This means you may encounter a range of personalities, communication styles, and levels of experience during your interview. Some members may be warm and conversational, while others may come across as more formal or direct.

This range of personalities can be both a strength and a challenge. It's natural to connect more easily with certain personalities, but try not to take any perceived coolness or rigidity personally. The Board's primary goal is to ensure you're a good fit for the community, not to judge your character.

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING DIFFERENT INTERVIEW STYLES:

- Stay polite and composed, even if the tone feels stiff or formal.
- Keep your responses clear and to the point. Avoid rambling or oversharing.
- Match the tone where appropriate. If the meeting is all business, stay professional. If it's lighter, you can be more conversational.
- Focus on being respectful, financially sound, and cooperative—the key qualities that appeal to Boards.

DESIGNATED LEAD

Couples and co-applicants should decide in advance how they will divide responses during the interview, ensuring both participate meaningfully. For example, one applicant might take the lead on all financial questions, while the other handles lifestyle or community-related inquiries. This approach helps the conversation flow smoothly and shows the Board that both applicants are engaged and aligned.

Tip: If you are purchasing with your child for your child's use only, it is imperative that the child—who will reside in the apartment—has a strong voice during the interview.

KNOW YOUR APPLICATION

Be ready to answer questions about your application and financial statements confidently and concisely, ideally without referring to your documents during the interview.

BE ON TIME AND DRESS APPROPRIATELY

Treat the Board interview with the same level of professionalism you would a job interview. Arrive on time (or a few minutes early), and dress in neat, conservative business attire. Avoid flashy or expensive jewelry and skip strong fragrances, as you never know if someone has sensitivities. A clean, understated appearance conveys respect and helps keep the focus on your qualifications and fit for the community.

PRIVACY AND PERSONAL QUESTIONS

The Board has great latitude in the kind of questions it can ask. Be prepared for personal questions. While they may seem intrusive, it's best to answer calmly and professionally without showing discomfort or frustration.

AVOID VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION

Avoid volunteering information or steering the conversation. Stick to answering what's asked, keeping your responses clear and to the point. Polite greetings and small talk are fine—just don't overshare.

Unlike a job interview, do not try to sell yourself.

This isn't a job interview—you don't need to sell yourself. Let the Board lead and answer only what is asked.

DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS

Avoid asking the Board unsolicited questions during the interview, as even innocent ones—like inquiries about upcoming renovations or building policies—can be misinterpreted or raise red flags. This interview is about you, not the Board. However, if the Board asks whether you have any questions, don't just say "no."

Instead, say something like: "I've carefully reviewed the House Rules and building information, and I'm very comfortable with everything I've seen so far."

You may also consider having one simple, neutral question prepared—perhaps about community events or amenities—to show you've been thoughtful and engaged in the process.

EYE CONTACT

Boards rarely turn down applicants for being too boring. Relax and make eye contact. It's better to be seen as calm and composed rather than overly eager.

RENOVATING?

It's best not to bring up renovation plans during the Board interview—unless the Board raises the topic first. Discussing renovations unprompted can come across as presumptuous, as though you're assuming approval is guaranteed.

If the Board does inquire about your plans and the apartment is clearly in original condition, keep your response general and respectful and avoid sounding overly ambitious or disruptive. For example:

"We all recognize that the apartment has an incredible layout, but it does need some work. Right now, our focus has been on the application process. We haven't finalized the full scope of any updates, but we look forward to working closely with the Managing Agent and Board to restore the beauty of this exceptional home."

This approach shows thoughtfulness and respect for the process, while also reassuring the Board that you intend to follow proper channels.

PETS

If your building requires a pet interview, ensure your pet is freshly groomed, well-fed, and has been walked beforehand to minimize distractions.

A SHORT INTERVIEW IS BETTER THAN A LONG ONE.

While there are no hard and fast rules, a short cordial interview with a few broad questions and remarks is often the best interview. Do not worry if the meeting feels short.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Most Boards do not provide an immediate decision at the end of the meeting. Instead, they typically take a day or two to finalize their evaluation. Once a decision is made, the Board informs the Managing Agent, who will pass along any follow-up requests, conditions, or approval status. Your Real Estate Agent will then be contacted with the outcome.

TIPS FOR A SMOOTH VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

If the interview is conducted via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, keep these in mind:

- Test your tech: Make sure your internet connection is stable and your camera and microphone are working before the meeting.
- Choose a quiet, well-lit space: Position yourself in a clean, distraction-free area with good lighting (facing a window or lamp is ideal). Make sure your background is neutral, free of anything controversial or overly personal, and tidy—it should not distract from the conversation.
- Ensure privacy: Make arrangements so that children and pets are not in the room during the call. This helps avoid interruptions and allows you to stay focused.
- Dress professionally: Wear business casual, the same kind of outfit you'd choose for an in-person interview—top to bottom, just in case you need to stand up!
- Maintain eye contact: Look into the camera while speaking to mimic in-person eye contact and show engagement.
- Pause before responding: Leave a brief pause after someone finishes speaking to account for possible lag or audio delay.
- Limit multitasking: Don't check emails or glance away—stay present and attentive throughout.
- Keep your screen name professional: Ensure your Zoom display name is just your first and last name (no nicknames or device labels).

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Meeting the cooperative board can feel a little intimidating, but remember—if you've made it to the interview stage, you're already well on your way. Be yourself, stay calm, and let your preparation speak for itself. The Board simply wants to ensure that you're a good fit for their community, not trip you up.

Keep your responses honest, polite, and to the point. If you've done your homework, you're likely to leave a strong impression.

Your real estate broker has a wealth of experience and can guide you through this process, offering neutral talking points to help you prepare.

TAKE A BREATH, TRUST THE PROCESS, AND GO IN WITH CONFIDENCE—YOU'VE GOT THIS.