

Healthy Co-op Checklist: Vital Signs

In a Healthy Co-op:

1. Shareholders elect a board of directors annually
2. Shareholders take turns serving on the Board, so there is some turnover every year
3. An annual financial report is distributed to shareholders each year
4. The board of directors prepares an annual budget for the maintenance and operation of the building, and sets maintenance fees each year
5. Co-op policies are set by the Board/shareholders, and the board employs a manager to carry these policies out
6. The officers supervise all the co-op's employees, including the manager
7. The manager (whether a professional "outside" manager, or an "inside" manager) has a written contract
8. The manager responds to questions and requests from the officers/board in a timely manner
9. The board responds to questions and requests from shareholders in a timely manner
10. Co-op policies (regarding repairs, alterations, subletting, resale, etc.) are clear and understandable, and are written
11. Shareholders are kept up to date on co-op policies by newsletter, special notices, meetings, or other methods
12. Shareholders are familiar with the By-Laws and proprietary lease, and keep copies of these documents on hand for reference
13. Shareholders vote to amend the By-Laws and proprietary lease when necessary
14. Energy costs are reasonable and boiler is operating efficiently and maintained properly, repairs are regularly performed and apartment heat is comfortable for shareholders
15. There is a multi-year plan and allocated budget for making repairs and upgrades and shareholders are aware of updates to building systems (roof, elevator, boiler)
16. The board and shareholders have a functioning operations and maintenance committee, repairs are tracked and done in a timely manner, and there is a clear policy on reporting and requesting repairs.
17. The board researches and pursues timely energy efficiency upgrades and new cost-saving building technology.

In an Unhealthy Co-op:

1. There are no annual elections

2. The same people serve on the board year after year after year
3. Shareholders do not receive any financial information
4. Years go by without an annual budget being prepared
5. The manager acts like a landlord: s/he both makes policies and carries them out
6. An officer is also the manager
7. The manager has no written contract or job description, and it is therefore impossible to supervise him/her, or to hold him/her accountable
8. The manager is unavailable, and does not respond to officer/board questions and requests
9. The board is unavailable, and does not respond to shareholder questions and requests
10. Policies regarding these issues either do not exist, or are confusing and are not in writing
11. The board does not keep shareholders up to date on co-op policies
12. Shareholders have never read the By-Laws and proprietary lease, and do not possess copies of these documents
13. Shareholders never use their power to make amendments to these documents
14. Energy costs are high and boiler is not running efficiently or is on its 'last legs', repairs are overdue and some apartments may run too hot and some run too cold for shareholder comfort
15. Shareholders are not aware of last updates to building systems (roof, elevator, boiler) and there is no plan or budget for making upgrades.
16. There is no clear policy on reporting and requesting repairs, no operations and maintenance committee, no process of tracking repairs or repairs occurring or being done
17. The board does not consider cost-saving energy upgrades or factor energy efficiency into running and maintaining the building.