

The Role of an HOA Board Member

It's that time of year again... new members have just been elected to serve on their Board of Directors. With this comes the election of officers and thus a new tone is set for the Association.

Each new Board member brings a dynamic to the meeting that sets the tone for the operation of the Association. These new volunteers are, most of the time, homeowners who have a vested interest in the protection of their property values and the direction the community takes into the future. Each of them can make their role as important as they choose and become as involved in the Association operations as they desire.

The President obviously presides over the meetings and typically works closely with the Association's manager. This role is an important one and usually the one that is most clearly defined. We all know that the President "runs the ship" at the Board meetings and takes a prominent lead with the attitude of the Board of Directors, which at times, can be a reflection upon the rest of the Community. It is primarily the President's role to be the liaison with the management agent and this person can often be called upon in an emergency to make a quick decision. The President should be the solid voice of reason for the Community and extend a neighborly hand when tragedy or the unexpected strike the Community. Sometimes it is the President who leads by example and gets involved with the "Community Clean Up" day, for example. Clearly, this role is the most well established and easily determined role for the Board to recognize and respect.

The Vice President serves the role as President in the event the President is not available. However, other responsibilities for this position remain up to the person holding it. It could be the easy thing to do to sit and wait for something to happen and to jump up when called upon -- but as leaders of the community, it is important to set an example. So while the Vice President may not take center stage at the Board meetings, this role as well as the others can be equally as important as that of the President.

The Secretary and Treasurer are sometimes combined into one position or separated depending upon the requirement in the governing documents as well as the preference of the Board. The Secretary holds the responsibility of ensuring adequate notice is provided for meetings, quorum requirements have been met and the minutes of the meeting are adequately taken and maintained. The responsibility that comes with this role is not something to be taken lightly as the records of the Association are precious. It is a necessity to ensure that notices are sent in compliance with not only the governing documents of the Association but also the state requirements as well.

The Treasurer reviews the Association's financial records, ensures timely payment of invoices, and makes necessary investments of the Association's funds. The Treasurer also takes a lead role in the development of the financial budget. Clearly the importance of this role should not be overlooked. However, Treasurers may not become as involved with the financial operations of an Association if they don't feel comfortable in this arena. On the other hand, the complete opposite may occur wherein the Treasurer becomes too involved or advises management of certain practices that could be completely out of line with appropriate business practices. Selecting a treasurer with an accounting background and good business judgment is essential.

In all cases, it is necessary for management to play an active role in the direction the Board takes and to help guide and direct the Association along the best path. Usually, Boards recognize the value of having professionals handle their day to day operations and of being in a position to offer their community the very best in experience and wisdom.

Each of the above roles can be as prevalent and responsive as the amount of effort one puts into them. The newly elected board member can take the position and run with it or not, but in all cases, the expertise of the management staff should be fully utilized. Such guidance is invaluable and a professional manager recognizes that there is nothing more important to an association member than protecting one's home.