

What Makes a Good Board?

In my many years of community association management, I have worked with numerous wonderful boards. And these same boards were the leaders in the most successful associations I ever managed. Their backgrounds were varied, and they all were interested in the success of their association. When I think back to what made them that successful, several things come to mind.

Spirited discussions were always welcomed and appreciated. The board members voiced their opinions but were never rude or disrespectful to each other. There was no yelling, and they allowed each other to speak without being interrupted. Humor was always a part of any meeting. A self-serving interest concerning any topic was not tolerated.

When a vote was needed, it did not have to be unanimous. The president allowed just enough time for discussion and then called for the vote. The board members in the minority vote were not angry, and they supported the decision of the entire board. They did not leave the meeting and then bad mouth the other board members to the homeowners about a decision they did not like.

Meetings were two hours or less. They started and ended on time. Agendas were timed, so that everyone knew the approximate length of the discussion before the vote was taken. The agenda was followed and digression did not take place. After the president called the meeting to order, the next item of business was called "Set the Agenda." Board members were allowed to add additional agenda items for discussion purposes only. And it was rare when agenda items were tabled. The boards realized that they had to make hard decisions, and delaying the vote did not accomplish anything other than to upset owners.

The board members read their board packages prior to the meetings and did not walk into the room while they were opening up their envelopes. These same boards heeded the advice of the professionals. They listened to what I recommended as their manager. They respected the legal opinion provided by their attorney and the financial advice from their staff accountant and auditor. And, vendors were brought into meetings to discuss projects and contracts. The board members were successful in their own businesses, but realized that they were not the "professionals" in the community association world.

All in all, I have been very lucky in regard to the wonderful boards I had the pleasure of working with in my career. And I believe they all shared the same traits described above, which are the same characteristics to which all board members should aspire.