

in the board room



THE TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY

By Clint McClure, CAMEx, CCAM

Congratulations, you have been recently elected or re-elected to the board and you will bring your experience and passion to the leadership of the association. You are now a board member serving a corporation designed to care for your association. You will need to work well with your fellow directors and the professionals that support the association.

Being elected or re-elected to the board is just the beginning. You and your board need to ensure your goals for the association are focused around the best intent of the association and the community. It goes without saying, you are not one of the board members who wanted to be on the board to have the tree removed in the common area to open up your ocean view.

Ninety-five percent of all board members that serve on the board have the time to commit to the job and are well-intended volunteers that just want to help the community and protect their investment. How do you perform your job well as a volunteer director? Understand the role of a board member and work with your board to think strategically to run a successful organization. The HOW you help your HOA as a board member and as a board makes a big impact on the success or failure of the community.

A few simple questions to ask yourself. You need to understand “WHO” a board director is before you can discuss the “HOW”.

1. Do you fully understand your role as a director and the requirements?
2. Have you read your association's governing documents and contracts in place?
3. Have you taken the time to understand the long-term plan in place for your community?
4. Don't have a long-term plan in place for your community? Then when will you and your board set time aside to develop one. The plan needs to be developed around the needs of the overall community and not just address complaints received.
5. Do you understand your association's reserves, the current study and the data contained in the financial statements and budget?

If any of your (WHO) answers to the questions above were no, then that is your homework to get done before you can move onto the “HOW”.

How will you as a board and a board member best help your

association? Think strategically and identify the issues that need board time to resolve. Keep items off the board's agenda that should not take the board's time and keep items on your agenda that do require the board's time. The association's bandwidth for operating is also defined by laws, state and federal. Your board needs to spend time on policies that address the issues for the entire association. Those policies are helpful to your management team, so they are able to quickly react and address the day to day needs of the community within the direction of the association. If you are unsure of an area that needs the board's help, ask your manager for guidance and listen to him or her. Managers are great sources of information to help the board fine tune the policies needed or to revamp an existing one.

Serving on a board you may have heard complaints about a particular issue in the association. Take those complaints as clues. Ensure the source of the valid complaints are addressed and action is taken to resolve the core issue. If you need an example of an item, have the board ask your manager to discuss the input causing the complaints rather than the personality of the complainer. When the board is able to focus its efforts on solving the big problems facing the association that in turn helps address the complaints you might hear serving on your board.

Let's tackle the 100-pound gorilla in the room. The board must appreciate the efficacy needed for management to perform its operations and day to day needs. Your board needs to be aware of the time demands on management and ensure they complement the performance by not micro-managing your manager.

BOARD MEMBERS: It feels good to solve

the little problems that come up day to day in your association. It gives you a sense of accomplishment. But that is your manager's job, and your association pays them to do that job. If you are the board member taking action on tasks and items that are your manager's responsibility, you may be interfering with your manager and you are not focused on solving the larger problems your manager needs the board to focus on.

FOR THE ASSOCIATIONS THAT HAVE ONSITE MANAGEMENT: Are you or your fellow board members in the office too much and giving your manager items to do outside of the board meeting? Are you setting fair expectations for your management team and allowing the time and space to get it done? It is important to become involved the right way.

If you need an example, have an open and honest conversation with your manager and you will find some great clues to help improve your board. It may be a short tune-up conversation or a detailed talk that allows the board to gain some insight. Your manager may have asked you to read this article to have a conversation about this very topic.

YOUR MANAGERS ARE EXPERTS IN MANAGING YOUR COMMUNITY AND THEY WILL PROVIDE YOU GREAT ADVICE AND CONNECT YOU WITH EXPERTS TO HELP YOU EVALUATE HOW TO HELP YOUR ASSOCIATION THINK STRATEGICALLY.

There is another 100-pound gorilla, and it deals with the correct way to measure your success. Have your board take time routinely to conduct its own performance assessment, and make it a habit. The board deciding not to raise assessments is not a strict measure for success regardless

of what you may think. The reason to fund the assessments at the rate that is needed is the measure of success. For example, if your association took the time to rebuild the community lake system and the return on the investment resulted in reduced operating costs that means you can adjust your assessments accordingly. And that is a success.

Areas to focus on include:

1. Accomplishments of the goals laid out for the year.
2. Have you reacted to any changes needed in the community and how easy was it to implement them?
3. How successful has the board been in recruiting new members in your committees and new members to your board?
4. Have you taken the time to communicate the community's successes to the membership?
5. After the board set a priority goal and timeline, did the board meet their objectives?

Your board makes the hard decisions and often not popular ones in today's online instant feedback. Ensure the board is measuring the community's success the right way. That means being focused on the goals, measuring the plan and then communicating the successes to the membership.



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