



## Communication Is Key

**A**sk any member of a community association and you will find that one of the number one complaints about community associations is the lack of communication between the board and the members of the community. Too often, members of community associations feel that they have no voice in major events affecting the community and that they are often uninformed or misinformed about decisions of the Board of Directors. Unfortunately, these feelings often lead to apathy amongst the membership and generate an “us against them” mentality, which causes discord between the board and the association members.

Effective management of a community requires the promotion of communication between the board and the members. There are several means by which a board can promote communication with the membership and combat community apathy and divisiveness.

### **ESTABLISH A COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

Perhaps one of the best methods of easing the burden of extra work for the board and getting members of the community involved is establish-

ing a communications committee. The communications committee can act as the liaison between the board and the membership and should be charged with determining and implementing the means and methods of communications between the board and the membership. Whether it is simply publishing a newsletter on a quarterly basis or setting up and maintaining a community website, by delegating some of the communications duties to an organized committee, a board can ensure consistent and timely communications with the membership.

### **CREATING AND PUBLISHING A COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER**

Probably one of the most popular and effective ways of communicating with the membership is publishing a community newsletter. A newsletter provides an opportunity for the board and its committees to inform the membership of goings on in the community, major events or projects, updates to the governing documents, or social functions in the community. It can also provide a forum for members to contribute articles and to share ideas.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

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## **CREATING AND MAINTAINING A COMMUNITY WEBSITE**

An increasingly popular method of communications for community associations is creating a website for the community. A website can have many useful functions, such as allowing for the payment of assessments online, providing PDF copies of the governing documents for the community, posting minutes of the board meetings, posting articles and updates on projects and events in the community, and posting a community calendar of events and functions. It can also allow for direct contact between the board and the members, as well as for member forums for discussion. While certain functions of a website can have their pros and cons, most associations find a website can be a highly effective communication tool, so long as it is properly managed and maintained.

## **SENDING COMMUNITY E-BLASTS**

Hand-in-hand with creating a community website, but perhaps a less-used communications tool, is sending out email blasts to the membership. The email blast can be a simple update on the status of community projects or events, or it can be more elaborate, attaching a monthly article or minutes from the board meetings. In this day and age, many people are receptive to receiving and storing information by electronic means.

## **HAVING TOWN HALL MEETINGS**

Although newsletters, websites and e-blasts have their advantages, a board should never discount the effectiveness of having some face time with the members. The annual meeting should not be the only opportunity for the membership to meet and to discuss the state of affairs for the community. A good way to garner interest in a town hall

meeting is to couple it with a social event, such as a cookout or a community bake-off. Having direct contact with the board more than once a year and promoting social activities can go a long way towards fostering effective communications and good will in the community. It is also a great opportunity to involve members who may not have access to the community website or e-blasts.

## **ESTABLISHING A WELCOME COMMITTEE OR PACKAGE**

One means of establishing good communications from the beginning is creating a welcome committee or a welcome package for newcomers to the community. This provides an opportunity for the board to ensure new owners are aware of the governing documents for the community as well as to introduce new owners to the community and all means and methods by which they can participate.

## **CREATING HOMEOWNER SURVEYS**

Probably one of the least used communication tools is community surveys. It never hurts to check in from time to time and take the temperature of the membership. Whether it is a simple survey on member's satisfaction on the state of the community or a survey on a proposed project or change to the governing documents, by touching base within the community, members feel more involved and interested.

Communication is key in ensuring a successful operation of the community. By taking the time to implement one or more of the foregoing means of communication, a board can go a long way in establishing a good relationship with the association members.

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