



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS IN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

By Associated Property Management

A common problem associated with community association living is poor or inconsistent communications with their members and residents. This often leads to misunderstandings, as any official business is filtered, it is left for interpretation and is usually wrong as it is spread throughout the community. The following are some ideas for effective communications from the Board of Directors and management, to the owners and residents.

All correspondence should be acknowledged within a reasonable period of time. A reply to the letter should be provided to the sender, even if the problem, inquiry or situation cannot be resolved. The fact that the letter is being acknowledged and that someone is concerned enough about this situation to respond, is the proper thing to do. To do otherwise, sends a subliminal message to an owner that no one cares about them and their problem.

If the association has an email address, this should be advertised in all official correspondence and used as another tool for the residents to be able to communicate with the association. The email should be checked every business day and due to the immediacy of the tool, requires a quicker response time to be performed.

The association should have an official area, or areas on the site, for all notices and announcements to be posted. This should be an area that most people go to on a daily basis, such as the pool area or the mailboxes. In addition to posting notices in areas on the site where most of the residents will see them, it is suggested that the association have their Board of Directors meetings consistently on the same day of the month in a location somewhere on, or near the site. If at all possible, the association should also mail the notice of meetings or piggyback them onto a newsletter mailing. This will help to reinforce the importance of the meeting and that the association wants its members to attend. Whenever, the association is posting or mailing a meeting notice, it is suggested that the agenda be posted with it, as this will show all important matters to be addressed at the meeting.

Minutes of meetings are vitally important to the membership, as it is an official record of the proceedings that have taken place, which will ultimately affect the membership. Minutes should be posted as soon as possible, and if at all possible placed in the association's newsletter and mailed to the membership. This will help to foster a sense of openness within the community from the Board of Directors to the membership

Newsletters are a tremendous way for the association to communicate with their owners and tenant residents. A newsletter helps to inform the readers of events, problems, and accomplishments of the association. In addition, newsletters help to reinforce and keep the membership acquainted with the documents, rules and regulations. The newsletters should be sent out consistently at the same time, and helps to clarify the short term and long term objectives of the Board of Directors.

The association should always announce any new resolutions and any new rules that are promulgated by the Board of Directors. The announcement should be posted at the appropriate area on site, mailed to the membership and again, printed in the newsletter as back-up to the event. If the resolution or the rules will affect any resident tenants, they should also be mailed this as well. It should never be assumed that a landlord will pass this information on to their tenants.

The association's telephone should have a messaging feature, whereby the message can be easily changed to provide callers with vital information concerning the association. This could be of the nature of pool closings, meeting times and dates or major repairs/improvements that will affect the membership. In many instances, the message may be just the information that the caller is inquiring about. There should someone in charge of changing the message as the events warrant it.

An association website is the ultimate community association communication tool. A website can provide owners, residents and prospective buyers in a community association, with an active (and interactive) way to communicate 24 hours a day. The website can have the documents and rules on it, forms for architectural approvals, work orders, meeting notices, minutes, announcements and reminders. The site should be easy to read and navigate. Prospective buyers can gain a great deal of knowledge about that community by reading the community association's website.

Though, it is limited in size and scope, compared to a website, associations should also consider having a separate community channel, through their cable TV that will help to provide association news, announcements and meeting information 24 hours a day for the residents only.

Overall, consistent and effective communications can help community associations to operate more cohesively.

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