



Associated Property Management

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AT ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

By Associated Property Management

Since the hurricanes of 2004, we have seen a trend of more owners becoming disruptive at Board of Directors and Members Meetings. Association owners are frustrated and stressed at what has happened to their lives over the last few years in South Florida. In addition, the aftermath of the hurricanes has caused additional stress due to increases in assessments, higher insurance costs and ever increasing and expensive special assessments to offset non-planned expenses and emergencies. In addition to the increased Association burden is also the burden of the residents having increased personal expenses as well, also caused by the hurricanes.

Today, owners and residents are frustrated and angry at these circumstances and they are taking it out on the Board of Directors and management personnel with more frequency at Association meetings. This is not right or fair to those assembled, as in most circumstances the Board of Directors do not control the weather, insurance costs or other operating costs. The Board of Directors are handling these issues and many other issues as well as they can and they need all of the help that they can get from the community to combat these challenges. At an Association meeting, the Board of Directors does not need a resident who is disruptive and disharmony is not part of the solution. In these difficult times there is too much to be accomplished and everyone should be working together rather than causing disruption. By statute, the Board is allowed to make reasonable rules and regulations on the participation of owners and members at Board of Directors Meetings. This usually has to do with time and frequency of talking at meetings. This article expands owner participation at meetings with the hope of helping to make meetings more productive, shorter in duration, and more professional.

To help minimize Association problems and to help to become more effective at their meetings, the Board should consider having a Standards of Conduct for all Association meetings. These standards would be agreed to by the Board of Directors and could be made official by a Board Resolution. The agreed upon Standards would be a part of the official records of the Association and should be posted along with the Meeting Notice and Agenda of the Meeting. Consider having the Standards of Conduct made into a sign that could be displayed on an easel at the entrance of the meeting room. In this manner, no one can say that they did not know of the policy when they come to the meeting. At least have the Standards copied and made available to residents that attend the meeting. It should be understood that these standards must be adhered to by everyone who attends the meeting.

The following is a list of “suggested” Standards and they can be expanded or reduced, depending on the size of the Association and the complexity of issues at hand:

No one should be allowed to speak unless they are recognized by the Chairperson of the Meeting. (This will reduce the amount of disruptions during a meeting).

There should be a rule that allows the Chairperson to also make rules at the meeting. In this manner, if a situation were to arise that is not covered in the Standards of Conduct, the Chairperson could make a quick rule that could diffuse or solve an issue.

No one is allowed to interrupt anyone who has the floor of the meeting. Interrupting helps to foster a hostile environment and wastes time, which make meetings last longer than is necessary.

All comments should be made to the Chairperson. In this manner the issue is depersonalized and not directed to someone who may have an opposing point of view.

All comments should be made on Agenda Items only. This helps to prevent meetings from getting off topic and a rehash of old items and topics that someone disagrees with.

Any time limits that have been made must be complied with and adhered to by all participants. Possibly there is an item on the agenda that is worthy of more time or owner participation. If this is the case, the Chairperson should be able to alter the time and how it will be allocated. Most other times, the Board should set a 2-minute time limit for members to speak.

If someone wants to speak more than once, and if this is permitted, then everyone should be allowed to speak first, prior to someone addressing the Board a second time. This gives as many people as possible the chance to speak at the meeting.

Do not allow someone to speak more than twice on the same issue. If the situation or discussions change regarding the same subject, the Chairperson will have to have some discretion if someone would want to speak again on the same subject, but with different circumstances.

No personal attacks should be allowed on anyone, as this not only allows the meeting to deteriorate but is unproductive and unprofessional. The Board is a group of volunteers who are trying to operate a “small business” and they should be respected. If an owner begins to personally attacking another member, whether on the Board or not, the Chairperson should nip this quick.

No foul or threatening language should be allowed to be used in any meeting by anyone. If anyone is unwilling to be civil in their dealings at a meeting, then they should be asked to leave, and if it is necessary, the meeting should be adjourned to a later time or date.

These Standards of Conduct will help an Association to have civil gatherings and more productive meetings. In the long run this will benefit your Association in terms of greater owner participation and involvement, and will ultimately ensure harmony.

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