

Pearls of Wisdom

Cultured Gems for Community Association Living—and Leading

BE A GOOD HOMEOWNER

- Review the covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs) and other association documents before you buy a home
- Read them again when you move in
- Pay your assessments—on time
- Attend the annual meeting
- Read the newsletter and the minutes of association meetings
- Follow the rules
- Serve on a committee
- Serve on the board or, at a minimum, attend board meetings
- Don't expect someone else to do it for you
- Help organize a community event—a food drive, holiday gift drive, or social event
- Vote in community-wide referendums
- Volunteer to serve your community
- Consider how your particular knowledge, skills, and experience can help the community
- Remember that you are a member of the community association. What is good for the association is good for you

BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

- Curb thy dog. (pick up after FiFi makes a deposit)
- Keep televisions and music at reasonable volumes
- Don't be a six-car family
- Take care of your property
- Help form a neighborhood watch
- Share a smile with a neighbor
- Offer to lend a hand
- Welcome new neighbors into the community
- Nurture relationships
- Talk about problems. Direct conversation is more effective than sending a letter

BE A GOOD BOARD MEMBER

- Serve because you care about your neighborhood, not because you have a hidden agenda
- Use courses and information to learn how to run a community association and work most effectively with others in your community
- Study the documents before you enforce them
- Conduct a reserve study and update it on a regular basis
- Focus on policies, plans, and objectives
- Communicate, communicate and communicate some more
- Seek the advice of qualified professionals

- Make decisions with the common good in mind, not self interest
- Educate residents
- Stay on top of association management trends
- Build alignment and consensus within communities
- Anticipate and prevent conflicts
- Remember your fiduciary duty to protect, preserve, and enhance the value of the property

BE A GOOD LEADER

- Provide community leadership
- Establish and articulate goals
- Define clear expectations
- Don't put things off
- Set high standards
- Make thoughtful and timely decisions
- Do what is right, not necessarily what is popular
- Ask others for help and input
- Plan and save for the future
- Say thank you—send a note, make a call
- Say please
- Build consensus
- Be an advocate
- Encourage strategic planning
- Execute with excellence

HAVE PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

- Distribute materials—financial reports, agenda, etc.—to board members at least a few days before board meetings
- Review this material
- Prepare a timed agenda and follow it
- Use the rules of parliamentary procedure
- Don't let meetings turn into non-productive social events
- Listen
- Be polite
- Hold open meetings, where all owners can attend
- Include an open forum on your agenda
- Make sure a quorum is present

WORK WITH COMMITTEES

- Define the committee's purpose
- Support and encourage committee members—remember they are your future leaders
- Keep in touch with them
- Seek their opinions
- Ensure that they follow the rules of parliamentary procedure

- Work with committees to establish realistic objectives and deadlines
- Remember, committees typically offer recommendations, not solutions
- Offer them praise and acceptance. Cheer, thank, and recognize them

DEVELOP A SUCCESSFUL BUDGET

- Obtain input from owners, board members, and committees
- Conduct research to ensure the budget is based on accurate information and projections
- Develop a month-by-month evaluation—don't just divide by 12
- Talk with service providers and professional suppliers to estimate costs
- Be realistic
- Raise assessments when necessary, and explain clearly why this is necessary
- Communicate the budget to members in advance of the new fiscal year
- Look for ways to control expenses, but don't reduce the level or quality of services without seeking input and advising the owners

SEEK COMPLIANCE WITH RULES AND DEED RESTRICTIONS

- Give residents a voice when creating a rule
- Communicate the rules to residents
- Make rules specific and reasonable
- Review the rules—new ones may be needed, old ones may need to be discarded
- Make the first contact with violators informal and in person if possible
- Never “look the other way”
- Offer compromises
- Hold a hearing
- Try arbitration or mediation
- Hold public meetings on controversial rules
- Be consistent
- Be reasonable
- Give clear and proper notice
- Practice due process

WORK WITH DIFFICULT PERSONALITIES

- Remember, constructive criticism provides the impetus for change
- Be diplomatic
- Listen
- Be interested
- Remain calm
- Work together—two people cooperating are more effective than one person telling another to change
- Never complain about complainers—your words will get back to you
- Invite them to volunteer

FOSTER COMMUNITY SPIRIT

- Recruit new residents to volunteer
- Promote volunteerism as a positive experience—and make it a positive experience
- Be enthusiastic
- Publicize the association's accomplishments
- Recognize volunteers
- Give awards
- Meet people
- Hold social events and 'meet your neighbors' nights
- Offer motivation for serving
- Invite people to volunteer via newsletter, in-house bulletins and face-to-face contacts
- Print a community t-shirt
- Recognize children in the community who are on the honor role, in sports, or for other special achievements
- Conduct surveys to gauge community opinion and solicit input
- Use e-mail and a web site

KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO GO

- ✓ Check your blood pressure
- ✓ If you're burned out, get out. New volunteers can offer new energy and new ideas
- ✓ Make yourself available to new board members.
- ✓ Continue to read the newsletter.
- ✓ Pat yourself on the back.
- ✓ Share the positive rewards of volunteering.