



Hindman Sanchez

ADVICE FOR A NEW BOARD MEMBER

You volunteered to serve your community, placed your name on the ballot, and were elected. Now you are awaiting your first meeting as a new board member. Then you ask, "What exactly do I do as a board member?" Here are a few tips that will help you enjoy your time on the board and be an effective board member.

Your association manager is part of the team, not a subordinate. "But doesn't the association manager work for me?" The association manager works for the association. However, the association manager is the professional the board has hired to operate your multi-million dollar real estate asset. Treat your manager as a professional, not as an order taker, minute taker or clerk.

An effective association manager will guide and lead your board. The association manager brings years of experience gained from dealing with countless similar situations. Accept this knowledge and benefit from it. The board has the final say, but a good association manager will give sound advice which always should be considered.

Recognize no one in life is perfect. This includes everyone involved with the operation of your association. The association manager will forget to do some minor item. The landscaper will not come on Thursday as promised. This is all part of operating a real estate asset. Follow the advice of the bestseller Don't Sweat the Small Stuff. Work with your fellow board members and the association manager to make sure things get done as best as possible, without causing yourself a lot of heartburn.

Remember you are a volunteer. This is not supposed to be a full-time job. Be careful not to second-guess decisions of your fellow board members or the association manager. Don't micro-manage. Don't insist on knowing every single operational detail. You are responsible for governance—setting policy and making decisions. The association manager is the one who is trusted and responsible for carrying out the policy and decisions of the board. Every phone call you make during the day to the association manager takes away time your association manager can be working. Let your manager manage with minimal interruption.

If the board has voted upon an issue, move on. Don't be angry or whine when something you wanted is voted down. You have one vote and are free to exercise that vote. The same goes for the other board members. The most effective boards vote and don't hold grudges. Be objective and leave your personal agenda at home. You are in a fiduciary relationship which requires you make informed decisions that are in the best interests of the association, in good faith, without any ill will or malice, and prudent.

Have fun and enjoy your time as a board member. Develop camaraderie with your fellow board members and with the association manager. You have to work as a team to move your community forward. Stay cool, calm, and collected. As a board member, you have to deal with some real minutia not to mention difficult people. Unit owners will complain about their neighbor's dog not being on a leash, someone's teenage children, and, yes, even the association manager. Sift through and prioritize these complaints, and you will find your community looks great and property values continue to increase. Focus on the big picture.