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Solutions for Homeowner Association Board Burn-Out

by Richard Thompson

So you ask, "How can a homeowner association board avoid the burn-out that comes with the job?" Getting and keeping dedicated board and committee members is one of a community association's greatest challenges. Here are some of the ways to prevent burn-out:

Have a Plan.

Handling community business efficiently and effectively can be a enormous stress reliever. One great tool is the Management Plan Calendar which establishes dates for meetings, periodic maintenance like gutter cleaning, administrative events like tax return filing and major maintenance like painting a year in advance. The Management Plan Calendar evens out the work load and demonstrates that the Board is acting proactively, not reactively. This, in turn, reduces complaints that contribute to burn-out. For more on this subject, see www.regenesis.net

Communicate Regularly.

Keeping association business meetings open to owners reduces suspicion that leads to criticism. Distribute regular newsletters, financial information and meeting minutes. Ask for feedback on issues by circulating surveys.

Protect Your Privacy.

Board members have the right to peaceful enjoyment of their home just like everyone else in the community. As a rule, don't accept anything short of an association maintenance emergency call after hours. Direct the balance of the calls to the property manager if you have one or use Caller ID to screen your calls if necessary.

Get It in Writing.

Association members who constantly complain can be very wearing on leadership. Rather than listening to endless haranguing, insist that their "comments" be put in writing. Several things will happen: Either the problem isn't important enough to put in writing and they will go away or they will put it writing so it can be dealt with properly at a Board meeting.

Use Your Property Manager.

If you have one, the manager should field all routine calls and respond to requests and issues. Significant non-emergency issues that require Board action should be deferred to and handled at regularly scheduled Board meetings.

Use the Board.

Board Presidents often feel that they have to do everything themselves because no one else will do it. This attitude is a self fulfilling prophesy. It is not the Board President's job to solve all problems personally but to lead and delegate. The board structure was designed to spread the load around. Resist the temptation to take carry the burden alone.

The Board as Administrator.

A fundamental error that many Boards make is doing office and maintenance work for free that would otherwise be hired out. Doing this undermines the Board's true purpose...to administrate association business. If the board takes on clerical and repair tasks, an administrative position that should only take a few hours a month rapidly escalates to a full time unpaid job. Who wouldn't burn-out under such conditions? Remember the Board's true purpose and stick to it.

Reward the Volunteers.

The most widespread reason for volunteer burn-out is because it's a "thankless job". In job satisfaction surveys, recognition and appreciation consistently rank way above monetary compensation. Find ways to reward directors, committee members and other volunteers through awards, recognition in newsletters and certificates. They cost little or nothing but address the human need for significance. Volunteers that receive appreciation in small but regular ways stay enthusiastic.

As with any effective business, success is the result of a long range planning, teamwork and communication. By following these suggestions, you will find that "thankless job" a more rewarding experience and your community a harmonious place to live.

For more information on this subject, see www.Regenesis.net.

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