

## Transparency... Let the Members See

My travels throughout our company's locations give me a great deal of insight into the differences between the states and their statutes relative to condominium associations, homeowners associations, townhome associations, property owners associations and community associations. The one thing that is not different is the fact that the Board of Directors is elected by the members to manage the business of the association. The Board, just like any elected official in city, county or municipal government, acts for the members on almost every decision affecting the business of the Association. The documents will provide for those things that the members are to vote on, generally amendments to the Declaration, Articles or Charter and By-laws, special assessments in some cases, and perhaps voting on the annual budget (Note: this is dictated by the individual documents).

The responsibilities of the Board are the same in almost every state. Some states having less jurisdiction over their actions than others. But for the most part, every Board has monthly or quarterly meetings to make decisions affecting or carrying out the business of the association. While many states do not require the posting of a notice of a board meeting or any other type of notification it is an important issue to discuss and to come to a decision on - having members attend your meetings. Where regulated by statute, most members are able to participate on a limited basis on agenda items that are posted prior to the meeting. The Board has the opportunity to adopt a policy that complies with the regulation, but also provides guidelines for the participation of the attending members so the meeting can proceed and the Board can ultimately make their decisions on those agenda items. For those states that are not regulated, it is still important to establish a policy that provides the owners the opportunity to observe the meeting and at the end of the meeting after adjournment be able to comment or ask questions. The transparency of the Board's actions and the chairmanship shown by the Board President or other Chairperson of the meeting should provide an excellent means of communicating to the members and allow them to see what really happens and how the decisions are made. Good decisions follow

# THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

excellent preparation and information provided to the Board by the manager/management company and/or other professional sources.

If your board meetings are not open and transparent, the reaction from your members may not be favorable and may foster the appearance that allows distrust and misunderstanding to build and grow. It has been my experience that initially the board meetings may draw a fairly large crowd. But once they see that they are being well represented and the decisions being made by the board are in the association's best interests in maintaining their investment, the attendance will drop off.

Posting the Minutes of the meetings on your websites is another way to communicate to the owners who may not be able to attend the meetings. While not a transcript, the Minutes should provide a basic overview of the actions, the Motions (or business) of the meetings that will give the owners enough information to let them know what is happening on issues that come before the Board.

Posting the Minutes will not take the place of the actual attendance at the meeting, as all of the dialogue and discussion can be experienced, but it is an economical means of communication.