

THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

Board Project Management

It doesn't seem there is ever enough time to get all the things done that need to be done. This is especially true in an active community for a volunteer board of directors. The work of Boards is becoming increasingly challenging given the effects of the current economy, the complexity of the issues and the desire to provide excellent management to achieve the goals of the association and its members.

There are hundreds of tasks to be accomplished in a day, a week, a month and a year. We all know that they can't all be done at the same time. To do so would require an astronomical amount of man hours, meaning staffing or outside contractors, which is an obvious cost factor. Therefore, setting priorities is crucial to ensure that the most important jobs are done first. Projects need to be thoroughly evaluated and ranked according to importance. This may mean that the manager's time that would be spent on writing letters about barking dogs is better spent on getting the bids to repair and replace the siding, which protects the buildings. It all needs to be done, but knowing and agreeing on what is the most important is key.

Setting priority for jobs and goals is generally part of the budgeting process or at the first meeting after the election of the Board. The budget projected will provide the road map for the projects that can and should be done, whether it is from an operating standpoint or using the reserves for their established purpose.

Meetings of the Board are where the decisions are made to approve and move forward with projects that have been thoroughly researched and reviewed. Therefore, the Agenda for the meeting is the "road map" for a successful meeting and identifying what must be accomplished and how. Be selective in determining the agenda items and recognizing that everything the Board may want to accomplish cannot be accomplished in one meeting. Select high priority items and allow sufficient time for the completion of the project. Avoid the temptation to include too many items and then be forced to defer some to the next meeting, or the next meeting after that. Making certain the important items are resolved is



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more important than embracing too much. Ideally, the only items that should be deferred are those requiring more information or analysis.

Many tasks and projects that Boards undertake are involved and complex, which can make them seem overwhelming. Breaking down big tasks into smaller, more manageable components simplifies the management of the project. Well defined sub-projects with agreed upon due dates can make the big task more manageable. The use of experts in specific fields can also help making large and complex tasks less stressful and confusing by providing the benefit of their expertise in answering questions and explaining details, enabling the board to make a better decision.

How often do you learn that a mistake was made in a rush to complete a task quickly, only to have to go back and spend the time to now "make it right". Doing it right the first time may cost a little more, but how much more does it cost to go back and do it a second time? The review time is well spent, assuring a more accurate result.