

## Board Planning for Associations

Well, here it is 2014. I know I've been a little absent the last few months, but they have been busy ones. Given that it is the beginning of a new year, today's ENews is going to be a collection of some thoughts I've had while sitting in an airport or on an airplane or at a board meeting.

This morning, I was reading an article from one of my LinkedIn Groups. The author is an attorney and a regular contributor who also writes a blog every week. Today's read was a good reminder, so I'd like to pass on what was said. I think it is an important consideration for all boards who are faced daily with the enforcement of covenants and restrictions and the making of rules to further explain those covenants.

The article starts out with a quote from Albert Einstein. He is quoted as having said "if I had one hour to save the world, I would spend fifty-five minutes defining the problem and only five minutes finding the solution".

Think about how many times you have spent hours wording a new rule to cure a problem, but how little time was spent in actually determining what the issue was that became a problem or what caused the problem that required the rule? Was your legal counsel involved in drafting it? Was there consideration given in how it could be enforced to achieve the desired result? Were there other means by which the desired result could be achieved? Was the rule more constrictive than your documents provided for? If you have a legitimate problem which you have defined, you have considered it from different perspectives and weighed various consequences of passing and not passing a rule addressing it and you have rule-making authority in your documents, then there is a good possibility that the rule is needed and the members will understand the need for it and most will comply.

I guess the real issue is, spend the fifty-five minutes defining it before making another rule.

On another note, many boards may have returning members and many will have some new or even all new members to the Board of Directors. We thank you for your contribution to your community by serving on the board. The thanks for

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your volunteer effort may not be in the form of a "Thank You" card from the members but seeing the difference that your service may make this year.

With some new or all new board members, this may be the time to revisit some of the Association's Policies and Procedures. For the new members, it will save a lot of time in answering questions about how the Association enforces its covenants violations, or how the collections policy works or even how items get on the agenda. If the Association doesn't have a policy on these items, maybe it's time to think about adopting them. A written policy can avoid misunderstandings on when Intent to Liens are sent to owners, or how many notices a violator receives before levying a fine or sending them to the association's legal counsel and provides a written plan for your community manager.

A quick review and discussion about this and other processes that your manager undertakes for you, will help avoid misunderstandings and misconceptions as it relates to the processes and procedures. Things change, with new board members your perspective may change so a re-visit may be just the thing to keep everyone on the same page and going forward.

The final thought is COMMUNICATION. Boards can't do too much of it. With the CommunityPortal at your fingertips, so much information can be posted and made available to all of your members. Talk about transparency... meeting minutes, newsletters, financial statements (or even a limited version such as the balance sheet and Income and Expense statement), forms for architectural modifications, your architectural guidelines, your policies and procedures, rules and regulations, a community calendar. All of these things will have a benefit to your members.

If you haven't already, please go to the CommunityPortal (starting out at the Sentry Website), register to be a user. If you're not sure how to use the CommunityPortal, there is a tutorial available on the Sentry website. Go to [www.sentrymgt.com](http://www.sentrymgt.com) to check it out.