



HOA Brief Newsletter

Tips for the HOA Community

February 2012, #15

Dealing with Member Apathy

Member apathy can make it hard for an association to reach quorum for the annual meeting. A lack of candidates can make it difficult to fill the seats on the board. So, what can a board and management do to generate voter and candidate interest? While there is no quick fix or easy answer to the all too common problem, that does not mean there is nothing that can be done to improve member participation.

Apathy is defined as a lack of interest or concern. The fact is, unless there is an issue which directly impacts all the owners (new parking rules or an assessment increase anyone?), most owners are content knowing that someone else is handling all the work while they enjoy the benefits of living in a managed community. The problem is made worse in that apathetic owners don't read their CC&Rs, Architectural Guidelines or the community's rules and regulations. As a result, these owners are more likely to be in violation of the governing documents, and when they receive a violation notice they tend to get angry since they do not understand what they did wrong. In fact, it is not uncommon that when an owner does decide to run for the board it is because they disagree with something the current board is doing.

However, I do not mean to suggest that a board seeking to create interest in an upcoming election "stir the pot" with some potentially unpopular issues just to get owners to generate member interest, the key lies in getting owners to care about what is going on in their community.

We often hear that a home is the single biggest investment most of us will ever make. That is true. So, the key lies in communicating with the members about what is happening in their community and how this impacts their "investment." Let them know regularly what steps the board is taking to preserve the community value. Are there renovations or upgrades being planned, new landscaping being considered, pool repairs or street maintenance planned? Also, take the time in these communications to solicit owner feedback.

You may also want to consider social gatherings such as a barbecue or block party. The goal should be to create an event that will allow the owners to gather in a fun and friendly atmosphere. These types of events are excellent times to promote the benefits the association provides its members. They also give the board an opportunity to engage the members in an informal setting.

While there will be things that you should not place in a newsletter or discuss a gathering, such as violation notices or delinquency status, regular communications and events of this kind give the board an opportunity to explain what it is working on, and how important a role the board plays in managing the community. This

helps build owner “buy-in” and interest in the community. Owners who are regularly informed of what decisions are being made are more likely to want a say in the board’s decisions. This will in turn increase interest and community involvement in voting, and in serving on the board.



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