

QUESTION & ANSWER

Q: How can new Board members obtain the education they need to effectively operate an association?

A: To become an effective Board member, each new member must take the time to learn the many aspects of association governance. The first and foremost source of information is the association's governing documents. These include the State Statutes, Declaration of Covenants and Restrictions, Articles of Incorporation (if applicable) and Bylaws. These documents clearly outline the duties of the Board and the operation of the association. In addition, the documents detail budget and insurance requirements, Architectural Guidelines, Rules and Regulations, the meeting requirements of the Board and the annual meetings. Carefully reviewing these documents will enable new Board members to understand their areas of responsibilities and decision-making authority.

The management company is another vital source of association information and experience. Their knowledge of trends and changes in the association management industry that affect the operation of associations is extremely valuable. Their contact with state and local governments, attorneys, professional service companies, contractors and other associations, provides management companies with a wealth of current information. Additionally, they are familiar with a multitude of formal education sources in the field of community management such as Community Associations Institute (CAI).

CAI membership exposes Board members to the experience of professionals in the insurance, legal, management, public policy, and contractor professions through educational programs, networking opportunities, and published materials. Board members have the opportunity to attend the seminars and meet other professionals in the industry, exchange experiences, and solicit professional advice before making decisions affecting their association. CAI offers training seminars, such as "ABC's for Association Leaders," which can enhance a Board member's understanding

Educating New Board Members

by Helen Shepet

CAI membership exposes Board members to the experience of professionals...

of association finances, management, legal matters and many other areas of association living.

Trade publications such as *Quorum* and *Common Ground* provide articles on day-to-day association operational issues, national trends in association living, and other developments affecting the community association industry. *The Guide for*

Association Practitioners (GAP) offers specific solutions and advice for all aspects of association management.

Another readily available source of information and guidance for Board members are the real estate sections of the local and regional papers such as the *Washington Times*, *Washington Business Journal*, and the Real Estate section of *The Washington Post's* Saturday edition. The articles feature legislative updates, common construction problems like FRT roofs and polybutylene plumbing, and legal information.

Board members, regardless of their experience level, should take every opportunity to continue their education in the dynamic and challenging field of association living. To serve effectively, each Board member must seriously accept their responsibility to keep abreast of association issues and the trends which affect the members of their association. ■

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