

Top 10 Things New Board Members Should Keep in Mind

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CONGRATULATIONS, you are on the board! The contribution you are making to your association is valuable and necessary to keep things running.

With a little reading and talking to other board members, you'll be up to speed in no time.

1 You don't have to make up the rules, you only need to follow and/or enforce them. Most boards already have a process in place to make things run smoothly. Find out how your association handles certain operations then get on-board.

2 Get to know the lingo. Board meetings can be filled with a lot of industry jargon, acronyms & abbreviations. Following are a few examples to get you started:

- **RCW** – Revised Code of Washington
- **CC&Rs** – refers to the Declaration, otherwise known as Covenant, Conditions & Restrictions.
- **Reserve Study** – budgeting tool required by state statute that lists all major components within your community then compares upcoming projects with how much money is available.
- **Envelope Study** – review by an expert of a building's exterior components to evaluate if the building is watertight or if there are any structural concerns.
- **ACC or ARC** – Architectural Control Committee or Architectural Review Committee.

3 Familiarize yourself with the rules. Governing documents are a hierarchy of rules. The top documents have the highest authority and the broadest language. The bottom of the list has the least authority and the narrowest language. Understand that the legalese may take a little getting used to before it actually makes sense. Read it through and understand that many things will make sense as you get further along in your reading and experience.

A. Revised Code of Washington (RCW or state statutes) that applies to your association.

- RCW 64.34 for condos that were created AFTER July 1, 1990.
- RCW 64.32 for condos that were created BEFORE July 1, 1990.
- RCW 64.38 for Homeowner Associations

B. Articles of Incorporation

C. Declaration *a.k.a.* CC&R's (Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions)

- a. You will find the duties of the board and responsibilities of homeowners here.

D. Bylaws

E. Rules & Regulations

4 Get familiar with existing contracts. Know what is included in your association's contracts with service providers. You can renegotiate expectations as needs change.

5 Familiarize yourself with the current concerns the board is discussing. If you have the opportunity, schedule an appointment with your association manager or another board member to get you up to speed or ask for meeting minutes from the last 3-4 meetings.

6 Things take longer than you might expect. Even the smallest project can take some time due to the process that must be followed. Be patient, be prepared and take the opportunity to move things along expediently when the occasion arises.

7 Rely on the experts. You do not need to be an expert to be a board member. You only need to know when to consult an expert. Once an expert is consulted, understand that it is in the association's best interest to listen to the expert's advice. If you still have questions and concerns, keep asking questions or consult another expert.

8 An association manager is a part of your team. A manager never takes the place of the board and a manager has little to no authority in making decisions for your community. Use a manager to facilitate, advise, educate, organize, and, among many other things, do the leg work for the board so that operations can go more efficiently and effectively.

9 Your association is a business. Taking this to heart will help you when making decisions. Personal concerns can easily burden you when considering a decision for the association. When this happens, remind yourself to "keep it business" so that you can eliminate the personal portion and make the best business decision for your association.

10 Look at the big picture. It is easy to get caught up in the details of any concern. Remember the main purpose of the project and let go of the smaller details that may only add to frustration rather than the actual goal.

Keep asking questions, don't take things personally and be efficient and effective when communicating. Being a board member can be a very rewarding and educational experience. 🏡