

The Board President

Community associations are legally formed as corporations, but on a practical level they're also communities of residents and neighbors. This means the president is responsible for maintaining the value of the corporate asset as well as enhancing—or at least maintaining—the lifestyle of the residents. It's a tall order.

The president must be familiar with the association's governing documents and promote compliance in all regards. He or she gets the authority to do this from state laws—either from the Condominium Act, Uniform Condominium Act, or Common Interest Ownership Act—depending on the type of association represented.

One of the president's important roles is board leader. He or she officially speaks for the board and the association. The president also works closely with board members to establish goals for the association and ensures the community operates successfully. Thus, it is in the president's best interest to maintain volunteers' participation in association affairs. This includes developing volunteers' skills as team members, enhancing their knowledge of business and identifying and training new association leaders.

As board leader, the president also presides over all meetings (board, special and annual meetings and executive sessions), and it's his responsibility to ensure meetings are productive.

The president is the liaison between the manager and the association. The manager's performance contributes significantly to the association's success. Therefore, it's very important for the president to understand the full scope of the manager's responsibilities. Close and frequent contact between the board and the community manager via the president promotes success and

helps fulfill the contractual agreement, which lets the association run more efficiently.

Leadership and management are the two qualities that must underlie everything the president does. Sometimes these obligations require that the president set aside other roles, such as neighbor or friend, to accomplish goals.

In addition, as an elected representative of the association, the president must operate on democratic principles. The president who takes action without board input or who doesn't reveal his or her true agenda does not create a sense of community or meet residents' expectations.

Community association presidents often learn on the job. Training can begin with committee service or board membership before an individual steps into the top position. Also, many educational and networking opportunities exist for association volunteers to increase their understanding and knowledge of community association operations and their ability to manage and govern effectively.

Books, seminars, periodicals and webinars (many are free online) are provided by the Center for Community Association Volunteers, a part of Community Associations Institute that offers extensive volunteer homeowner education.

A good community association president will make sure that he or she actively listens to everyone, exhibits confidence, takes charge as the leader of the community and the board and brings about positive change while making sure to confront unpleasant issues.

The position of president isn't for everyone, but fortunately every president has a board for support. As long as members recognize the importance of the community that unites them, the role of president can be very satisfying.