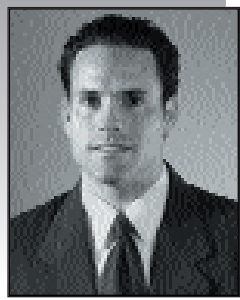


Manager's Perspective...



Russell Munz

How to Get Community Business Done Faster & Easier

Turbo Charge Change at your Community with Committees

By Russell Munz

This is the third article of a seven-part series designed to help your community accomplish more this year. After working with numerous associations, our firm has seen a pattern of behaviors and processes that can be improved so you can operate your property more efficiently.

In my previous article, I outlined how a board can determine where to use their volunteer hours to the greatest benefit. However, what does a board do if it has too many tasks to handle and not enough time? It creates more volunteer hours by enlisting the help of unit owner volunteers. In this article I will discuss 1) why some communities have low volunteerism and how to turn around an apathetic community; 2) how to start involving volunteers; 3) example projects.

It seems that most community board volunteers are diligent folks. So why does a position on the board start out as a basic function but then grows into a major responsibility that seems to swallow their free time, family time, time spent with friends and basically consume their life? What causes this? How can it be reversed—one word: VOLUNTEERISM.

Why don't more associations have committees of volunteers to help make changes that have a positive impact on people's #1 asset—their residence? Here is my top 10

list of favorite excuses why a community does not enlist the help of volunteers:

- 1) It is a national trend that folks these days just don't want to volunteer.
- 2) Lack of time, no one has more time, we are all busier than ever.
- 3) No one else cares because they figure the board or management company will handle the load.
- 4) Belief that "if you don't do it yourself it doesn't get done correctly."
- 5) People are in a state of transition, they either just moved in or are planning on selling and moving out.
- 6) Boards fear losing control by inviting greater resident participation.
- 7) Boards do not have time to explain to other volunteers, it takes time to train up a new volunteer.
- 8) Belief that no one wants to help, it would be a waste of time to even ask.
- 9) Board's feel bad asking people for help.
- 10) Fear of dealing with neighbors due to personality conflicts or other reasons.

I will admit that it is easier said than done, but if the board spends two weeks to get folks actively involved in improving the community, multiply the volunteer hours per month, times a new participant and you see that it is well worth the effort. One of the best resources for taking on this initiative is CAI's booklet on Community apathy entitled: *Revitalizing Apathetic Communities*. This is *Guide for Association Practitioner's (GAP) Report #16* which can be purchased at CAI's website www.caionline.org. The booklet is a great reference and lays out a plan of action for reinvigorating your community.

Being an Army Captain taught me that many hands make light work. As a board, you too have to enlist the support of

your troops, unit owner volunteers, and delegate some tasks. A board of several volunteers cannot do it all. Furthermore, most management agreements do not include special projects in the fee they quoted you. So the option is ask your neighbor for FREE assistance or ask the management company for help and pay some additional fees. You have to choose whatever option it takes to get your community moving faster on its issues, how-



...we're working together!

ever, free is always the best choice if you can get people to help out.

Here are some suggested steps to take to get your community working together. First, make a list of the projects facing your community over the next few years using a timeline. Don't just think of construction projects, there may be administrative, financial or legal projects as well. Second, get a list of what skills people at your community have. Circulate a questionnaire for what experience residents have so you can organize your volunteers around their strengths. The questionnaire should ask what people do for work, if they have volunteered for other organizations on committees or projects before. Briefly list the projects from step one to better qualify unit owners for applicable project knowledge and leave space for people to write in responses and ask them to please be specific. Third, to help the board form committees there is sample document from



Nothing can stop us...

CAI's (GAP) Report #16. This booklet has a worksheet for developing a committee's charter which includes: committee's name, purpose, responsibilities, term, number of

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members, section of members, committee organization, relationship to board, relationship to management. Also, the booklet's appendix has a sample goal sheet for committees. This is important because the board needs to provide clear guidance so the volunteers are focused on

the board's/community's needs. There is also a sample committee meeting report which lists the date, attendees, projects in process of study with target dates of completion, and problems resolved or recommended to the board which is then given to the board to keep them updated. These are just guidelines that you have to tailor for your community. Lastly, the board and committees need to meet as frequently as possible to ensure the committee is not wasting its time pursuing the wrong items due to misunderstandings.

There is no limit to what volunteers can assist with but here are some examples of projects we have seen recently: rules & regulations, energy savings, parking issues, newsletter production, loan application process, declaration & bylaw amendments, etc. If you have a facility plan/reserve study, that will help with your construction project committee planning. Construction planning can involve architectural review including color selection, changes to existing layouts, choices in low maintenance materials, etc.

So take time from doing the routine work of the community to step back to ask how can we do things smarter around

here to get more accomplished this year. I challenge you to maximize the hours spent volunteering by organizing your community. I am sure you will look back in January and say "I can't believe we got so many things done to improve where we live."

In my next article I will outline how to stop dealing with the largest board time waster—reacting to last minute emergencies. When most of these emergencies go away you can start to proactively run your community. Until then I hope you use some of these techniques to focus the necessary resources at your community and get things done faster! ■

Mr. Munz is a former US ARMY Captain where he learned the importance of providing clear guidance and delegating to teammates. Prior to military service, Cornell University business programs taught him the importance of focusing time on tasks that have the greatest impact. Now he works with Pyramid Real Estate Group.