



THE ROLE of the **ASSOCIATION** **PRESIDENT**

(Third Edition)



BY ROBERT T. DENNISTOUN

Acknowledgments

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A community association president's actions shape the character of the community and the lifestyle of community residents. For this reason, the president must understand the roles and responsibilities of the position as well as the tools of effective leadership and management.

This report guides the association president—as leader and manager—through unique challenges and frustrations. While this guide cannot prescribe a standard set of actions to initiate in every situation, it does offer suggestions that may help the president to run the association more smoothly.

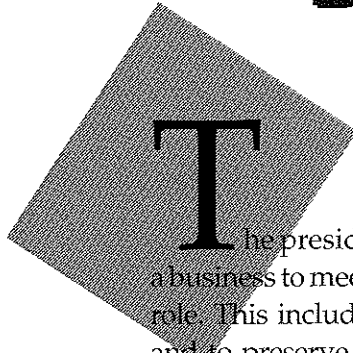
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KEY POINTS FOR

The Role of the Association President

- The association is both a community and a business. The president should work to enhance the lifestyle of residents and protect the value of the asset.
- The president should be concerned with the image of the association and how board decisions affect property values.
- The president should direct the budget process.
- The president should help define the overall goals of the association.
- Prior to each board meeting, the president should prepare a working agenda and distribute it to the board.
- The president should identify and train potential association leaders.
- The president must review procedures and job descriptions. Familiarity with these documents helps clarify the roles of the manager and of the association.
- The president should network within the greater community to cultivate worthy advisors.

Working With Other Board Members



The president must perceive the association as both a community and a business to meet the expectations of the members and to fulfill the president's role. This includes working to enhance the lifestyle of community residents and to preserve, protect, and enhance the value of the *asset*—the *community association*.

The asset is the physical property, financial position, legal standing, and image of the association. The asset exists after current owners have left the community. To protect the asset, the president prepares and adheres to budgets, formulates and enforces rules and policies, and sets and achieves goals.

Dual Roles of the President

Association presidents are required to fulfill many different roles. The onset of a challenging situation or problem often determines the role the association president plays. Sometimes the president must set aside other roles, such as neighbor or friend, to accomplish a task or to make a decision.

The role of leader and manager underlies everything the president does. How does the leader differ from the manager? The leader:

- Makes it possible for others to participate and to perform
- Directs the activities of the association
- Motivates the residents to volunteer for the association
- Initiates the ideas and activities that determine the asset's present or future value
- Sets the agenda that determines the direction for association activities

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The manager:

- Maximizes the association's resources
- Executes or delegates required tasks

As a visible, elected representative of the association, the president must operate on the democratic principals of government. The president's role is similar to that of a town mayor. He or she should focus upon methods of leadership that motivate member participation and enhance the community. The role of a dictator taking action without board input or a slick operator never revealing the true agenda does not create a sense of community or meet the expectations of association members.

Relationship to Other Positions

The president's most important role is that of *leader of the board*. The board, the bylaws of the association, and state laws define the role of the president and of other board members. The president should understand these roles

since he or she depends on board members for specific information and action.

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The president should expect board members to complete assigned tasks in a timely fashion.

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The president should encourage the other board members to contribute to association operations. The ideas and contributions of board members are important, especially on small boards.

The president should expect board members to complete assigned tasks in a timely fashion. If a board member fails to complete a task, the president is held accountable.

If tasks are delegated and completed successfully, member input can lend invaluable understanding and perspective to the issues at hand.

The president should also look to board members for leadership guidance. Challenged by new tasks, board members realize their capabilities, gain a better understanding of association operations, and eventually take the place of the president as business and community leader.

Secretary

The secretary, the "official recorder" of the association's activities, is responsible for ensuring that board meeting minutes are taken. Other duties include filing documents and attesting to the validity of documents by signing them.

The duties of the secretary are outlined in the association's bylaws as well as in the state's not-for-profit corporation laws. At the beginning of the secretary's term, the president should discuss the specifics of the position and go over a schedule of tasks.

One task is to determine when a meeting's minutes should be distributed to other board members. Timely writing and distribution of minutes remind board members of actions taken on authorized projects.

Treasurer

The treasurer is the chief financial officer of the association. The duties of the treasurer include preparing financial reports and understanding budget operations and replacement reserve funds. The president should work

closely with the treasurer to confirm that his or her knowledge and understanding of finances is sufficient to maintain association accounts.

The budgeting process requires input from the president as well as the board and community manager. Together, the president and treasurer set timelines for completion of each step in the process. It is essential for the president to work closely with the treasurer since the budget is linked so closely to the success of association business.

Vice President

The vice president substitutes for the president in his or her absence. The person in this position also conducts meetings and presides over the board meeting when the president chooses to stand down from the chair. The vice president should be informed about programs, agendas, etc. so that he or she is prepared to chair the meeting in the event of an emergency. Refer to association bylaws for additional duties of the vice president.

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Community Manager

Large associations, or those that require the services of a community manager, may hire either a community management company or a professional manager to operate as the agent of the board. The duties of the manager vary depending on the contract agreement, but generally the manager directs association operations, including: selecting and directing vendors, collecting resident fees, managing funds, paying accounts due, and maintaining the buildings and grounds.

The success of the working relationship between the community manager and board depends upon clearly defined roles, open lines of communication, and effective delegation of tasks. Close and frequent contact between the board and the community manager via the president enhances this relationship and helps fulfill the contract agreement.