

# Service to your community board is serious business | Home & Living

*Jimmy Jackson*

Whether you're a new owner of a condominium or a longtime resident of a condo or home in a property owners association, you know your little community has a board that makes policies and rules for the collective good.

But you may also be part of a narrower slice of folks who feel called to serve on the board. Maybe you feel a civic urge to contribute. Maybe you've got a streak of watchdog that wants to be sure business is conducted in a public and proper way. Or maybe you're convinced that the board is misguided and would benefit from your point of view.

Whatever your motivation, being elected to and serving on your association's board of directors can be rewarding – but it's a serious commitment, not in terms of money or sacrifice as much as accepting responsibility for schooling yourself on the board's role, the association's bylaws and governing documents, and the proper way to run meetings.

So, you will need to bone up on your association's documents. These include:

- n The articles of incorporation that grant the right to be a corporation;
- n The bylaws that set forth the regulations dictating how the association is governed and operates, including duties of board officers, fiduciary duties, liability, committees and records;
- n The declaration – also known as covenants, conditions and restrictions – that prescribes how common expenses are shared, pet restrictions, use of recreational facilities, and what elements (such as terraces, parking spots or balconies) are in the exclusive use category;
- n The minutes of the past year's board and committee meetings; and,
- n The most recent reserve study, which looks years, even decades, into the community's future to forecast major repairs and capital projects that are essential, and prescribes how much money should be set aside in anticipation of the projects.

**At the same time**, as a board member, you represent the people who call your development their home. You'll want to chat with neighbors as well as unit owners you don't know to learn their complaints, compliments and concerns about the association. Yes, they could or should bring those issues to board meetings, but if they're absent, you should feel obliged to bring up constituents' concerns with your board colleagues.

You can also learn a lot about the regular operation of the community by talking with your association's property manager.

Of course, you will attend board meetings, and you're responsible for reading in advance

any materials provided by the chairman or committees. This is always important, but especially when dealing with budgets and finances such as setting condo fees or viewing contractor bids and authorizing contracts.

Inevitably, you will want to brush up on “Robert’s Rules of Order,” the gold standard for running orderly and professional meetings.

As I said, don’t blithely run to serve on the board if you can’t commit to tackling this learning curve. If you’ve a keen interest in the association’s business but don’t have the ability to serve on the board, you can still be an informed unit owner by attending board meetings and talking with board members.

But if you do have an appetite for serving and being a proficient board member, a good learning resource is the Community Associations Institute. As its website at [www.caionline.org](http://www.caionline.org) says, “CAI provides information, education and resources to the homeowner volunteers who govern communities and the professionals who support them.”

Its resources include online instruction, downloadable sample forms and templates, Common Ground magazine and other excellent information.

CAI’s Southeastern Virginia Chapter will hold a Community Association Day 2018 Trade Show and Education Expo at the Virginia Beach Convention Center from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 24. To learn more, go to [www.cadayvirginia.com](http://www.cadayvirginia.com) or call 757-558-8128.

*Jimmy Jackson, ABR, GRI, SFR, with Rose & Womble Realty, is chairman of the Hampton Roads Realtors Association’s Common Interest Community Forum. Realtors are real estate agents who adhere to a strict code of ethics and work to protect and preserve private property rights; learn more at [www.isyouragentone.com](http://www.isyouragentone.com). Questions about a condo or common interest community topic? Email [svegh@hrra.com](mailto:svegh@hrra.com). For more on HRRA, go to [www.hrra.com](http://www.hrra.com), or call 757-473-9700. This column is not legal advice nor a legal recommendation.*