

## HARASSMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS AND MANAGEMENT

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Many times, owners feel that the Manager or an individual member of the Board is responsible for some action that may or may not have been taken that affects this person individually.

Many years ago when I managed communities, early in my career, owners would show up at the meetings to yell at me, as the manager, rather than yell at the Board. Because I had signed the letters, my contract required twice monthly inspections and these inspections resulted in violation letters, etc., I was perceived as being *responsible* for any actions taken. I receive death threats via my voice mail and through vicious letters.

Board member training solved that problem as Directors were advised that as they were responsible for everything in their corporation, they needed to defend the Manager as long as the Manager was following *their* direction, following *their* policies and requirements in the management contract. It was very refreshing when Members of the Board would speak up when owners were addressing the Board and trying to attack the Manager. The Board would focus their comments back to the Board and let them know that the Manager was only following their policies and direction.

Several Directors received threatening phone calls, their homes were egged, their cars were damaged, etc. when initially they wouldn't take the Manager's advice and not refer owners to the management office as recommended and not giving out their personal phone numbers as recommended. They wanted to be "owner" friendly and work with everyone personally. Unfortunately, years of experience teach Managers that there will be individuals who you will never make happy and who can be very violent. Sharing these past situations with future Directors proactively during Board training got them to understand what can happen regardless of the good intent of the Directors.

In our trying times, many owners just need someone to focus the anger and frustration on and Managers are trained to listen to the owners while not taking comments personally. At a Board meeting, however, the Board needs to step up to the plate and intervene to protect their agent(s).

One of the issues that Managers and Directors face in our industry is misunderstandings of what the Board and managers are required, by law, to do or not to do. The Common-Interest Community industry has become one of those industries where our legislators are trying to fix individual problems through legislation that affects everyone. The Board and Manager face more challenges today than previously because of this legislation. Logic doesn't work any longer since in a lot of cases, the law won't allow methods that previously used to work with owners.

Use the experts who serve your communities to help you communicate stressful information. Owners meetings are a wonderful time to have your experts attend to

basically tell the owners what the owners may not have believed coming from the Board or the Manager as it may have appeared to be self serving. Having this meeting around a social event will change the tone as well as most people act differently in a social environment.