



The Regenesis Report



National Innovative Homeowner Association Management Strategies Priceless

Regenesis means making new beginnings using eternal principles in innovative ways.

Regenesis believes that the goal of every homeowner association board should be to promote harmony by effective planning, communication and compassion.

The Regenesis Report provides resources and management tools for just that purpose. Every month, articles of common interest to homeowner associations nationwide are offered along with innovative strategies for addressing common problems.

Managing an HOA can be a lonely and frustrating task. Take heart. Help is on the way.



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Meeting Expectations

Scenario One. The meeting starts with a “homeowner forum”. A member is recognized and complains about something that has nothing to do with the board’s function. The board tries to answer but the answer isn’t accepted. Other owners chime in. Then another homeowner, another question and another group discussion. Some get to let off steam and others are polarized.

Then the business session starts. Many board members open their meeting packets for the first time even though they were distributed a week before the meeting. Since many aren’t familiar with the material, questions ensue and time is wasted. The manager can answer some but not all of the questions. Three hours pass, little is accomplished and everyone goes home drained.

Scenario Two. All board members have reviewed the meeting packet before the meeting. The meeting starts and guests are informed that the board will be dealing with the business portion of the meeting first followed by a “member comment period”. A motion is made to approve the Consent Agenda (noncontroversial items like approval of minutes, informational reports, correspondence requiring no action, etc.) and receives a second. One board member has a concern on one item. The motion is amended to approve the rest of the Consent Agenda without comment. The vote is called and approved.

Moving on, there are three action items. A motion is made and seconded in turn for each item. A discussion takes place which usually lasts 5-15 minutes and a vote called. The total time to cover the business portion is typically one to two hours.

The “member comment period” begins and each interested homeowner is given five minutes to bring matters of a policy nature to the board. This is not an opportunity for a “bull session”. It’s up to the chair to keep

comments focused and relevant. If, for example, the comment involves a maintenance request, inform the member who should be called for that (Maintenance Committee, manager, etc.). If the member states “The board should do so and so” and so and so involves research, ask the member if he would like to present a researched proposal for the board’s consideration. Just because a member has an idea doesn’t mean the board needs to take ownership of it. This is a wonderful opportunity to get other members involved and to groom future board or committee members.

If your meetings run something like Scenario Two, great. If your meetings sound like Scenario One, you need to make changes. There are five elements for an effective and efficient meeting:

- 1. Come Prepared.** Each board member needs to come to the meeting prepared. Without preparation, time is wasted and the likelihood for uninformed decisions is high. To that end, board packets need to have an agenda and all supporting material.
- 2. Chair Takes Charge.** The chair needs to keep the agenda moving and eliminate unfocused discussion. For example, when a motion is debated, the chair should alternate between pro and con discussion. When there is no more “pro” or no more “con”, time to take a vote.
- 3. Make Real Decisions.** The board needs to make decisions, not simply discuss things. So, all agenda action items need to come with a recommendation like “Approve Roofing Contract” instead of “Discuss Roofing Contract”.

4. Make Informed Decisions. Avoid making decisions on a new motion that is not either an emergency or a no-brainer. Any motion that takes thought or research should be tabled to a future meeting to allow time for that to take place.

5. Have a Meeting Process. The meeting should use an orderly process like a simplified version of Robert's Rules of Order. A process for introducing an agenda item with a motion and a second makes sure at least two board members are in agreement on the decision to be reached. If the motion does not get a second, move on.

By establishing expectations that produce effective meetings, several things will happen. Business will get done and it will be easier to recruit volunteers who want to be part of a successful team. This is good news for all. 🌱

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Ask the HOA Expert

Q Our Architectural Review Committee (ARC) conducts reviews of homeowner requests using email with no face-to-face meetings. What about the open meeting concept?

A Committees are not under the same constraints as the board to meet in open meetings accessible to members (unless the governing documents or state statute dictate otherwise). Email is okay for the ARC when the answer is "approved" but when there is a denial, the petitioner has the right of appeal in a face-to-face meeting with the ARC and, ultimately, with the board if necessary. The ARC should report and

summarize its actions to the board at regularly scheduled meetings.

Q A board member is proposing that the HOA donate to a children's charity amounting to \$5 per year per member. Is this appropriate?

A Charities are a wonderful thing but it's not appropriate to donate money out of the HOA coffer. A great alternative has been developed by McNary Estates Homeowners in Oregon. Each year, McNary hosts the an HOA wide garage sale. Each garage sale host pays a small fee for advertising. Each visitor is required to bring a can of food for the local Food Bank. Result: McNary donates several *tons* of food each year, the event attracts volunteers from all over the city, the news media gives it high profile coverage, the members make money and the HOA members have an enduring source of pride. Another benefit is that McNary homes for sale get much more attention during the event. All do well by doing good.

Q We have been having board discussions at meetings about our HOA pool safety. We have a four foot tall fence with key locked gates. We have rules and consequences if they are not followed. Should the pool be supervised by a lifeguard or pool monitor?

A Unless your HOA is wealthy enough to provide a life guard during pool hours, pool operations are typically "use at your own risk". That said, the homeowner association is responsible to keep the fence, gates and locks in good condition.

When the pool season is over, a safety type pool cover should be installed. All safety covers must conform to the Standard Performance Specification set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) be able to support a certain amount of weight, not permit gaps that a child or pet could squeeze through, and remove standing water. Loop Loc brand covers, for example, are built from extremely strong material and securely anchored

to the pool deck. This design prevents children and pets from inadvertently falling in.

Prohibiting after dark swimming makes sense since it will likely disturb the neighbors and often attracts party goers that may be intoxicated. Minors 14 years old and younger and all guests should be accompanied by an adult resident.

Finally, ask your HOA insurance agent about other suggestions to reduce pool risk. They are usually prepared with a laundry list.

Q A board member recently hosted a barbeque although we have banned them due to fire safety considerations. He is flaunting the rules. What should we do?

A Speak to him in private and review the rule and reason for it. Usually that will do the trick. If he continues to violate the rule, it's appropriate to apply whatever penalty you have for such violations.

Another thought. Since barbeques are American as apple pie, if you have a suitable location in the common area, why not designate it for this purpose? The HOA could add the furniture, concrete pad and even the grill.

Q Our board has been enacting rules without consulting the members. Some are way off base or totally unnecessary. What can be done about this?

A A basic rule about HOA rules is that they should be few and necessary. Unfortunately, some boards feel when it comes to rules, the more the merrier.

Whenever there is evidence that a rule is needed, polling the members should be the very first step. There are few rules that are so urgent that allowing time for member review and comment couldn't allow a better perspective. The public relation aspect alone justifies the effort.

Some boards make rules to control a few offenders who will never be controlled. Scofflaws eat rules for breakfast so making new ones only feed the beast. Whatever rules that are enacted need to have an ongoing and widespread need.

Q We have had a very hard time getting a quorum at our annual meetings. Regardless, elections are held and directors elected. It seems to me that the elections are illegal if there isn't a legal quorum.

A The reason that quorums are required is so that a few can't control the many without their consent. If the quorum concept is abandoned, the current board can crown itself emperor and wield the scepter of power with impunity. Kidding aside (I was kidding!), gaining legal quorums is often difficult for annual meetings. That is why the concept of "proxy" is a necessary component of HOA annual meetings. A proxy is a person appointed by another person to act on their behalf. Virtually every HOA is allowed to use them for annual meetings so that quorum and voting majorities can be attained.

Proxy forms should be distributed along with the official meeting notice with instructions to complete and return them at least a week before the meeting. The proxy giver should have the option to appoint "a director of the board who is not running for election" if no one else is able to attend. The proxy authority can also be designated "for quorum purposes only".

A week before the meeting, the proxy returns should be tallied. If there are not enough to meet the quorum, more can be collected door to door until a quorum is achieved. That way, on annual meeting night, there will always be a legal meeting. All proxy givers that attend simply retrieve their proxy and vote as usual. Either way, the meeting stays legal.

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The world's best information resource for condominium and homeowner associations. Includes Ask the HOA Expert™. Unlock the vault of knowledge for pennies a day.
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What are CC&Rs?

"CC&Rs" is an acronym commonly used in the homeowner association industry. It means "Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions". It is used generically for any HOA rule or policy. But it's more complicated than that. In the HOA environment, there may be policies, procedures, rules, regulations and resolutions. All are necessary to do the HOA business properly. But what exactly are they?

Policy: A policy is a standard adopted by the board that sets out the beliefs, values and objectives that causes the homeowner association to act (like a collection policy, an enforcement policy or a conduct of meetings policy). A homeowner association's policies communicate, organize and focus the resources of the homeowner association.

Procedure: A procedure is the process that accomplishes a particular objective. For example, the homeowner

association should have a clear and defined policy regarding assessment collection. The detailed steps of how this policy is achieved comprises the procedure of collecting assessments.

Rule or Regulation: A homeowner association's board of directors adopts rules or regulations to define desired behaviors and to set limits on allowable uses of the common elements and homes or units, architectural changes and the behavior of residents and guests. Some typical examples of rules include pets, parking, noise and use of HOA facilities.

Resolutions: A resolution is a method of formalizing a decision made by an homeowner association's board of directors. Resolutions are used to adopt policies, procedures, rules and regulations or to clarify ambiguous terms in the governing documents. Resolutions should include four components:

1. **Authority.** The section of the governing documents that gives the board authority to adopt resolutions;
2. **Purpose.** Why the resolution is needed or being adopted;
3. **Scope and Intent.** Who will be affected, the reach, range and extent
4. **Specifications.** A clear and complete statement on what those bound by the rule are expected to do.

So there you have it. Now you can speak like an HOA authority. CC&Rs is not just an acronym anymore. 🗳️

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Relandscaping

As homeowner associations age, both structures and landscape wear out. And just like those harvest golds and avocado greens of the 70s, landscape tastes change. Fortunately, the

varieties of plants available have made the options wonderful and numerous. The best news of all is that creative use of these options coupled with the latest irrigation technology can significantly reduce both maintenance and utility costs. That is landscape news every HOA can use: more is less. Here are a few pointers to get the landscape renovation process moving:

1. Develop a Landscape Plan. Rather than cruising Walmart looking for plant bargains, hire a landscape architect who will integrate site, irrigation, curb appeal and maintenance needs in a comprehensive plan. This plan will include specific plant selections that are placed appropriately for best impact. The plan can then be bid by a variety of installation contractors so the HOA can get the best value.

2. Convert Turf to Planting Beds. Reduce maintenance and water costs. Bushes have deeper roots than turf and require less water.

3. Tree Thinning and Replacement. Developers are notoriously bad about planting too many trees, the wrong kind or letting the low bid dictate the number or mix. Generally, since new trees come in small calipers, it takes more of them to make the desired marketing impact. What did the job 20 to 30 years ago has now produced an over dense mix of trees that are too close to buildings, roads and walkways. An arborist can evaluate the mix and make removal and replacement recommendations to suit a mature landscape.

4. Modernize the Irrigation System. Recent improvements to irrigation technology now deliver water where and when it's needed. With more zone control, turf and planting beds receive differing water amounts. Rain override sensors eliminate cycles as needed. Drip irrigation provides steady yet low water flows to planting beds. Buried drip systems apply water directly to the roots, and reduce water loss through evaporation and runoff. Drip systems are coupled with traditional sprinkler

systems to deliver water efficiently.

For any homeowner associations over 20 years old, the time has come, the walrus said, to talk of many things. But few things are more compelling than landscape renovation. Cut costs, lower maintenance, improve curb appeal and up market values...a rescape for the new millenium.🌱

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Life Skills Checklist

Homeowner associations need competent leaders to thrive. While a congenial board is helpful, it's important that the board have a strong leader to coordinate, plan and, well, lead.

So what defines a good leader in the first place? Leadership is not just about accumulation of knowledge and information. It's about achieving as many of these life skills as possible:

- Honesty. Sincerity, transparency and candor in all actions.
- Competency. Actions are based on reasoned thinking.
- Ethics & Integrity. Practices sound moral principles.
- Forward-Looking. Envision what they want and how to get it.
- Humility. Acts like a servant by elevating others.
- Inspiring. Displays confidence by showing mental, physical and spiritual strength.
- Informed. Reads and studies to gain better understanding.
- Seeks Challenges. Not content to simply react, a leader seeks out challenging assignments.
- Compassionate. Displays empathy to the feelings, values, interests and well-being of others.
- Perseverance. Sticks to a goal regardless of obstacles.
- Confidence. Calm under pressure.

- Decisive. Not afraid to make a decision and stick to it but willing to change course when facts dictate.
- Imaginative. Shows creativity when faced with complex problems.
- Communicator. Communication is both strategic and inspirational. Clear and frequent communication keeps the board goal focused.

No one is born with these traits. All are learned through life experiences. Often the best teacher is failure. Failure helps develop humility which opens the doors to learning many of the other life skills. Having some of them is great. Having them all is a lifetime achievement. Look for those that have lived life and learned its lessons without being crushed in spirit.🌱

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The Volunteer Ride

At the core of every homeowner association is the principle of "volunteerism". It is a noble calling which calls for giving up self interest for the greater good. Americans, arguably the most self-indulgent citizens of the world, have a curious ability to rise to the occasion and give of themselves. Americans donate considerable time, talent and treasure to the downtrodden of the world. Some pay the ultimate price for this noble work. Unfortunately, there never seems to be a shortage of opportunities.

The notion of volunteering in an HOA is usually cast as serving on the board but volunteerism actually takes on a variety of forms:

Lifestyle. HOA Members agree when they buy in to voluntarily comply with rules, regulations and restrictions that non-HOA property owners are not required to do. These include architecture design, parking, pet and other significant lifestyle restrictions.

This is no small thing considering Americans view property rights as holy. Presumably, they do so because they agree with the restrictions and don't view them as negative.

Financial. HOAs always involve payment of money, sometimes a lot of money, to keep the HOA operation perking along.

With HOAs, reserve planning calls for setting aside money for future renovation that may not happen for up to 30 years. This kind of advance planning is necessary because HOA ownership interests are collective. Sharing assets like roofs and siding means that individuals no longer have maintenance responsibility, the HOA does. To fund these collective costs requires each owner to contribute the portion of the future costs proportional to the time in ownership.

Service. Volunteer service is where "the rubber meets the road". Directors of the Board are called on to make executive decisions. If the HOA is professionally managed, the Board's primary function is to oversee the manager who oversees the operation. An organized board using professional management can accomplish its calling with a only few meetings a year of a couple hours each. The obligation is light and volunteer directors have insider control over outcomes.

Non-elected volunteer service comes in several forms. Committees can be either "standing" or "ad hoc". Standing committees have ongoing functions. Examples include Architectural Review, Landscaping and Pool. Ad hoc committees are formed for a single purpose that, once accomplished, ends the further need of the committee. Examples include Budget and Winter Social. Committees allow members with time and talent to focus on an area of interest without being on the front line. While some committees can have a demanding load (Architectural Review), others can be low activity level.

Neighbor. This is probably the most
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innate form of volunteerism. Each of us is called to care for our neighbor in tangible ways. The first step is to get acquainted. The next step is to find common ground or interests upon which to interact in an ongoing basis. The greatest step is to develop an actual interest in your neighbor as a person so that watching out for his concerns becomes a matter of habit.

In the final analysis, all HOA members are volunteers in one capacity or another and to one degree or another. We can't avoid it. By presence or presents (physically or financially) HOA members join in and sacrifice personal interest for the greater good. And there are *millions* of such volunteers actively engaged in HOAs everywhere. You can't run. You can't hide. Enjoy the volunteer ride. 🌟

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A Victorious Life

On September 3rd, 2024 at the age of 49, a sincere Christian, a caring father of 13 children, a deacon of the Emmanuel Church, Victor Belza, passed away from malaria contracted from a missionary trip to Africa. Victor's over 20 missionary trips included Ukraine, Mexico and various countries in Africa.

Victor was easy going and joyful. He did not seek glory or reward, but with a kind smile, humbly served God and people. He was often described as the "heartbeat" of the missions. *From Victor's Obituary*

I had the honor of meeting Victor in 2020. I had hired his company Allstate Concrete of Vancouver WA to install a new driveway at my home. I watched in fascination as he and his two sons worked tirelessly for four days. The quality of work was outstanding and I told him so when he finished. His

face beamed with a broad smile and he said "I love my work!" Those words echo in my mind as I think of how he lived his life.

49 years is not much time to accomplish great things but Victor understood at a young age what God had in store for him and pursued it with passion. He loved his work because it was God's work. Victor's life was truly victorious. 🌟

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I'm Confused

I recently married a widow who had an 18 year old daughter. My father, a widower, came to visit a number of times and he fell in love with my step-daughter. They married. As a result, my step-daughter legally became my step-mother and my father my son-in-law.

My father's wife gave birth to a son who is my grandchild because I am the husband of my step-daughter's mother. This boy is also my brother because he is the son of my father.

As you can see, my wife became a grandmother, because she is the mother of my father's wife. Therefore, it appears that I am also my wife's grandchild.

A short time later, my wife gave birth to a son who now is my father's brother-in-law, the step-son of my father's wife and my uncle.

My son is also my step-mother's brother and through my step-mother, my wife has become a grandmother and I have become my own grandfather.

In light of all of this, I would like to know does my son, who is also my uncle, my father's son-in-law, and my step-mother's brother qualify for childcare benefits? 🌟