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Eight Roles You'll Master as Community Association President

Serving as a homeowner or community association board president is an honor, a privilege and an experience that many take great satisfaction in. But before you make the leap from resident to board member, it's key to understand exactly what you'll be getting yourself into, and we can help. The good news is, the variety of tasks and skills that the position entails certainly keeps the job interesting!

For starters, it's important that you understand the scope of work for the position, as an ineffective president can hamstring a community's growth for years to come. To help you make the most of this unique opportunity, let's look at the essential roles a good board president will need to take on to be successful.

Parliamentarian. An association's governing documents guide the way the association is run. It's the board president's job to understand the governing documents and processes to successfully run the board.

Volunteer booster. As president, you're a big part of making people want to volunteer on the board and its committees. Your energy, leadership and vision can be instrumental in galvanizing support for your board's objectives and identifying people who will want to run for the board in the future to help meet your community's needs.

People who have natural leadership skills already receive recognition in their communities and are usually the people who are asked to 'Please run, Please help us'. When you're a high-level executive, you have a skill set that doesn't always translate without a hitch into running a community full of your friends and neighbors. An experienced management staff can help you tap into the skills you already have and better manage the community.

Liaison. When you work with a property management company, you'll be the essential link between that firm and your association. This means you'll need an in-depth understanding of what your property manager is focused on, especially when it comes to the full scope of his or her responsibilities.

Meeting facilitator. If you've ever been in a bad meeting, you know how dull, inefficient and uninspiring it can be. As president, you'll be tasked with making sure your meetings are productive and efficient – all while giving everyone the opportunity to speak their minds, too. It's a delicate balance, but it's an art you can master.

We have seen, over the years, powerful presidents from the corporate world sometimes have trouble with the warmer and fuzzier role of a board president, like collaborating and facilitating. They're used to the executive environment by day where high-level decisions can be made unilaterally – but on an association board, decisions have to be

made for the members of the community at large and with a consensus. That isn't always popular with the squeaky wheels who try to drive a lot of decisions.

Leader (above friend). At some point during your service, you will find yourself in a position where you need to set aside your role as friend or neighbor and focus on both what is right for the community and what is required of you as outlined in your association's governing documents. This can feel unpleasant at times, but, if you explain your position to your friends and neighbors, they'll most likely understand it is done for the good of the community.

"This is one of the toughest roles for most board presidents," explained Troy Kurtz - CAM. "But generally, good leaders are able to separate the personal from the business."

When, as a president, you are in a position that requires you to set aside your role as a friend or neighbor, it's a good idea to rely on the community's vision, mission and governing documents to explain that position. Every action taken by the board needs to fit that vision. Take a step back and ask 'Is this leading toward our vision and following our mission? Is this best for the community as a whole?' These are good questions to ask during budget season. Sometimes, boards have to put personal feelings aside and raise assessment fees for the good of the community. Good board presidents can explain that clearly, in the context of the community's vision, getting buy-in from everyone in the community along the way.

Collaborator. Remember, this isn't a dictatorship. And even though it may seem like well-intentioned, unilateral action is the most efficient way to achieve a goal, it's rarely the best option for the community. Remember to seek board input and the proper approvals every step of the way to ensure the longevity and strength of your community.

Student. No president, whether of a company, a country or a community, comes into the job knowing everything about how to do the job. Good leaders have the humility to recognize that and take steps to absorb all the information they can. In your role as board president, you'll learn something new every day!

"A good student knows when to ask questions, and there are no dumb questions. We all want to have the answers for everything and there's no way we can. That's okay, because we have a plethora of experts we can employ who do have the answers."

Peer. "First of all, the president is a peer to the rest of the board. They need to recognize that they are one vote and respect the opinion of other board members. They have an important role on the board, however they are not above their peers. They are in office to facilitate the needs of the community. They are a member of the community as well."

Great leadership has a huge impact on how a community thrives. Remember that, as president, you'll fulfill many roles to help you and your neighbors achieve your shared vision of a great community.

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