



LEGAL

Being a Board Member Doesn't Have to be Stressful – Part 1

BY MARK FRIEDMAN, FLORIDA BAR CERTIFIED AS A SPECIALIST IN CONDOMINIUM AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT LAW

Stress is defined as “a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.” While it is difficult to be totally stress free, there are coping strategies that Board members can use to cut down on the amount of stress that comes with the position. The following are some tips that I give to clients when they are having difficulty coping.

1. You may be a Board member year-round, but you are not on duty at all times. Set boundaries with your schedule. For example, the president will deal with Association-related matters on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The vice president will take Tuesday and Thursday. During those days, except in extreme circumstances, your “office” hours are 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. You can organize it however you like, but you have to compartmentalize and leave time for yourself as well.

2. Use separate emails. Get a free Gmail, Yahoo, or other account. There is nothing more stressful than trying to enjoy your emails in the evening only to find that a unit owner is sending you multiple emails in all CAP letters demanding you do something. That will stress you out and make you lose sleep. Have a separate email account for Association business. Never use your personal email address for Association business.

3. Do not give out your personal cell phone number unless it is imperative. There is nothing worse than texting with your friends or grandchildren as you try to relax on the weekend only to have members of the community filling your phone with text messages and comments, complaints, concerns or other issues. If there is an emergency you should have a means that they can reach you, but if the association can afford to have a separate phone that transfers from president

to president, that may help alleviate the stress.

4. Work with a licensed community association property manager or management company approved by the Board. Upgrade your current management contract if need be so that the manager does more of the day-to-day work with the Board left as decision makers on behalf of the community.

5. Work with a Board-Certified attorney. Get to know your attorneys and use their legal services when stressful issues come up such as whether you must approve a transfer, violations, fair housing issues, etc. Having to deal with all of these difficult issues like a full-time job that you, as board members, are not being paid for, only adds to your stress unnecessarily. Also aligned with this topic is to know your basic legal rights through seminars, webinars,

and materials provided by law firms and the Division of Florida Condominiums, Time Shares and Mobile Homes. If you know the meaning of a term like “fiduciary duty” and how that works on a practical level you may not be stressed out if someone erroneously says that you breached this duty when you know what is and is not considered a violation.

More recommendations next month.

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