

HOA Board Survival Guide: 10 Rules for a Sane, Effective Board

A short guide for volunteer directors who want to govern well without letting the association take over their lives.

Good boards are not the boards that personally do everything. They are the boards that create clear decisions, reliable systems, documented follow-through, and reasonable boundaries.

1. Govern; do not become the maintenance department.

Board members should decide priorities, budgets, policy, and major commitments. Routine execution belongs in a system or with delegated support.

2. If it is not documented, the next board will have to rediscover it.

Keep decisions, contracts, project history, and open items with the association.

3. One problem should have one owner.

Every open item needs a responsible person and a next date. “The board is handling it” is not a workflow.

4. Read the financials before there is a crisis.

Cash, reserves, delinquencies, unpaid bills, and upcoming obligations should be visible throughout the year.

5. Compare scope before price.

A low bid for less work is not a better bid. Make vendors price the same problem.

6. Big projects need big-project management.

Major repairs create extraordinary coordination. Treat that work as a project, not an extra line on the monthly agenda.

7. Use professionals for professional opinions.

Management coordinates. Attorneys advise on law. Engineers/architects advise on technical matters. Brokers advise on coverage. Accountants advise on accounting/tax matters.

8. Communicate before people invent their own story.

Owners tolerate difficult news better when the board explains what is known, what is not known, what happens next, and when they will hear more.

9. Build for the next board, not just the current one.

A healthy association can survive turnover because records, calendars, procedures, and responsibilities are not trapped with one person.

10. Protect volunteer time.

If capable board members are burning out, the association is under-supported. Add systems, delegate administration, or hire help before the board becomes the bottleneck.

ONE QUESTION TO ASK AT EVERY BOARD MEETING

What are we doing ourselves that does not actually require a board member?

Have one issue your board wants to sort out? Bring it to PRG in a free 30-minute Board Problem-Solving Session.

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