



Wolf Rifkin Shapiro, Schulman & Rabkin, LLP Perspective

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PERCEPTIONS BECOME REALITY

If we are to attract and retain the type of individuals we want in our community, we must insure that the community they live in is an inducement, not a detriment.

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COMMITTEE PHOBIA?

By: Sara E. Barry, CMCA Director of Operations for Wolf, Rifkin, Shapiro, Schulman & Rabkin, LLP

Potentially, a community association can be run for a while with reasonable success without reliance on committees, but for long-term effectiveness, an association must have strong committees. The intent of this article is to share our opinion on why you should have committees and how to get and keep productive committees and committee members.



were inventing the wheel, let alone re-inventing it? Any effective committee has a clear statement of its purposes in written form and understands it through discussion with the President, designated Board member or the committee chairman.

Committee Charters (or job descriptions) give any committee a head start towards reaching its goal. Any group's effectiveness is directly proportional to the understanding of its purpose and what is expected of group.

We have heard it said that "A committee is a group that keeps minutes and wastes hours". Someone countered that by saying, "What committee do you know that keeps minutes." Both of these individuals have not had positive experiences with participation on or the use of committees.

What Makes a Good Committee?

How many times have you served on a committee and felt that you

While the size of the committee is important its work is often related to the direction it is given and the tools provided. Committees are an excellent way to pool information and eliminate errors as our life experiences are all unique and allow us to contribute considerably to the ultimate goal.

It is critical that either the Manager or one of the knowledgeable Board members meet with each committee at its first organiza-

tional meeting to ensure that the committee has the adequate tools. Many committees have met for months without fully understanding what they have been expected to accomplish. There is obviously much resentment on the committee members' part when they feel as if they have worked very hard to get to a particular point and are then told that their actions were taken in vain.

Below are a few of the other qualifications of a good committee:

- 1) A good committee believes in and respects democratic values.
- 2) Has a responsible leader who guides the committee process.
- 3) Has a Board liaison to work with it as advisor.
- 4) Has carefully selected members who are interested and qualified.
- 5) Plans carefully the work to be done.
- 6) Works through its assignments one step at a time.
- 7) Has a sense of priorities and of timing.
- 8) Has compatible members who participate in deliberation and discussion.
- 9) Works as a team rather than as individual performers.
- 10) Has an adequate agenda for each meeting.
- 11) Keep minutes of every meeting and provides them to the Board of Directors.
- 12) Keeps records of the committee in an organized manner.
- 13) Gets an infusion of new blood periodically to keep the momentum and enthusiasm going.
- 14) Evaluates itself regularly.
- 15) Provides basic satisfaction for its members.

What Makes A Good Committee Chairperson?

Any good committee works as a team rather than as individual performers and has a good chairperson who:

- 1) Starts the meeting on time and ends the meeting on time.
- 2) Allows enough time for the group to get well acquainted.
- 3) Sees to it that as many members as possible participate in the discussion.
- 4) Keeps the talk directed to the topic and towards the objective.
- 5) Tries to avoid being an expert, but does take part in the deliberations without being too aggressive. An active chairman tends to do better as a guide and leader rather than those who play a more passive part.
- 6) Helps the committee by summarizing the decisions from time to time.
- 7) Has a vision, maintains objectivity and does not try to enhance with his/or her interests.
- 8) Is keenly aware of the dignity of every person in the group and never says anything negative about an individual.
- 9) Encourages the committee members to express themselves and does not reject or minimize their contributions.
- 10) Is seen as sincere and thoughtful by the committee.
- 11) Summarizes the meeting at its conclusion and the actions to be taken by the individual members as their assignments.

Committee

An assembly of persons to whom the consideration of any matter is committed or referred.

The Qualities of a Good Committee Member

Finding the model committee members is of course an ideal, like finding model Board members. We may not find all of the qualities in one person, but as a group can fill all of the qualities.

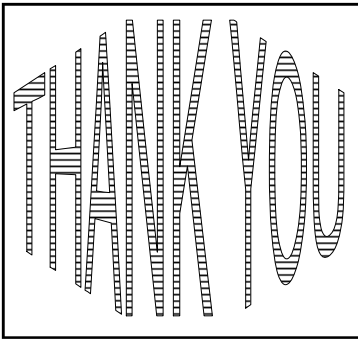
Some of those qualities are:

- 1) Receptive and open to ideas.
- 2) Is a good listener.
- 3) Does not speak over other participants.
- 4) Encourages other to participate and express his or her opinion.
- 5) Has perspective and a vision.
- 6) Is familiar with the aims of the community

association and sympathetic to it.

- 7) Is able to express himself.
- 8) Enjoys working in a group and the give and take of committee discussion.
- 9) Is willing to give the necessary time to meeting attendance.
- 10) Has good judgment and is not narrow or arrogant.
- 11) Can think in terms of the broad welfare of the group rather than his own professional or company interests.

The Committee members should all be knowledgeable of the community association's practices, policies, and procedures. Giving each member a copy of past committee minutes, work product or results help the committee to focus on their direction as well.



Recognition for Volunteer Committee Members

One of the most overlooked areas for volunteers is recognition for a job well done (or even a job done).

Board meetings and annual meetings are a great time to acknowledge the time and talents that have been given to your community. The drive for many people is getting recognition for a job well done. They do not expect pay or presents, but rather recognition that he or she gave up part of their personal life for the betterment of the association. Recognition in front of one's peers is reward enough for many individuals.

Certificates of appreciate can be awarded for those individuals who serve or served on the committees. As unpaid volunteers the acknowl-

edgement of appreciation should be the least of the recognition that these individual receive.

Properly Arm and Direct Your Committees

Unless you are willing to properly arm your committees with proper direction and instructions, don't be surprised if they fail.

Below are a few of the ways to ensure the failure of you committees:

- 1) Pick a poor leader. Make sure he/she doesn't keep discussions on the subject, doesn't keep things moving and most important, NEVER compliments or motivates others in the group.
- 2) Muddy your goals. Make sure members of the group are unclear as to what it is they are actually doing.
- 3) Don't take assignments seriously. To make sure this happens motive your group with a general LACK of enthusiasm and commitment.
- 4) Concentrate on the question, "What is it we are supposed to be doing?" But never answer it.
- 5) If any of the committees make a specific recommendation, make sure the Board ignores them and doesn't give them feedback.
- 6) Waste as much time as possible, concentrating on unrelated or unproductive discussions, assuring that no consensus or decisions can be reached.
- 7) Be sure to put at least one person on each committee who will totally dominate the group; put two such members on each committee for some really sensational arguments.
- 8) Never prepare for a committee meeting. Shun written agendas and handouts which might actually clarify the objective or assignment.
- 9) Never take any action; rather use all of your time in circuitous discussions which preclude decision and action.
- 10) Always have a "hidden agenda" item up your sleeve.



**WOLF RIFKIN SHAPIRO, SCHULMAN
& RABKIN, LLP**
PERSPECTIVE



3556 E. Russell Rd. #200
Las Vegas, NV 89120

Phone: 702-341-5200
Fax: 702-341-5300
Seblv@aol.com

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**Wolf Rifkin Shapiro & Schulman,
Rabkin, LLP** is based in Las Vegas, Nevada
and represents community associations *in all areas of
real estate law* including:

- ▶ Preparation of Amendments to the CC&Rs and By-laws.
- ▶ Enforcement of CC&Rs, By-laws and Rules and Regulations.
- ▶ Insurance Related Claims
- ▶ Representation in Mediation, Arbitration and Litigation in Dispute with Owners.
- ▶ Construction Defect Litigation



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