



CONDO CONNECTION NEWSLETTER



An **Associa**® Company

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Message from the President

Back to the Basics

Since opening our doors 24+ years ago, we have found that success often comes when Board members are empowered with tools and knowledge that can help them fulfill their duties. That's why we've focused our 2019 newsletters and free Board seminar offerings on sharing our expertise with you.

For our most recent newsletter, we asked our Condo Managers what our board members and homeowners are struggling with the most in their communities. We took their ideas, feedback, and questions and created some practical advice that can help educate your board and improve your community. So, whether you're getting some push back on new rules, want to help educate residents on tips for living in your community or need to rethink your parking situation, we have resources that can help you!

Sincerely,

Brad Wells
President - Wilson, Blanchard Management Inc.
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“Breaking Bad” In Condos

Won’t Keep the Peace

In a perfect condominium, all that live on the property abide by the Rules and there is no need to issue violation letters or to verbally remind people of said Rules. We all know perfection does not exist, but perhaps working towards that objective can greatly improve and contribute to the goal of harmonious living among residents on a property. So, how do we improve Rule abidance in the condominium? How do owners know the Rules to be able to abide by them? And what about that board member that always parks overnight in visitor parking? How do we tell them that Rules exist for all in the corporation and that there are no exceptions? Finally, what does a manager do when all else fails and what options exist to address owners that just want to break bad? Luckily you are reading this informative article that discusses all of these things!

The Rules of a condominium are commonly referred to as ‘house rules.’ Their purpose is to help owners get along with one another, to protect the condominium property and its assets, but most importantly to protect the owners’ right of quiet enjoyment within their respective units. Each condominium comes with its own set of Rules which differ from property to property. The Rules are initially created by the developer and submitted with the disclosure statement prior to the condominium’s registration. Moving forward, the board of directors can decide to change, remove or modify a rule granted the rule is not contested through a requisitioned meeting of owners.

Communication is the Key to Success

A common complaint among owners who are singled out is “Well I didn’t know I couldn’t do that” which is also commonly followed by “Would you mind giving me a copy of the Rules?” In my experience, not many owners review their Rules before moving into a condo. Questions I am asked frequently usually involve pet restrictions and not necessarily whether Hibachi barbecues are allowed on the balconies since they don’t have a propane tank attached to them.

Wouldn’t it be great if someone explained the Rules to owners verbally? Perhaps going over them point-by-point? One idea to communicate the Rules is to host an annual info session where a manager can go over the Rules of the condominium and answer or clarify any concerns people may have, as well as explain why certain rules exist. This type of exercise serves more than one purpose as it assists in the creation of a community environment on the property, supports a common ground between the manager and owners and (let’s face it) can certainly eliminate some work for managers. For even more community involvement, managers can also ask a resident that knows a different language to perhaps assist in these sessions so that a larger audience can be included. Rules can also be communicated within newsletters, bulletins, friendly reminder mass emails, posted on the condo community website as well as other methods of mass media available.

The Rules are for Everyone

It seems every time I address a violation with one owner I am told of other violations by other owners, building staff, visiting vendors and sometimes even board members. The times a manager hears of board members not abiding by the Rules can be most awkward as directors are the ones that should certainly know better. In addition to the obvious, a board member that consistently breaks the Rules without repercussions can be perceived as having preferential treatment. This is never a good perception. Letters should be issued to all owners in violation of the Rules and are routinely done as a three-step process. The first letter advises and cites the violation to the owner and perhaps gives a date of compliance. The second letter reminds the owner of the violation again, and refers back to the previous letter that was sent coupled with the communication of a more aggressive compliance date. Finally, the third letter does not offer a compliance date but a note that should the corporation receive yet another complaint, the matter will be brought to the corporation’s solicitor to deal with and all costs involved will be the responsibility of the unit owner. It is important for managers not to forget to issue violation letters to board members as well, to further drive home the point that the Rules are for everyone and that board members are only such within board meetings. Once a board member leaves a meeting, she or he is an owner just like everyone else.

It is also imperative that a manager stresses the importance of the Rules with other people on site such as building staff, the superintendent and other people that the community is involved with every day. Leading by example is one of the best forms of non-verbal communication too, so the better staff and vendors know the Rules the more they will be able to communicate them.

Effective Enforcement

If three letters have been issued, the solicitor has become involved, and the owner continues to violate a Rule that consistently disturbs other owners on the property, the last option that the corporation has is to go to mediation. Mediation and/or arbitration is mandatory under the Condominium Act, 1998 with respect to disagreements between owners and the corporation when it comes to the declaration, bylaws and rules. The purpose of mediation is to eliminate any confusion and provide clarity among the parties, to address the concerns of each party and put into consideration the situation as a whole and suggest resolutions that all parties can agree upon. This statutory process begins, usually with an informal meeting with all the respective parties, but could become complicated (and costly) if people act unreasonably. The point here is that there is a process that must be followed by all members of a condominium community; often this is an opportunity for everyone to hear each other’s perspective on the issue and to resolve the situation in its entirety.

To live harmoniously is not always easy in the best of situations. Amplify that by living on a property with strangers that come from all different backgrounds, beliefs and life experiences as well as having their own internal set of rules that are perfectly fine in their own minds. Some days managers can feel as though they’re herding cats as they try to manage the building and staff as well as owners that are disrupting the community. At times where managers can become exasperated, it is helpful to know there are systems in place that can ultimately address the issues and provide a direction for when property management needs to take care of owners that are hell bent on breaking bad.

Written By:
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EVERYTHING YOUR BOARD NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT PARKING & ENFORCEMENT

Many communities struggle to manage parking rules and enforcement. For townhomes and condos with limited spaces, the problems are only amplified with additional limits on guests and times of day you can park. If your condo needs to rethink its parking policies, we can help. We’ve advised countless communities on how to solve their parking problems and we’re here to share that advice with you. Keep reading to discover how to create parking and towing rules that can help restore peace to your association.

CONDO PARKING RULES

We see the same scenario repeated throughout many communities. A condo corporation passes a new rule and residents choose to ignore it. Believe it or not, there’s an effective way to create functional parking regulations that visitors will follow, and residents will embrace.

WHAT’S YOUR PARKING PROBLEM?

Rules and regulations should help manage widespread community issues, and the same goes for parking. Take the time as a Board to think through your current parking problems and carefully develop a solution that’ll enhance your community without being overly restrictive. Below are some of the most common community parking rules and how they can help.

PROHIBITED VEHICLE TYPES

Many parking regulations aim to limit the type of vehicle which can be parked to help maintain a look and feel for the neighborhood. Prohibited vehicles often include RVs, campers, boats, large work trucks, and trailers.

RESTRICTED PARKING AREAS & TIMES

In high-rise, low-rise and townhome complexes, owners typically have designated spots to park their cars, but even single-family home communities will often provide parking guidelines. Some communities restrict street parking to unclog the roadways and maintain the look of the association, while others may only allow parking in garages and other designated areas, including visitor parking spaces that are restricted to non-residents only.

ABANDONED & NON-WORKING VEHICLES

Many communities limit the amount of time a vehicle can be parked in one spot. This rule helps discourage residents from parking or abandoning non-working cars in areas that are inconvenient for their neighbours and the community.

PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC ROADS

Once you’ve identified your community’s parking problems, you’ll be well on your way. However, before you can roll out your solution, you’ll need to do some additional research. Enforcement policies for parking will depend primarily on whether the corporation owns the streets.

PRIVATE ROADS

If your condo owns and operates the roads inside your community, then you’ll have a lot of flexibility when it comes to parking enforcement. You should be able to regulate where vehicles can park, and even restrict some kinds of commercial and recreational vehicles from entering or parking overnight.

PUBLIC ROADS

If your community uses publicly-maintained roadways, then your parking rules will be limited by local by-laws. As such, parking violations that occur on public streets typically fall outside of the condo corporation’s authority. However, some cities may still allow condo corporations to pass and enforce some community restrictions. If your community is experiencing widespread parking violations on public streets within the community, then consider forming a parking committee. This committee can educate themselves on local parking ordinances and work with local authorities to help resolve any recurring issues.

ARE YOU PROVIDING PARKING ALTERNATIVES?

Overly restrictive rules can be difficult to enforce, and parking regulations are no exception. If your Board decides to restrict where and when residents and their guests can park their vehicles, then don’t forget to provide viable alternatives. Creating clearly marked spaces for guests and residents will help everyone follow the rules and limit frustrations before they have the chance to occur.

ENFORCEMENT

Once you’ve developed well-researched parking rules for your community, you’ll need a way to enforce them. Start by creating an enforcement plan that’s shared with homeowners well in advance of implementation.

GIVE RESIDENTS FAIR WARNING

Regardless of your local laws, it’s always a good idea to give everyone fair warning before their car gets ticketed (or towed). Posting signs can help but be sensitive to how these signs might look inside your community. Sharing new parking rules in your community newsletter, website, or at owner meetings will also help get the word out.

PROTECT YOUR BOARD

If your Board does decide to tow, proceed with caution. Do your due diligence to make sure neither your Board nor your residents will be subject to unreasonably high fees and fines. If you allow a tow company to charge unreasonable amounts, then you’ll see a lot of pushback from your community. To avoid any issues, read the fine print, negotiate fees ahead of time, and ask to see the tow company’s license and insurance before entering into any agreement or contract.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Parking enforcement can be a tight rope walk. However, if you put in the work, your parking rules will enhance, not hurt, your community. Remember, everyone wants the best for their neighbourhood. Keep an open dialogue with residents to find common-sense parking solutions that everyone can support.

CONDO 101: TIPS FOR LIVING IN A CONDOMINIUM COMMUNITY

Millions of people around the world live in condominium corporations. The types of communities can differ by location and building type, but in general, being a condo owner provides a unique set of opportunities. If you're looking to enhance your community living experience, then we've identified five simple ways to get the most out of your condo community.

1. Know the rules and respect them.

Hopefully, you got to know the rules before buying your condo, but if not, it's never too late to start. Take a close look at your governing documents and familiarize yourself with your community's rules and regulations. If anything is unclear, don't hesitate to ask for help. Your Board of Directors or Condominium Manager will be happy to answer any questions you have and fill in any missing details. Once you have a proper understanding of the rules, do your best to follow them. Almost all potential problems of living in a condominium will be avoided by living within the rules.

2. Try to be a good neighbour.

Following the rules will also help keep a good relationship between you and your neighbours. If you suspect your neighbours of ignoring neighbourhood guidelines, like parking or noise violations, don't jump to any conclusions. It may be wise to talk to your neighbour face-to-face before ever reporting them to your association. Either way, keeping open lines of communication between you and your neighbours is always a good idea. Also, don't hesitate to reach out to them and invite them to condo meetings and activities.

3. Get out and enjoy everything your community has to offer.

Living in a condo community isn't free, but often it does have some perks. If you're paying monthly dues to help maintain neighbourhood parks, pools, or other amenities, then get out and enjoy them with your family. One of the main reasons people want to live in a condo is to take advantage of the added events and amenities. Getting out and enjoying the extra things your community offers will likely improve your sense of community and make your experience of living there far more enjoyable.

4. Actively participate and volunteer with your community.

If you're looking for additional ways to get involved in your community, your condo may provide volunteer opportunities. Start by attending your corporation's AGM and getting to know your current board members. Often, your board will have additional committees for activities that you can help run. Likewise, you may want to consider volunteering on the Board.

5. Stay connected and communicate often.

Condo communities are always changing and adapting to meet the needs of their residents. While your Board may try its best to keep you informed, it's a good idea to do all that you can to stay connected. Make sure you are signed up to receive any community communications, whether it be through the mail, emails, text messages, or phone calls. Additionally, many communities will also use online apps and websites to send out notifications. Whichever way your community communicates, make sure you are plugged in and not missing any relevant news or announcements.



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