

HOA Successfully Ends Infighting Between Board Members

A community made up of 15 single-family homes located in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, was experiencing severe infighting between its board members. This conflict was primarily based on board members having different interpretations of the provisions within the association's governing documents and how to enforce them.

SITUATION

At the core of this issue was board members' misinterpretation of governing documents and some of these misinterpretations leading to compliance issues. These misunderstandings also led to issues with elections, insults being thrown back and forth on social media, and the board splitting into factions.

- One board member began consulting an attorney in an attempt to get the attorney to agree with their interpretation of the documents.
- Board members weren't aware of the proper procedures for amending governing documents and therefore were trying to change them through improper means.
- Some board meetings had to be held in a public outdoor area to lessen the chances of confrontations getting out of hand.
- In addition to the community manager, the CAMS regional vice president had to be present at some board meetings in order to ensure everyone remained calm and business was handled appropriately.
- The board realized that the tension they were experiencing amongst themselves was causing disruption throughout the community and distrust among the membership. They knew they needed to solve the issues they were having for the betterment of the community as a whole.

SOLUTION

At the height of the conflict, CAMS remained neutral as to not upset any individual board member but rather listened to each person's concerns.

- The community manager immediately recognized that at the core of this issue was a lack of understanding of board member roles and the community's governing documents.
- Once the board members realized this, they became open to being educated on the basics of how community associations should function as well as the provisions within their governing documents.

SOLUTION (CONT.)

- CAMS as well as the association's attorney sat down with the board president and provided a detailed explanation of the governing documents, how to interpret them, and the role the board and each member plays within the association.
- The community manager explained to board members when their interpretations of governing documents were incorrect and would do research alongside the attorney when necessary to provide board members with the information they needed.
- CAMS' representatives provided a calming presence for the board and guided them towards efficiency, working together as a team, and presenting a united front.

OUTCOME

Once the board members became educated on their governing documents, much of their anxiety was alleviated which led to a significant decrease in the infighting they had been experiencing.

- The education that was provided by CAMS and attorneys has empowered the board to reach out when they have questions instead of making assumptions on document interpretations. This is something they were not doing before.
- Even when disagreements arise, the board is now able to handle them in a professional and civil manner.
- Correspondence between the board and CAMS is no longer argumentative but rather seeking assistance in understanding provisions of their documents. They are now asking questions before reacting.
- Meetings have now become more efficient.
- The board has been appreciative of the assistance they've received from CAMS in solving their issues.

Understanding community association governing documents is difficult by its very nature, especially for those who are new to being board members. CAMS is a strong advocate of education both for our team members as well as the boards we serve. By educating our managers on how to interpret governing documents – and how to reach out to other industry professionals when needed – they are equipped to then assist board members in understanding the documents that govern their associations. In addition, CAMS provides multiple educational opportunities for board members, all aimed at helping them understand the various aspects of being a volunteer community leader. Having the skills to educate others, as well as the willingness to educate yourself, is key in any aspect of life, and at CAMS we understand the value of providing this service to our clients.

“

When CAMS took over our community we were divided. It seemed as though the community was against the board. Everything was filtered through the portal CAMS provided. We stopped using our private email we set up and we stopped responding directly to homeowners when they privately emailed each of us. This enabled the community to see that there was a third party listening to them and providing responses, ultimately lessening the divide and helping to get our community back on track with allowing the board to focus on managing the association. The community manager's experience and knowledge really proved to be a godsend!

- Thea M.



Call for details.

Does your community have the guidance it needs?