



JUST ELECTED? NOW WHAT?

A GUIDE FOR NEWLY ELECTED BOARD
MEMBERS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS



Our City strives to meet the needs of all residents who choose to call Orlando home. To do this, I have made it a priority for the Neighborhood Relations team to organize, support, mentor and guide residents and neighborhood organizations in their effort to keep Orlando a great place to live, work and play. In 2014, we launched iLead, a comprehensive neighborhood-training program that informs, connects and involves our neighborhood leaders through a series of interactive guides, videos, webinars and workshops. I encourage you to use the iLead program to build and sustain your successful neighborhood organization.

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer

Guides



- Board Orientation and Operations
- Communication Tools
- Effective Meetings
- Engaging the Next Generation of Leaders
- Event Planning
- Ice Breakers
- Leadership Skills
- Neighborhood Grants
- Parliamentary Procedures made Simple
- Writing Your Neighborhood History

iLead is a comprehensive program that provides you with the tools to inform, connect and involve your neighbors through a variety of trainings, such as the iLead Leadership Series, Lunch and Learn and Community Connection Workshops. These tools cover topics such as how to effectively hold meetings, how to utilize a variety of communication tools and how to engage the next generation of leaders. iLead is your one stop shop for online leadership training.



This guide is the results of countless questions over many years from new board members. It is divided into three sections. The first section is the basics or starting on the ground floor. Section two is for board members of voluntary homeowner, neighborhood or tenant associations. The third section is devoted to board members of condominium or mandatory homeowner associations.

So let's get started.

Congratulations on being elected to your association's board of directors. First, there is the feeling of elation at what you have just accomplished. Then it hits you. Oh my goodness, what have I gotten myself into? So, how can you be an effective board member?

WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?

This is a question our Neighborhood Relations team gets asked all time by newly elected board members. Some of the benefits of serving as a board member are below:

- investing and giving back to your neighborhood – great way to increase your civic engagement;
- protecting one of your largest assets - your home;
- contributing to the quality of life in your neighborhood;
- enhancing, practicing or learning new skills, such as public speaking, conducting meetings, volunteer management, problem solving, relationship building, communication, conflict resolution...oh, can't leave out patience, knowing when to speak up or be quiet and diplomacy
- meeting people and developing new friends; and
- opportunity to work with City of Orlando elected officials and staff.



SECTION ONE: THE GROUND FLOOR

Here are some basics to build upon for your success.

CITY OF ORLANDO IS YOUR RESOURCE AND CHEERLEADER

You can count on the City's Office of Communications and Neighborhood Relations for a variety of resources and assistance to make your board service a rewarding and productive experience. Our Neighborhood Relations team exists to serve neighborhood organizations like yours. Call this team at 407.246.2169 to speak with the Neighborhood Relations Coordinator assigned to your neighborhood. We are your training resource for managing your neighborhood organization. Through our iLead training program, we offer workshops, guides and videos that deepen your understanding of your role as a volunteer board member.

In addition to this guide, there are three guides worth reading at this point with your board

1. Board of Directors Operations
2. New Board Orientation for Neighborhood Organizations
3. Parliamentary Procedures Made Easy



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Read your association's governing documents, such as its articles of incorporation, bylaws and rules and policies. If your association is incorporated as a not-for-profit in the State of Florida, you need to be familiar with Florida Statutes 617-Not-for-Profit. Condominium board members need to know Florida Statutes 617 and 718-Condominiums. Mandatory homeowner association board members need to read Florida Statutes 617 and 720-Homeowners Associations. **See page 3** in this guide for the definition of a mandatory homeowners association.

Reading and comprehending your association's governing documents is the first step in understanding your role, your board authority and how the association operates. Be sure you have hard copies of these documents in a binder or electronically filed on your computer. Use these documents as reference at all your meetings.

ASK FOR A BOARD ORIENTATION

Hopefully, your association has a board orientation. If they don't, which by the way isn't unusual, then ask your board president to conduct an orientation for you and any other new board members. For an example of a board orientation, read our "New Board Orientation for Neighborhood Organizations" guide posted on the iLead guides page at orlando.gov/ilead.

A thorough board orientation helps you and other new directors become quickly engaged in the work of the association. When done right, an orientation can be motivational and function as a building block to an organization's effectiveness and achievements. It also helps build a working relationship among all the board members.

GET TO KNOW YOUR FELLOW BOARD MEMBERS

Share your background with your other board members. We know this can be hard from some people to toot their own horn, but it's important that all the board members understand the skills, experience and knowledge each director brings to the board...so toot your own horn, without bragging or going over the top.

Share your professional and civic experience, what skills and knowledge you are able to contribute to the board. Ask your fellow board members to share this information about them, too. This is a great way to start team building!

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Now that you are on your board, you have become a role model in your neighborhood, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, whether you like it or not. That's right, your neighbors will look to you for guidance, knowledge and help and will watch how you conduct yourself and how you maintain your property. So, be a good role model and lead by example; by doing this you will build a reputation of a credible and productive board member. Stay positive, listen, be prepared for meetings in advance, read meeting and committee minutes, follow the agenda and help promote being respectful and civil to each other.

CONTRIBUTE TO A WELCOMING AND ORGANIZED ATMOSPHERE

Let's take your leading by example a little further and ask you to assist with creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere at all the association's meetings and events. It doesn't take a lot to do this, other than being intentionally friendly and welcoming to all. Help to introduce neighbors to each other and go out of your way to meet new neighbors and network them with others.

To contribute to an organized atmosphere, be sure you have done your homework and have read the minutes in advance, even if you don't get the minutes until the meeting, take the time to read them before the start of the meeting; take your seat at least 60 seconds before the meeting starts and encourage the other directors and officers to do the same, starting on time demonstrates a respect for everyone's time.



VOLUNTEER

If you aren't serving in an officers' position, why not volunteer to serve on a committee or lead a specific project.

WHAT IS A VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION?

- A **voluntary neighborhood organization** is a neighborhood association, civic association, resident association or tenants association. And, in some cases in the City of Orlando, it is also a homeowners association.
- A **voluntary neighborhood organization** is a group of residents, renters and property owners, who advocate for and organize activities in a neighborhood. These organizations may have dues.
- In many cases, businesses within the organization's boundaries may join the neighborhood organization too. Bottom line by living or buying property in the boundaries of a voluntary neighborhood organization, you do not have to join the association or be required to pay dues.
- A **mandatory organization** is a condominium (COA) or homeowners association (HOA) where property owners automatically become members of the association and are required to pay dues and special assessments.
- In this type of neighborhood organization, homeowners don't have a choice of not joining or not paying dues and special assessments. By purchasing a condominium or home in a mandatory HOA, the owner is agreeing to obey all the condominium or HOA rules and regulations. A condominium or a mandatory HOA has the legal authority to enforce rules and regulations as defined by the Declaration of Condominium or the HOA's covenants, conditions, and restrictions (CC&Rs) and by Florida Statutes.
- A mandatory association may own and maintain common property, such as entryway features, perimeter walls, pool, tennis and/or basketball courts, etc. In order to maintain this common property, the mandatory association was created by the original landowner as a legal entity with the authority to collect dues to maintain the common property and the operation of the association.
- In addition to the association's articles of incorporation, bylaws and declarations and deed restrictions, condominiums are governed by Florida Statutes 617 and 718 and mandat



SECTION TWO: Voluntary Neighborhood Organization Board Members

BOARD NOTEBOOK OR ELECTRONIC FILES

Create a notebook or an electronic folder containing key documents that will help you govern your association. Examples of what your board notebook may contain are:

1. Articles of Incorporation (if incorporated)
2. Bylaws
3. Budget/financial information
4. Board contact information
5. List of committees, chairs and contact information
6. Meeting agendas and minutes
7. Contacts, such as your City Commissioner, your Neighborhood Relations Team, your Police Community Liaison/Crime Prevention Officer, your County Commissioner, etc.

YOU ARE IN SALES

Membership recruitment is everyone's job, especially the board of directors. As a voluntary association, your members are the life blood of your association. There is power in numbers. Since your neighbors don't have to join the association, it is important for your association to demonstrate its value and need for members. Ask neighbors to join the association, sometimes that all it takes, a personal invitation from someone they know.

BE POSITIVE – ITS CATCHING

As you read in the first section, lead by example. Your own positive attitude can be a great help in setting the tone of your association. Staying positive generates good energy that may attract and keep members.

KEEP IN MIND...

- Board notebook or electronic files
- Operate with transparency
- Your attitude is infectious
- Leadership skills to hone include listening, consensus building, diplomacy, integrity.





SECTION THREE: Condominium and Mandatory Homeowner Association Board Members

REQUIRED – READING AND UNDERSTANDING GOVERNING DOCUMENTS AND FLORIDA LAW.

Within 90 days of being elected to the board of your mandatory condominium or homeowners association, Florida law requires you to certify in writing to the association's secretary that you have read your association's Declaration of Condominium or Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs), articles of incorporation, bylaws, and rules and current written rules and policies; that you will work to uphold such documents and policies to the best of your ability; and that you will faithfully discharge your fiduciary responsibility to the association's members.

If you do not do this within the first 90 days of your election to the board, Florida law requires you to be suspended from the board until you comply with the requirement.

There are two ways you can complete this certification and comply with Florida law:

1. attend a board certification course that is approved by the State of Florida Department of Business & Professional Regulation. This certification course is approximately three hours and participants receive a certificate of completion at the end of the course; or,
2. sign an affidavit saying you read all your association's governing documents and the appropriate Florida Statute, either Florida Statute 718 for condominiums or Florida Statute 720 for homeowner associations.

You will need to give the educational course certificate or the signed affidavit to your association secretary to keep on file as long as you are a board member.



The educational certificate or written certification is valid and does not have to be resubmitted as long as you serve on the board without interruption. Florida Statutes requires your association to retain your educational certificate or written certification for inspection by the members for 5 years after your election.

Please note that if your association fails to have the educational certificate or written certification on file that this failure does not affect the validity of any board action. This training requirement is under Florida Statute 718.112 (4.b) for condominiums and Florida Statute 720.3033 for homeowner associations.

The City of Orlando encourages you to consider using option 1. By attending a board certification workshop, you are learning about specific Florida Statutes that outline your legal and fiduciary responsibilities, and gaining greater insight into your role and responsibilities as a board member. Plus it's an opportunity for you to ask questions and get clarification about your board responsibilities.

These board certification classes are normally free and in the Orlando area are routinely conducted by attorneys that specialize in condominium and mandatory homeowners associations or community/property management companies that help manage mandatory associations.

The City of Orlando and Orange County Government offer this training through the Community Connections workshop series at least once a year. For the Community Connections schedule, visit Orlando.gov/neighborhoods.

GOT THE PICTURE?

We encourage you to take advantage of the City's resources and training. Remember, we are here to help you manage your neighborhood. Visit Orlando.gov/neighborhoods for a variety of resources for associations.

STAY INFORMED, CONNECTED AND INVOLVED

orlando.gov/neighborhoods

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