



NEW BOARD MEMBER GUIDE



Essential Governance, Finance, and Operations
Standards for New HOA Directors.



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What does an HOA Board member actually do?

As a new HOA Board member, your job is to help guide your community. You don't need special experience, just a willingness to make fair decisions and look out for the best interests of your neighbors.

Your core responsibilities include:

Knowing and upholding the governing documents (the rules the community agreed to follow)

Reviewing the association's finances, including budgets and long-term planning

Selecting the best vendor to care for common areas and other areas of association responsibility such as landscaping, pools, playgrounds, or common buildings

Each Board officer (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary) has specific duties which will be covered in the following pages, but all Board members work together and share responsibility for the association's overall success.



Your main job is simple:

Lead with fairness, follow the governing documents, and work together to keep the community running well.

How HOA Management Companies Help

In most communities, the Board partners with a professional HOA management company. The Board votes; management executes. The Board sets policies, approves budgets, and makes all major decisions. The management company then oversees the day-to-day operations, including administrative tasks, financial reporting, maintenance coordination, vendor oversight, and homeowner communication. They serve as an expert resource, guiding while implementing the Board's direction.

If Your HOA is Self-Managed

In self-managed communities, the Board performs both the governance role and the operational tasks typically handled by a management company. This significantly increases the workload, placing responsibilities such as collecting assessments, coordinating repairs, maintaining records, and managing vendors directly on the Board.

BOARD VS. MANAGEMENT: WHO DOES WHAT?

The Board of Directors

- Sets policies and community priorities
- Makes all final decisions
- Enforces governing documents
- Oversees finances and long-term planning
- Directs committees and approves major projects

The Management Company

- Implements Board decisions
- Handles daily operations and administration
- Coordinates maintenance and vendors
- Supports financial reporting and budgeting
- Advises the Board with professional expertise

What are the roles of each Board officer?



President

Board Leader & Facilitator

Key Responsibilities:

- Leads Board meetings and sets agendas
- Ensures Board decisions are carried out
- Signs contracts after Board approval
- Represents the HOA in official matters
- Works with management to implement policies



Vice President

Support & Continuity

Key Responsibilities:

- Steps in for the President when needed
- Understands governing documents
- Oversees assigned projects or committees
- Provides leadership support across initiatives



Secretary

Records & Documentation

Key Responsibilities:

- Prepares agendas and takes minutes (this could vary by community)
- Maintains official association records
- Documents decisions and actions
- May manage newsletters or website updates



Treasurer

Financial Oversight

Key Responsibilities:

- Monitors budget and financial reports
- Reviews expenses and disbursements
- Provides monthly financial updates
- Advises the Board on financial decisions



Member at Large

Flexible support where the Board needs it most.

Key Responsibilities:

- Full voting Board member
 - Assists with projects & committees
 - Adds perspective and capacity
-

How HOA Management Companies Lighten the Load

In an ideal, well-supported community, the Board's job becomes strategic, collaborative, and manageable. Here's what that looks like:



Board members spend their time discussing priorities, reviewing proposals, and making informed decisions; not chasing paperwork or fixing problems themselves.



Management provides board packets, reports, and recommendations in advance. Meetings stay on track, follow an agenda, and end with clear decisions and next steps.



The Board sets direction. Management implements it. Board members avoid burnout because they aren't completing day-to-day work.



Once the Board votes, management handles vendor coordination, communication, resident updates, progress tracking, and reporting. Removing the need for the Board to micromanage.



Management acts as a buffer, so Board members aren't responsible for disputes, complaints, enforcement, repairs, or financial tasks.

A well-run community where Board members can serve effectively without becoming overwhelmed.

What legal and fiduciary duties must I understand?

As an HOA Board member, you are a fiduciary, legally responsible for acting in the best interests of the association and its members. Fiduciary duties come from state law and the community's governing documents and form the foundation of ethical, responsible Board leadership.

Your core fiduciary duties include:

Duty of Loyalty:

Put the association's interests above personal or private interests and avoid conflicts.

Duty of Care:

Make informed, thoughtful decisions using reasonable care, diligence, and good judgment.

Duty of Good Faith:

Act honestly, transparently, and in alignment with the governing documents.

Duty of Disclosure:

Share relevant information and disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

These duties exist to protect the association and ensure Board decisions are fair, accountable, and legally defensible. Violating fiduciary duties can create significant legal and financial risk, so every Board member must understand and uphold them at all times.



Fiduciary Duty Checklist for HOA Board Members

You can refer to this checklist regularly to confirm that your decisions, actions, and conduct meet the fiduciary obligations required of every HOA Board member.

- Put the association's interests first
- Avoid decisions that benefit you, friends, or family
- Disclose conflicts of interest immediately
- Recuse yourself when a conflict exists
- Never use your position for personal gain
- Review packets and financials before voting
- Ask questions when information is unclear
- Base decisions on facts and governing documents
- Attend meetings consistently
- Ensure actions follow state law and community rules
- Act honestly, ethically, and transparently
- Follow policies and governing documents
- Support long-term community interests
- Maintain confidentiality when required
- Communicate clearly and respectfully
- Share information that affects decisions
- Report risks or concerns promptly
- Disclose vendor or contractor relationships
- Ensure key details are reflected in records
- Know the limits of your role
- Avoid making decisions without Board approval
- Follow proper voting and meeting procedures
- Leave daily operations to management (unless self-managed)
- Monitor finances and reserves
- Approve budgets responsibly
- Maintain appropriate insurance
- Avoid unnecessary or unauthorized spending

How do Board meetings work? What is expected of the Board?

HOA Board meetings are where official business happens. They provide the structure for decision-making, ensure transparency for the community, and keep the association in compliance with its governing documents and applicable laws. For new Board members, understanding meeting procedures and why they matter is essential for effective service.

How a Board Meeting Flows

Notice & Agenda

Before the meeting occurs, proper notice must be provided as required by state law and the community's governing documents.

Notices generally must include:

- Date
- Time
- Location
- Agenda or list of topics to be discussed

Notice requirements vary by state and by association, so Board members should review the governing documents to ensure compliance.

Calling the Meeting to Order

The chair, typically the President, opens the meeting and confirms that a quorum, the minimum number of directors required to conduct business, is present. Without a quorum, no official decisions may be made.



Motions and Discussion

Business begins when a director makes a motion, and another director seconds it, placing the issue “on the floor” for discussion.

- Motions ensure discussion stays structured and state the intent
- Seconds confirm there is enough interest to consider the topic

Once the motion is on the floor, the chair opens discussion for Board members and, when required, homeowners.



Debate and Participation

The chair recognizes speakers and keeps the debate focused on the agenda item. A director “has the floor” only when acknowledged by the chair, preventing cross-talk and keeping the meeting organized.

Voting

After the discussion concludes, the chair calls for a vote. Common voting methods include:

- Voice vote (“yay” or “nay”)
- Raised hands

The results are recorded in the minutes.

Minutes

Minutes are the association’s official record and should document:

- Motions made
- Directors who seconded
- Voting results
- Actions approved
- Required disclosures

Accurate minutes protect both the Board and the association.



Open Meetings (Regular Session)

Most HOA business must occur in an open meeting that members are allowed to attend. Typical open-meeting topics include:

- Budgets and financial decisions
- Assessments or fee changes
- Contract discussions
- Rule or policy updates
- Property improvements
- Major maintenance decisions

The precise list varies by state, but transparency is generally required for any matter affecting the community.

Closed Meetings (Executive Session)

An executive session is a closed portion of a Board meeting where confidential matters may be discussed. While the exact rules vary by state and governing documents, executive sessions are typically permitted for:

- Legal matters or consultation with the association's attorney
- Pending or anticipated litigation
- Personal, financial, or disciplinary issues related to members or employees
- Employee performance or compensation
- Homeowner violation appeals

Emergency Meetings

Emergency meetings may be held when immediate action is required to protect the community's health, safety, property, or essential operations.

Procedures for emergency meetings—notice requirements, recording of minutes, and follow-up actions—are defined by state law and the governing documents.

Key Terms New Board Members should know:

Chair: The person leading the meeting

Floor: When the chair gives member permission to speak

Order: Discussion is “in order” only after a motion and second have been made

Motion: A formal request for the Board to discuss or take action on an issue

Second: Another Board member signals support for the motion so discussion can begin

Quorum: The minimum number of Board members required to conduct official business, as defined in the bylaws

Voting: Most votes happen by voice (“yay/nay”) or raised hands





Sample HOA Board Meeting Agenda Outline

(For Regular Open Board Meetings)

Date

Time

Location

Call to Order

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

- Review and vote to approve prior minutes

Homeowner Forum

- If required by governing documents or state law
- Each speaker given up to ___ minutes
- The Board listens but does not engage in debate
- Items requiring action are placed on a future agenda

Reports

President's Report

- Key updates and announcements

Treasurer's Report

- Financial statements, Budget updates, Delinquency report

Manager's Report

- Maintenance updates, Compliance, Projects & Vendor updates

Committee Reports (as applicable)

- Landscape. Architectural Review. Social/Communications

Old Business

- Items carried forward from previous meetings
- Status updates
- Votes as needed

New Business

- Each item follows the standard meeting sequence:
- Motion
- Second
- Board discussion
- Homeowner comments (if allowed)
- Vote

Adjournment

HOA budgets and reserves

A strong, well-planned budget is the foundation of a successful community. As a Board member, you help ensure that the association has the resources to care for common areas, support essential services, and plan for long-term needs. You don't need to be a financial expert, just committed to thoughtful planning and informed decision-making.

An HOA Budget

An HOA budget is the association's financial roadmap for the year. It outlines how much the community expects to collect (income), how much it expects to spend (expenses), and how much it will set aside for future repairs (reserves).

A well-prepared budget helps the Board:

- Make informed financial decisions
- Anticipate future costs
- Maintain adequate reserve funding
- Allocate funds responsibly
- Set accurate and fair assessments
- Support long-term stability and transparency

Your Community Manager and Treasurer typically work together to prepare a draft budget, with input and oversight from the Board. Some communities also form a Budget Committee to increase transparency and resident involvement.





What makes up a budget

Income

- Homeowner assessments (primary revenue source)
- Fees or other small revenue streams

Operating Expenses

Day-to-day costs of running the community, such as:

- Landscape and maintenance contracts
- Utilities
- Insurance
- Management fees
- Repairs and general upkeep
- Administrative costs

Reserve Fund Contributions

Long-term savings for major repairs or replacements like:

- Roof or siding replacement
- Road resurfacing
- Pool equipment
- Playground structures
- Mechanical or structural systems

Together, these categories ensure the association can meet its responsibilities and maintain the community's value.

The goal of every HOA budget is simple: break even.

If expenses exceed income, the Board must consider:

- Adjusting expenses
- Renegotiating contracts
- Increasing assessments
- Implementing a special assessment (only when absolutely necessary)

Associations are not-for-profit, so financial decisions must focus on stability—not generating surplus revenue.

Budget Checklist

Review governing documents

Confirm notice requirements, approval timelines, and assessment rules.

Look at last year's numbers

Compare prior budgets, actuals, and spending trends.

Confirm vendor and utility costs

Check for contract renewals and anticipated increases.

Review the reserve study

Verify reserve contributions and upcoming major projects.

Identify operating needs

Account for maintenance, repairs, insurance, and administrative costs.

Plan for unexpected expenses

Consider insurance deductibles, legal costs, or aging infrastructure.

Calculate assessment levels

Ensure income covers expenses and supports reserves.

Approve the draft budget

Discuss line items, ask questions, and vote in an open meeting.

Communicate the final budget

Send required notices and share a simple explanation with homeowners.

Reserve Funds

A reserve fund is a separate savings account for your HOA, set aside not for day-to-day upkeep, but for major repairs, replacements, and long-term maintenance of community assets.

A portion of your HOA dues should be allocated regularly to the reserve fund so your association is prepared when big-ticket items need attention.



Why every HOA needs a strong reserve fund

1. Avoid Costly Surprises

The reserve study outlines the expected lifespan and replacement cost of common components, helping the Board plan responsibly for major expenses.

2. Improve Budget Accuracy

Reserve studies use real data, inflation assumptions, and industry standards, making financial projections more reliable year over year.

3. Extend the Life of Community Assets

Planning ahead reduces long-term costs and helps the Board prioritize projects at the proper time.

4. Strengthen the HOA's Value

Lenders and buyers review reserve balances. A well-funded reserve signals strong leadership and lowers financial risk for everyone.

5. Build Homeowner Confidence

Sharing reserve updates openly reassures residents that community finances are being managed with care and foresight.

How does enforcement and architectural review work?

Successful HOA communities rely on clear standards and consistent enforcement. Compliance and architectural review programs are not about restricting homeowners but about maintaining community aesthetics by enforcing the standards in the governing documents. For new Board members, understanding how these systems work—and what your role is within them—is essential.

Every HOA is built on a shared vision: that homeowners can enjoy a clean, attractive, and well-maintained environment. Governing documents outline the standards that support that vision, including:

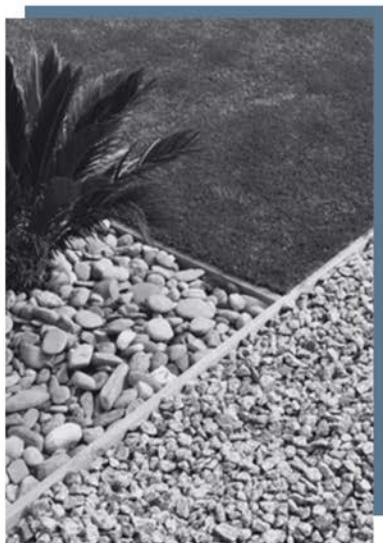
- Exterior appearance and maintenance
- Landscaping expectations
- Architectural design and modifications
- Use restrictions and community rules

These standards help ensure the community remains cohesive, appealing, and desirable, which is a key factor in maintaining property values.

Compliance

Compliance enforcement is the process of helping homeowners understand and follow the standards they agreed to when purchasing in the community. The goal is collaboration, education, and fairness—not punishment.

Standards apply to things like landscaping, exterior upkeep, parking, trash, noise, and other elements that affect the community's appearance and harmony.





Compliance Process

While each community is unique, a typical process includes:

Step 1: Observation

A potential violation is identified during routine community reviews or through a homeowner report.

Step 2: Courtesy Notice

Homeowners receive a friendly reminder explaining the concern and how to resolve it. The intent is to inform—not to accuse.

Step 3: Opportunity to Correct

Homeowners are given a reasonable timeframe to make the correction or ask questions.

Step 4: Follow-Up

If the issue remains unresolved, the Board will take further action in accordance with the governing documents.

Step 5: Resolution

Once corrected, the matter is closed with no further action.

Principles of Fair and Consistent Compliance

Consistency:

Standards must be applied equally to everyone.

Clarity:

Expectations should be easy to understand, with homeowners fully informed of requirements.

Respect:

Interactions should remain constructive, professional, and homeowner-friendly.

Documentation:

Accurate records ensure transparency and support positive outcomes.

Architectural Review

Architectural review ensures that exterior changes enhance the community and comply with established guidelines. It balances individual creativity with the shared aesthetic of the neighborhood.

Homeowners typically need approval before starting projects such as:

- Exterior painting
- Landscaping redesigns
- Patios, fencing, or decks
- Room additions or structural changes
- Roofing or door/window replacements
- Accessory structures (sheds, gazebos, pergolas)

The Architectural Review Process

Step 1: Application Submission

Homeowners provide the details needed for review—plans, samples, materials, dimensions, etc.

Step 2: Administrative Review

Management confirms the application is complete and ready for the committee or Board to review.

Step 3: Committee/Board Evaluation

The Committee/Board evaluates the request based on:

- Governing documents
- Written design standards
- Community aesthetics
- Safety considerations

Step 4: Decision

The Committee/Board issues an approval, conditional approval, or denial with clear reasoning. This approval is not in lieu of the need for approval from any other governmental agencies.

Step 5: Completion Review

Once work is complete, management verifies that the project matches the approval.

This process helps homeowners feel informed and supported from start to finish.



How does the Board Communicate with Homeowners?

Effective and consistent communication is one of the most important tools a Board has to build trust, reduce confusion, and strengthen the sense of community. Homeowners want to feel informed and included, and clear communication helps them understand the decisions that affect their lives and property.

Because not every homeowner receives or prefers information the same way, the strongest Boards communicate through a mix of channels, stay consistent, and focus on sharing the information residents want and need most.

Across every community, homeowners rely on the Board to communicate key information such as:

- Meeting notices and agendas
- Updates from the Board or Community Manager
- Annual meeting and budget information
- Election details
- Project and maintenance updates
- Common-area or amenity closures
- Rule or policy changes
- Community events and programs
- Welcome information for new residents

Sharing timely, relevant updates helps homeowners feel supported and confident that their community is well-managed.

Use a blend of communication tools

A. Email Updates

Fast, direct, and widely read—perfect for reminders, announcements, and time-sensitive updates.

B. Community Website or Online Portal

A central hub for governing documents, meeting materials, project updates, calendars, forms, and important notices.

C. Newsletters

A friendly, easy-to-read way to share updates, highlight projects, and strengthen community connection.

D. Board Meetings

The most transparent form of communication. Meetings allow homeowners to observe decision-making, hear updates, and engage with leadership.

E. Direct Mail

Best for required notices, annual information, welcome packets, and communications that must reach all owners.

F. Apps

Mobile platforms and HOA portals allow homeowners to receive notifications, submit requests, and access information instantly. Text or voice alerts may be used for urgent announcements.

G. In-Person Interactions

Events, open forums, and casual conversations help humanize the Board and build strong relationships.

Remember, communication is a two-way street. Not only is sending information important, but also listening to homeowner responses.

You're Not Alone in This Work

As a new Board member, you're taking on an important leadership role—one that helps preserve community standards and ensure fairness and transparency for all residents. This eBook has provided the high-level foundational knowledge you need to get started, but remember:

You do not need to know everything on day one.

When your community works with a professional HOA management company, your role is focused on direction, policy, and decision-making. Management handles the day-to-day operations so you can focus on what matters most: leading the community with confidence and clarity.

Going forward:

- Ask questions
- Lean on your Board colleagues
- Rely on your Community Manager for support and guidance
- Refer back to this guide anytime you need clarity

Thank you for stepping forward to serve. Your time, insight, and dedication help ensure your community remains strong, connected, and well cared for.