

Bees, Bats, Hurricanes, and Fairy Rings

Disaster Preparedness Best Practices

by Betsy Barbieux

Most of us would rather spend time working and thinking about the best that could happen. Many boards of directors spend considerable time, effort, and money planning for the betterment of the community. Tough decisions are made on the different varieties of flowers at the front entrance, the color of the tile and carpet in the club house, and what type of social activities they will offer. While these type of decisions are necessary, boards need to be sure they do not take up the major part of the meeting time or the association's funds. Boards need to be constantly reminded to keep the main thing the main thing. The main thing should be the backdrop of every decision made by the board.

What is the main thing?

The association's mission statement. Every association has basically the same mission statement:

To maintain and protect the value of the property by enforcing the documents and rules and regulations while maintaining a spirit of community.

The very essence of the legislation over the past 30 years has been to ensure boards stay focused on the main thing—the property. While the residents, children, elderly, disabled, guests, and pets (some think they are people, too) who reside on the property are important, boards should be spending more time on decisions regarding the maintenance, protection, and value of the property. They need to spend some time planning on what could go wrong. It's a negative topic, but it must be done.

It is the ethical responsibility of the governing body of the association—the board of directors—to fulfill the statutory mandate to focus its concerns toward the property. Managers know this and are frustrated when boards spend more time keeping people happy to the detriment of maintaining and protecting the value of the property.

Over the past several years, managers have shown great concern when boards have not stepped up to the plate to spend time and energy in creating disaster preparedness plans. Granted, the manager will most likely compile the actual information, but the board must give the manager direction, cooperation, and time to do so.