



The Elite Insider

HOA Rules: Don't be a Scrooge with Holiday Lighting Rules

Inside this issue:

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>HOA Rules: Don't be a Scrooge with Holiday Lighting Rules</i> | 1 |
| <i>Dos and DON'Ts for new HOA board members</i> | 2 |
| <i>Holiday Cocktail Recipe</i> | 2 |
| <i>Calendar of Events and Office Closings</i> | 3 |
| <i>Are you ready for the cold weather?</i> | 3 |
| <i>Celebrity Corner</i> | 3 |

Elite Management Professionals, Inc.
 AAMC
 •4112 Blue Ridge Road Suite 100
 Raleigh, NC 27612

Find us online at
www.elite-mgmt.com,
 Facebook and Twitter

Phone (919) 233-7660
 Fax (919) 233-7661

Office Hours
 Mon.-Thurs. 8:30-5:30
 Friday 8:30-1:00

Does your association have a policy limiting the holiday decorations members can put up? Should it? If so, what's reasonable?

Just in time for the holidays, here are suggestions for retaining the holiday spirit while making sure your community standards are maintained.

1. **Let reason rule.** The key to successful association management is almost always reasonableness. If your association is considering regulating holiday lights, consider your goal, and then work backward to make sure you don't enact too-strict restrictions when less heavy-handed regulation will do the job. If your goal is to make sure holiday lighting isn't over the top, an outright ban is probably using a hammer when a fly swatter would do the job. Instead, focus your restrictions on the size and timing of the holiday displays. Also think about whether your goal is only to discourage over-exuberant Christmas displays or whether it's also to regulate all holiday displays. For example, bright and noisy Christmas displays may make neighbors gnash their teeth for an entire month. However, a ghastly and noisy Halloween display may be a hit among neighborhood children, and it will likely be at peak creepiness

and spooky-music strength for only one night—when kids are trick-or-treating.

2. **Consider what's too much.** The most effective rules are those that identify when holiday lights can be put up and must be taken down, such as no sooner than 30 days before the holiday and no later than two weeks afterward. They also include restrictions on the scope of the display. Some associations allow only a certain length of lights, such as 100 total feet of lighting. Others identify the spaces on which lights may be hung, such as along the roof line, front door, front windows, and one tree in the front yard. You may also want to restrict roof-anchored displays, such as inflatable Santas and reindeer. And don't forget sound restrictions. You can ban all sound elements or allow them only during certain hours, say from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. so that neighbors don't complain about being bombarded with holiday music while they're trying to sleep.

3. **Reserve your rights.** The problem with holiday lights is that it's hard to define what's over-the-top before owners go there. That's why it's smart to include the right for your architectural review com-

mittee to approve (or disapprove) holiday displays. That way, if an owner includes a feature you never anticipated— but that's clearly not something your community approves— you can ask for it to be modified or removed.

4. **Remember the spirit.** Though it's important for your association to retain its aesthetic integrity, always choose your battles wisely and in the spirit of the season. If a homeowner is an active and good neighbor throughout the year and revels in the lighting beauty of the holidays, ask yourself whether the display is so outrageous that it's worth dampening that neighbor's year-round goodwill. In many cases, you'll find you're better off smiling and enjoying the display in the spirit in which it was intended.



DOs and DON'Ts for new HOA board members

By: Donna DiMaggio Berger



When you first learn that you will be serving as a new member of your community's board of directors, you are likely to be offered either congratulations or condolences. What you are not likely to be offered is much in the way of guidance for your new "job."

You probably achieved your director's seat in one of the following ways:

1. You were recruited/urged to run for the board by your neighbors or current board members.
2. You were appointed by the existing board to fill a vacant seat.
3. You ran for the board because you were eager to correct perceived deficiencies in current association operations.
4. You are one of the rare few who embrace service to others.

Regardless of how you came to serve, there are right and wrong ways to begin your tenure as a community association director.

Ask questions. Rather than making assumptions, ask questions about why the board is doing certain things

and enforcing or ignoring certain policies. Of course, questions should be just that, inquiries with the genuine purpose of obtaining information, not veiled accusations or overt criticism. There will be time for change and possible censure later after all the facts are gathered. For now, just try to figure out why your board does what it does and based on what authority.

Do your homework. The work begins, not ends, after you join your board of directors. First and foremost, you must be prepared to attend your board meetings as well as any membership meetings.

However, your work as a director doesn't end there. For self-managed communities you could be looking at quite a bit of legwork to perform the necessary duties of operating and administering the community. Even if your community is professionally managed, you should not expect to abdicate your responsibilities as a director to a manager or to your fellow directors. You will need to read reports, minutes and a host of other materials pertaining to your role as a director before you are expected to weigh in with a decision on them.

Immerse yourself. There are lots of free and good classes out there that will help you better understand your role as a community association board member. Attend a class, read a book and read your governing documents. If you are the ambitious type, you might want to also consider reading the statute that governs your particular type of association. But do not

expect to interpret everything on your own – that is your association attorney's role.

Take your role seriously. As with any representative form of governance, people are relying upon you to make sound and reasonable decisions on their behalf. The members are also allowing you to spend their hard-earned dollars so understanding what it means to be a good financial steward is a critical component of serving on your board.

You cannot fulfill your fiduciary obligations if you do not show up, are not adequately prepared and do not take your role as a director seriously. Remember, even if you think the role is a cakewalk, you might learn a hard lesson to the contrary in court.

Remain objective. Put aside your personal issues and hotspots and focus on what is in the best interests of the community. This is perhaps one of the hardest lessons to embrace but is likely to be the most important. You cannot truly represent your community if you are focusing on what matters to you to the exclusion of what matters to the majority of your association members.

Last, be proud of the fact that you chose to serve as a community association director. Winning that seat is usually a vote of confidence in your skills. Remember, your voice and your vote count, so use both wisely.



Holiday Cocktail Recipe– Gingerbread Martini *Featured at the 2014 Elite Holiday Open House*



Gingerbread Martini

- 1 oz. Vodka
- 1 oz. Kahlua or Bailey's

- 1-2 oz. Gingerbread flavored syrup (1 oz. Ginger + 1 oz. Brown Sugar Cinnamon works great!)
- 1 oz. Half and Half

Are you ready for the cold weather?



Fall is the time to prepare for winter—cold and wet conditions not only make you miserable, but they can damage your home. Some winterizing can wait, some can't. Make a list of what needs to be done, and tackle the time-sensitive tasks first. Here's a simple checklist from to help you get a jump on winter.

Indoor Winterizing

- Examine doors and replace weather-stripping as needed.
- Examine window caulking and reseal where needed.
- Examine and repair vents where needed.
- Clean chimneys and flues.
- Remove items near heat vents.

- Place nonskid runners or door mats outside to help keep water, sand and salt out of the house.

Outdoor Winterizing

- Cut back tree branches and shrubs that hide signs or block light.
- Examine outdoor handrails and tighten if needed.
- Turn off electrical breakers for outdoor equipment.
- Close hose bibs.
- Clean out gutters and downspouts.
- Clear yard drains.
- Spray outdoor locks and hinges

with lubricant.

- Stake driveway and walkway edges that may be difficult to find under deep snow.

Assemble, stockpile or refresh winter supplies:

- Batteries
- Candles and matches
- Ice melt and deicer
- Sand
- Snow shovels
- Generator fuel
- Antifreeze

Calendar of Events and Office Closings

DECEMBER

December 9th– Holiday Open House

December 24th, 25th and 26th– Christmas All Offices Closed

JANUARY 2015

January 1st 2015- New Year's Day All Offices Closed



Celebrity Corner

Actress Sarah Jessica Parker has come under fire from a homeowners association here after she staged a photoshoot for her shoe line on the steps of the house that featured in her hit TV show "Sex And The City".

The property on Perry Street in Manhattan is frequently visited by fans, who wish to see where Parker's character Carrie Bradshaw lived, and the owners have erected signs in a bid to keep them off the steps.

Parker returned to the building earlier this month to stage a pho-

toshoot for her footwear brand, placing the shoes on the steps and posting pictures of them on her Instagram.com page.

However, the stunt has infuriated the local homeowners association, who claim the actress failed to obtain proper permission to gain access to the steps, reports contactmusic.com.

Gerald Banu, president of the Perry Street Association, said: "I heard about the shoot. They didn't get the permission from the owner. The situation with 'SATC' visitors is still very intense.

"People who live here get upset that the sidewalks are constantly jammed... The only thing I could suggest to her is that when they write the next script, please have Carrie move to a new address."

