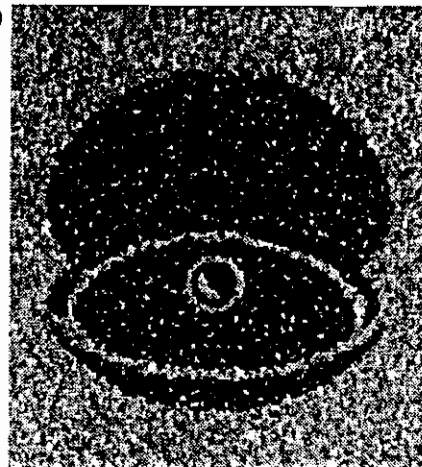


# PEARLS

## of WISDOM

*116 Tips To Ensure a Happy  
Community Association Experience*

Compiled by Kenneth M. Budd



**H** Jackson Brown, Jr., wrote *Life's Little Instruction Book* to provide his son with wisdom he could refer to as he lived his life. In that same spirit, CAI editors have combed through 20 years of CAI publications and periodicals to offer similar instructions for community association life. Here then are 116 pearls of wisdom to guide you and ensure that your community association experience is a happy one

### **Be a Good Homeowner**

1. Review the documents before you buy your unit.
2. Read them again when you move in.
3. Pay your assessments.
4. Attend the annual meeting.

5. Read the newsletter and the minutes.
6. Follow the rules.
7. Serve on a committee.
8. Serve on the board.
9. Don't expect someone else to do it for you.
10. Remember that you are a member of the association. What is good for it is good for you.

### **Be a Good Neighbor**

11. Love thy neighbor
12. Respect thy neighbor
13. Curb thy dog
14. Don't play the stereo too loud.
15. Park in your own space.
16. Don't be a six-car family.
17. Clean up after yourself.
18. Take care of your property
19. Help form a neighborhood watch.
20. If there is a problem, talk about it—

direct conversation is more effective than sending a letter or banging on a wall

### **Be a Good Board Member**

21. Serve because you care, not because you have a hidden agenda
22. Use CAI courses and information to learn how to run a community association.
23. Study the documents before you enforce them.
24. Don't go on a power trip.
25. Remember your fiduciary duty to protect, preserve, and enhance the value of the property.
26. Conduct a reserve study
27. Let the manager manage.
28. Focus on policies, plans, and objectives.

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- 29. Communicate, communicate, communicate
- 30. Communicate some more.

### **Be a Good Leader**

- 31. Establish clear goals.
- 32. Articulate them.
- 33. Don't put things off
- 34. Set high standards
- 35. Make decisions
- 36. Do what is right, not what is popular.
- 37. Be positive.
- 38. Ask others for input.
- 39. Plan and save for the future
- 40. Send thank you notes.

### **Have Productive Meetings**

- 41. Distribute materials—financial reports, agendas, bids—to board members a few days before the meeting.
- 42. Study this material.
- 43. Prepare an agenda
- 44. Follow it.
- 45. Follow the rules of parliamentary procedure
- 46. Act professional—don't let the meeting turn into a social event
- 47. Don't serve alcohol
- 48. Don't call people names
- 49. Open the meeting to other owners.
- 50. Allow questions only after the meeting.

### **Work with Committees**

- 51. Define the committee's purpose.
- 52. Support the committee members
- 53. Keep in touch with them
- 54. Seek their opinion
- 55. Ensure that they follow the rules of parliamentary procedure.
- 56. Give them objectives.
- 57. Give them deadlines
- 58. Remember—a committee usually offers recommendations, not solutions
- 59. Offer them love, praise, and acceptance
- 60. Reward them.

## **10 Ways to Destroy Your Association**

- 1. Stay away from meetings. Show up at meetings only if you have a problem or complaint.
- 2. Decline office or appointment to any committee. Then, get angry if you are not nominated.
- 3. Insist on describing the association in negative terms only. Never prepare an agenda, never plan the details of an event, and never coordinate with affiliates
- 5. Don't do any association work if you can avoid it. Then, when the old reliables pitch in and get the job done, accuse them of being a clique.
- 6. If you do come to a meeting, don't speak until the meeting is finished. Then, criticize and say how things should have been handled.
- 7. Oppose all new programs as being a waste of the membership's money.
- 8. When nothing new happens, complain that the officers lack imagination.
- 9. Read your bulletins infrequently. Then, complain that you don't know what's going on.
- 10. Never introduce yourself to new members or visitors—make them come to you.

—John E. Matheson, *Board Briefs*, May/June 1992

### **Develop A Successful Budget**

- 61. Obtain input from owners, board members, committees, and management.
- 62. Conduct research to ensure the budget is accurate
- 63. Develop a month-by-month evaluation—don't just divide by 12

**"A well-informed membership harbors fewer 'hard' feelings."**

—Bill Meyer

- 64. Talk with contractors to estimate costs.
- 65. Be realistic
- 66. Raise assessments if necessary
- 67. Be straightforward about it—don't use gimmicks or emotional appeals
- 68. Plan for the future.
- 69. Look for ways to cut expenses, but don't reduce the level or quality of

services or without telling the owners.

- 70. Communicate the budget to members.

### **Enforce the Rules and Deed Restrictions**

- 71. Give residents a voice when creating a rule.
- 72. Make rules specific and reasonable
- 73. Communicate the rules.
- 74. Review the rules—new ones may be needed, old ones may need to be discarded.
- 75. Make the first contact with violators informal, if possible.
- 76. Never "look the other way."
- 77. Offer compromises
- 78. Hold a hearing
- 79. Try arbitration or mediation.
- 80. Hold public meetings on divisive rules

### **Renters and Kids, Parking and Pets**

- 81. Don't treat renters as outcasts—involve them in the community.
- 82. Publish a tenant's handbook.
- 83. Plan events for children
- 84. Let the children help organize the events.
- 85. Give them a place to play.
- 86. Tow cars only as a last resort.

# The 10 Commandments for Board Members

## Thou shalt

1. Be consistent in all thy dealings
2. Be faithful in attendance at board meetings
3. Allow the professional manager to manage
4. Insist that professional management be responsible to the board of directors
5. Keep a watchful eye on the financial reports
6. Communicate with your fellow board members and homeowners
7. Deal honestly with all thy fellows
8. Resist using thy position for personal gain
9. Remember that you are a board member operating a business
10. Encourage the association to be members of CAI

—Terrence P. Crawford, *CAI News*, 1981

87. Place parking signs where they can be seen.
88. Give pets a place to walk
89. Encourage the purchase of fish
90. Watch *Old Yeller*.

## Work with Complainers

91. Remember: the only way to improve is through constructive complaints
92. Be diplomatic.
93. Listen

**"Heaven and hell are the only mandatory membership organizations which can guarantee compatibility of neighbors."**

—Byron R. Hanke and  
Thomas S. Kenny

94. Appear interested.
95. Remain calm
96. Don't say anything about anyone's mother
97. Try working together—two people cooperating are more effective than one person

- telling another to change.
98. Do not allow complainers to insult you or use foul language.
99. Never complain about complainers—your words will get back to you.
100. Invite them to volunteer

## End Apathy

101. Recruit new residents.
102. Promote volunteerism as a positive experience.
103. Be enthusiastic.
104. Publicize the association's accomplishments
105. Recognize volunteers.
106. Give awards
107. Meet people
108. Hold social events and "meet the owners" nights.
109. Offer owners motivation for serving
110. Ask for volunteers in the newsletter, in-house bulletins, and through face-to-face contacts.

## Know When It's Time to Go

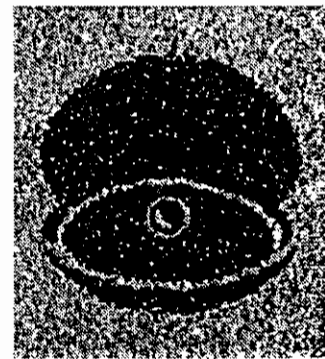
111. Check your blood pressure.
112. Determine if you are buying aspirin in bulk.
113. If you're burned out, get out—new volunteers can offer new energy and ideas.
114. Make yourself available to new board members.
115. Continue to read the newsletter.
116. Pat yourself on the back. □

## Those Who Made the Pearls

These pearls of wisdom were taken from articles in *Common Ground*, *The Magazine for Condominium and Homeowner Associations*, and CAI's newsletters and publications. They were written by the following authors and contributors:

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