

## Cyber Security for Association Web Sites

The Community Organization of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) held its first meeting for the autumn season at 9:30 a.m., Wednesday, September 20, at the Gulf Harbors Civic Center. It was unfortunate that only 13 people were in the audience, and this included Dominick and the CONA board members. The speaker, Steven H. Mezer, from the Becker and Poliakoff legal firm, gave a detailed presentation of the potential and repercussions of starting a community web site of homeowners and condominium associations. His presentation lasted around 40 minutes, but he gave everybody a packet to carry out that all the information on 26 pages. An unmonitored web site can do harm. It must be password protected. Remember that Financial Statements are private. Many bad people are out there ready to cause trouble using an under-controlled web site. Mr. Mezer highly recommended the social media network called; "Nextdoor." It is free and it is designed for managed community associations. Other social media networks, including FACEBOOK and LINKEDIN, are not designed for association and board use. If a community's board consists of all retired Euro-American (White) men, it is not a wise idea to post a photo of the board on the website in today's diversity-driven society. Photographs and videos from a drone touring the target community at a time of day when no residents are out walking about could be useful to post. A husband may become irate if he was photographed walking with a woman who was not his wife. It would be wise to take advantage of a professionally managed web site that belongs to the property management company. Using a shotgun approach to send out groups of email can be performed well if the addresses of the other email recipients are blocked. Condominium boards can vote electronically, but this would take much finesse to perform it legally. The phrase: "All microphones are open!" illustrates that anybody can attend an open board meeting, record a proceeding on his cellphone, and post it on YOUTUBE, with comments. If the comments become slanderous, attorneys, like Mr. Mezer, are available to handle the lawsuits. Never allow an owner to set up a community website. His motivation is questionable. Do not allow open public comments on the association web site. One only needs to read comments on YOUTUBE videos to learn that cyber audience members are full of profanities and petty complaints. It is prudent to include cyber security as part of an association insurance coverage. I conclude that a community association website must be professional constructed and professional run or else the association's board is asking for trouble. The best option may be to ask the professional property manager to include a web page on his/her site for the board and the association. Also, ask Becker & Poliakoff for an information packet.