

# COMMUNITY NEWS

THE COUNCIL OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS  
"The Voice of Condominium, Civic and Homeowner  
Associations of Pasco County"



**Tis the season to be jolly!** The last month of 2015! On to new beginnings for 2016. The Council of Neighborhood Associations is blessed to have such a wonderful support system. The great Pasco County is building every day as we build with them. It is important to remember the reason for volunteerism; to be apart of the team that sets a secured foundation for our community and the future residents to come. The Council of Neighborhood Associations wishes you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

**CONA UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- **December 9, 2015 – The Council of Neighborhood Associations Appreciation Breakfast. The event will be held at the Heritage Springs Country Club at 9AM. Our guest speaker will be Mr. Greg Armstrong, Owner at Coldwell Banker F.I. Grey Residential, Inc. Tickets are \$15 and are on sale now! Please contact your CONA Directors to purchase.**
- January 20, 2016 – “The Impact of Foreclosures and Abandoned Properties on Communities” Speaking on this topic will be Mike Wells, Sr. Pasco County Property Appraiser.
- February 17, 2016 – “What happens when HOA and COA documents are not renewed in February” Guest speakers will be Jane Bolkin and Vince Peralta of Peyton Bolin
- March 16, 2016 – “The Water Fix” Issues with communities served by FGUA. The speaker will be Matthew Rihs, Community Service

Representative FGUA.

- April 20, 2016 – **BIG EVENT!!!** “Officers and Directors Certification Course” This event is FREE to CONA Members! Non-members may pay \$15 for the Certification or become a CONA Member and \$15 for the year.
- May 18, 2016 – “What’s Going on up there in Tallahassee?!” Prospective Speaker will be State Representative Amanda Murphy.

**CAI SUNCOAST UPCOMING EVENT:**

2016 CA Day & Trade Show - The St. Petersburg Coliseum - Thursday, February 25, 2016 10:00 AM- 4:00 PM

**THE CONA CHALLENGE!**

We challenge all members that attend the monthly meetings to bring one guest... your neighbor, friend, a community board member...! We will announce them at the meeting.

**MAIN STREET HOLIDAYS**

We are looking forward to the wonderful Christmas displays that will surround us this month. as well as all of our festivities that make Downtown New Port Richey great! The River Lights Boat Parade- Saturday, Dec. 5 and the Friendly KIA Christmas Village Dec. 11 & 12.

**THE WEST PASCO ART GUILD**

Please be sure to check out thir website [www.westpascoartguildandgallery.org](http://www.westpascoartguildandgallery.org) to see the upcoming schedule for the holidays.

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# DECEMBER 2015

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
		1	2	3	4	5 RIVER LIGHTS BOAT PARADE NPR
6 Hanukkah	7 Hanukkah	8 Hanukkah	9 CONA APPRECIATION BREAKFAST	10 Hanukkah	11 Holiday Food Drive Faith Baptist 9- 12	12 Friendly KIA Christmas Village 11 & 12
13 Hanukkah	14 Hanukkah	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## ON THE BOARD

BY JOE WINKLER, CMCA

Hire Power

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Hiring a management company to oversee your community can be overwhelming. Ultimately, management’s role is protecting and increasing the value of your most precious asset: your home (and by extension, your community).

Many board members have no idea where to start, and it can be difficult to discern which management company will be the best fit. Every company has unique strengths, but it’s crucial to find a long-term partner who understands your association’s distinctive needs and can render the necessary level of service and attention.

Boards should use a rigorous evaluation process to select a management company. The goal should be uncovering whether a particular company can provide the level of service and attention that the community needs.

## DEFINED SCOPE

Before the board sets up meetings or schedules capabilities presentations, it should create a very clear request for proposal (RFP) document that lists the exact types of service it wants management to provide. A single statement ensures that the board is comparing “apples to apples” when firms return their proposals. Terminology can vary between companies, so a single RFP guarantees that the board will understand the costs and capabilities of each provider.

The RFP also becomes the board’s first opportunity to evaluate a management firm’s customer service level. Does the company respond to the inquiry in a timely manner? Does it ask questions if they are unclear? Does the bid match the community’s needs, or did the company simply send a boilerplate response? The first impression is a strong indicator of how a company will behave when under contract.

## EVALUATION PROCESS

There are five key areas boards should explore to ensure that they've done due diligence during the evaluation process.

Ask about a manager's qualifications and personality. Ask the company to detail how it hires, trains and supports managers. Here are some questions and discussion points:

- How many years' experience, on average, do the managers in your company have?
- How long have the managers been with the firm?
- What practices does the company use to retain managers?
- What process does the company use to assign managers to specific accounts?
- Why would the assigned manager be a good fit for our community?
- How many accounts does the specified manager handle at one time?

You're looking for a satisfied, enthusiastic, well-trained manager with sufficient support to ensure that he or she can do the best job possible. A manager's personality is important but so is his or her experience and continuing education.

Discuss your expectations regarding communication. Poor communication is one of the top frustrations of community associations. Uncover what to expect from the company before engaging with it. This can save an association the irritation of working with a company with communication standards that don't meet the board's expectations.

During the initial evaluation, ask the company to explain its communication philosophy. The response will reveal how it prioritizes communication. Next, ask for specifics regarding communication strategies: Does the company use current technology, such as e-mail or text messages? Does it follow up with written communications? Does it have a policy regarding response time? You're looking for a company whose communication style matches the needs of the residents in your community.

Request details about board member training and education. As volunteers, most board members have little formal training regarding the technical, municipal and financial topics that impact a community. A good management company will strongly encourage board member education, so the board can make the best decisions for the community. CAI, its chapters, some management companies and attorneys offer educational workshops, lectures, training sessions and materials.

Ask for referrals for accurate testimonials. Online message boards like Yelp or Nextdoor.com tend to become forums for residents to vent their frustrations instead of honest assessments of working relationships. Therefore, ask each management company to provide a list of references and speak with current or past board members about their experiences. Don't be afraid to get specific by asking about the firm's strengths while also probing for areas

that need improvement. Knowing the complete picture will help the board make a better decision.

Look for accreditation and professional certifications. Here's a look at CAI and the Community Association Managers International Certification Board (CAMICB) designations and what it takes to achieve them (all managers must adhere to professional ethical standards):

- Certified Manager of Community Associations (CMCA). Must pass CAMICB exam to demonstrate fundamental knowledge in managing common-interest developments. Must renew every two years through continuing education.
- Association Management Specialist (AMS). Must earn the CMCA, pass two additional education courses, and manage the finances, administration and facilities of an association for at least two years. Must renew every three years through continuing education.
- Professional Community Association Manager (PCAM). Must earn the CMCA and meet advanced educational requirements in law, communications, operations and asset protection. Must have at least five years' experience. Must renew every three years through continuing education.
- Large-Scale Manager (LSM). Must earn the PCAM, have at least 10 years' experience and meet advanced educational requirements. Must renew every three years through continuing education.
- Accredited Association Management Company (AAMC). Company must adhere to CAI's Professional Manager Code of Ethics, manage for at least three years, have a PCAM as the company's senior manager and show that at least 50 percent of its managers hold a PCAM, AMS or CMCA. Must provide continuing education for management staff.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Your management company should be your ally in protecting your investment. Boards must be fully transparent with the problems and challenges facing the community to enable the company to offer the best service. Outline the association's needs honestly during the evaluation process so an open dialogue can be facilitated. This helps the board assess the level of creative problem-solving the company will bring.

Above all, don't ever feel rushed or pressured to make a quick decision. Management companies should be business partners that can serve the community for many years to come. Don't jump into any agreements without carefully considering the company's strengths and experience, and how they align with the community's needs.

*Joe Winkler is vice president of marketing for Keystone Pacific Property Management in Irvine, Calif. [www.kppm.com](http://www.kppm.com)*

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