

How to Get the Most Out of Your HOA

1. **Attend Meetings of the Board of Directors.** The Board of Directors makes the decisions that affect the way the Association is managed. These decisions are made at Board Meetings. Whether the Association meets monthly, every other month, or quarterly, this is the best way to stay informed about what is happening at your property and what you can do to participate. By attending Board meetings, you can learn about decisions that may be made at future meetings and how you can help influence decisions on the matters that concern you.
2. **Read the newsletter.** Most Associations send out a monthly newsletter, others send one out every other month, and some only send one out quarterly. No matter how often it is sent, the newsletter contains important information. This is the method by which the Board of Directors and management communicates with owners and residents about what is happening at the property. This is one of the best, and easiest, ways to stay informed.
3. **Obtain Copies of Minutes.** The Association is required by law to provide copies of minutes of the Board of Directors meetings, but only if you ask. The minutes are the legal record of all the decisions made by the Board of Directors. If you want to stay informed, you should request 12 months of minutes every year. The management company normally charges a nominal fee for current minutes and a bit more for older minutes. This is a good alternative to attending Board meetings, but, this way, you only find out about decisions after they have been made.
4. **Join or Form a Committee.** A lot of the work at Homeowners Associations is done by Committees. If you believe the landscape needs improvement, chances are there is a Landscape Committee to address that concern. If not, talk to the Board of Directors about starting a Landscape Committee. The same can be done for others issues such as: Architectural Control, Parking, Pets, Playgrounds, etc. The Committees research the problems and possible solutions and then make a recommendation to the Board of Directors for a course of action. The Board takes the advice of the Committees and makes their decision accordingly.
5. **Attend Local Seminars and/or Conferences.** There are a number of organizations that specialize in providing service and training to Homeowners Associations, their Managers, and their Boards. Much of the training is also open to homeowners that just want to know a bit more about their HOA. A local group in San Jose is the Executive Council of Homeowners (ECHO). California Association of Community Managers (CACM) is a statewide organization and Community Association Institute (CAI) is nationwide. All three organizations offer seminars and conferences specifically for the purpose of educating the public about Community Associations.
6. **Get to Know Your Manager.** Take the time to call or write a note to your Manager just to introduce yourself and say "hello." Managers can be a wellspring of information about your Homeowners Association, and they would love to talk to you about it. Building a friendly connection with your manager will help keep things going smoothly if you should have a problem down the road. Managers oftentimes only hear from Homeowners when there is a problem or complaint, so it is nice to hear someone calling just to be friendly. Good working relationships always help to make everyone's experiences more pleasant. Good relationships also foster motivation for providing excellent service.

If you have any questions or concerns about your Homeowners Association, please feel free to contact Christopher Flood at CF Management (see letterhead for contact details).