

Trade Expo Chock-full of Information, Services

Event also Offers Credit, Noncredit Courses

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Before wrapping up our series on tips for new board members, today's column will take a break from that topic, to announce an upcoming local program that should be of interest to community association board members, unit owners, and managers.

The South Gulfcoast Chapter of Community Associations Institute (CAI) will be hosting its annual Trade Expo on Thursday, February 6, 2003, at the Seven Lakes Condominium Auditorium.

Seven Lakes is located on U.S. 41, across from the Bell Tower Mall, directly behind Edison National Bank. The purpose of the Trade Expo is two-fold. First, local vendors can hawk their wares. Over forty exhibitors have obtained booths. Service providers such as banks, management groups, accounting firms, engineering firms, insurance agencies, law offices, security providers, painters, and contractors are typical exhibitors.

In addition to the opportunity to see the latest in products and services, the Expo will provide a series of educational presentations. At 8:00 a.m., the "legal

update" required for community association management (CAM) licensure will be presented. CAMs receive credit for this course, but those who are not managers are welcome to attend as well. I will be the instructor for this program.

From 9:00 a.m. to noon, a seminar from CAI, pursuant to its contract with the Florida's state condominium agency, will be presented. The course involves condominium operations and will be presented by Mark Benson of Benson's, Inc., a Fort Myers management firm. This program is not certified for CAM credit, and is primarily intended for the delivery of education to board members and unit owners. However, this course is also of extreme value to managers, even if educational credit is not received.

From noon to 1:00 p.m., CAI's Florida Legislative Alliance will hold an open forum for Expo attendees. This group is CAI's legislative affairs committee for community association issues in Florida. The program will include a presentation on legislation expected to be considered in Tallahassee in the upcoming legislative session. Legisla-

tion involving fire sprinklers, electronic notice (for example, e-mail) and responses to lender questionnaires are all potential issues for the upcoming legislative session. Further, an open forum time will be set aside to take input from interested parties as to potential legislative issues that might be worthy of future legislative treatment.

From 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., a legal/insurance forum will be held. Attorney Richard D. DeBoest II, along with me, will represent the legal side. Stan Plappert of Collier Insurance Services and Gino Littlestone of Oswald, Trippe and Company will represent the insurance industry side. This program is intended to serve as an update on legal/insurance issues, and will be presented in a question and answer format.

The legal update starts at 8:00 a.m., exhibitors at the Expo will open their booths at 9:00 a.m. The Expo will conclude at 3:30 p.m. Admission is free. Reservations are not required.

Over the years, I have heard many community association board members and managers express a desire for greater ac-

cess to educational opportunities. Here's your chance for an action-packed day and the opportunity to attend what promises to be a top notch program.

Now on to reader mail.

QUESTION: I am a board member in our condominium association and wish to understand our documents better. Our documents were written in 1967. I cannot interpret nor understand the language in most of the clauses. Is there a class I can take to help me understand these documents, so that I can begin to get things updated according to the modern day condo laws? - S.R. (via e-mail)

ANSWER: Florida's first Condominium Act was written

in 1963, and was in its infancy when your community was created, some 35 years ago.

Most 60's-era condominium documents I have read are, at best, difficult to understand, and are filled with legalese. There is no class that I know of that would assist you in trying to interpret archaic documents. A competent lawyer could help, but the cost may not be worth the benefit, at least if you can change the documents.

It is probably time for your owners to invest in writing a new set of documents. An experienced community association attorney can guide you through the process. Typically, it is best to simply sit down with the attorney with your "wish list", includ-

ing items you would like to see in the new documents. Rental restrictions, parking regulations, pets, business use of units, guest usage, maintenance provisions, insurance requirements, board terms, and financial issues are amongst the items that will typically be covered much better in a new set of governing documents.

The first thing you need to look at is the amendability of your current documents. Unfortunately, I have found that many first generation documents are difficult (if not nearly impossible) to amend, often taking eighty percent, or even one hundred percent approval. If that is the case, you may have no choice but to live with what you have. Good luck. ♪

Mr. Adams concentrates his practice on the law of community association law, primarily representing condominium, co-operative, and homeowners' associations and country clubs. Mr. Adams has represented more than 600 community associations and serves as managing shareholder of the Firm's Naples and Ft. Myers offices.

Send questions to Joe Adams by e-mail to jadams@becker-poliakoff.com This column is not a substitute for consultation with legal counsel. Past editions of this column may be viewed at www.becker-poliakoff.com.