

Dallas Homeowners League

Brief: Association Consistency – Key to Success

Consistency in actions, responses and treatment are very important to the success of neighborhood associations.

Reliable Customer Service

Perhaps the most frustrating thing for a customer is inconsistent service. McDonald's prides itself on providing consistent products and service. When you eat at a McDonald's in Pittsburgh or Paris you know that your double cheeseburger will taste the same, be the same size and be served in the same packaging. There is comfort in knowing what to expect.

Customer service for Owners in a Community Association should be as reliable as McDonald's. Every caller should be treated with respect and a friendly and cooperative manner. Board members sometimes need to be reminded that personal differences with a neighbor should not affect the outcome of an architectural change request. Managers need to keep in mind that "even a broken clock is right twice a day". They should listen to the frequent caller as they would a first-time caller. They should not assume they are wrong or just complaining...again.

Decisions based on personality or "who you know" are dangerous. If statues are not permitted in the front beds, don't overlook the statue in front of a committee member's home because "she does so much for the community". You will have a difficult time defending and enforcing the rule elsewhere. Deviation from the adopted rules creates inconsistency that cannot be upheld.

The Board's decision should be supported by the documents, current laws, best practices and opinions from their community manager, attorney, accountant, engineer and other professionals. Personal feelings should not enter into the discussion.

Consistent Treatment for Everyone

Owners should expect, and receive consistent treatment when they deal with any representative of the Association. Prompt and efficient responses to maintenance service requests, accounting questions or reports of violations should be routine. Committee and Board meetings should be scheduled to ensure reasonable response time to owner requests. Pushing a friend's request through without the normal process will anger other Owners who have to wait for their decisions.

We know we will never please everyone but we can avoid appeals based upon the way they were treated rather than the decision that was made. The rules and architectural guidelines are in place to ensure a uniform appearance throughout the community. Don't fall into the trap of straying from uniform enforcement. Inconsistent treatment of Owners opens the Association up to possible legal action and negative publicity for the community. The Board and management must do everything they can to create an atmosphere of community and fair treatment that will enhance the lifestyle of the Association.