

## BUSINESS RESOURCES

# Four Lessons for Community Managers to Carry Beyond 2020

BY TIM O'KEEFE



To say there are lessons to be learned from the collective experiences and challenges of 2020 is a dramatic understatement.

Everyone had to adapt quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic to stay healthy and safe. In the community association

world, board members and community managers immediately implemented new practices and protocols to protect residents, staff, and vendors. They kept all parties informed of the measures being taken at each community.

As we prepare for an eagerly anticipated new year, expect these aspects of community association management in 2020 to remain paramount.

While we do not know the unforeseen challenges communities and the broader public will face next, we can be confident that the resourcefulness and resilience demonstrated throughout this year will help us successfully navigate whatever comes our way.

*Tim O'Keefe is a partner and executive director, strategic growth and client relationships, at KW Property Management & Consulting, a Miami-based property management company.*

## Best Practices to Start Off the New Year



### 1. REDEFINING DISASTER PLANNING AND PREPARATION

At most communities, especially those in coastal areas, annual emergency training and protocols revolve around natural disaster preparedness and response. The pandemic has significantly broadened the scope of potential emergencies community managers may face. Going forward, annual training of managers and staff also must take public health crises into account.

Communities should make sure they are always well stocked with personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer, and disinfecting products. Permanently restricting package and food deliveries to designated receiving areas to minimize lobby and common area exposure might be a sound practice.

### 2. CROSS-TRAINING EMPLOYEES TO SERVE A VARIETY OF ROLES DURING EMERGENCIES

Managers and staff members were forced to expand their skill sets throughout the pandemic. For instance, pool and gym attendants became part of cleaning and maintenance crews. Managers successfully encouraged employees to avoid a mentality of being "too good" for a particular job and focused on doing what they could to address the immediate needs of a constantly evolving situation.



### 3. BALANCING PHYSICAL HEALTH WITH FINANCIAL HEALTH

Communities may be under financial pressure due to the pandemic, as a surge in the unemployment rate has seen delinquencies increase in some communities. Many proactive boards have elected to put a line of credit in place with key association banks. This gives associations instant access to funds should they be needed for projects or emergencies.

On the heels of budget season, boards and managers hopefully have taken a fresh look at maintenance needs, vendor contracts, insurance policies (shop around for the best rate and coverage!) and a long-term reserve projection. Approaches to reserves will always vary from association to association. Those continuing to operate with little or no reserves risk burdening owners further by imposing special assessments.

### 4. USING TECHNOLOGY FOR REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS AND ELECTIONS

From children to great-grandparents, all generations became versed in Zoom and other virtual meeting platforms this year. The growing comfort level with such platforms made us rethink which in-person meetings are truly necessary. Some associations can expect to stick with virtual monthly or quarterly meetings broadcasted on closed-circuit TV stations in their communities. For elections, software developers are ramping up new online voting platforms that will become increasingly appealing in many communities.

