



From Board Conflict to Board Alignment: 4 Tips for Texas HOAs

Thursday February 01, 2024

Managing a homeowners' association (HOA) is a colossal task, and one of the biggest challenges you face as a board member is achieving alignment with your own fellow board members. Before anything else can work smoothly - budgeting, maintaining communal areas, organizing events, collaborating with committees - it's important to acknowledge that board conflict can and will arise.

Like disputes between neighbors, disputes between board members are bound to happen, especially in HOAs where there are numerous issues to be tackled. Sometimes board conflict arises from differing opinions on hot-button issues for which two sides simply cannot come to a resolution. Sometimes board conflict happens when new members come in with fresh ideas, eager to change things.





How to solve board conflict: board alignment.

Board alignment is the first step toward the community's overall success. Without it, essential projects get neglected, policy decisions stagnate, and residents' overall experience deteriorates.

In fact, a lack of board alignment can lead to tensions with homeowners, causing damage to your board's reputation. Prolonged board conflict sends a bad message - it paints a picture of a divided board that can't agree on anything. As a result, homeowners lose trust in the very leaders they elected to represent them.

To avoid all of that, you need to discover how achieving board alignment can lead to a thriving HOA and a harmonious community. But first, let's understand what exactly board alignment is.

What is board alignment?

Myth: Board alignment is about agreeing on every single decision or having an identical perspective and the same opinions collectively.

Fact: It's not humanly possible to have the same thought process and see the world with the same eyes, filtered through the same lens.

Board alignment is about having a shared vision and mission for the community you serve. It's about having a clear understanding of your HOA's goals and objectives and working together as a team to achieve them. When your board is aligned, you can make decisions efficiently, effectively communicate with one another and your residents, and move forward with a singular purpose.

How do we resolve board conflict and achieve board alignment?

Now that we know what board alignment is, let's talk about how to make it a reality. It's time to bring your board members together, put aside any personal differences, and start working towards that shared vision. Remember, it's natural and healthy to disagree on some aspects, but you must always keep the HOA's objectives in mind.

Here are 4 tips on how to put board conflict behind you and maintain alignment with fellow board members.





Tip #1: Start with your “why.”

Why did you become a board member in the first place? Here are a few common reasons why people volunteer to serve their HOA. Any of them sound familiar?

- **Community enhancement:** Enhancing the aesthetic, social, and financial aspects of the community, creating a shared sense of pride among residents.
- **Advocacy:** Acting as a voice for neighbors and ensuring their needs and concerns are addressed, promoting an inclusive atmosphere where every voice can be heard.
- **Stewardship:** Overseeing the effective management of community resources and budgets, ensuring that they are used wisely for the collective benefit.
- **Legacy building:** Establishing a legacy of a well-managed property, setting up sustainable practices that will serve present and future generations.
- **Network building:** Collaborating with other individuals who have a strong sense of civic duty and are equally passionate about making a positive impact in their community.

All the reasons above have something in common: By becoming a board member, you committed your time to service, benefiting the community as a whole. You joined to help foster a harmonious environment that enhances the life of every resident, *not just your own*.





Tip #2: Hear your fellow board members out, even when you disagree.

A key component of board alignment is listening to understand rather than just listening to respond. Here are a few things to keep in mind when hearing out your fellow board members (remember, the goal is to collaboratively problem-solve):

- **Actively engage:** Commit to genuinely focusing on the speaker without the distraction of preparing your next point. This ensures you truly understand what is being communicated.
- **Delay your response:** Take a moment after someone has finished speaking before you begin to reply. This allows you to process the information fully and shows the speaker that their point has been considered.
- **Summarize and ask questions:** When a fellow board member has presented a viewpoint, summarize what you've heard and ask clarifying questions. This signals that you have digested their perspective and are interested in a deeper understanding.
- **Avoid assumptions:** Approach each conversation with curiosity. Every board member's perspective is unique, and assuming you already know their standpoint can lead to misunderstandings and board conflict.
- **Mind your body language:** Use encouraging body language such as nodding and maintaining eye contact. Nonverbal cues like these reinforce that you are attentively engaged in the conversation.
- **Eliminate interruptions:** Ensure the speaker can finish their thoughts without interruption. This requires self-restraint but is crucial for creating a respectful dialogue environment.
- **Cultivate patience:** Patience is vital in a board setting with diverse opinions. Allow conversations to flow without rushing, which can lead to more thoughtful and comprehensive discussions.

What if you disagree? How do you avoid board conflict?

When disagreeing with a fellow HOA board member, it is important to respond respectfully and thoughtfully. Avoid personal attacks or dismissive language, and instead focus on addressing the issue at hand.

Start by actively listening to their viewpoint, then calmly present your own perspective. Ask

questions to gain a better understanding of their position and be open-minded to finding potential solutions that incorporate both viewpoints.

Remember to critique the idea, not the person, and avoid making assumptions. By responding with patience and mutual respect, disagreements can lead to productive dialogue rather than board conflict, and ultimately benefit everyone in the association.

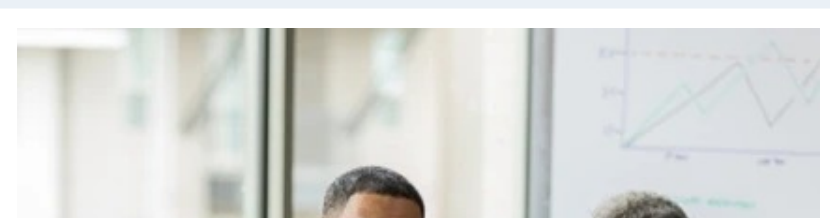


Tip #3: Stick to your association's mission and strategy.

Consider these simple steps for decision-making within your HOA board:

1. **Confirm your mission:** Each decision should reflect your mission. This is your community's driving force.
2. **Consult your strategic plan:** Your strategic plan is your map to the future. It should guide your every step and be the benchmark against which you measure your choices.
3. **Question for clarity:** Ask, "Is this decision in line with our mission and strategy?" If it's not, it's likely not the right choice for your community.

Remember, your association's mission, vision, and [strategic community plan](#) work together to serve as a compass for your board's decision-making to achieve common goals.





Tip #4: Leave your ego at the door.

Plain and simple: If you want an HOA that gets things done and does them well, you've got to leave your ego at the door. It's not about *who* makes the decision, it's *how* that decision improves your community. A few pointers to remember:

- **It's not about you:** It's about the whole community.
- **No personal agendas:** Set aside your own projects—this is a team effort.
- **Keep a united front:** You're in this together to better the whole association and enhance the lives of residents.

So put aside your ego and work collaboratively with fellow board members. Instead of seeing disagreements as roadblocks, view them as opportunities for constructive debate and growth. Remember, a united front is always stronger than individual egos. Keep the community's goals at the forefront of every decision and let that be your guiding light towards success.



How does a property management partner help resolve board conflict?

When board conflict arises, members are typically able to proactively come to a resolution themselves without needing to consult their property management partner. A seasoned HOA management company typically refrains from direct intervention and focuses on unwavering support of the community. The community manager's primary responsibilities are to:

- offer guidance and education
- execute decisions
- manage daily tasks
- oversee routine functions that keep the association in order

Conclusion: Why is board alignment so important?

In conclusion, achieving board alignment is crucial to the success of your HOA and the community you represent. By having a shared vision, clear goals, and effective communication, you can work together as a team to accomplish the goals that benefit your entire HOA. And as we all know, this is the best way to enhance the life of every resident.



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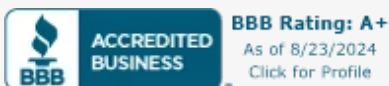
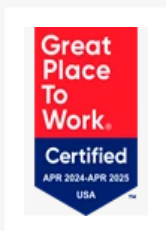
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