

Fellow Co-Owners -

When I relocated to Michigan in 2003 and moved into Main Street Square I was delighted to have found such a great looking community in such a terrific location. I really had no desire to be on the Board after dealing with a terrible experience and an incompetent Board with the Association at the town home I owned in Pennsylvania.

A couple of weeks after I moved in I decided to take my blinds down. To cover the windows I taped up some of the paper that was used for packing. It looked awful, but it was temporary for about a week or two until I had a free weekend to hang new blinds. During that week, the Association did a walkthrough and the management company called me and left me a voicemail about my new "window treatments." The property manager at the time mentioned that she noticed I was new to the community and informed the Board of this, but wanted to let me know the rules about window treatments.

Now some people would have been upset about this, but I was actually really happy to receive the call. I called the management company and jokingly said I was surprised the Board didn't like my gorgeous, wrinkled paper window treatments. I explained the situation and stated I would have the blinds up by the weekend. Why was I happy about this? Because it was clear to me that someone was looking out for the condition of this community; a community in which I invested a sizable amount of money.

Some people would find this kind of situation annoying, for several reasons. One would be: how could someone tell me what to do with my home? Well, to that I agree. However, when the condition of my home affects your home value or the condition of your home affects the value of my home these types of issues become a problem. It is none of anyone's business and I personally don't have the time or the interest to be bothered with what goes on in people's personal lives behind their closed doors. But I've said this before; we are all basically joined at the hip and anything that infringes on another co-owner is a problem. If someone doesn't understand that then my suggestion is they buy a home.

Well, you maybe guessed that I really had no interest in becoming a Board member; I was just happy to be pulling my life together after a personal tragedy and getting to know suburban Michigan. Then my neighbor came over and told me there was a Board position open. He told me there were other candidates and asked me to 'just meet the Board.' Being that I wanted to seem like a good neighbor I agreed. I figured if there are other candidates, they won't choose me. Well, here I am - my 3rd year on the Board – go figure.

This has been a terrific learning experience for me. I and the other Board members invest a lot of time, probably upwards of 15 hours a month on MSS. All for zero pay and many headaches. So why do we do it? I can only speak for

myself, but I find it rewarding to face the many building and budget challenges we've had. Since I've started serving on the Board we've done some great things in the interest of better communication and a stronger community.

The Board has implemented a garage door program providing benefit to co-owners, from a monetary and convenience standpoint. We have also surveyed co-owners, started a newsletter, revamped the website (thanks to the help of John Myer), done a tremendous amount of work on landscaping, and tackled the chimney issue. We finally solved a sprinkler issue that the development has experienced since day one and we think we have finally solved the erosion issue that plagued Main Street for years. The Board Members have also invested more of our personal time to the community by taking on the task of performing light checks. This cuts the cost of replacing burned out lights in half and saves the Association approximately \$300 per month!

We've done all of this with modest increases to dues, however we have increased the dues to avoid special assessments. The Board and specifically I feel special assessments are unfair to all current co-owners. Why not spread the costs out fairly among all past, present and future co-owners?

I know it is never easy to understand why things sometimes go the way they do, be it a dues increase, late charges, landscaping changes, etc. But there is a good reason for all of it. You have your own concerns and agenda – the Board looks out for the concerns of the entire community.

As long as I am on the Board, please feel free to bring forward all issues. But be prepared because you will be asked to work on solving them. If you have a landscaping issue, join the landscaping committee; if you think money needs to be spent on something, then perform the due diligence necessary to make a decision. If you think you can do a better job, then by all means step up.

This isn't co-owner v. co-owner or co-owner v. Association Board – the way I see it we are in this together. So when you do approach the Board or the management company please do so with a supporting attitude. And please remember that all of the Board Members work for the better of this community, pay association dues AND volunteer their time.

If you aren't going to be part of the solution than you are part of the problem. Let's all be part of the solution and work together!

Thanks for reading. God Bless each of us and our community!

Tammy Capone