

CAI Northern Ohio Chapter

Quarterly Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we head into the last quarter of 2022, the Board wants to thank each and every one of you for the services you provide to community associations. The management field is not an easy one but all of you make the work seem easy to an outsider. Thank you.

The article How Technology is Advancing Community Management serves as a reminder that we, as a group, must embrace new technology and allow it to assist us in our day-to-day lives. Change is not easy but sometimes it really does help.

And while Ohio does not have to deal with alligators or bobcats, Into the Wild, at Home, provides some useful tips on how to deal with deer and geese.

Did you know that CAMICB is governed with volunteer board members? CAMICB not only represents the interests of the community management field, but also strives to promote professional and ethical standards to consistently raise the bar of expectations for managers and business partners. Our Chapter fully supports this endeavor and we are sure you do as well.

We hope you all have a wonderful holiday season.

Lisa Frisch, President
Northern Ohio Chapter
Community Associations Institute

How Technology Is Advancing Community Management

By Matt Semyck

Reprinted from *Community Manager*, January/February 2022

Over the past two years, community association management companies and their staff members, individual managers, and association clients have adopted new forms of technology to help them fulfill their responsibilities. Conducting business remotely has become increasingly common for managers, boards, and homeowners due to the many changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Technology is taking the association management industry to the next level. In many cases, the switch to remote processes has streamlined how associations operate. Board elections held through electronic voting, online violation and inspection modules, and full-scale architectural review platforms are heavily critical processes that can now be done from a smartphone, tablet, or computer. Residents no longer need to schedule time to complete certain tasks face to face or fill out, print, and deliver forms in person.

Electronic voting has enabled association members to vote on issues or in elections on their own time and from the comfort of their home while remaining anonymous and accessing data in real time. The implementation of online voting swept community associations during the pandemic and continues to do so.

Online violation and inspection modules make the lives of inspectors and community managers vastly easier by creating a collaborative environment for the two to communicate and fulfill their tasks. In addition, adapting the architectural review process to an online format can provide a place for homeowners to share their projects and receive approval or denial instantly. We've seen massive success across the industry from associations that have adopted an online architectural review system.

Associations that embrace technology to help streamline their community's operations will have homeowners who are more satisfied, board members who feel less pressure in their role, and community managers who continue to find new ways to save time. Improving processes and continuously achieving better results is critical to remain successful and relevant in today's social and professional climate.

Implementation of more technologically focused business processes will allow community association management to remain a forward-thinking industry for the foreseeable future. As younger generations enter the profession in the years to come, association managers will continue to see increased success and satisfaction as community management progresses toward a brighter and better tomorrow.

Into the Wild, At Home

By Joe Cantlupe

Reprinted from *Common Ground*, November/December 2021

Some of the most scenic community associations in the U.S., often those that touch the ocean or gorgeous countryside, can count wildlife as one of their unique draws, but there can be trouble in paradise too.

Alligators sometimes bask in the sun's rays on a driveway or wander into an open garage. Vultures pluck at windshield wipers and deposit heavy droppings. Deer crash into cars. Wild peacocks damage roofs and make loud screeching sounds.

Community associations new and old are balancing human lifestyles with wildlife instincts, wrestling with the impact of living alongside each other, and weighing resident concerns with efforts to preserve the natural environment.

The Seabrook Island Property Owners Association in Johns Island, S.C., is teeming with wildlife. Located 23 miles south of Charleston, the community includes 3.5 miles of beach, some areas of which are protected migratory bird habitat. Seabrook bills itself as one of the few places in the U.S. where dolphins strand feed for fish. Alligators, armadillos, bobcats, coyotes, fish, foxes, raccoons, otters, opossums, turkeys, turtles, snakes, and white-tailed deer also call the community home.

"The natural environment, including the wildlife that inhabits it, is an essential park of Seabrook Island," says Heather Paton, CMCA, AMS, LSM, PCAM, executive director of the community of more than 2,300 homeowners. "Conflicts between wildlife and humans are inevitable. We strive for balance and have developed programs to achieve that. Typically, our most urgent responses are to alligators. For safety, warning signs are posted at lagoons."

Across the country, community associations are developing safety guidelines and strengthening their education programs.

"Wildlife issues tend to be hard to talk about generally because there are so many types of animals with their own problems – alligators threatening people and pets, bears foraging for food, feral pigs on golf courses, deer that are so plentiful it's hard to avoid hitting them with cars, geese causing a mess, and so on," says James Slaughter, an attorney with Law Firm Carolinas in Greensboro, N.C. "Depending on the type of animal, keep in mind that these issues can be very politically charged."

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Slaughter, a fellow in CAI's College of Community Association Lawyers, recalls one community that was experiencing a "shockingly high" number of cars striking deer. When the board announced that it was preparing to cull the deer population, there were calls for the board to be recalled or to resign, he says.

While there is no hard data on whether conflicts with wildlife are becoming more prevalent, the general sense is that there has been an uptick. Roughly 4,000 new homeowners associations and condominiums are built each year. There are around 355,000 community associations in the U.S. as of 2020, according to estimates from the Foundation for Community Association Research.

Slaughter points to the location of new communities as a driver behind the potential increase. "Communities are being built in what was next to or in nature," he says. "Moving into wildlife and then saying, 'Let's get rid of all the wildlife,' is neither practical nor appropriate."

Circumstances and options for resolving conflict with wildlife will vary, Slaughter says. Laws differ in states, and some animals can't be trapped or moved without a permit.

ROOST RESOLUTION

Some communities have turned to local partnerships to resolve the conflict.

Broadlands Association, a 1,500-acre, 3,800-home community in Ashburn, Va., was named a Certified Community Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation in 2008 for its efforts providing habitats in backyards and public areas. Over the years, though, a problem began roosting.

A large brood of vultures, as many as 600 at a time, started settling on roofs at night, causing extensive damage to property, says Sarah E. Gerstein, CMCA, AMS, PCAM, general manager of the large-scale community. The vultures pulled up shingles, scratched paint on cars, broke windshield wipers, and had "repugnant vomit."

"It got pretty controversial," says Gerstein. "They are intimidating. For a huge number of people, this was a big issue impacting their daily lives, waking us up in the morning or in the middle of the night."

Broadlands realized they couldn't deal with it on their own because both black and turkey vultures are federally protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Gerstein says. It is illegal to kill, poison, injure, or otherwise harm the birds. Vultures perform highly beneficial work in nature's food chain, cleaning up dead and decaying roadkill and animals that have passed naturally.

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The community worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Loudoun County Public Schools to contract with wildlife specialists to provide roost dispersal for seven consecutive days. The techniques included pyrotechnics, bottle rockets, and the hanging of effigies (deceased vultures) near nesting spots. Within a week, the vultures moved on from the community.

In Northern California, a community managed by Common Interest Management Services in Danville, has been dealing with another type of destructive bird: wild peacocks.

“They get on people’s roofs and try to eat bugs, damaging roofs,” says Adrienne Bretao, CMCA, AMS, PCAM, senior vice president of the management company, which oversees about 600 communities. “Plus, they are loud and annoying.”

The advice for homeowners: Make your home and landscape less attractive to them. “Keep your roofs clean. Keep your landscape clean. Don’t leave the cat food out,” says Bretao. “People ask, ‘What is the community doing about this?’ It’s like trying to prevent rain.”

In Clearwater, Fla., a couple of years ago, the Greenbriar Club Neighborhood Association made the local news when one resident (or more) wielded a bow and arrow and occasionally shot at peacocks with an air rifle. Sometimes, there were close calls for humans, says Ruth Blondell, President of the 55-and-older community of 837 single-family homes and 54 condominiums.

“There have been complaints about the peacocks, but some people have loved them. Some have trapped them on their own. The HOA remained neutral, but when somebody starts shooting peacocks, it becomes more of a public problem,” says Blondell, who was among the Greenbriar residents nearly struck by a shot from an air rifle.

The community had initiated efforts to thwart shootings of the invasive species, but plans have been detoured during the COVID-19 pandemic. “We were getting proactive and then COVID came,” she says. “We’re going to try to be proactive again.”

LIVING TOGETHER

Despite the conflict and emotion, community association officials stress the need to maintain the natural environment and protect wildlife.

Seabrook Island continually monitors the environment with conservation measures and keeps watch over new homes being constructed, says Paton.

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The community's architectural review standards include a provision that every property maintains a "wildlife corridor." In that corridor, there is a minimum 10-foot-wide natural vegetated area between properties. To protect loggerhead turtle nesting sites, there is a "lights-out" requirement on beachfront properties as well as a requirement for dark sky-compliant light fixtures throughout the island.

Seabrook also has a comprehensive deer management program to control the population and the health of the herd. For two months each fall, a naturalist conducts a multi-day deer study. The environmental committee reviews the data and the program recommendations and determines how many deer – if any – will be culled during the winter.

The recommendation must be approved by the community board, and a state permit is also required. In 2019, 50 deer were removed. The deer meat was packaged and donated to local food banks.

At the more than 4,500-home Suntree Homeowners Association, located in Brevard County, Fla., one of the benefits of living there is what the community describes as "the access to nature and all of its creatures." And there are plenty of them: wild hogs, alligators, coyotes, gopher tortoises, eagles, ospreys, hawks, owls, vultures, ducks, snakes, bobcats, raccoons, honeybees, and bats.

With the significant presence of wildlife and concerns among some of the residents about safety, the board issued a wildlife coexistence policies mission statement. The community follows coexistence and management information from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. The idea is that "creatures deemed dangerous to humans or pets could likely be avoided rather than trapped and killed," according to the statement.

Suntree's initiative was inspired by the dozens of calls the management office received monthly about a particular species. The community placed all of the information and appropriate solutions into a guide that can be passed along quickly to homeowners.

The animal activists and wildlife lovers applauded the move. "Some residents have an uneducated fear of animals, and it seems that this was the best solution to give our residents the tools they need to answer their questions," says the community's general manager, who wished to remain anonymous.

Suntree gently reminds residents about the importance of wildlife and the significance of coexistence.

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“The underlying goal is that eradication isn’t the preferred method (related to certain wildlife), but coexistence is,” says the manager. “If people change their behavior, they are not going to have an issue with wildlife at Suntree. Many of the transplants to Florida come with a natural fear of wildlife. If you don’t mess with an alligator, there’s no chance you will be harmed.”

Several years ago, a coyote killed a dog at Suntree, but that was the only occasion when wildlife has harmed an animal or a person, as far as the manager could recall.

ADVISE, WARN CONTROL

Attorney Slaughter recalls dealing with a community association board flummoxed about too many deer in the community.

“The first board suggestion was that several board members who were hunters could go out and shoot the deer, even though there were nearby playgrounds,” Slaughter recalls. His reaction? “No, no, and no.”

After a healthy amount of advice, out-of-state professionals were brought in with a plan and lots of liability insurance.

For most associations that have concerns about wildlife, the options fall into categories: advise owners; warn owners and guests through signs and postings; and take control of the situation, Slaughter says. “The appropriate option will depend on many factors: what’s the issue; what kind of animal is it; and where’s the problem.”

For newcomers and longtime residents, education helps.

The Highlands Ranch Community Association in Highlands Ranch, Colo., is home to 100,830 residents, more than 31,000 homes, and an abundance of wildlife – everything you would find in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains: elk, deer, mountain lions, turkeys, bobcats, coyotes, and more. Most of the complaints the community receives about wildlife is when a creature ventures into the neighborhoods or other developed areas.

Trail users frequently see the wildlife, but that’s true of any open space areas along the Front Range of the Rockies. “The backcountry is a conservation area, and we work to educate everyone that they should expect to see wildlife (there),” says Jerry Flannery, CEO and general manager of Highlands Ranch.

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Access to areas of the backcountry outside of the Highlands Ranch trail systems is only available through the community's programs and activities. Those adventures are always guided.

At Seabrook Island, educational programs are focused on the beauty of the environment, and the creatures that inhabit it. Among them is a dolphin education program and a bobcat guardian program. There are also special interest groups such as the Seabrook Island Natural History Group, the Seabrook Island Birders, and the Seabrook Island Turtle Project.

Such programs are "essential" and part of "appreciating the beauty of our environment," Paton says.



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The Organization Behind The Essential Credential

By: John H. Ganoe, CAE, Executive Director, CAMICB

It takes vision and determination to drive successful organizations forward and it's not just one area of focus that creates a success story. From the very beginning, CAMICB has been the certification body with oversight responsibility for developing and delivering the CMCA examination, including the maintenance and promotion of the CMCA credential. In fulfilling that role for more than 25 years, the organization supports homeowners living in community associations by recognizing managers who've demonstrated an operational understanding of the tasks essential to performing the job of a community association manager.

But supporting the community association management profession is far more than ensuring the CMCA credential is maintained at the highest possible standard. CAMICB must also make sure that homeowners, employers, the businesses that support community associations, legislative and regulatory bodies, and professional peers understand the value of the CMCA credential and the many benefits a credentialed manager, versus a non-credentialed manager, brings to your association.

A Behind The Scenes Look At CAMICB Operations

The CAMICB office is located in Northern Virginia and is comprised of a seven-member professional staff who execute operational matters. Staff members manage exam development, certification applications, credential renewal and recertification, the delivery of direct customer service to candidates and credential holders, and the conduct of all CMCA activities in full compliance with the rigorous standards of the CMCA's domestic and international accrediting bodies.

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Volunteers are at the heart of CAMICB's work starting with a nine-member volunteer Board of Commissioners who govern the organization and are charged with representing the interests of the constituencies served by professional managers. To ensure a wide-range of talent and expertise are represented, the Board includes a minimum of five CMCA credentialed managers, up to three members drawn from a field serving the profession, and a public member.

And, we are fortunate that the contributions of volunteers' time, talent and expertise goes beyond the Board of Commissioners. For example, the CMCA exam is developed by a broad and diverse team of volunteer Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). Subject Matter Experts work under the direction of the CAMICB Director of Examination Administration and the exam development process is overseen by our test development partner, Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO).

Additionally, a group of volunteer leaders oversee compliance with the CMCA Standards of Professional Conduct, a professional and ethical roadmap for CMCA credential holders. Full compliance with the Standards ensures the highest level of professionalism – and accountability – in working with boards and associations.



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CAMICB Supports Managers From The Start Of Their Professional Careers Through Retirement

It's important to note that while CAMICB is not an educational entity, it's deeply committed to offering resources and guidance to CMCA candidates that will position them for success on the exam. In doing so, CAMICB offers a number of free tools to help candidates prepare for the CMCA exam including a comprehensive candidate handbook and study guide, an online preparatory course, an exam "Quizlet" tool and webinars focused on exam preparation. Further, staff work daily to offer individual support to candidates and credential holders.

A broader suite of resources and programs help support managers and the profession, including the following:

- CAMICB offers managers who earn the CMCA credential a CMCA Digital Badge that credential holders can use as an easily shareable online "resume," highlighting the value of earning and maintaining the CMCA credential. Credential holders are also offered several resources to assist them in promoting their credential.
- CAMICB maintains a robust bank of approved continuing education programs – many offered at no cost – to assist credential holders with ongoing professional development and to assure that credential holders have access to the continuing education required to maintain their CMCA credential.
- CAMICB maintains a public-facing directory of credentialed professional managers so that homeowners and potential employers can quickly confirm a credential holder's active status. Interested parties can search by entering key terms such as last name, city, company, state, etc.
- CAMICB offers the CMCA (ret.) program for retired professional managers. The program is for individuals who want to stay connected to an expanding group of committed professionals with no obligation to meet continuing education requirements.

The more than 73.5 million people in the United States who live in covenant-protected communities rely largely on CMCA certification as proof of ethical, knowledgeable, professional community association management and CAMICB is proud to support the highest level of professionalism in the field.