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Editor- Terrence R. Real,  
Esq.  
trreal@floydllaw.com

The Floyd Law Firm PC  
15 Highway 17 South, Surfside Beach. S.C. 29575

## Community Talk

### THE STORY OF A BOCCE BALL: AMENITIES IN A COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

**There is a story told about a man in South Carolina who pushed a bocce ball across a grassy field with his nose.** It seems the man was a member of a board of directors of a community association in Hilton Head. The board had voted to install a new bocce court instead of expanding its tennis facilities.

The man, so the story goes, opposed the decision and vowed that he was so sure that 100 people would not sign up to use the bocce court, he would push a bocce ball with his nose if they did. On a sunny afternoon shortly after the installation was completed, the man got down on all fours and began to slowly push

the bocce ball toward the far end of the grassy court – all to the laughter and cheers of his fellow board members and neighbors.

The lesson of this possibly apocryphal story is that a community association has to listen to its members and find out how they want to use the amenities in their communities. Amenities are the swimming pools, walking paths, tennis courts, parking lots, and even trees and grass that make up the common areas of a community association. They are open for all residents to use and enjoy. But, over the years, the more popular amenities can suffer from overuse and the less popular can undergo neglect.

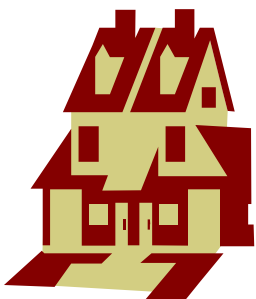
A community association, to be successful, should work to make

sure its amenities reflect the residents. For example, the foot paths may have a regular stream of walkers while the tennis courts sit empty. The swimming pools may be overcrowded, but the adjacent clubhouse is rundown and dilapidated. The landscaping, once welcoming and pleasant, may be overgrown and unattractive.

The resident population also may be changing. Families with children may be taking the place of elderly residents. Or retirees may now constitute the majority of the homeowners.

The key question for the community association is how to know it's time to change the amenities. A good first step in

15 Highway 17  
South  
Surfside Beach, SC  
29587  
843-238-5141



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in answering this question is to conduct a survey of the residents. Ask the residents if the amenities meet their expectations and do they contribute to the value of their homes.

A board can prepare a simple questionnaire that lists all of the amenities and asks the residents how often they use them (e.g., often, occasionally, never) and what value they place on them (e.g., by rating each one from 1 – low to 5 – high). Residents can be asked which amenities are the most important in defining their community and which should be added or changed.

Real estate agents also can be surveyed to determine what they see as the best and worst ameni-

ties. The agents may well know what amenities induce a person to buy and which make others not buy. The agents also can suggest amenities to make the community more attractive. New residents as well as those who looked but did not buy are also a source of information. They can be asked the same questions as the realtors, and their answers can provide a valuable insight into the community's appeal.

Once this information is collected, it has to be implemented. The board may want to use an existing committee to handle this, or it can set up a special committee. In either case, the group should act promptly before the

information gets stale and enthusiasm dies out.

The bottom line is that amenities are critical parts of any community. They provide comforts, enjoyments, and recreations for the residents and pay dividends in increased property values. In the long run, communities that enhance their amenities will remain strong, protect the owner's investments, and provide an attractive quality of life.

(The author acknowledges and is grateful to Robert H. Schwarting, Ithaca, NY, for his article titled "Recreational Use" in *Common Ground*, May June 2007).

Please refer to Robert's Rules of Order. This provides valuable guidance for board members, old and new, of community and homeowner's associations. If you would like a free copy of a useful summary of these rules, please contact Attorney Terrence R. Real, or Peggy A. Way at The Floyd Law Firm PC at (843) 238-5141.

The Floyd Law Firm's "Community Talk" is furnished as a service to provide general information believed by us to be reliable. It is not intended to constitute our definitive advice as to any specific matter or action. If you wish to pursue a matter contained in our "Community Talk", please feel free to contact us or visit our website at: [www.floydlaw.com](http://www.floydlaw.com) or contact [treal@floydlaw.com](mailto:treal@floydlaw.com).



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