

Community MOMENTS



Bernadette Aham-Neze

Senior Community Association Manager

RealManage Houston

August 2019

Message From The President

I want to start by thanking each of you for your loyalty to your communities and our team at RealManage. Being the management company of choice to represent the board of directors is an amazing charge and something we don't take for granted. We are already past the halfway point of the year, also known in the community management world as peak season. This is the time of the year where amenity programming, repair, and fulfillment is at its highest peak as well as planning for 2020 budgets. I also believe that this is the best time for our RealManage Ambassadors and Boards of Directors to sit down to define and discuss the outcomes desired for the upcoming year. Perhaps you want to bring your delinquency rate down by 5%, or you want to have increased attendance at board meetings by 20%; regardless, we should work together to define the desired end states and plan for those as we are in the budget season.

As always, it is my most profound gratitude that each of your communities has chosen RealManage as its managing partner. Should you have any comments or concerns regarding the service level you receive, I welcome each of you to reach out by sending an email to clientsatisfaction@ciramail.com. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

Chris Ayoub

President, RealManage



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EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Bernadette Aham-Neze



SENIOR COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION MANAGER

REALMANAGE HOUSTON



Bernadette Aham-Neze is one of our Houston office's Senior Community Association Managers whose tenure with our RealManage family spans more than five years. Prior to entering the association management field, Bernadette was in the home building and development industry for approximately fifteen years where she says she, "loved the interaction with potential home buyers and homeowners and the joy that accompanies it." With this background, association management was an easy transition for her, allowing her to continue working with homeowners, builders, and developers alike.

Given her tenure and success in the industry, we wanted to gain more insight into her tactics. When asked what she finds most challenging about our industry, she states, "The most challenging aspect of being an association manager is keeping everyone involved content. As an association manager, you are pulled in many directions. You're not only managing the community, but you are also managing the vendors, homeowners, budget, etc." When quizzed further on how she remains so successful given these challenges, "I overcome this by not over-promising and trying to set realistic expectations." Part of Bernadette's success also includes her constant work to apply balance to her life. When not working, she makes sure to follow her passions of spending quality time with family and friends, shopping, reading, eating out, and visiting arts/crafts festivals.



Bernadette shared the following when queried about any insight or observations on the future of our branch, company or industry, “I may be a little biased, but the Houston Branch is awesome to work with. We have the most amazing leaders, and our team of employees are family. We all try to excel and help one another in the process. RealManage is a company to watch in the coming years as a leader in Association Management. We are already leading in software, training, and continued employee education.”

Our company as a whole, and especially Team Houston, could not be more thankful for and proud of Bernadette Aham-Neze and we cherish having her as part of our family for years to come.

Written by **Sandra Vela Mora, PCAM®**
Division President: RealManage Houston

Board Spotlight

Kelly Kale

VANDERCROFT FARMS HOA RALEIGH, NC



The Raleigh Market would like to spotlight the Vandercroft Farms HOA board president, Kelly Kale. Kelly started her board tenure for Vandercroft Farms in November of 2017, immediately upon the transition from developer-controlled to homeowner control. She has worn many hats during that time and has volunteered countless hours to her community. Kelly, along with her fellow board members, has held many community events, thus far; Spring Flings, Christmas light contests, Independence Day celebrations, Trunk or Treat, and many more. With the community's best interest in mind, she has received many donations and vendor sponsorships to have amazing events. The events help to grow and support a tight-knit community that looks after one another while saving the community money as a whole.

Vandercroft Farms is beyond blessed to have such a diligent and dedicated board member, and she is a true joy to work with! Thank you, Kelly, for all you do and your unwavering dedication to Vandercroft Farms.


Written by **Cassie Renteria, CMCA®**
RealManage North Carolina





WHAT IS SMART IRRIGATION?

Why your HOA should invest in this technology



Advances in smart home technology provide convenience while at the same time, saving you money and helping the environment. This technology is especially useful when it comes to landscaping and green spaces. Part of the growing Internet of Things (IoT) that connect devices to the internet, systems such as Smart Irrigation Controllers can help the landscaping in your HOA healthy and thriving.

HOW SMART IRRIGATION WORKS

By using weather and soil information, Smart Irrigation Controllers know when to irrigate and how much water to apply. Some controllers use weather satellites while others use sensors to sample the air temperature and humidity. Smart Irrigation systems are so smart, they know, for example, to turn off the sprinklers when it is raining.

Gone are the days of guessing how much water is enough water, or of forgetting to water at all. You don't have to be a soil scientist or meteorologist either. Smart Irrigation controllers automatically maintain watering and irrigation schedules, allowing you to relax and to enjoy the benefits.

Healthy lawns and well-maintained landscaping within an HOA are a source of pride for members and an attractive feature for prospective buyers. Integrating features like smart irrigation controllers are a wise investment for HOA and part of how the IoT and Smart Home Technology are changing the way we live.

CONSERVE WATER AND SAVE MONEY

Research by the Irrigation Association proved that Smart Irrigation Controllers save up to 30 percent more water than traditional controllers. This is important data considering that two-thirds of residential water use happens outdoors. More importantly, most of the outdoor water use is wasted by over-watering lawns, trees, plants, and flowers.

In addition to conserving water, Smart Irrigation Controllers:

- Help associations save money on water bills for common areas
- Prevent water damage caused by over-watering
- Increases member satisfaction and reduces member complaints

In addition to water damage, over-watering can lead to fungal issues in plants and insect problems. Investing in a Smart Irrigation Controller for your HOA is a win-win for the environment and your members. For the best results, be sure to hire a professional landscaper to install the system so that it is set up properly for your landscape needs.

THE CASE FOR ADEQUATE RESERVE CONTRIBUTIONS

"But... that's all we can afford!"

Written by **Robert Nordlund, CMCA®, AMS®**

Founder/CEO of Association Reserves | www.ReserveStudy.com | Twitter: @Reserves

What's better - \$50/mo Reserve contributions (as part of your condo's total monthly assessment) or \$100/mo? All other things being equal, I'd rather pay the \$50 monthly bill. Why would any board, able to set the budget at their association, choose the higher amount for the owners?

But that question, faced by boards every year, reveals flawed logic. It's not an "**I'd rather pay more or less**" question, nor should it be considered a board "choice." The roof will fail and need to be replaced on a very predictable schedule, along with many other similar projects. There are indeed "Surprise!" expenses faced by associations (construction defects, hailstorm or hurricane damage, etc.) but those aren't Reserve expenses. Reserve expenses are predictable projects. National Reserve Study Standards, published in 1998, contains a tight four-part test that dictates which types of these predictable projects should be funded through Reserves. Those Reserve expenses are as real and predictable as any other upcoming bill the association will face.

SO THE TRUE QUESTION IS ONLY HOW YOU PAY FOR IT...

A bill that needs to be paid boils down to "sooner" or "later." And unfortunately, the common choice of "later" is usually more expensive. Choosing to fund Reserves at a rate less than your assets are deteriorating, less than recommended in your Reserve Study, doesn't save you money. It simply means you'll pay that money later by means of a special assessment or a loss in home values (or both). And "later" often means the project will be more expensive than initially anticipated. A good example is a paint project that will require significant prep or repair costs due to a delay getting started.

The basic complaint of "**that's all we can afford**" is an arbitrary line in the sand created by the board. It has nothing to do with the real "bill" of the ongoing cost of deterioration. Each owner purchased a home with common areas (roof, paint, asphalt, elevator, hallway, pool, etc.). Those common area components will need to be repaired or replaced with 100% certainty. If the board feels assessments are "high," the answer is not to reduce Reserve contributions in an attempt to keep assessments low. The board's job is to provide for the needs of the association. Individual owners are responsible for making their own value judgments on the affordability of their housing choices. The correct balance of responsibilities is for the board to budget what the association needs, and for owners to decide if living in the association is affordable or not. The board is making decisions outside their scope of responsibility if their decisions are influenced by their perception of what owners can "afford."



Adequate Reserve contributions are part of the true cost of owning an association home. These contributions are not “for the future.” These contributions simply pay the ongoing deterioration bill, so the funds will exist when the bill comes due. Protect your owners from the avoidable “surprise” of special assessments and let them make their own informed decisions about the cost of being members in the association based on the true cost of homeownership.

So Reserve contributions are not for “the future” or for “surprises”. Setting a budget that includes adequate Reserve contributions allows every owner to pay their fair share of the deterioration that occurred while they owned a home in the association. After all, it is “just another bill” that needs to be paid.



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