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# COMMUNITY MOMENTS

A REALMANAGE PUBLICATION



## Dennis Kapsis

Director of Community Association Management



# JULY

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

**H**appy July! 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 Director's is an amazing charge and something we don't take for granted. We are already at 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 tempo as well as planning for 2018 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 2018. 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 entering budget season.

**I**would also like to take a moment to announce that RealManage has teamed up with Rowell, Inc in Elgin, Illinois. Rowell has one of the finest reputations in community management for providing exceptional service to their clients. We will be focusing on fostering more local relationships and services through this fantastic new partnership. Excellent customer service continues to be our absolute priority and this relationship will help take us to the next level. Thank you again for your continued loyalty and we look forward to faithfully serving you for many years to come.



**Chris Ayoub**  
*President, RealManage*



# Dennis Kapsis

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

Dennis Kapsimalopoulos, or Dennis Kapsis as his associations know him, is the Director of Community Association Management for RealManage-Orlando, a branch office servicing about a third of RealManage clients in Florida. Being home to both Universal Studios and Walt Disney World, Orlando has some unique challenges in the community association management industry, particularly in the realm of out-of-state owners and investment properties within the associations under management. Due to a remarkable work ethic and personable approach, Dennis has led the Orlando Branch to its first Market of the Quarter award for its success in early 2017.

Originally born in Athens, Greece, Dennis moved to the United States at the age of 13, relocating to New York City, New York with his younger sister and parents. His father retired from the Greek Army and began piloting large vessels before accepting a position as a port administrator in Manhattan. After finishing school, Dennis entered into the real estate industry before relocating to Florida in 2010, Seeking a welcome change from the cold weather and high cost of living and starting a new career in community association management.

Dennis had been working in the industry for roughly seven years before being hired by RealManage as a community manager. This industry has an appeal to him; specifically, he likes working with people and solving their problems. This type of work allows him to stay active and exercise some creativity in sourcing solutions for his clients. His time as a manager was brief as his aptitude, drive, and

thoroughness, traits he says come from his father, were recognized and prompted his swift promotion to Director of Community Association Management. This change yielded near immediate results with Orlando's online reviews of positive customer service skyrocketing after only four months, sporting an overall 4.9 / 5 rating on Google, leading to an increased interest by new clients in retaining the branch's services.

" This is an industry where you have to care. "

When asked specifically about Orlando – what makes the branch different and why are you so successful – Dennis had this to say: "This is an industry where you have to care. You have to go above and beyond and never settle for the minimum, and that's why our retention is so high. The branch leadership cares a great deal about our clients. We're willing

to do what it takes, and we own our mistakes. People are human, and the test of a person is to admit when mistakes happen, step forward towards a solution, and move on. Always keep moving forward."

Dennis' vision for Orlando includes a few goals for 2017 and beyond. Above all, he wants to end the year without losing any clients and continue to grow, attempting to win the Market of the Year Award from RealManage. Long term, Dennis wants to outpace a few competitors and be the number one management provider in his market. His message to everyone else, much like his management style, is straightforward and direct: "We're coming. We're small right now in this market, but that's not forever."





BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# Hal Lanham

The Hills POA

Hal has held various positions within The Hills POA to include member of the Architectural Control Committee, Chairman of the Security Committee, Vice President, and is currently President of The Hills POA.

He brings an unusual level of community understanding as he served as a City Manager in Four Cities in Texas prior to coming to the Austin, Texas, area. His skills are evident as he deals with the issues of the POA.

Many of the accomplishments of the POA that can be attributed to his efforts, although he is quick to give credit to others, include upgrading the manned gates security staffing, a cooperative effort to remodel the POA's offices, replacement of all street and traffic signs with decorative poles and reflectorized signs, replacement and refurbishing of all game areas and significant improvements to the streets.

His organizational skills are most evident during Board meetings. The agenda is well thought out and has back-up information for each item provided from the onsite manager, Angela Thielemans. Each Committee Chair has prepared a report for the packet as well, and most importantly, the meeting never exceeds two hours.

His governmental knowledge and skills are also unmistakable, as the POA coordinates with the Village (City) of the Hills and the Hurst Creek Municipal Utility District (the Hills utility provider). All of these entities office under the same roof in a cooperative manner, which not only is convenient for all Hills residents, but also saves our residents thousands of dollars each year.

Most importantly, he recognized that the make-up of the traditionally retired population of residents in The Hills was rapidly changing to more than 50% of the residents having young families. As a result, he has brought a new generation of residents onto the committees and to positions on the Board combined with many experienced members.

The Hills residents are greatly indebted to Mr. Lanham for his ongoing selfless efforts to make The Hills a wonderful place to live.





# PRE-PLANNING A DISASTER RESPONSE

Disaster planning is critical for anyone-- but it's doubly significant for HOAs and others in positions of authority. If a natural disaster strikes in your area, are you prepared to respond? Knowing the roles and responsibilities your HOA has in times of disaster will help everyone respond more efficiently, restoring order to your neighborhood sooner.

## THE MOST COMMON DISASTERS

When it comes to disasters, there are several key things you are planning for. While the full scope of disasters you need to anticipate will depend on your area, there are several you might count on needing to cover: fire, flood, earthquakes, tornadoes, and extreme storms that cause damage to the surrounding area. You will also need to think about human-made disasters: chemical spills, explosions, and terrorism, among others. If your HOA covers multifamily units, consider the possibility of building collapse. Make sure that you consider any other disasters that are common to your geographic area.

## PRE-PLANNING YOUR ROLE

As you're considering the role that the HOA should take in responding to a disaster, there are several key questions you should ask. These include:

- > How do local first responders act in the event of an emergency? Are they typically very involved with putting the community back together, or does it take them longer to respond, with less involvement?
- > What does the community expect of the HOA in the event of an emergency? Are you supposed to be very hands-on, or will the community expect to take care of itself? Note that the higher the dues paid by members of the community, the more involvement they will expect by the HOA.
- > How often is disaster likely to strike in your community? For example, do you live near a high-crime area or an area where natural disasters are an annual event? Does your area frequently experience strong storms?

Knowing the answers to these questions will help you shape a more effective HOA disaster plan.

## TYPICAL HOA RESPONSIBILITIES

- > Help notify residents of a mandatory evacuation.
- > Help evacuate residents who are elderly, handicapped, or who might struggle to evacuate on their own.
- > Return residents to their homes as soon as possible.
- > Coordinate information with emergency response personnel to keep everyone safe and informed.
- > Provide aid to residents where possible throughout and following the emergency situation.

## WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

Within your HOA, there are likely several leaders who are willing or able to take point in the event of a disaster. While it is possible for everyone to pitch in, there are several key points you should take into consideration concerning the responsibilities that you might take on in the event of an emergency.

- > What members of the HOA can assist with evacuations, phone calls, and other tasks? Keep in mind that members with young children or with disabled dependents may not be suitable for these tasks, as they will be otherwise occupied.
- > What member will be responsible for coordination efforts following the disaster?
- > Are there members of the HOA who are able to pitch in and help with things like removing fallen trees or limbs or other basic tasks for homeowners in your area, especially if there is a need to evacuate quickly? How large is your homeowner's association? How many properties does it cover? Sharing responsibility is more critical for associations that cover a large number of units than those that cover only a few.

Being prepared for a disaster ahead of time will prevent you from needing to scramble when an emergency does occur. By asking yourself several key questions ahead of time, you can start the planning process and help your HOA prepare for the possibility of an emergency. These steps will allow you to pre-plan.



# CIRACONNECT

## CIRANET UPDATE

As part of our on-going endeavors to provide the best service and technologies in the industry to our clients, RealManage is proud to introduce a new enhancement to our software. The [Mass Communication Tool](#) is designed to empower community managers with a quick, robust, flexible and fully integrated (i.e. no third-party software product) tool to send out mass communication to community members, owners, residents, etc.

This new feature allows homeowners in communities managed by RealManage to choose whether or not they receive mass e-mails sent from their association by opting in.

### Homeowners have several options:

- > Opt in to receive standard notifications from their community association.
- > Opt in in to receive emergency notifications from their community association.
- > Opt in to receive both.
- > Opt out to receive none.



# CREATING YOUR HOA EMERGENCY PLAN

You have started the process of pre-preparing a disaster plan for your HOA. Now you want to take a step forward and create an HOA emergency plan that will allow you to provide assistance for your members when an emergency occurs. There are several things your emergency plan should include.

## CONTACT INFO FOR ALL MEMBERS

You never know what kind of disaster could strike and many of them will cause you to need to contact all of your members. In the event of an explosion, a chemical spill, or a flood, for example, you may need to evacuate all of the residents in the area. Simple contact information will allow you to effectively contact as many of them as possible. Some tips:

- > Save a set of contact information that is organized by residence, not by name: there's no reason to contact both spouses when the first one has already answered.
- > Make sure you have alternative emergency contacts in case of an emergency.
- > A searchable directory stored virtually will be easier to search and maintain than a paper directory. Consider a shared file that can be accessed by all members of the HOA during an emergency but have a back-up in case of power failure.

## YOUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

Your HOA needs a solid emergency response plan that includes all the information you'll need to keep your members safe in the event of a disaster. This includes:

- > Evacuation routes, including alternative routes in case the usual ones aren't safe
- > Information about how evacuations will be determined (other than those announced by emergency response personnel)
- > Contact information for local first responders and aid organizations
- > How you will coordinate with the management company or other relevant organizations throughout the disaster and recovery
- > How communication with the insurance company will occur and how involved the insurance company will be with the recovery process. Be sure to include relevant contact information for the insurance company and a copy of the policy
- > Information about who within the HOA or the residents has the authority to make relevant decisions
- > A physical inventory of any structures or spaces that are considered HOA property
- > The individuals who are responsible for taking care of specific tasks- notifying residents, coordinating recovery efforts etc.- following the emergency.

## BUDGET FOR DISASTERS

Is your HOA responsible for providing some financial assistance to residents throughout the disaster recovery process? Are there communal pieces- swimming pools, game rooms, or playgrounds, for example- that are paid for by HOA dues? How will they be repaired if a disaster occurs? Your HOA disaster recovery plan needs to include a budget that includes:

- > The actual numbers of the budget
- > Methods for adding additional funds to the budget if necessary (fundraising, asking or raising funds from homeowners, allocating funds from another source, etc.)
- > Financial priorities in the event of a disaster
- > A list of responsibilities that will be covered by the HOA in the event of a disaster.
- > It is impossible to have a budget prepared for every possible emergency or disaster, but if the HOA recognizes the threats ahead of time by budgeting something towards disasters it will be much less of a headache and easier to work to get the HOA back on track during recovery

## WHO CAN HELP?

Throughout your homeowner's association, you have residents with different needs and different skill sets. As you're recovering from your disaster, there's plenty of information that you'll want to be able to access quickly. This might include:

- > Information about individuals who are in a position to provide assistance to the elderly or handicapped. For example, that single young man- or father with several teenage sons- at the end of the block might be in a great position to help move trees or to help escort the elderly woman down the street to an evacuation point.
- > Information about organizations that are providing aid throughout the emergency process. Make sure to collect numbers from any organizations that are offering help, including churches and other volunteer organizations.
- > Any residents who have specific skills that will be useful throughout the recovery process.
- > Vendors who have been pre-approved to take care of physical recovery following an emergency.

When disaster strikes, you want to be prepared to respond swiftly and efficiently. Designing a solid disaster response plan will make it easier for you to be sure that your residents are taken care of and that your neighborhood is back to normal as soon as possible following an emergency. Keep in mind that residents should also be encouraged to know how they will respond in the event of specific emergencies, especially those that are common in your area.





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