

COVID-19: Technology and Social Distancing

March 16, 2020



COVID-19 has introduced new challenges to the way we meet and work together in our communities. Many of our daily community association activities include in-person interaction, from regular meetings to conduct association business to elections and other membership votes. Social distancing, the new normal, has necessitated a change to our behavior. While we continue to learn more about the COVID-19 virus and how it is spread, we do know that limiting in-person interaction can greatly reduce risk. Modern technology is a powerful tool to help reduce the transmission of the virus and allow us all to continue with our normal community association business. The following are a few options to consider as your association works to reduce risk in your community.

Voting

A standard election or membership vote often involves voting on a paper ballot. In addition, other types of voting events also include meeting in person, either to cast a ballot or participate in an annual meeting. At this time, we don't know exactly how long the virus lasts on surfaces, but experts do believe it can be transmitted by touching surfaces. While social distancing and other guidelines now require we limit group activities and avoid public gatherings, there are a number of technologies that allow voters to participate in elections and cast membership votes safely from the comfort of their own homes.

Online voting is a Florida approved option and is a powerful tool to ensure association members can easily participate without the risk of exposure to the virus from in-person meetings or via voting materials. If you have an upcoming election or other membership vote, consider adding online voting to your process to avoid the need for physical materials and in-person participation.

Association Documentation

Community associations are required to provide access to association documents in the form of document inspection requests, a common practice that is sure to continue even during these uncertain times. We expect COVID-19 to affect the normal course of business for at least the next few months, especially as we continue to avoid in-person meetings and handling physical materials.

Instead of requiring in-person document inspections, consider posting your association documentation to your community website. Community association website software offers tools to upload association documentation and share links via email. These tools also allow you to easily post all Florida required association materials to a password protected area of your association's website,

facilitating ease of access and satisfying document inspection requests. These tools are simple to use and are cost-effective methods to continue to support your membership while helping to stem the transmission of the Covid-19 virus.

Association Communication

As we have seen, communication during an uncertain time is crucial. Your community association website is an instrumental channel to quickly and effectively communicate with your association membership. By posting official notices on how your community is managing the outbreak, your website provides a quick and centralized mechanism to ensure your association is apprised of the latest information. We all rely on websites for information and entertainment, and we will likely spend more time online now that our out of home activities are limited. Take this opportunity to direct your membership to your association website for the latest community updates.

We are all facing the challenges COVID-19 has introduced. Social distancing, cancelled activities, and the overwhelming amount of information only adds to the stress of this evolving situation. Technology can be a powerful equalizer, enabling us to work together in safe conditions and keep lines of communication open to all.