
The UCOM Press

Fall/Winter 2022

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

We would like to wish everyone a very Merry Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!

We are looking forward to 2023 in more ways than one and we can't wait to share the educational pieces that we have in store for our membership. Check out our website www.ucomonline.org to see all of the updates that we have made and to learn about our plans and upcoming events.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our upcoming seminars!

Dawn Miller-President-Communications
Director

Educational Opportunities

UCOM is an organization that assists potential candidates and current condominium board members with their roles (duties) on the board. The educational opportunities on how to be an effective board member and conduct a meeting are tremendous. Our website has a library of articles for you to take advantage of and you can also attend our seminars given by condominium attorneys.

Many of our board meetings and interactions with our own condominium co- owners are held online due to the pandemic. The computer and the internet is our salvation so that our meetings can be held on ZOOM or other platforms. With the internet, our risk of being scammed is

exponential. Responding carelessly to emails that look legitimate from your bank, credit card company or store may lead you to erroneously give out information about your account or yourself. Always ascertain that the URL is correct. The email address should not have spelling mistakes or come from "joe blow@gmail.com" for example. Clicking and opening such inviting links may give the hacker the opportunity to encrypt a bug into your system. Be (aware) cautious always and get yourself a good internet anti-virus and security protection package and backup your system. Remember that browsing on the web may lead you to unsafe areas that a cyber virus protection program will alert you to possible danger.

Wishing you safe interactions via email and safe browsing.

Clara Sumeghy
UCOM, Board Secretary

Winterization Checklist

In colder climate common wall communities, it's extremely important to ensure that owners of vacant units have properly winterized and secured their unit to prevent damage to it and neighboring units. Here's a handy checklist you can adapt to your community.

GENERAL

Check Your Insurance. Consult with your insurance agent to see that your content coverage is adequate. The Association's

insurance will not cover loss of or damage to your personal property.

Emergency Contact Information. <VERY IMPORTANT> Leave information with the Manager and Board President including expected return date.

Landlords. Post this notice in a visible location within the unit.

Weekly Inspection. Have someone inspect the unit at least weekly, especially if there is a prolonged cold spell or recent freezing temperature.

INSIDE

Adjust Hot Water Thermostat. Turn gas hot water heaters to minimum (pilot light only) or turn electric hot water heater completely off. Set the thermostat no lower than 55EF to protect against freezing conditions.

Draperies & Blinds. Adjust so interior view is minimal.

Exterior Doors. Secure all including the garage door, if applicable.

Fireplace. Close flue and doors and put reminder note on the mantel: "Flue Closed".

Leave Sink Cupboard Doors Open. Leave cupboard doors open under kitchen and bathroom sinks to keep pipes warm.

Lighting. Install clock controls in the living room and bedroom so they turn on and off each evening for security purposes.

Pipe Thawing. If the pipes freeze, use a hair dryer or wait until the weather moderates. When thawed, listen for running water when faucets are turned off. If you hear it, there may be a broken water line. If so, report it to the board or management immediately.

Refrigerator. Turn thermostat to minimum setting and remove all perishables.

Windows. Close and secure all windows.

OUTSIDE

Lighting. Install photocell in exterior entry fixture for automatic night lighting.

Close Main Water Valve. If you have access to a valve that controls your unit only, close it.

Electrical Tape on Pipes. If applicable, verify working condition.

Exterior Faucets. Install Styrofoam covers by fall to prevent freezing. Leave in place until Spring.

Exterior Vents. If your unit has them, close them or install vent plugs by October 15. Open them again by April 15. Close or open later if weather dictates.

Patio/Deck. Store all plants and pots. Store or protect furniture.

Sump Pumps. If applicable, verify working condition.

Snow & Ice Conditions. Keep a supply of an ice melt handy (no salt or kitty litter). Keep a broom and snow shovel handy to keep your steps and walkways clear of snow.

SERVICES & UTILITIES.

Mail. Advise the post office to hold or forward your mail.

Newspaper. Discontinue or suspend service.

Utilities. Prepay utilities to ensure continued heating during your absence.

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Eva Veller-Executive Vice President

HOME SAFETY!!

KEEP YOUR DRYER VENT CLEAN:

At least once a year, clean out your dryer vent to improve your dryer's overall operation and longevity. This practice also lowers fire risks and your utility bills. Follow these tips for better function and safety.

****Unplug the dryer, pull it away from the wall and disconnect the duct.**

****Vacuum the inside of the vent**

****Insert a dryer-vent brush into the duct. Move it back and forth while rotating to clean out any dust attached to the side of the vent. Continue to extend the brush until the vents are free of lint and dust.**

****Reconnect the duct and plug in the dryer**

****Inspect the vent on the outside of your home and be sure the flap opens easily when the dryer is on.**

In addition, be sure to clean out the lint trap before each drying cycle. If you use dryer sheets, you may notice a residue that builds up on the lint screen over time. If the screen becomes clogged, wash it in warm, soapy water using a soft scrub brush. Be sure to rinse and dry the screen thoroughly before inserting it back into the dryer.

As Ben Franklin said "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure".

By: Cheryl Curley-Hospitality Director-
Commercial Account Manager, Jarvis Property
Restoration-BMS CAT of Michigan

EMAIL BLASTS

Welcome to the modern age. Board members used to conduct business on the phone and wait

for the monthly meeting to implement everything. Now that we all have computers and the internet, we can do a lot through email. It saves time and we can look back at our discussions and ideas. We have also encouraged our co-owners at City Center Estates to submit their email addresses. We make sure they know we will only use them to send emergency notices that need to go out immediately. Examples are when the grass is too wet to cut, we can send an e-mail blast to let them know it will be done the next day instead. When the snow falls and they are wondering why they are not out to plow, we let them know they will be there as soon as the snow stops falling. We have also joined a new database that is completely web based called AppFolio. With this new software, co-owners can check their balance, change their contact information, pay their bill, submit work orders and more. This portal will also email reminders to co-owners when it's time to pay their assessments which will help with delinquencies. This streamlines the communication process between management and co-owners. We are excited to take this next step into a more digital future.

Cindy Locke-Board Member

Purchasing a Home in an Association

Purchasing a condominium or townhome may be the most significant financial decision a home buyer makes. While the location, building design and amenities are important, there are also several financial and legal aspects to consider before making the commitment. In association living, that commitment includes not only the purchase of property, but also automatic membership into an association. The information you gather before the purchase will help you have a complete picture of how the

association operates. You should become familiar with some of these nuances and learn what makes this transaction different from the purchase of a single-family home in a subdivision or renting an apartment.

Several key issues can be addressed through the written offer you will present to the seller. The contract should either include a clause or be attached to a separate document, called a Rider, that asks the seller for certain documents. Through these documents, you can learn about the association's financial picture, whether any legal action is pending against the association and whether the association bylaws prohibit certain types of pets, for example.

A buyer of a condominium should ask the seller to produce the following documents:

- Copies of the association declaration, bylaws and rules and regulations;
- Recent newsletters (if applicable)
- A list of any liens placed against the unit;
- Budget
- The status and amount of reserves, both for replacement and for specific projects;
- Provide the contact information for the association's insurance carrier for common element coverage information.
- Improvements or alterations made by prior unit owners to unit or limited common elements, which are in good faith believed to be in compliance with the condominium rules and regulations.
- Any special or additional assessments outstanding on the unit.

These documents will create a picture of how the association is managed and how owners' monthly assessments are being spent. Does the association have adequate insurance to cover replacing the condominium building in the event of fire, theft or other damage? Given the age of the property, have reserves been accumulating to cover routine maintenance projects, as well as more significant planned improvements? If the answers to these questions are no, it could be an additional financial liability to an owner.

The association's declaration, bylaws and rules and regulations will help you understand what types of activities are permitted in the complex. Are unit owners allowed to leave trailer trucks or motorcycles parked in the lot? Are pets allowed and, if so, are there weight restrictions? If you have a 75-pound dog or want to buy the unit as an investment to rent out, these documents could dramatically change plans.

The most important suggestion is to pay a lawyer to review these documents before you close. That does not mean just hire a lawyer to do a closing; pay them for their legal analysis of these important documents and reports.

By doing research before you purchase, you can save yourself from surprises and focus instead on living your new life as part of a condominium association. After all, association membership is not a privilege, it comes with ownership.

Dawn Miller-UCOM President-Key Association Management-Key Elite Realty

Help Us Spread the Word!

Do you know any other community board members that could benefit from being a UCOM member? We're back, help us spread the word!

Educational programs have begun.

Quarterly virtual presentations will be available on the UCOM website. You will not need a password or pin this year.

Quarterly Seminars featuring legal counsel (UCOM members) will be sharing their knowledge with you at actual, live events. These meetings will take place at various venues throughout the Metro Detroit area for your convenience.

Quarterly our newsletter will post on the website and emailed to our membership.

Look for information on the website:

www.ucomonline.org

Emails will be sent to you from:

ucommich@gmail.com.

Add these addresses to your list of contacts so it doesn't end up in your spam folder.

Share your email info with us. Send your email address to info@ucomonline.org.

See us on Facebook.

Knowledge is power!

Be strong!

