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## INDEX OF ADVERTISERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Irrigation, Inc.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Ways Drains</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Family Insurance - Jeffrey Mayhew Agency, Inc.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asphalt Associates Inc.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEI</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson, Kerrane, Storz &amp; Nelson, P.C.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomington Security Solutions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Construction, LLC</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CertaPro Painters - Twin Cities East</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Advantage</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterium-Schimnowski Engineers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elysian Construction</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FirstService Residential</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gassen Company</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellmuth &amp; Johnson</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoffman Weber Construction</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Bank of Omaha</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Concepts Management Group, Inc.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCS Residential</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve Advisors</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sela Roofing &amp; Remodeling</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stinson Services, Inc.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strobel &amp; Hanson, P.A.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Inspectors of Election</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TruSeal America, LLC</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## BUDGETING FOR INSURANCE EXPENSES
By Grant Herschberger of Marsh & McLennan Agency

## CASINO NIGHT RECAP
By Tim Broms, Executive Director of CAI-MN

## OUTDOOR BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS
By Rachael Hoeschen of Birch, Inc.

## ALL ABOUT INSULATION
By Heidi Stinson of Stinson Services

## GOLF TOURNAMENT HIGHLIGHTS
By Tim Broms, Executive Director of CAI-MN
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The title for this message is something Tim Broms said to me as we wrapped up our 12th annual chapter golf tournament on August 20th. The event was an unqualified success – and for that many thanks are due to those who served on the golf and social committees, and of course to Tim as our Chapter Executive Director, for the months of planning and last-minute scrambling necessary to pull off one of our largest events of the year.

But there were doubts. The golf tournament was threatened by rain all day. Most of us arrived at the course in some unexpected early rain, which in some areas was a virtual downpour. And the forecast indicated there was an 80% chance that thunderstorms would move in well before we were scheduled to finish our rounds. Tim fielded calls starting early that morning due to the ominous weather. When people asked him: “What do we do?” He replied: “We show up.”

As he relayed the story to me, Tim added the first part: “This is Minnesota.” Stated together, the words stuck with me because it not only rang true that day, but also for so much of the past year.

The golf tournament succeeded because people had faith and they showed up. We braved the elements as only Minnesotans can do and we were rewarded. Somehow, the clouds parted just enough and held off through the entire day. In fact, as I left the course about an hour after the last door prize was handed out, I still saw CAI-MN golfers enjoying more conversation on the patio overlooking the 18th green.

Throughout this year as well, we’ve had incredible stability and seen the rewards that come from the kind of resolve and work ethic that I think are traits distinctive to Minnesota. Despite adding more to everyone’s plates than in past years, each member of the Board of Directors has dug in and taken on important roles in planning and strategizing. When the chapter called on Tim (in 2017) to help us transition the role of our executive director to become more hands-on and approachable, he showed up. When we asked our committees to take on new and different roles, they all showed up. My fellow executive committee members Joe Crawford, Kris Birch, and Mary Felix agreed to meet on a weekly basis for several months just to make sure we were doing our job as a chapter. As a result of all these efforts, we’ve had record attendance at our tradeshow and golf tournament and great turnout at our social and educational events. Over the past year we’ve added more members, more annual partners, and I believe more relevance to what we do for the community association industry in Minnesota.

And I think the reason is simple: This is Minnesota. We show up.
As anyone involved in the community association industry knows, using volunteers is an important part of the efficient running of almost any Association, whether it be volunteer board members, other volunteers for projects, specific matters or general assistance around the grounds and buildings of an Association. However, care should be taken when utilizing volunteers and there are a number of issues to be aware of in that context.

**Association/Volunteer Protections**

Volunteers may be individually protected by the federal “Volunteer Protection Act of 1997” but that may not protect the association itself to any real degree. That Act was intended to protect individual volunteers with non-profits from risk of tort liability for their actions in order to allow volunteering without worrying about potential liability for being a volunteer. But an Association needs to protect itself as well.

A volunteer is essentially acting as an agent of the Association when volunteering, depending on the type of task being done. Thus, there could be liability for negligence or wrongdoing as a result of something that the volunteer does (or does not do). Also, there is the risk of injury to the volunteer while doing tasks for the Association – that must be considered as well.
Liability Concerns

Some key concepts arise when involved in the world of volunteers:

- Lack of training is often what differentiates a volunteer from an “expert”. And that can be the difference in outcomes when using volunteers. Highly technical tasks are likely not good grounds for volunteer usage – using an expert with the training, experience and protections of the industry is likely a better choice. As stated above, determine where the line is between a properly trained expert and a zealous volunteer. Even a highly trained volunteer for a certain task/job may not come with the same protections as utilizing a true industry “expert”.

- Scope of duties/task. Sometimes, in the “heat” of “esprit de corps” a volunteer may feel inclined to do more than was initially planned for or expected. While that could be helpful, it is better to have a narrowly focused and specific set of tasks/duties so that there is clarity and oversight for what is being done.

- Written waivers signed by volunteers can be used to attempt to limit possible liability to a volunteer for some injury or act. But, it should be accepted that a waiver may not be an absolute method of limiting an association’s exposure for volunteer issues. Waivers are helpful in deflecting potential liability but need to be used cautiously and with an understanding that if something bad does happen and there are injuries or damages, any such waiver is certain to be challenged.

Possible Insurance Coverage for Volunteer Work

There are a number of potential insurance options to protect the Association from potential liability to or as a result of the actions/inactions of volunteers:

- Directors’ & Officers’ Liability. Protects board members making decisions during the course of Association business so long as they are acting in the appropriate way and using “business judgment” when doing so. Such a policy is good practice and can provide defense and indemnity where there is a dispute between an Association and one or more members/owners about decisions or actions taken by the board of directors.

- Worker’s Comp. Typical worker’s compensation coverage may not cover volunteers (only employees), so depending on the task considered this may be something to look into further and determine potential options with your agent.

- Crime & Fidelity Insurance. Such insurance can protect an Association against financial losses as resulting of some type of fraudulent financial activity, e.g., embezzlement, wire fraud, check fraud. Oftentimes, associations may have an “employee dishonesty” bond/insurance, but that may only cover employees; to the extent coverage is sought for volunteers, exploring potential options may be wise.

These are just a few of the considerations when using or thinking about using volunteers around your Association. It can be done and most certainly can be helpful and rewarding to both the volunteer and the Association. But being aware of and planning for the potential pitfalls and risks is good business practice for homeowners’ associations.

Christopher R. Jones, Esq., is a partner with the law firm of Hellmuth & Johnson. He is also a member of CAI’s Minnesota chapter board of directors.
Q: Why have you been referred to as the HOA gurus?

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Q: What common mistakes do you see associations making?

Letting members get far behind in their assessment payments. A small delinquency can quickly become a significant financial loss to an association. The board should employ an efficient and consistent practice of collecting delinquent assessments.

Not carefully reviewing the governing documents before making decisions. When a board passes a rule, adopts a resolution or makes other formal decisions, it should first review the governing documents to make sure that the decision is consistent with those documents. Failing to do so can result in the rule or decision being unenforceable or could lead to unnecessary litigation with the affected members.

Not properly planning for the association’s financial future. Boards should (and are often required to) properly reserve for future expenses. Failure to do so can lead to large special assessments which can put unforeseen financial strain on the members and result in uncollectable sums for the association.

Neglecting to amend governing documents when appropriate. Some associations deal with significant issues that arise due to a lack of clarity in governing documents. This is often seen in townhome associations where the maintenance obligations of the members and the HOA are not sufficiently defined. Rather than continue to struggle with such issues, HOAs should take steps to amend their governing documents to provide clarity and end the cycle of disputed interpretations of the documents.

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MinnesotaHoa.com/Page/2018_VA_Nominations
Disputes and conflicts are an ordinary part of everyday life anytime people gather together. The core of interpersonal conflict is a sense of threat to something important to the participants, especially the loss of something. Numerous factors may come into play: lack of resources, interdependence, flawed organizational structures, different communication styles and cultural values to name a few. Conflict tends to escalate if unaddressed.

Community association disputes arise in the same way but often center around certain common situations that occur when people are living together, whether in a care facility, a condo, a co-op or gated single-family development. Do any of these situations sound familiar?

- A couple places six huge pink flamingos in their yard to protest HOA rules on lawn ornaments
- A homeowner plants pansies in what he views as a neglected patch of common area garden space
- Homeowners are told they cannot have “Support our Troops” or “All are Welcome Here” flags in their yards
- The HOA Board decides to replace all the gutters in every house and charge homeowners extra, even though some have no problems with their gutters at the moment
- A care facility resident treats another resident badly, bullying him incessantly
- Board meetings seem to drone on forever, accomplish nothing, and irritate other owners
- Residents are fined frequently for rules violations, sometimes unwritten rules

A few themes run through these familiar scenarios: concerns about covenants and rules, association money management, governance structures, and personality clashes. For the most part, such conflicts cannot be solved by simple denial or avoidance because almost by definition they will recur, they are among people who must deal with one another (willingly or not), and they involve a core value: HOME.

Community conflicts can play out well and end in creative solutions or play out poorly and end unhappily. The key to achieving a good result is to seize the earliest possible moment. When a complaint or concern begins is the best moment to begin to resolve it. The essential and simple first step is this: provide disputants an early opportunity to be “heard.” Not just attended to, or appeased, or nodded at, but deeply and genuinely listened to.

Whether it is through an adopted rule formal process, or simply a community practice, providing the chance to talk to a sympathetic listener is vital to a healthy approach to conflict. Absent this outlet, conflict in associations and other community organizations will play out like a simmering pot – simmering until it ferociously boils over! Turn down the heat with this early intervention.

Patricia McGinnis and Madge S. Thorsen, Esq., Mediators, Trainers, Facilitators.
Q: My neighbors are driving me crazy, using the laundry facilities at all hours day and night. I am adjacent to the laundry and the noise of the machines intrudes and bothers me, especially late at night. Shouldn’t we have “quiet time” in the building?

A: From an Association perspective, this may be a question that is answered already in the CC&Rs or other rules and regs. As a matter of conflict skills, however, this is one of those “catch it while it is manageable” opportunities. If only one or a few neighbors tend to be the late-night or crack-of-dawn launderers, the solution may be as simple as a conversation. Invite them for coffee at your place. Put in a load of laundry before they come so they will be able to hear the noise for themselves. Explore with them if other hours might work for them as well as you – perhaps using the laundry between 8 am and 7 pm. An informal agreement might be reached and you’ve lost nothing. Rather, you may have created new friendly relationships and avoided some big brouhaha. First rule of conflict resolution: TALK!

Q: I am sick and tired of service animals pooping in the common areas and owners not cleaning it up. Shouldn’t we fine them or something?

A: First, ask your management and Board or the lawyers. Rules and law on service animals are to be heeded, of course. If you are an official or manager, you may need to steer clear under the law or rules and regs of asking questions about the service animal owner’s disabilities. But if you are just a neighbor who wants to help, what about a pro-active informal approach? Try LISTENING! If the animal owners are willing to talk with you, ask what you can do to help them with their needs. Are they even able to tell when a service animal has relieved itself or discern that clean-up is needed? Does their disability negatively affect that? Are they visually impaired or live with traumatic brain injury that might limit their perception? Can you brainstorm with them or their caregivers some possible solutions? Doggy diapers? Hire a local kid to do the pick-up? Propose making it part of the Association’s maintenance plan for a few extra pennies? Informal and kind neighborly questions may uncover solutions.

DO YOU HAVE CONCERNS REGARDING A CONFLICT IN YOUR HOA?
Submit your questions via email to info@cai-mn.com and put “Conflict Corner” in the subject line. Be sure to include your contact information.

Select questions and answers will be published in the next issue of Minnesota Community Living.
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We Do Painting. You Do Life.
When It Rains, It Pours

BY CHUCK KRUMRIE & MATT KUHA

It took me years to figure out the meaning of that phrase on the Morton salt box. Unlike “it never rains but it pours”, this phrase was advertising its free-flowing product. The salt pours even when it’s raining. Next to water, salt is the stuff of life. Clichés like “above the salt” and “worth your salt” both attest to its essential nature. Indeed the word “salary” is derived from the Latin “salarium” meaning a soldier’s salt allowance. Don’t give me money, just pay me in salt.

How and when humans realized that salt has other than culinary uses is not known. But it is an essential element in ice control during Minnesota’s first season: winter. (The second is road repair.) Without getting into a chemistry lesson, salt’s value is that it lowers the freezing point of water. Sodium chloride (good old table salt) has long been what we spread on our sidewalks. But within recent history, other salts have come into vogue due to their ice melting capabilities.

Sodium salt has an effective lowest temperature of 27° F, meaning that it lowers water’s freezing point just five degrees below where water becomes solid anyway. And it’s endothermic – it consumes heat from its environment.

Magnesium salt has an effective lowest temperature of 0° F. Plus it’s exothermic, which speeds up the melting by increasing heat in the local area. Calcium salt is exothermic too and its effective lowest temperature is an incredible minus 25°F! Before you pick up the phone and tell your snow clearing vendor to stock up on magnesium salt for winter, please note that performance comes with a price. MgCl is about 47% more expensive than NaCl.

It’s also important to consider what type of areas are being treated. Because of the nature of salts, they will cause some level of damage to virtually any surface they’re applied upon. That being said, some are better than others. For example, Calcium Chloride is typically the safest salt included product for new concrete or concrete with expensive finishes. Some products are also prone to staining, so make sure you ask your vendor what products they recommend and why – price shouldn’t be the only consideration.

There is also one very important and pervasive suggestion that needs to be addressed. The concept that more is better. When utilizing Chlorides to melt ice, more is never better. Science Alert! Chlorides only work when diluted in a solution with water and the concentration of Chloride in that solution determines its effectiveness. Too high a concentration will actually RAISE the freezing point of water, having the opposite effect than we’re working for. Proper application is a must!

Of course, there are other ice management materials. In fact, most snow clearing vendors will use a sand/salt mixture on roads and driveways. You wouldn’t believe how far a ton does not go. There are less-caustic options as well – options that are safer for the environment. Products like Cherry Stone Grit can offer traction improvements without the damage salts bring to the party. But the salient (!) point is that this is all means to the strategy of what insurance companies like to call risk management. Minnesota, winter and gravity: there is no such thing as risk abatement with ice. I always recommend having a plan in place to address ice. This need not be anything comprehensive or what we usually think of as a plan. It could be something simple like “address as needed”. The point is to know what you are going to do before you need to do it. Options such as “Pre-treatment” applications, liquid salt options and temperature related product selection can help round out what makes for the most efficient and effective plans.

Many of my board members look to me to suggest a salt application. And they know when they see “Salt?” in the email’s subject line, it means I need a reply promptly. Per the above, this constitutes having a plan. We are trying to prevent slips and falls and also ward off possible litigation. If an insurance claim arises because of a slip and fall injury, you can bet the insurance carrier will be wanting to know what ice mitigation practices your community has adopted.

Don’t be like the Plan Ahead sign with the “D” dropping off the end. Spend some time before the fact contemplating an address for ice this winter. Query your snow removal vendor about their recommendations. And for goodness sakes, tread carefully out there!

Chuck Krumrie, CMCA, is Broker and Owner of Urbanwood, Inc. in Minneapolis. Since 2005, Urbanwood has serviced smaller CICs in the Twin Cities metro area.

Matt Kuha is a Service Manager with Irrigation by Design.
As a Feng Shui consultant, I am called to offices for various reasons – they need more business, need employee retention, need employee cooperation, need to hire more people, need to fire people, etc. By creating a space where people feel good the minute they enter, interactions are more positive and results are more productive.

An ancient Chinese tradition, Feng Shui has arrived in the Western world. It is now widely applied in private homes, offices, hospitals, clinics, restaurants, even cars. Feng Shui approaches a space from an experiential level – how does someone feel in the space? We have all had the experience of walking into a room and feeling wonderful. We feel inspired, intrigued, and fully engaged. Compare that to the times when we walk into a space and can’t wait to leave.

Feng Shui is built on the premise that a space reflects the lives of the occupants. If the door doesn’t work well, for example, it sets a message that people or business is not all that welcome. If a space is cluttered, you may find the occupants are scattered as well. Although these may be subconscious unintentional messages, they still can cause issues.

One of the areas on which I focus as a Feng Shui consultant is the room of first impression – in a home that would be the entry; in a business that would be the waiting room/reception area. These areas set the tone for what is to come. Depending on the experience of the visitor, the interaction may go well or not well at all.

Here are some specific Feng Shui actions to take in a waiting room to assure that the feeling will ensure a positive experience and an equally productive outcome:

How Your Waiting Room Can Work for You Using Feng Shui Principles

BY CAROLE HYDER
1. **Bring in nature.**

Nature soothes and heals. There’s a Japanese tradition called “forest bathing” which is prescribed to those who are sick. They simply walk through a forest. The idea is that being in nature will help someone feel better.

Nature in an office can be equally important. Feng Shui uses nature as its model.

What would nature do in a space? It wouldn’t line up chairs in a row but instead would offer a more organic seating experience. It wouldn’t be devoid of sound but would have some kind of auditory input, whether music or sounds of nature.

Bringing in nature might involve incorporating a plant or some fresh flowers. It will be important to keep them fresh and vital. Of course, if you have no windows in your waiting room, then a beautiful silk plant or silk flowers could work. If nothing else, hang a poster depicting nature or a landscape or seascape.

By the way, none of these items should be small and insignificant. Let nature make a statement for you that is strong and direct. Everyone will benefit.

2. **Make color part of your statement.**

A blah color says, well, blah. You don’t have to yell out a color statement but certainly something memorable would be appropriate. Make sure that the color you use on the waiting room walls blends or is the same as the color the company uses on your logo.

Use the same color on all four walls so there isn’t a split experience for those coming in. If you can’t paint your walls (building policy perhaps), then artwork is your friend. See #1 above.

3. **Simple is best.**

The waiting room is not the place to store extra copy paper or stack up cardboard boxes in the corner. Just because there is no room anywhere else in the office, the waiting room is NOT a storage area.

In a space that may well be the first experience someone has with you and your company, clutter is not going to enhance the relationship. Keep it free of knick-knacks and extraneous items. The clearer all horizontal surfaces are, the more clarity there will be with those who work there.

Remember: a space reflects the life of the occupant – don’t create chaos in the first few minutes.

4. **Have a positive distraction.**

If someone needs to hang out in the waiting room for a while, make sure it’s still a memorable use of time. Out-dated magazines do not contribute to a positive experience. One or two thoughtful books might help calm someone who’s agitated – a book of inspirational sayings, an art book, a book of photography.

Television is not a good idea unless it’s tuned to the nature channel. The world news may not supply confidence and clarity coming through a wall-mounted TV. Background music could be a nice distraction as could a fountain (see #5 below).

5. **Water is your friend.**

The word “feng” means wind and the word “shui” means water. Having water in some form in a space can positively affect someone’s brain patterns moving them to a calmer and more amenable demeanor. The sound of water speaks to the soul of an individual – whether they realize it or not – diffusing what could be a difficult situation.

A fountain is one way to bring water into a space. A fountain is soothing and mesmerizing. Yet, be aware, they require a great deal of maintenance. Water can also be brought in by hanging a seascape painting on one of the walls. Water is also present when chairs are not set up in strict rows but instead are arranged in such a way that it creates a meandering path through the waiting room – much like a stream.

Creating a space where people feel good right from the start leads to productive conversations and effective resolutions.

Sometimes just one or two Feng Shui adjustments are enough to shift a contentious situation into something more creative, inspiring and beneficial to all involved.

Carole Hyder has been helping to create thriving environments since 1992. In recent years, her work has become exclusively corporate with an emphasis on medical settings. Using the principles of Feng Shui combined with modern scientific research, Carole helps organizations create a space that supports employees and clients, and encourages maximum efficiency and productivity.
Does Your HOA Have a Maintenance Plan in Place?

A comprehensive inspection of all common elements is the first step in developing a preventative maintenance plan. To facilitate this process, Gassen Company has developed a proprietary inspection form that is easy to read, understand and follow.

If your association hasn’t developed a preventative maintenance plan yet, contact Gassen Company. We have the expertise necessary to guide your association toward compliance.

For a free consultation, contact:
Kirk Gassen, CEO
kgassen@gassen.com
(952) 922-5575

Effective January 1, 2019, homeowner associations will be required to have a formal written preventative maintenance plan, budget and maintenance schedule for all common elements in the association. The association must provide all individual unit homeowners with a copy of this maintenance plan and must adhere to the plan.

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Summer is nearly over, and we are quickly approaching the time of the year to start gathering and reviewing information for your Association’s budget. While there are many different factors to consider while budgeting, one of the most tricky and unpredictable aspects of the process is the insurance. Every association is different and since there is so much variation with all the insurance factors (association size, carriers, deductibles, coverages, etc.), it is worthwhile to prepare ahead of time regarding your insurance.

First and foremost, your Association will need to budget for the insurance premium. The market changes constantly from year to year, with various carrier and weather activity influencing premiums. This year, for example, insurance carriers are still regrouping from last year’s June 11th hailstorm. Because of this, increases in premium should be anticipated when your Association’s insurance policy comes up for renewal. The amount of premium increase can depend on a multitude of factors: recent prior losses, the geographical location of the association, the age of the building’s original construction, the age of the roofs, and more. While the amount of increase varies from Association to Association, as you prepare to budget for your insurance expenses, it is recommended to contact your current agent 60-90 days ahead of your renewal to see what kind of increase they expect.

While the premium is usually the first insurance expense that unit owners tend to notice, the Association’s deductible is equally important, though oft forgotten. The deductible (the amount you must pay before the insurance carrier begins to pay their portion) can come in many sizes and forms, so it is important to understand what deductibles are being offered and how much you will need to pay in the event of an insurance claim.

Your Association’s property policy typically has a per occurrence all-peril deductible; what this means is that there is a single deductible amount (typically in the $2,500-$10,000 range) that is applied each time a covered loss happens. For instance, if a fire were to occur and damage common property, the Association would be responsible for paying that listed amount before the carrier would begin to pay.

With the recent trend of weather related damage in Minnesota, most, if not all, association insurance policies have a separate wind/hail deductible. These separate deductibles are called “peril-specific deductibles” and they are used in situations where the frequency of a specific type of loss is threatening the future insurability of an association. Since hailstorms in Minnesota tend to be quite damaging and relatively frequent, the insurance companies who operate here have found it necessary to use these peril-specific deductibles for losses caused by wind or hail storms.

Understanding how your association’s wind/hail deductible is set up is vital to being prepared for possible future expenses. Wind/hail deductibles commonly come in one of three forms: per occurrence, per building flat (ex. $10,000 per damaged building), or per building percentage (ex. 2% of the building value of each damaged building).

So let’s say you live in a 10-building association with two units in each building, and the association has a total building value of $10,000,000. If the wind/hail deductible is listed as 2% of the building value, then each unit owner’s responsibility for the wind/hail deductible would be $10,000. While it’s better than paying for the full cost of repairs, $10,000 (or more, depending on what deductible your association has) isn’t cheap, which is why it is highly recommended to carry an HO6 policy if you live in a condominium or townhome association. HO6 policies, among other coverages, offer “loss assessment coverage,” which can be used to pay for the association’s deductible. It is prudent for unit owners who have an HO6 policy to sit down with their personal insurance agent and review their association’s master insurance policy and the association’s governing documents, as they state how losses should be assessed for that specific association:

1) As a common expense
2) Against the unit(s) damaged
3) Against the unit(s) where the loss originated

While these conversations admittedly aren’t the most exciting, it is much better to figure these things out ahead of time, rather than finding them out at the time of a claim. With the proper budget preparation and diligence, you and your Association will be fully prepared for any insurance expense that comes your way.

Grant Herschberger is a Business Insurance Consultant with Marsh & McLennan Agency and a member of CAI-MN’s Editorial Committee.
Casino Night Recap

More than 130 people turned out for CAI-MN’s Casino Night social event at the end of July. In addition to gaming, prizes, Bauhaus brews and a food truck, the event provided a relaxed platform for socializing among colleagues.

Kudos to the Social Committee for hosting such an outstanding event!

Tim Broms is Executive Director of the CAI-MN Chapter.

THANK YOU PROGRAM SPONSORS:
Outdoor Budget Considerations

BY RACHAEL HOESCHEN

I have owned my townhome in Minneapolis for eight years (wow, time flies). When I purchased it, I had NO clue what being a member of a homeowners association meant and was one of the naïve ones who thought “the association will take care of that”. I assumed if a shrub died, the association would replace it; if a sidewalk was slippery, the association would salt it; if a blizzard came, I’d be shoveled out quickly before any of my “normal” neighbors even had time to get out their snowblowers.

Since purchasing my home, I’ve joined the board of my HOA, obtained my real estate license, worked as a community manager and spent the last three years of my career working on the business partner side of community management in the lawn, snow and irrigation industry. While I by no means consider myself an expert in the homeowner association world, I have had my dose of budgeting reality.

The association will in fact replace shrubs, salt slippery sidewalks and my driveway will be plowed after a blizzard, but as the homeowner, I am the association. Along with the other homeowners, I am the one funding the “association” – and as we all know, money doesn’t grow on trees (in fact, it’s the opposite – trees are expensive to maintain, remove and replace). I’ve come to realize HOA budgets should be re-evaluated and amended subject to the community needs. Allow me to elaborate:

Each fall, my association’s board and the community manager meet to review expenses and discuss/approve the next year’s budget. We have always had a typical budget that closely resembles the budget below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51000</td>
<td>Lawn, Snow Irrigation</td>
<td>$29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52000</td>
<td>Outdoor Lawn Maintenance</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53000</td>
<td>Irrigation Water</td>
<td>$3,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our lawn, snow and irrigation line items are a no brainer – we’ve signed a two year contract and we know the annual budget. But how often do we review the contract and truly consider what is and is not included in that annul rate?

If your association is anything like mine, our community manager sent out an RFP on our behalf and then gave us a summary of the contracts and pricing to review. Sure, we reviewed the contracts, but did we take the time to consider the details? Honestly, probably not as well as we should have.

When we had those two atrocious snowfalls this past April, our driveways were opened up once during the snowfall but they were not cleared for three days!!! And the sidewalks were not shoveled for four days!!! Our Facebook page was full of complaints and our community manager was bombarded with emails. BUT when we reviewed our contract, our snow removal business partner was well within the scope of the contract.

What is Outdoor Lawn Maintenance anyways? Every single year we were over budget for this item and not just by a few hundred dollars. We would have items such as shrub replacements, tree canopy raising, sod replacement, sprinklers replaced, salting driveways, monument annuals, etc. We never stuck to the budget number and almost didn’t seem to consider it when approving projects. If a shrub was dead, we knew it had to be removed, disposed of and replaced.

We only have 44 homes, but let’s think about the logic of this. We were budgeting just $68.18 per home per year for any outdoor expense beyond the contracted services. That was unrealistic and not smart.

- One shrub cost $20-$60 depending on the type and that doesn’t even include the cost of labor to dig up the old shrub and replace the new one.
- Salting all 44 drives typically costs us $500, but there have been times we desperately needed it and the cost was almost double.
- We have a bus stop that we ask to be salted anytime it freezes, thaws, snows or as requested. Every time that costs $120.
- We have two monuments and every year we approve an annual project for $730.
I could give countless examples of the items we’ve approved that are outside of our contract, but once we had an “ah ha” moment, we decided to revamp our budget and it was the best decision ever.

Now our budget looks something like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51000</td>
<td>Lawn, Snow Irrigation</td>
<td>$29,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52000</td>
<td>Landscape &amp; Sod Improvements</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53000</td>
<td>Irrigation Water</td>
<td>$3,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54000</td>
<td>Monument Annual</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55000</td>
<td>Salting</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56000</td>
<td>Irrigation Repairs</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57000</td>
<td>Mulch</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A $5,800 annual increase for a small HOA is something we didn’t approve easily, but when you break down the math our dues only went up $11 per month per home. The change was great! Our community manager could approve small bids without board involvement, our email exchanges were drastically reduced, the bus stop was fabulously maintained and we created a mulch refresh schedule that happened every spring.

Overall, our curb appeal went up and board members were able to take a step back and let our lawn, snow and irrigation business partner excel at what they do.

Maybe this is your association’s year to revamp your budget. What items do you approve annually (salting, monument annuals, median annuals, pond treatments, etc.) that you can approve at budget season by making them inclusive in your budget?

A great way to start this process is to invite your lawn, snow and irrigation business partner to a board or budget planning meeting and ask them to review your history with you as well as any ideas they may have.

Good luck!

Rachael Hoeschen is a Recruitment and Retention Specialist with Birch, Inc. She is also chair of the CAI-MN Editorial Committee.
When it comes to insulation, many people envision the pink rolls of itchy stuff. In fact, there are several types of insulation and they each have their unique purpose.

Insulation does its job by creating small pockets of air that slow the transfer of heat through the insulation in exactly the same way that a blanket works. Types of insulation vary according to use and geographic location.

Insulation is measured in R-Value, which is a measure of how well an object, per unit of its exposed area, resists conductive flow of heat. The greater the R-value, the greater the resistance, and so the better the thermal insulating properties of the object. Two factors determine that number: the thickness of the insulation and the insulating ability of the material. In most areas in Minnesota, the building code requires a minimum R-Value of R-49 in ceilings. Local governing agencies or communities may have different requirements, so it’s always good to check with the local building official or a professional insulation contractor to verify the requirements.

Working for a construction company, I often get asked what is the best type of insulation to go in the walls, attic spaces, basements or any other nooks and crannies that need to be insulated. Insulation options that work best in Minnesota’s cold climate are outlined in the below tables.

### Batts or Blankets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Fiberglass, rock (mineral) wool.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R-Value/Inch</td>
<td>3.1 to 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Installation</td>
<td>Fitted between studs, beams and joists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Applicable</td>
<td>All unfinished floors, walls and ceilings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Do-it-yourself. Suited for standard stud and joist spacing that is free of obstructions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Solid Foam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Extruded polystyrene foam (XPS), expanded polystyrene foam (EPS or beadboard), polyurethane foam, and polyisocyanurate foam.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R-Value/Inch</td>
<td>3.5 to 7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Installation</td>
<td>Interior applications—must be covered with ½-inch gypsum board or other building-code approved material for fire safety. Exterior applications—must be covered with weatherproof facing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Applicable</td>
<td>Basement rim joists, exterior walls under finish materials and vented low-slope roofs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>High insulating value for relatively little thickness. Can block thermal leak when installed continuously over frames or joists. Can provide both air barrier and vapor retarder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As you can see there are many options when it comes to choosing your insulation. Here are a couple of additional things to factor in regarding your insulation project:

• **Missing Insulation Feeds Mold.**
  Warm air seeks gaps in the insulation and when it hits colder surfaces as it flows out of or into the house, moisture condenses – which promotes the growth of mold. These spots often occur on exterior walls near floors or windows, at corners and around outlets and lights. If the mold disappears after cleaning, make sure to control indoor humidity with a dehumidifier or vent fan and monitor to make sure the mold does not return. If it reappears, you may need to open the wall to fix the problem. Remember mold is considered a hazardous material and there are many types of mold. If a large area of mold exists, you may want to contact a professional to develop a remediation and repair solution.

• **Seal Small Attic Holes with Foam and Caulk.**
  Hot air rises, so leaks in the ceiling are even worse than leaks in walls. In many homes, this airflow through ceilings and into the attic is the primary source of heat loss. You can check for leaks around ceilings light fixtures and the attic access door using a smoke stick. But the only way to detect other leaks is to crawl up into the attic, pull back the insulation and look for them. Most leaks occur where chimneys, electrical and plumbing lines pass through the ceiling.

  Although the attic is a challenging place to work, plugging these leaks is a simple project – mostly caulking, foaming gaps and replacing or adding appropriate insulation.

  On a typical insulation project, it’s not unusual to find more than one type of insulation being used. Following is a general estimate of cost associated with the different material installations. Each project is unique and

[Continued on page 25]

### LOOSE FILL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Cellulose, fiberglass rock (mineral) wool.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R-Value/Inch</td>
<td>2.4 to 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Installation</td>
<td>Blown into place (attics) or dense packed (cellulose, walls).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Applicable</td>
<td>Enclosed existing wall cavities or open new wall cavities. Unfinished attic floors and hard to reach spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>Commonly used for retrofits (adding insulation to existing finished areas). Good for irregularly shaped areas and around obstructions. Dense pack cellulose in walls also provides an air barrier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SPRAY FOAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Polyurethane, polyisocynene.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R-Value/Inch</td>
<td>3.6 to 7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of Installation</td>
<td>Sprayed onto surfaces or behind a net facing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where Applicable</td>
<td>Open wall cavities, between roof rafters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td>High insulating value for relatively little thickness. Provides good air barrier. Some products provide vapor retarder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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on larger projects, determining the scope of work with a professional insulation contractor will help to establish a more accurate estimate.

- **SPRAY FOAM:** Expect to spend $300-$600 for a DIY foam insulation kit to cover 200 square feet. Professional installation is roughly $0.44 to $1.50 per square foot.

- **RIGID BOARD:** Rigid foam insulation will not shift or blow out of place and is water and pest resistant. Average rigid foam board insulation cost is from $3.95 to $7.20 per square foot, professionally installed.

- **FIBERGLASS BATTs:** The material cost for fiberglass insulation is $145-$200 for a 500 square foot area. Add $150-$300 for labor if you hire it out.

- **LOOSE FILL:** Material costs are about $500 for the average 1,500 square foot home. One advantage of cellulose insulation is that it can be installed over existing insulation for additional protection from the elements.

Insulation is an integral part of the building system. A properly insulated building envelope helps to reduce energy consumption at the same time reducing wear and tear on mechanical equipment. It also protects waterlines and similar plumbing from freezing and reduces environmental concerns, including mold buildup. Selecting appropriate insulation materials and having them installed correctly will reduce energy demand, utility costs, owner maintenance and will improve the quality of life for the occupants.

Heidi Stinson is with Stinson Services Inc., and a member of the chapter’s Editorial Committee.
Despite the soggy start, CAI-MN’s 12th annual golf tournament was a huge success. The sell-out event featured 40 foursomes hitting the links at Midland Hills Country Club followed by a highly competitive bean bag toss matchup. Congratulations to all of the winners!

Thank you to Gavnat & Associates, our Caddyshack Sponsor and special thanks to everyone that helped to make this fun-filled day a huge success:

**CAI-MN Golf Committee:**
Jocelyn Alberts  
Jon Edin  
Tom Engblom  
Tom Klaers  
Christopher R. Jones  
Greg Nelson  
Gary Olsen  
Jennifer Pingel  
Crystal Pingel  
Joel Starks (Chair)  
Michelle Stephans

**Social Committee Volunteers:**
Ryan Arvola  
Melissa Cushing  
Rochelle Eades  
Mika Kieffer  
Natalie Martynow  
Terry Rauk

*Tim Broms is Executive Director of the CAI-MN Chapter.*

Photos by Heidi Stinson.
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