

May/June 2015

# Focus

L.A.'s Premier Source of Information for Community Associations

**SAVE THE DATE:**

**Sipping by the Sea  
Wine Night**

**August 15**

**Overcoming Renovation  
Challenges**

**Assistance Animals  
Everywhere!**

**Social Media in an  
HOA World**

# Challenges

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### On the Cover

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# OVERCOMING RENOVATION CHALLENGES:

# PONDEROSA SPRINGS

◆◆◆ By Dennis Brooks

**P**ONDEROSA SPRINGS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION is a lovely 210-unit complex in San Pedro with numerous mature trees, waterfalls and streams throughout. The 30-year-old buildings, however, were suffering the effects of deferred maintenance of their wood decks, stairs, etc. Prior to contacting our firm, the association had hired a contractor to perform the first phase of deck repairs. The board of directors then quickly realized that, due to the unanticipated amount of dry rot, along with some additional items which they discovered should be included in the project, they needed the assistance and advice of an expert to help guide them through the process. In addition, the board was concerned about their ability to obtain the votes to pass the assessment necessary to fund the added repairs. We investigated the condition of the buildings and helped analyze the additional repairs. We assisted the board in developing a clear scope of work and obtaining pricing for that newly-developed scope. The budget we established included an appropriate contingency for the dry rot, which we knew would be encountered during the repairs, as well as funds to cover unforeseen conditions that may be encountered in a complex of this age.

The budget estimate indicated that the association may need a bank loan in addition to the passage of a special assessment.

One of the major challenges facing the passage of the assessment was the fact that the governing documents required a majority quorum for passage of an assessment, but required a two-thirds majority for the bank loan. This meant that the owners would need some major convincing. We helped the association conduct a series of town hall style meetings in order to inform the membership of the condition of their property, the need for the repairs and the effect on property values with and without the repairs taking place. We helped them secure a loan and worked with the HOA's attorney, community manager, bank and board to explain this to the membership during the town hall meetings. We worked with the association to clearly explain to the homeowners why they should vote for the bank loan even if they were against the assessment—that if the assessment passed and the bank loan vote did not pass, there would likely be homeowners who would have trouble paying their share of the assessment in one lump sum.

**T**HE VOTE WAS TAKEN and the assessment passed by a comfortable margin, but the approval of the bank loan fell short by just a few votes. After some additional discussion with the HOA's attorney, the board made the decision to proceed with the project. Before the assessment due date the board wisely decided to once again place the vote for the bank loan before the members. This time, with the realization that they would be paying the assessment regardless of whether there was a loan option available to them or not, the vote for the loan passed and the bank funding of the project was set in place, with an option for the homeowners to pay for the repairs over time.

With the major political issues and the funding accomplished, work was started almost immediately. The complex now has been upgraded, the property values have been preserved, and Ponderosa Springs has been returned to a safe, beautiful and tranquil oasis for the residents.

Our experience has taught us that most every project has its challenges. However, with a dedicated board of directors willing to make the hard decisions and work together even when the political pressure from some homeowners is strong, success is possible. Completing a project like this a process, and that process, if carefully managed by individuals with experience, will most often lead to success. I was asked by a client once, "What would you expect the hardest part of the project to be?" I am sure that they were thinking it would be some aspect of the construction itself. However, my response was that the hardest part of this or any project is keeping the board together and on the same page with each other and your experts so that there is a unified front and a strong and cohesive plan of action from the start right through to the completion of the project.



Dennis Brooks is the president and founder of Design Build Associates, a construction management consulting firm specializing in HOA reconstruction projects with offices in Westlake Village and Irvine. He can be reached at [DennisBrooks@dbuild.com](mailto:DennisBrooks@dbuild.com)