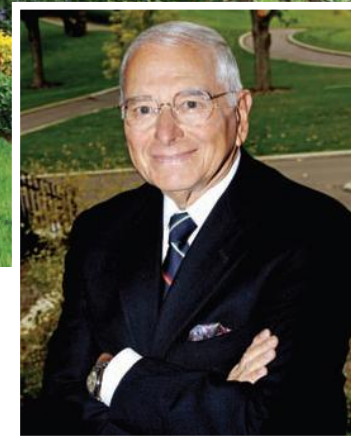




community of excellence
winner—disaster preparedness



3360 Condominium

Prepared for Better and for Worse

by Kathy Danforth

While many communities have taken a step back in their improvement projects to keep budgets down, the board of the 3360 Condominium has taken several giant steps forward. Much of the focus has been on disaster preparedness, for which they won a Community of Excellence award. Manager Jimmy Aroney claims, “We have the best board in Florida as far as we’re concerned. During the economic struggle that everyone is facing, we are continuing to upgrade this

building so that when the market starts to turn, there'll be no question about where to buy."

The 3360 Condominium enjoys seven and one-half acres on the ocean at Palm Beach, with two, seven-story buildings, two tennis courts, a pool which has recently been refurbished, and abundant parking. One building also has a recreation room and kitchen, while that space in the other building was converted to a fitness center and offices. The property is co-managed by licensed managers Jimmy, general manager, and Izabela Simioni, administrative/assistant manager.

Though they have not been hit by a hurricane lately, the 3360 Condominium was badly damaged by Hurricane Wilma and with that experience, they have been motivated to prepare for future storms. The largest investment by the community has been installation of impact windows in all common areas and every unit, at a cost of \$3.5 million. Jimmy says, "They are like a windshield—they could shatter, but they won't break. They're very thick, about four times the



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thickness of regular windows, and they're put in with stainless steel screws. If there was a hurricane, I would not be afraid to stay in a unit!"

Back-up generators have been secured to run essential areas in case of a power outage. The association opted for natural gas generators instead of diesel. Jimmy explains, "What happens in a hurricane is that after six or seven days everybody runs out of diesel fuel and you have no generator. My understanding is that they've only shut off the natural gas in Palm Beach one time. We've put a 1,000 gallon propane tank in the ground, so this building would be operative for many weeks. If we're out of power, the office, all common areas, one elevator in each building, and the kitchen will be in full operation."

Not only will there be air conditioning in common areas during a power outage, but water extraction and other repairs can begin. "There are outlets along the outer walls of the atriums, which are very important because they can connect generators to plug in equipment to extract water or do whatever work they need to do. We are trying to prepare for every little detail."

Another step they have taken is provision for water. Izabela says, "We installed two water coolers with a sophisticated filtration and oxygenation system. Even with a boil order from the city, we would still be able to use and drink the water. We won't have to stand in line for water."

The 3360 has roofing, restoration, and water extraction contractors who have agreed to respond to 3360's needs first if needed. Though they are not on retainer, they are companies that have made a commitment to give the 3360 priority in case of a widespread disaster. Jimmy points out, "If you're loyal to people, they're loyal to you," and the 3360 has developed that relationship with these companies. When a storm is on the horizon, they check in with their contractors to ensure that equipment and supplies, which may potentially be needed, are secured and ready.

The association has also upgraded their roof and improved the attachment of air conditioning units. The roof coating is tar

and gravel, and all the air conditioning units have been moved from wooden stands to metal. Additionally, all air conditioning units have double strapping to secure them against high winds. Though the roof air conditioners for the private residences are owned by the homeowners, the association is responsible and must insure them against casualty damage under a law passed by the legislature in 2008. In addition to securing the equipment, "We now insure for that," Izabela reports.

Though the association is preparing to be self-sufficient even in dire circumstances without power, Izabela hastens to add, "I don't want to give the wrong message. If they give an evacuation order, I would prefer for people to be evacuating!" Their measures are to aid reconstruction rather than establish the best hurricane camp in town.

The association has not just prepared for the worst; they are eager for and proceeding with improvements in all areas. Jimmy explains their approach: "These buildings that are 30 years old are our big business. In the retail field, when costs like insurance, electricity, and water go up, they have to raise prices. In a condominium, we don't have that ability so the only way we can help ourselves is through technology. If we don't constantly upgrade by technology, we're going to go out of the world backwards because that's all we have to rely on to offset costs."

A geothermal heating system was installed last year and began working in February. The initial cost was \$53,000 and savings are anticipated to be \$20,000/year. Izabela exclaims, "We are hearing other managers complaining how much it is costing to

water valves. We're constantly cross-training so if someone's on vacation or sick, the others can pick up where they left off," Izabela comments. They contract out maintenance of windows, fire extinguishing and alarm systems, landscaping, air conditioning, general equipment, and pest control.

Committees provide focused support, though Jimmy notes, "They don't micromanage us. It's close family-type communication." The

Jimmy says of their association, "We learned a lesson. We want to be the A-rated building and benefit everyone who lives here now and down the road in the future. Even though you're spending money now, in the long run you'll save. We have what no other condominium has. I think that's a tribute to this board to continue to constantly upgrade this building."

social committee plans at least one holiday party, and during the winter season, there are weekly card games. With over 80 percent of the residents seasonal, the action does vary. The decorating committee serves through advice regarding decorating improvements. They are currently talking to contractors, choosing colors, and soliciting bids for upgrading the lobby.

The maintenance committee is on the lookout for any improvements needed on the property, whether it is trees or paint. Izabela is a strong proponent of rigorous maintenance; "Everything must be taken care of on a daily basis," she states. "Everything that we've done we have to maintain. If you don't, in the long run, it will cost more to bring it up-to-date. You have to keep it clean, paint, and repaint.

The finance committee reflects the board's unique determination not to cut back on projects because of the economy. Though hard economic times "will always impact the budget," Izabela says, "we've found ways to continue to improve the building and offset the costs. Only if there is no other way to meet the budget will we special assess."

The sales and lease committee has the responsibility for interviewing potential buyers to check their references and financial status, as well as introducing them to the community and what it has to offer. Izabela observes, "We don't want to get into financial problems in the future, and this committee has a very important role."

The amendments/bylaws/legal/insurance committee has the task of overseeing these aspects of the community's operation. The committee must keep on top of insurance needs, and the legislature presents a changing target in determining exactly what is required. Laws requiring condominium owners to maintain homeowners' insurance have been changing, leaving this committee to determine how they will comply.

The personnel committee is kept up-to-date on employee issues. Izabela notes, "Currently they are keeping contact with an employee who is in the hospital," ensuring community support.

As an older community, 3360 is faced with the common scenario of new residents being much younger than the previous owners,

who may have moved in when the building was first opened. Jimmy comments, "A few people have lived here since the inception of the building, and we know their children and grandchildren because they come in here to visit. With new people, we have to start over. Younger people are still working and don't have the time to be as involved as people who have lived here a long time—at least not yet."

Izabela says, "We're located in a strip of condominiums right on the ocean. We're trying to be innovative and improve operations—we're looking for any way we can save money." She recommends that other associations research options that might benefit them. "Everybody should look out of the box—look to the future and see what's out there. Get more facts and do your own research," she advises.

Though they have tackled many projects, there are dreams for more. Izabela says, "We have a lot of ideas, but we have to be patient and spread it over the years."

They have the board to make things happen, so if it's a good idea, it will probably be tomorrow's project. Jimmy says of their association, "We learned a lesson. We want to be the A-rated building and benefit everyone who lives here now and down the road in the future. Even though you're spending money now, in the long run you'll save. We have what no other condominium has. I think that's a tribute to this board to continue to constantly upgrade this building." ■



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