

# Raise Your Hand

Passionate volunteers are very much welcomed at NAA and local apartment associations.

BY SUSAN SHERFIELD, CPM

Each year, NAA members witness the “changing of the guard” as the current NAA Chairman takes a breather from a very busy year and a new group of NAA Officers steps up to serve. There may also be new Regional Vice Presidents, new committee chairs and certainly new committee members. As each issue of *units* is delivered to members and you read about these leaders, you may ask, “How did they get there and how do I get involved?” The answer is quite simple: Raise your hand.

NAA and its state and local associations are composed of volunteers. We sometimes forget that leaders of each organization are not hired; at some point, each of us raised our hand to serve.

While there is not a pre-determined path to take to become an officer at the local, state or national level, most people start by becoming familiar with their local apartment association. This is a great way to begin your involvement to learn how NAA is structured, what is involved in leading a committee, serving on the board and becoming an officer.

*Local and state affiliates have different committees depending on the size of the organization and the needs of the city or state they serve. These committees often include but are not limited to:*

- **Education**
- **Government Affairs**
- **Trade Show**
- **Membership**
- **Community Service**

It is best to speak with a member of the association staff or an active member of the organization to get more information about the committees in your region to identify those in which you are most interested.

Serving on a variety of committees as your career in property management progresses will also help you to understand how NAA activities affect the entire industry. You also will develop skills in leading a volunteer group that can be quite different from leading direct reports. Committee chairs are usually appointed by the local affiliate president. As each officer moves up the ladder, they take notice of who is involved in the organization and emerging as a leader. Once again, raise your hand if you are interested in being considered for a committee chair position.

Getting involved in an apartment association is not only a great way to learn more about the industry, but it is also a great way to build a career. Networking with industry colleagues

allows you to share best practices, develop resources and impact your community. You will have the opportunity to learn from a variety of professionals who have already experienced many of the challenges that you will encounter in your apartment career. And you will certainly develop lifelong friendships.

The next step is to serve on the board of directors within your affiliate. You should not assume that your involvement alone indicates that you are ready and interested in serving.

Let people know that this is your goal. Some affiliates have involvement or attendance requirements to be eligible to serve on the board or as an officer, so make sure you are familiar with those that apply to your organization.

## Becoming Eligible to Serve

Serving on the board of directors will add another level of understanding of NAA and our industry. You will now be involved in making key decisions for your affiliate and members will start looking at you as a possible future officer. If you want to become an officer, raise your hand.

It is through serving and attending industry events at the state and local affiliates that you learn what NAA is all about. There have been successful NAA leaders who were able to transfer their leadership skills directly to the national level without serving at the local or state level, but there is tremendous benefit in learning the organization at all levels if you wish to be involved nationally some day.

If you are hesitant to just jump in, start by having a one-on-one conversation with somebody you know who is very involved and ask him or her to help you get started. The good news is that there are industry mentors everywhere that are more than happy to assist.

People in leadership positions within a company are responsible for identifying emerging leaders and developing them for the future of their company. It should be the same for those of you in leadership positions with the local and state apartment associations, as well as the leaders of NAA.

Look for talent and enthusiasm and reach out to those people to get involved. They may just be unaware of the opportunities that exist for industry involvement. They are the future of our industry and the future leaders of our organizations. We'll be watching for you to raise your hand. 🙌

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