

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Regulated Industries

BILL: SB 1450

INTRODUCER: Senator Simpson

SUBJECT: Homeowners' Association Board Meetings

DATE: March 7, 2014

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Oxamendi</u>	<u>Imhof</u>	<u>RI</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>CA</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 1450 amends s. 720.303(2)(a), F.S., to require that meetings of the board of directors of a homeowners' association must be held at locations that are accessible to physically handicapped persons.

II. Present Situation:

Homeowners' Associations

Florida law provides statutory recognition to corporations that operate residential communities in this state and procedures for operating homeowners' associations, and protects the rights of association members without unduly impairing the ability of such associations to perform their functions.¹

A "homeowners' association" is defined as a:

Florida corporation responsible for the operation of a community or a mobile home subdivision in which the voting membership is made up of parcel owners or their agents, or a combination thereof, in which membership is a mandatory condition of parcel ownership, and which is authorized to impose assessments that, if unpaid, may become a lien on the parcel.²

Homeowners' associations are also governed by ch. 607, F.S., relating to for-profit corporations, or by ch. 617, F.S., relating to not-for-profit corporations.³

Section 720.301(4), F.S., defines the terms "declaration of covenants," or "declaration," to mean:

¹ See s. 720.302(1), F.S.

² Section 720.301(9), F.S.

³ Section 720.302(5), F.S.

a recorded written instrument in the nature of covenants running with the land which subjects the land comprising the community to the jurisdiction and control of an association or associations in which the owners of the parcels, or their association representatives, must be members.

Section 720.301(8), F.S., defines the term “member” to mean “a member of an association, and may include, but is not limited to, a parcel owner or an association representing parcel owners or a combination thereof.”

Section 720.301(10), F.S., defines the term "parcel owner" to mean the record owner of legal title to a parcel.

Section 720.301(11), F.S., defines the term "voting interest" to mean “the voting rights distributed to the members of the homeowners' association, pursuant to the governing documents.”

Homeowners' associations are administered by a board of directors whose members are elected.⁴ The powers and duties of homeowners' associations include the powers and duties provided in ch. 720, F.S., and in the governing documents of the association, which include recorded declaration of covenants, bylaws, articles of incorporation, and duly adopted amendments to these documents.⁵ The officers and members of a homeowners' association have a fiduciary relationship to the members who are served by the association.⁶

Americans with Disabilities Protections

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA or “act”)⁷ protects Americans with disabilities from discrimination from employment, public services, and in access to, and enjoyment of, public accommodations. In regards to public accommodations, the act provides that:

no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity.

The act defines a disability to mean:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
- A record of such an impairment; or
- Being regarded as having such an impairment.⁸

In relevant part, the act provides:⁹

⁴ See ss. 720.303 and 720.307, F.S.

⁵ See ss. 720.301 and 720.303, F.S.

⁶ Section 720.303(1), F.S.

⁷ Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*

⁸ 42 U.S.C. 12102(1).

⁹ 42 U.S.C. 12181(7).

The following private entities are considered public accommodations for purposes of this subchapter, if the operations of such entities affect commerce

- (A) an inn, hotel, motel, or other place of lodging, except for an establishment located within a building that contains not more than five rooms for rent or hire and that is actually occupied by the proprietor of such establishment as the residence of such proprietor;
- (B) a restaurant, bar, or other establishment serving food or drink;
- (C) a motion picture house, theater, concert hall, stadium, or other place of exhibition entertainment;
- (D) an auditorium, convention center, lecture hall, or other place of public gathering;
- (E) a bakery, grocery store, clothing store, hardware store, shopping center, or other sales or rental establishment;
- (F) a laundromat, dry-cleaner, bank, barber shop, beauty shop, travel service, shoe repair service, funeral parlor, gas station, office of an accountant or lawyer, pharmacy, insurance office, professional office of a health care provider, hospital, or other service establishment;
- (G) a terminal, depot, or other station used for specified public transportation;
- (H) a museum, library, gallery, or other place of public display or collection;
- (I) a park, zoo, amusement park, or other place of recreation;
- (J) a nursery, elementary, secondary, undergraduate, or postgraduate private school, or other place of education;
- (K) a day care center, senior citizen center, homeless shelter, food bank, adoption agency, or other social service center establishment; and
- (L) a gymnasium, health spa, bowling alley, golf course, or other place of exercise or recreation.

Florida has adopted architectural accessibility requirements of the ADA in the Florida Building Code.¹⁰

State Regulation of Homeowners' Associations

Unlike condominium and cooperative associations,¹¹ which are regulated by the Division of Florida Condominiums, Timeshares, and Mobile Homes (division) within the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (department), homeowners' associations are not regulated by a state agency.

Section 720.302(2), F.S., expresses the legislative intent regarding the regulation of homeowners' associations:

The Legislature recognizes that it is not in the best interest of homeowners' associations or the individual association members thereof to create or impose a bureau or other agency of state government to regulate the affairs of homeowners' associations. However, in accordance with s. 720.311, the Legislature finds that

¹⁰ Section 553.503, F.S.

¹¹ See chs. 718 and 719, F.S., respectively.

homeowners' associations and their individual members will benefit from an expedited alternative process for resolution of election and recall disputes and presuit mediation of other disputes involving covenant enforcement and authorizes the department to hear, administer, and determine these disputes as more fully set forth in this chapter. Further, the Legislature recognizes that certain contract rights have been created for the benefit of homeowners' associations and members thereof before the effective date of this act and that ss. 720.301-720.407 are not intended to impair such contract rights, including, but not limited to, the rights of the developer to complete the community as initially contemplated.

The number of homeowners' associations or persons living in homeowners' associations in Florida is unknown. Although homeowners' associations are required to file articles of incorporation with the Division of Corporations (division) in the Department of State, the division cannot identify corporations that are homeowners' associations under ch. 720, F.S.¹²

The division's authority is limited to arbitration of recall election disputes.¹³

Meetings of the Board

Section 720.303(2)(a), F.S., provides for the conduct of meetings of the board. It requires a quorum for a meeting of the board. All meetings of the board must be open to all members. However, meetings between the board and its attorney with respect to proposed or pending litigation where the contents of the discussion would otherwise be governed by the attorney-client privilege are not required to be open to non-board members. The quorum and open meeting requirements apply to the meetings of any committee or other similar body when a final decision will be made regarding the expenditure of association funds. These requirements also apply to meetings of any body vested with the power to approve or disapprove architectural decisions with respect to a specific parcel of residential property owned by a member of the community.

Meetings of Members

Section 720.306, F.S., provides for meetings of the members of the homeowners' association. Section 720.306(1)(a), F.S., requires a quorum of 30 percent of the total voting interests, unless a lower number is provided in the bylaws. Section 720.306(2), F.S., requires that associations must hold an annual meeting of its members for the transaction of any and all proper business at a time, date, and place stated in, or fixed in accordance with, the bylaws. The election of directors, must be held at, or in conjunction with, the annual meeting, or as provided in the governing documents. Membership meetings to elect leaders, adopt and approve association financial statements, amend the governing documents, handle items of special business involving the membership, and to address other matters for the general welfare of the community.¹⁴

¹² Homeowners' Association Task Force, *Final Report of the Homeowners' Association Task Force*, February 2004, page 5. A copy of the report is available on the internet at <http://www.ccfj.net/DBPRTFfinalreport.pdf> (Last visited March 11, 2014).

¹³ See s. 720.303(10)(d), F.S.

¹⁴ See Peter M. Dunbar and Charles F. Dudley, *The Law of Florida Homeowners Associations*, 9th ed. (2012-2013) s. 2.1.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 720.303(2)(a), F.S., to require that meetings of the board of directors of a homeowners' association must be held at locations that are accessible to physically handicapped persons.

It is not clear whether the requirement that the meetings must be held at locations that are accessible to physically handicapped persons would also apply to meetings of the membership of the association held pursuant to s. 720.306, F.S.

IV. Constitutional Issues:**A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 720.303 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
