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720.301 Definitions.—As used in this chapter, the term:

(1) "Assessment" or "amenity fee" means a sum or sums of money payable to the association, to the developer or other owner of common areas, or to recreational facilities and other properties serving the parcels by the owners of one or more parcels as authorized in the governing documents, which if not paid by the owner of a parcel, can result in a lien against the parcel.

(2) "Common area" means all real property within a community which is owned or leased by an association or dedicated for use or maintenance by the association or its members, including, regardless of whether title has been conveyed to the association:

(a) Real property the use of which is dedicated to the association or its members by a recorded plat; or

(b) Real property committed by a declaration of covenants to be leased or conveyed to the association.

(3) "Community" means the real property that is or will be subject to a declaration of covenants which is recorded in the county where the property is located. The term "community" includes all real property, including undeveloped phases, that is or was the subject of a development-of-regional-impact development order, together with any approved modification thereto.

(4) "Declaration of covenants," or "declaration," means a recorded written instrument or instruments in the nature of covenants running with the land which subject 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.

(5) "Department" means the Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

(6) "Developer" means a person or entity that:

(a) Creates the community served by the association; or

(b) Succeeds to the rights and liabilities of the person or entity that created the community served by the association, provided that such is evidenced in writing.

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(7) "Division" means the Division of Florida Condominiums, Timeshares, and Mobile Homes in the Department of Business and Professional Regulation.

(8) "Governing documents" means:

(a) The recorded declaration of covenants for a community, and all duly adopted and recorded amendments, supplements, and recorded exhibits thereto; and

(b) The articles of incorporation and bylaws of the homeowners' association, and any duly adopted amendments thereto.

(9) "Homeowners' association" or "association" means 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, and 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. The term "homeowners' association" does not include a community development district or other similar special taxing district created pursuant to statute.

(10) "Member" means 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, and includes any person or entity obligated by the governing documents to pay an assessment or amenity fee.

(11) "Parcel" means a platted or unplatted lot, tract, unit, or other subdivision of real property within a community, as described in the declaration:

(a) Which is capable of separate conveyance; and

(b) Of which the parcel owner, or an association in which the parcel owner must be a member, is obligated:

1. By the governing documents to be a member of an association that serves the community; and

2. To pay to the homeowners' association assessments that, if not paid, may result in a lien.

(12) "Parcel owner" means the record owner of legal title to a parcel.

(13) "Voting interest" means the voting rights distributed to the members of the homeowners' association, pursuant to the governing documents.

History.—s. 33, ch. 92-49; s. 52, ch. 95-274; s. 4, ch. 99-382; s. 44, ch. 2000-258; s. 16, ch. 2004-345; s. 13, ch. 2004-353; s. 62, ch. 2008-240; s. 16, ch. 2011-196.

Note.—Former s. 617.301.

720.302 Purposes, scope, and application.—

(1) The purposes of this chapter are to give statutory recognition to corporations not for profit that operate residential communities in this state, to provide procedures for operating

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homeowners' associations, and to protect the rights of association members without unduly impairing the ability of such associations to perform their functions.

(2) 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 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.

(3) This chapter does not apply to:

- (a) A community that is composed of property primarily intended for commercial, industrial, or other nonresidential use; or
- (b) The commercial or industrial parcels in a community that contains both residential parcels and parcels intended for commercial or industrial use.

(4) This chapter does not apply to any association that is subject to regulation under chapter 718, chapter 719, or chapter 721 or to any nonmandatory association formed under chapter 723, except to the extent that a provision of chapter 718, chapter 719, or chapter 721 is expressly incorporated into this chapter for the purpose of regulating homeowners' associations.

(5) Unless expressly stated to the contrary, corporations that operate residential homeowners' associations in this state shall be governed by and subject to part I of chapter 607, if the association was incorporated under that part, or to chapter 617, if the association was incorporated under that chapter, and this chapter. This subsection is intended to clarify existing law.

History.—s. 34, ch. 92-49; s. 53, ch. 95-274; s. 45, ch. 2000-258; s. 11, ch. 2003-14; s. 17, ch. 2004-345; s. 14, ch. 2004-353; s. 8, ch. 2007-173; s. 71, ch. 2014-209.

Note.—Former s. 617.302.

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(1) **POWERS AND DUTIES.**—An association which operates a community as defined in s. 720.301, must be operated by an association that is a Florida corporation. After October 1, 1995, the association must be incorporated and the initial governing documents must be recorded in the official records of the county in which the community is located. An association may operate more than one community.

The officers and directors of an association have a fiduciary relationship to the members who are served by the association. The powers and duties of an association include those set forth in this chapter and, except as expressly limited or restricted in this chapter, those set forth in the governing documents. After control of the association is obtained by members other than the developer, the association may institute, maintain, settle, or appeal actions or hearings in its name on behalf of all members concerning matters of common interest to the members, including, but not limited to, the common areas; roof or structural components of a building, or other improvements for which the association is responsible; mechanical, electrical, or plumbing elements serving an improvement or building for which the association is responsible; representations of the developer pertaining to any existing or proposed commonly used facility; and protesting ad valorem taxes on commonly used facilities.

The association may defend actions in eminent domain or bring inverse condemnation actions. Before commencing litigation against any party in the name of the association involving amounts in controversy in excess of \$100,000, the association must obtain the affirmative approval of a majority of the voting interests at a meeting of the membership at which a quorum has been attained. This subsection does not limit any statutory or common-law right of any individual member or class of members to bring any action without participation by the association.

A member does not have authority to act for the association by virtue of being a member. An association may have more than one class of members and may issue membership certificates. An association of 15 or fewer parcel owners may enforce only the requirements of those deed restrictions established prior to the purchase of each parcel upon an affected parcel owner or owners.

(2) **BOARD MEETINGS.**—

(a) A meeting of the board of directors of an association occurs whenever a quorum of the board gathers to conduct association business. Meetings of the board must be open to all members, except for 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.

A meeting of the board must be held at a location that is accessible to a physically handicapped person if requested by a physically handicapped person who has a right to attend the meeting. The provisions of this subsection shall also apply to the meetings of any

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committee or other similar body when a final decision will be made regarding the expenditure of association funds and to meetings of anybody 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.

(b) Members have the right to attend all meetings of the board. The right to attend such meetings includes the right to speak at such meetings with reference to all designated items. The association may adopt written reasonable rules expanding the right of members to speak and governing the frequency, duration, and other manner of member statements, which rules must be consistent with this paragraph and may include a sign-up sheet for members wishing to speak. Notwithstanding any other law, meetings between the board or a committee and the association's attorney to discuss proposed or pending litigation or meetings of the board held for the purpose of discussing personnel matters are not required to be open to the members other than directors.

(c) The bylaws shall provide for giving notice to parcel owners and members of all board meetings and, if they do not do so, shall be deemed to provide the following:

1. Notices of all board meetings must be posted in a conspicuous place in the community at least 48 hours in advance of a meeting, except in an emergency. In the alternative, if notice is not posted in a conspicuous place in the community, notice of each board meeting must be mailed or delivered to each member at least 7 days before the meeting, except in an emergency.

Notwithstanding this general notice requirement, for communities with more than 100 members, the bylaws may provide for a reasonable alternative to posting or mailing of notice for each board meeting, including publication of notice, provision of a schedule of board meetings, or the conspicuous posting and repeated broadcasting of the notice on a closed-circuit cable television system serving the homeowners' association. However, if broadcast notice is used in lieu of a notice posted physically in the community, the notice must be broadcast at least four times every broadcast hour of each day that a posted notice is otherwise required. When broadcast notice is provided, the notice and agenda must be broadcast in a manner and for a sufficient continuous length of time so as to allow an average reader to observe the notice and read and comprehend the entire content of the notice and the agenda.

The bylaws or amended bylaws may provide for giving notice by electronic transmission in a manner authorized by law for meetings of the board of directors, committee meetings requiring notice under this section, and annual and special meetings of the members; **however, a member must consent in writing to receiving notice by electronic transmission.**

2. An assessment may not be levied at a board meeting unless the notice of the meeting includes a statement that assessments will be considered and the nature of the

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assessments. Written notice of any meeting at which special assessments will be considered or at which amendments to rules regarding parcel use will be considered must be mailed, delivered, or electronically transmitted to the members and parcel owners and posted conspicuously on the property or broadcast on closed-circuit cable television not less than 14 days before the meeting.

3. Directors may not vote by proxy or by secret ballot at board meetings, except that secret ballots may be used in the election of officers. This subsection also applies to the meetings of any committee or other similar body, when a final decision will be made regarding the expenditure of association funds, and to anybody 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.

(d) If 20 percent of the total voting interests **petition the board** to address an item of business, the board shall at its next regular board meeting or at a special meeting of the board, but not later than 60 days after the receipt of the petition, take the petitioned item up on an agenda. The board shall give all members notice of the meeting at which the petitioned item shall be addressed in accordance with the 14-day notice requirement pursuant to subparagraph (c)2.

Each member shall have the right to speak for **at least 3 minutes on each matter placed on the agenda by petition**, provided that the member signs the sign-up sheet, if one is provided, or submits a written request to speak prior to the meeting. Other than addressing the petitioned item at the meeting, the board is not obligated to take any other action requested by the petition.

(3) MINUTES.—Minutes of all meetings of the members of an association and of the board of directors of an association must be maintained in written form or in another form that can be converted into written form within a reasonable time. A vote or abstention from voting on each matter voted upon for each director present at a board meeting must be recorded in the minutes.

(4) OFFICIAL RECORDS.—The association shall maintain each of the following items, when applicable, which constitute the official records of the association:

- (a) Copies of any plans, specifications, permits, and warranties related to improvements constructed on the common areas or other property that the association is obligated to maintain, repair, or replace.
- (b) A copy of the bylaws of the association and of each amendment to the bylaws.
- (c) A copy of the articles of incorporation of the association and of each amendment thereto.
- (d) A copy of the declaration of covenants and a copy of each amendment thereto.
- (e) A copy of the current rules of the homeowners' association.

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(f) The minutes of all meetings of the board of directors and of the members, which minutes must be retained for at least 7 years.

(g) A current roster of all members and their mailing addresses and parcel identifications. The association shall also maintain the electronic mailing addresses and the numbers designated by members for receiving notice sent by electronic transmission of those members consenting to receive notice by electronic transmission. The electronic mailing addresses and numbers provided by unit owners to receive notice by electronic transmission shall be removed from association records when consent to receive notice by electronic transmission is revoked. However, the association is not liable for an erroneous disclosure of the electronic mail address or the number for receiving electronic transmission of notices.

(h) All of the association's insurance policies or a copy thereof, which policies must be retained for at least 7 years.

(i) A current copy of all contracts to which the association is a party, including, without limitation, any management agreement, lease, or other contract under which the association has any obligation or responsibility. Bids received by the association for work to be performed must also be considered official records and must be kept for a period of 1 year.

(j) The financial and accounting records of the association, kept according to good accounting practices. All financial and accounting records must be maintained for a period of at least 7 years. The financial and accounting records must include:

1. Accurate, itemized, and detailed records of all receipts and expenditures.
2. A current account and a periodic statement of the account for each member, designating the name and current address of each member who is obligated to pay assessments, the due date and amount of each assessment or other charge against the member, the date and amount of each payment on the account, and the balance due.
3. All tax returns, financial statements, and financial reports of the association.
4. Any other records that identify, measure, record, or communicate financial information.

(k) A copy of the disclosure summary described in s. 720.401(1).

(l) All other written records of the association not specifically included in the foregoing which are related to the operation of the association.

(5) INSPECTION AND COPYING OF RECORDS.—The official records shall be maintained within the state for at least 7 years and shall be made available to a parcel owner for inspection or photocopying within 45 miles of the community or within the county in which the association is located within 10 business days after receipt by the board or its designee of a written request. This subsection may be complied with by having a copy of the official records available for inspection or copying in the community or, at the option of the association, by making the records available to a parcel owner electronically via the Internet or by allowing the records to be viewed in electronic format on a computer screen and printed upon request.

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If the association has a photocopy machine available where the records are maintained, it must provide parcel owners with copies on request during the inspection if the entire request is limited to no more than 25 pages. An association shall allow a member or his or her authorized representative to use a portable device, including a smartphone, tablet, portable scanner, or any other technology capable of scanning or taking photographs, to make an electronic copy of the official records in lieu of the association's providing the member or his or her authorized representative with a copy of such records. The association may not charge a fee to a member or his or her authorized representative for the use of a portable device.

(a) The failure of an association to provide access to the records within 10 business days after receipt of a written request submitted by certified mail, return receipt requested, creates a rebuttable presumption that the association willfully failed to comply with this subsection.

(b) A member who is denied access to official records is entitled to the actual damages or minimum damages for the association's willful failure to comply with this subsection. The minimum damages are to be \$50 per calendar day up to 10 days, the calculation to begin on the 11th business day after receipt of the written request.

(c) The association may adopt reasonable written rules governing the frequency, time, location, notice, records to be inspected, and manner of inspections, but may not require a parcel owner to demonstrate any proper purpose for the inspection, state any reason for the inspection, or limit a parcel owner's right to inspect records to less than one 8-hour business day per month.

The association may impose fees to cover the costs of providing copies of the official records, including the costs of copying and the costs required for personnel to retrieve and copy the records if the time spent retrieving and copying the records exceeds one-half hour and if the personnel costs do not exceed \$20 per hour. Personnel costs may not be charged for records requests that result in the copying of 25 or fewer pages. The association may charge up to 25 cents per page for copies made on the association's photocopier. If the association does not have a photocopy machine available where the records are kept, or if the records requested to be copied exceed 25 pages in length, the association may have copies made by an outside duplicating service and may charge the actual cost of copying, as supported by the vendor invoice.

The association shall maintain an adequate number of copies of the recorded governing documents, to ensure their availability to members and prospective members.

Notwithstanding this paragraph, the following records **are not accessible to members or parcel owners:**

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1. Any record protected by the lawyer-client privilege as described in s. 90.502 and any record protected by the work-product privilege, including, but not limited to, a record prepared by an association attorney or prepared at the attorney's express direction which reflects a mental impression, conclusion, litigation strategy, or legal theory of the attorney or the association and which was prepared exclusively for civil or criminal litigation or for adversarial administrative proceedings or which was prepared in anticipation of such litigation or proceedings until the conclusion of the litigation or proceedings.
2. Information obtained by an association in connection with the approval of the lease, sale, or other transfer of a parcel.
3. Personnel records of association or management company employees, including, but not limited to, disciplinary, payroll, health, and insurance records. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term "personnel records" does not include written employment agreements with an association or management company employee or budgetary or financial records that indicate the compensation paid to an association or management company employee.
4. Medical records of parcel owners or community residents.
5. Social security numbers, driver license numbers, credit card numbers, electronic mailing addresses, telephone numbers, facsimile numbers, emergency contact information, any addresses for a parcel owner other than as provided for association notice requirements, and other personal identifying information of any person, excluding the person's name, parcel designation, mailing address, and property address.

Notwithstanding the restrictions in this subparagraph, an association may print and distribute to parcel owners a directory containing the name, parcel address, and all telephone numbers of each parcel owner. However, an owner may exclude his or her telephone numbers from the directory by so requesting in writing to the association. An owner may consent in writing to the disclosure of other contact information described in this subparagraph.

The association is not liable for the disclosure of information that is protected under this subparagraph if the information is included in an official record of the association and is voluntarily provided by an owner and not requested by the association.

6. Any electronic security measure that is used by the association to safeguard data, including passwords.

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7. The software and operating system used by the association which allows the manipulation of data, even if the owner owns a copy of the same software used by the association. The data is part of the official records of the association.

(d) The association or its authorized agent is not required to provide a prospective purchaser or lienholder with information about the residential subdivision or the association other than information or documents required by this chapter to be made available or disclosed. The association or its authorized agent may charge a reasonable fee to the prospective purchaser or lienholder or the current parcel owner or member for providing good faith responses to requests for information by or on behalf of a prospective purchaser or lienholder, other than that required by law, if the fee does not exceed \$150 plus the reasonable cost of photocopying and any attorney fees incurred by the association in connection with the response.

(6) BUDGETS.—

(a) The association shall prepare an annual budget that sets out the annual operating expenses. The budget must reflect the estimated revenues and expenses for that year and the estimated surplus or deficit as of the end of the current year. The budget must set out separately all fees or charges paid for by the association for recreational amenities, whether owned by the association, the developer, or another person.

The association **shall provide each member with a copy of the annual budget** or a written notice that a copy of the budget is available upon request at no charge to the member. The copy must be provided to the member within the time limits set forth in subsection (5).

(b) In addition to annual operating expenses, **the budget may include reserve accounts** for capital expenditures and deferred maintenance for which the association is responsible. If reserve accounts are not established pursuant to paragraph (d), funding of such reserves is limited to the extent that the governing documents limit increases in assessments, including reserves.

If the budget of the association includes reserve accounts established pursuant to paragraph (d), such reserves shall be determined, maintained, and waived in the manner provided in this subsection.

Once an association provides for reserve accounts pursuant to paragraph (d), the association shall thereafter determine, maintain, and waive reserves in compliance with this subsection. This section does not preclude the termination of a reserve account established pursuant to this paragraph upon approval of a majority of the total voting interests of the association. Upon such approval, the terminating reserve account shall be removed from the budget.

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(c)1. If the budget of the association does not provide for reserve accounts pursuant to paragraph (d) and the association is responsible for the repair and maintenance of capital improvements that may result in a special assessment if reserves are not provided, each financial report for the preceding fiscal year required by subsection (7) must contain the following statement in conspicuous type:

THE BUDGET OF THE ASSOCIATION **DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR RESERVE ACCOUNTS** FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURES AND DEFERRED MAINTENANCE THAT MAY RESULT IN SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS. OWNERS MAY ELECT TO PROVIDE FOR RESERVE ACCOUNTS PURSUANT TO SECTION 720.303(6), FLORIDA STATUTES, UPON OBTAINING THE APPROVAL OF A MAJORITY OF THE TOTAL VOTING INTERESTS OF THE ASSOCIATION BY VOTE OF THE MEMBERS AT A MEETING OR BY WRITTEN CONSENT.

2. If the budget of the association does provide for funding accounts for deferred expenditures, including, but not limited to, funds for capital expenditures and deferred maintenance, but such accounts are not created or established pursuant to paragraph (d), each financial report for the preceding fiscal year required under subsection (7) must also contain the following statement in conspicuous type:

THE BUDGET OF THE ASSOCIATION **PROVIDES FOR LIMITED VOLUNTARY DEFERRED EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTS**, INCLUDING CAPITAL EXPENDITURES AND DEFERRED MAINTENANCE, SUBJECT TO LIMITS ON FUNDING CONTAINED IN OUR GOVERNING DOCUMENTS. BECAUSE THE OWNERS HAVE NOT ELECTED TO PROVIDE FOR RESERVE ACCOUNTS PURSUANT TO SECTION 720.303(6), FLORIDA STATUTES, THESE FUNDS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THE RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF SUCH FUNDS SET FORTH IN THAT STATUTE, NOR ARE RESERVES CALCULATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THAT STATUTE.

(d) An association is deemed to have provided for reserve accounts if reserve accounts have been initially established by the developer or if the membership of the association affirmatively elects to provide for reserves. If reserve accounts are established by the developer, the budget must designate the components for which the reserve accounts may be used. If reserve accounts are not initially provided by the developer, the membership of the association may elect to do so upon the affirmative approval of a majority of the total voting interests of the association.

Such approval may be obtained by vote of the members at a duly called meeting of the membership or by the written consent of a majority of the total voting interests of the association. The approval action of the membership must state that reserve accounts shall be provided for in the budget and must designate the components for which the reserve accounts are to be established.

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Upon approval by the membership, the board of directors shall include the required reserve accounts in the budget in the next fiscal year following the approval and each year thereafter. Once established as provided in this subsection, the reserve accounts must be funded or maintained or have their funding waived in the manner provided in paragraph (f).

(e) The amount to be reserved in any account established shall be computed by means of a formula that is based upon estimated remaining useful life and estimated replacement cost or deferred maintenance expense of each reserve item. The association may adjust replacement reserve assessments annually to take into account any changes in estimates of cost or useful life of a reserve item.

(f) After one or more reserve accounts are established, the membership of the association, upon a majority vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present, may provide for no reserves or less reserves than required by this section. If a meeting of the unit owners has been called to determine whether to waive or reduce the funding of reserves and such result is not achieved or a quorum is not present, the reserves as included in the budget go into effect. After the turnover, the developer may vote its voting interest to waive or reduce the funding of reserves. Any vote taken pursuant to this subsection to waive or reduce reserves is applicable **only to one budget year.**

(g) Funding formulas for reserves authorized by this section must be based on a separate analysis of each of the required assets or a pooled analysis of two or more of the required assets.

1. If the association maintains separate reserve accounts for each of the required assets, the amount of the contribution to each reserve account is the sum of the following two calculations:
 - a. The total amount necessary, if any, to bring a negative component balance to zero.
 - b. The total estimated deferred maintenance expense or estimated replacement cost of the reserve component less the estimated balance of the reserve component as of the beginning of the period the budget will be in effect. The remainder, if greater than zero, shall be divided by the estimated remaining useful life of the component.

The formula may be adjusted each year for changes in estimates and deferred maintenance performed during the year and may include factors such as inflation and earnings on invested funds.

2. If the association maintains a **pooled account of** two or more of the required reserve assets, the amount of the contribution to the pooled reserve account as disclosed on the proposed budget may not be less than that required to ensure that the balance on hand at the beginning of the period the budget will go into effect plus the projected annual cash

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inflows over the remaining estimated useful life of all of the assets that make up the reserve pool are equal to or greater than the projected annual cash outflows over the remaining estimated useful lives of all the assets that make up the reserve pool, based on the current reserve analysis. The projected annual cash inflows may include estimated earnings from investment of principal and accounts receivable minus the allowance for doubtful accounts. The reserve funding formula may not include any type of balloon payments.

(h) Reserve funds and any interest accruing thereon shall remain in the reserve account or accounts and shall be used only for authorized reserve expenditures unless their use for other purposes is approved in advance by a majority vote at a meeting at which a quorum is present. Prior to turnover of control of an association by a developer to parcel owners, the developer-controlled association shall not vote to use reserves for purposes other than those for which they were intended without the approval of a majority of all nondeveloper voting interests voting in person or by limited proxy at a duly called meeting of the association.

(7) FINANCIAL REPORTING.—Within 90 days after the end of the fiscal year, or annually on the date provided in the bylaws, the association shall prepare and complete, or contract with a third party for the preparation and completion of, a financial report for the preceding fiscal year. Within 21 days after the final financial report is completed by the association or received from the third party, but not later than 120 days after the end of the fiscal year or other date as provided in the bylaws, the association shall, within the time limits set forth in subsection (5), provide each member with a copy of the annual financial report or a written notice that a copy of the financial report is available upon request at no charge to the member. Financial reports shall be prepared as follows:

- (a) An association that meets the criteria of this paragraph shall prepare or cause to be prepared a complete set of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles as adopted by the Board of Accountancy. The financial statements shall be based upon the association's total annual revenues, as follows:
1. An association with total annual revenues of **\$150,000 or more, but less than \$300,000**, shall prepare compiled financial statements.
 2. An association with total annual revenues of at least **\$300,000, but less than \$500,000**, shall prepare reviewed financial statements.
 3. An association with total annual revenues of **\$500,000 or more** shall prepare audited financial statements.
- (b)
1. An association with total annual revenues of less than \$150,000 shall prepare a report of cash receipts and expenditures.
 2. An association in a community **of fewer than 50 parcels**, regardless of the association's annual revenues, may prepare a report of cash receipts and expenditures in lieu of financial statements required by paragraph (a) unless the governing documents provide otherwise.

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3. A report of cash receipts and disbursement must disclose the amount of receipts by accounts and receipt classifications and the amount of expenses by accounts and expense classifications, including, but not limited to, the following, as applicable: costs for security, professional, and management fees and expenses; taxes; costs for recreation facilities; expenses for refuse collection and utility services; expenses for lawn care; costs for building maintenance and repair; insurance costs; administration and salary expenses; and reserves if maintained by the association.

(c) If 20 percent of the parcel owners petition the board for a level of financial reporting higher than that required by this section, the association shall duly notice and hold a meeting of members within 30 days of receipt of the petition for the purpose of voting on raising the level of reporting for that fiscal year. Upon approval of a majority of the total voting interests of the parcel owners, the association shall prepare or cause to be prepared, shall amend the budget or adopt a special assessment to pay for the financial report regardless of any provision to the contrary in the governing documents, and shall provide within 90 days of the meeting or the end of the fiscal year, whichever occurs later:

1. Compiled, reviewed, or audited financial statements, if the association is otherwise required to prepare a report of cash receipts and expenditures;
2. Reviewed or audited financial statements, if the association is otherwise required to prepare compiled financial statements; or
3. Audited financial statements if the association is otherwise required to prepare reviewed financial statements.

(d) If approved by a majority of the voting interests present at a properly called meeting of the association, an association may prepare or cause to be prepared:

1. A report of cash receipts and expenditures in lieu of a compiled, reviewed, or audited financial statement;
2. A report of cash receipts and expenditures or a compiled financial statement in lieu of a reviewed or audited financial statement; or
3. A report of cash receipts and expenditures, a compiled financial statement, or a reviewed financial statement in lieu of an audited financial statement.

(8) ASSOCIATION FUNDS; COMMINGLING.—

(a) All association funds held by a developer shall be maintained separately in the association's name. Reserve and operating funds of the association shall not be commingled prior to turnover except the association may jointly invest reserve funds; however, such jointly invested funds must be accounted for separately.

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(b) No developer in control of a homeowners' association shall commingle any association funds with his or her funds or with the funds of any other homeowners' association or community association.

(c) Association funds may not be used by a developer to defend a civil or criminal action, administrative proceeding, or arbitration proceeding that has been filed against the developer or directors appointed to the association board by the developer, even when the subject of the action or proceeding concerns the operation of the developer-controlled association.

(9) APPLICABILITY.—Sections 617.1601-617.1604 do not apply to a homeowners' association in which the members have the inspection and copying rights set forth in this section.

(10) RECALL OF DIRECTORS.—

(a)1. Regardless of any provision to the contrary contained in the governing documents, subject to the provisions of s. 720.307 regarding transition of association control, any member of the board of directors may be recalled and removed from office with or without cause by a majority of the total voting interests.

2. When the governing documents, including the declaration, articles of incorporation, or bylaws, provide that only a specific class of members is entitled to elect a board director or directors, only that class of members may vote to recall those board directors so elected.

(b)1. Board directors may be recalled by an agreement in writing or by written ballot without a membership meeting. The agreement in writing or the written ballots, or a copy thereof, shall be served on the association by certified mail or by personal service in the manner authorized by chapter 48 and the Florida Rules of Civil Procedure.

2. The board shall duly notice and hold a meeting of the board within 5 full business days after receipt of the agreement in writing or written ballots. At the meeting, the board shall either certify the written ballots or written agreement to recall a director or directors of the board, in which case such director or directors shall be recalled effective immediately and shall turn over to the board within 5 full business days any and all records and property of the association in their possession, or proceed as described in paragraph (d).

3. When it is determined by the department pursuant to binding arbitration proceedings that an initial recall effort was defective, written recall agreements or written ballots used in the first recall effort and not found to be defective may be reused in one subsequent recall effort. However, in no event

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is a written agreement or written ballot valid for more than 120 days after it has been signed by the member.

4. Any rescission or revocation of a member's written recall ballot or agreement must be in writing and, in order to be effective, must be delivered to the association before the association is served with the written recall agreements or ballots.

5. The agreement in writing or ballot shall list at least as many possible replacement directors as there are directors subject to the recall, when at least a majority of the board is sought to be recalled; the person executing the recall instrument may vote for as many replacement candidates as there are directors subject to the recall.

(c)1. If the declaration, articles of incorporation, or bylaws specifically provide, the members may also recall and remove a board director or directors by a vote taken at a meeting. If so provided in the governing documents, a special meeting of the members to recall a director or directors of the board of administration may be called by 10 percent of the voting interests giving notice of the meeting as required for a meeting of members, and the notice shall state the purpose of the meeting. Electronic transmission may not be used as a method of giving notice of a meeting called in whole or in part for this purpose.

2. The board shall duly notice and hold a board meeting within 5 full business days after the adjournment of the member meeting to recall one or more directors. At the meeting, the board shall certify the recall, in which case such member or members shall be recalled effective immediately and shall turn over to the board within 5 full business days any and all records and property of the association in their possession, or shall proceed as set forth in subparagraph (d).

(d) If the board determines not to certify the written agreement or written ballots to recall a director or directors of the board or does not certify the recall by a vote at a meeting, the board shall, within 5 full business days after the meeting, file with the department a petition for binding arbitration pursuant to the applicable procedures in ss. 718.112(2)(j) and 718.1255 and the rules adopted thereunder. For the purposes of this section, the members who voted at the meeting or who executed the agreement in writing shall constitute one party under the petition for arbitration. If the arbitrator certifies the recall as to any director or directors of the board, the recall will be effective upon mailing of the final order of arbitration to the association. The director or directors so recalled shall deliver to the board any and all records of the association in their possession within 5 full business days after the effective date of the recall.

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(e) If a vacancy occurs on the board as a result of a recall and less than a majority of the board directors are removed, the vacancy may be filled by the affirmative vote of a majority of the remaining directors, notwithstanding any provision to the contrary contained in this subsection or in the association documents. If vacancies occur on the board as a result of a recall and a majority or more of the board directors are removed, the vacancies shall be filled by members voting in favor of the recall; if removal is at a meeting, any vacancies shall be filled by the members at the meeting. If the recall occurred by agreement in writing or by written ballot, members may vote for replacement directors in the same instrument in accordance with procedural rules adopted by the division, which rules need not be consistent with this subsection.

(f) If the board fails to duly notice and hold a board meeting within 5 full business days after service of an agreement in writing or within 5 full business days after the adjournment of the member recall meeting, the recall shall be deemed effective and the board directors so recalled shall immediately turn over to the board all records and property of the association.

(g) If the board fails to duly notice and hold the required meeting or fails to file the required petition, the unit owner representative may file a petition pursuant to s. 718.1255 challenging the board's failure to act. The petition must be filed within 60 days after the expiration of the applicable 5-full-business-day period. The review of a petition under this paragraph is limited to the sufficiency of service on the board and the facial validity of the written agreement or ballots filed.

(h) If a director who is removed fails to relinquish his or her office or turn over records as required under this section, the circuit court in the county where the association maintains its principal office may, upon the petition of the association, summarily order the director to relinquish his or her office and turn over all association records upon application of the association.

(i) The minutes of the board meeting at which the board decides whether to certify the recall are an official association record. The minutes must record the date and time of the meeting, the decision of the board, and the vote count taken on each board member subject to the recall. In addition, when the board decides not to certify the recall, as to each vote rejected, the minutes must identify the parcel number and the specific reason for each such rejection.

(j) When the recall of more than one board director is sought, the written agreement, ballot, or vote at a meeting shall provide for a separate vote for each board director sought to be recalled.

(k) A board member who has been recalled may file a petition pursuant to ss. 718.112(2)(j) and 718.1255 and the rules adopted challenging the validity of the

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recall. The petition must be filed within 60 days after the recall is deemed certified. The association and the unit owner representative shall be named as respondents.

(l) The division may not accept for filing a recall petition, whether filed pursuant to paragraph (b), paragraph (c), paragraph (g), or paragraph (k) and regardless of whether the recall was certified, when there are 60 or fewer days until the scheduled reelection of the board member sought to be recalled or when 60 or fewer days have not elapsed since the election of the board member sought to be recalled.

(11) WINDSTORM INSURANCE.—Windstorm insurance coverage for a group of no fewer than three communities created and operating under chapter 718, chapter 719, this chapter, or chapter 721 may be obtained and maintained for the communities if the insurance coverage is sufficient to cover an amount equal to the probable maximum loss for the communities for a 250-year windstorm event. Such probable maximum loss must be determined through the use of a competent model that has been accepted by the Florida Commission on Hurricane Loss Projection Methodology. Such insurance coverage is deemed adequate windstorm coverage for purposes of this chapter.

(12) COMPENSATION PROHIBITED.—A director, officer, or committee member of the association may not directly receive any salary or compensation from the association for the performance of duties as a director, officer, or committee member and may not in any other way benefit financially from service to the association. This subsection does not preclude:

(a) Participation by such person in a financial benefit accruing to all or a significant number of members as a result of actions lawfully taken by the board or a committee of which he or she is a member, including, but not limited to, routine maintenance, repair, or replacement of community assets.

(b) Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses incurred by such person on behalf of the association, subject to approval in accordance with procedures established by the association's governing documents or, in the absence of such procedures, in accordance with an approval process established by the board.

(c) Any recovery of insurance proceeds derived from a policy of insurance maintained by the association for the benefit of its members.

(d) Any fee or compensation authorized in the governing documents.

(e) Any fee or compensation authorized in advance by a vote of a majority of the voting interests voting in person or by proxy at a meeting of the members.

(f) A developer or its representative from serving as a director, officer, or committee member of the association and benefiting financially from service to the association.

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(13) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—The community association manager or management firm, or the association when there is no community association manager or management firm, shall report to the division by November 22, 2013, in a manner and form prescribed by the division.

- (a) The report shall include the association's:
 - 1. Legal name.
 - 2. Federal employer identification number.
 - 3. Mailing and physical addresses.
 - 4. Total number of parcels.
 - 5. Total amount of revenues and expenses from the association's annual budget.

- (b) For associations in which control of the association has not been transitioned to nondeveloper members, as set forth in s. 720.307, the report shall also include the developer's:
 - 1. Legal name.
 - 2. Mailing address.
 - 3. Total number of parcels owned on the date of reporting.

- (c) The reporting requirement provided in this subsection shall be a continuing obligation on each association until the required information is reported to the division.

- (d) By October 1, 2013, the department shall establish and implement a registration system through an Internet website that provides for the reporting requirements of paragraphs (a) and (b).

- (e) The department shall prepare an annual report of the data reported pursuant to this subsection and present it to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2013, and each year thereafter.

- (f) The division shall adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement the provisions of this subsection.

- (g) This subsection shall expire on July 1, 2016, unless reenacted by the Legislature.

History.—s. 35, ch. 92-49; s. 54, ch. 95-274; s. 1, ch. 97-311; s. 1, ch. 98-261; s. 46, ch. 2000-258; s. 12, ch. 2003-14; s. 3, ch. 2003-79; ss. 2, 18, ch. 2004-345; s. 15, ch. 2004-353; s. 135, ch. 2005-2; s. 16, ch. 2007-80; ss. 9, 10, ch. 2007-173; s. 22, ch. 2010-174; s. 17, ch. 2011-196; s. 15, ch. 2013-188; s. 2, ch. 2013-218; s. 17, ch. 2014-133.

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Note.—Former s. 617.303.

720.3033 Officers and directors.—

(1)(a) Within 90 days after being elected or appointed to the board, each director shall certify in writing to the secretary of the association that he or she has read the association's declaration of covenants, articles of incorporation, bylaws, and current written rules and policies; that he or she will work to uphold such documents and policies to the best of his or her ability; and that he or she will faithfully discharge his or her fiduciary responsibility to the association's members. Within 90 days after being elected or appointed to the board, in lieu of such written certification, the newly elected or appointed director may submit a certificate of having satisfactorily completed the educational curriculum administered by a division-approved education provider within 1 year before or 90 days after the date of election or appointment.

(b) The written certification or educational certificate is valid for the uninterrupted tenure of the director on the board. A director who does not timely file the written certification or educational certificate shall be suspended from the board until he or she complies with the requirement. The board may temporarily fill the vacancy during the period of suspension.

(c) The association shall retain each director's written certification or educational certificate for inspection by the members for 5 years after the director's election. However, the failure to have the written certification or educational certificate on file does not affect the validity of any board action.

(2) If the association enters into a contract or other transaction with any of its directors or a corporation, firm, association that is not an affiliated homeowners' association, or other entity in which an association director is also a director or officer or is financially interested, the board must:

(a) Comply with the requirements of s. 617.0832.

(b) Enter the disclosures required by s. 617.0832 into the written minutes of the meeting.

(c) Approve the contract or other transaction by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the directors present.

(d) At the next regular or special meeting of the members, disclose the existence of the contract or other transaction to the members. Upon motion of any member, the contract or transaction shall be brought up for a vote and may be canceled by a majority vote of the members present. If the members cancel the contract, the association is only liable for the reasonable value of goods and services provided up to the time of cancellation and is not liable for any termination fee, liquidated damages, or other penalty for such cancellation.

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(3) An officer, director, or manager may not solicit, offer to accept, or accept any good or service of value for which consideration has not been provided for his or her benefit or for the benefit of a member of his or her immediate family from any person providing or proposing to provide goods or services to the association. If the board finds that an officer or director has violated this subsection, the board shall immediately remove the officer or director from office. The vacancy shall be filled according to law until the end of the director's term of office. However, an officer, director, or manager may accept food to be consumed at a business meeting with a value of less than \$25 per individual or a service or good received in connection with trade fairs or education programs.

(4) A director or officer charged by information or indictment with a felony theft or embezzlement offense involving the association's funds or property is removed from office. The board shall fill the vacancy according to general law until the end of the period of the suspension or the end of the director's term of office, whichever occurs first. However, if the charges are resolved without a finding of guilt or without acceptance of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere, the director or officer shall be reinstated for any remainder of his or her term of office. A member who has such criminal charges pending may not be appointed or elected to a position as a director or officer.

(5) The association shall maintain insurance or a fidelity bond for all persons who control or disburse funds of the association. The insurance policy or fidelity bond must cover the maximum funds that will be in the custody of the association or its management agent at any one time. As used in this subsection, the term "persons who control or disburse funds of the association" includes, but is not limited to, persons authorized to sign checks on behalf of the association, and the president, secretary, and treasurer of the association. The association shall bear the cost of any insurance or bond. If annually approved by a majority of the voting interests present at a properly called meeting of the association, an association may waive the requirement of obtaining an insurance policy or fidelity bond for all persons who control or disburse funds of the association.

History.—s. 3, ch. 2013-218.

720.3035 Architectural control covenants; parcel owner improvements; rights and privileges.—

(1) The authority of an association or any architectural, construction improvement, or other such similar committee of an association to review and approve plans and specifications for the location, size, type, or appearance of any structure or other improvement on a parcel, or to enforce standards for the external appearance of any structure or improvement located on a parcel, shall be permitted only to the extent that the authority is specifically stated or reasonably inferred as to such location, size, type, or

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appearance in the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants.

(2) If the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants provides options for the use of material, the size of the structure or improvement, the design of the structure or improvement, or the location of the structure or improvement on the parcel, neither the association nor any architectural, construction improvement, or other such similar committee of the association shall restrict the right of a parcel owner to select from the options provided in the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants.

(3) Unless otherwise specifically stated in the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants, each parcel shall be deemed to have only one front for purposes of determining the required front setback even if the parcel is bounded by a roadway or other easement on more than one side. When the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants do not provide for specific setback limitations, the applicable county or municipal setback limitations shall apply, and neither the association nor any architectural, construction improvement, or other such similar committee of the association shall enforce or attempt to enforce any setback limitation that is inconsistent with the applicable county or municipal standard or standards.

(4) Each parcel owner shall be entitled to the rights and privileges set forth in the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants concerning the architectural use of the parcel, and the construction of permitted structures and improvements on the parcel and such rights and privileges shall not be unreasonably infringed upon or impaired by the association or any architectural, construction improvement, or other such similar committee of the association. If the association or any architectural, construction improvement, or other such similar committee of the association should unreasonably, knowingly, and willfully infringe upon or impair the rights and privileges set forth in the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants, the adversely affected parcel owner shall be entitled to recover damages caused by such infringement or impairment, including any costs and reasonable attorney's fees incurred in preserving or restoring the rights and privileges of the parcel owner set forth in the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants.

(5) Neither the association nor any architectural, construction improvement, or other such similar committee of the association shall enforce any policy or restriction that is inconsistent with the rights and privileges of a parcel owner set forth in the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants, whether uniformly applied or not. Neither the association nor any architectural, construction improvement, or other such similar committee of the association may rely upon

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a policy or restriction that is inconsistent with the declaration of covenants or other published guidelines and standards authorized by the declaration of covenants, whether uniformly applied or not, in defense of any action taken in the name of or on behalf of the association against a parcel owner.

History.—s. 11, ch. 2007-173.

720.304 Right of owners to peaceably assemble; display of flag; SLAPP suits prohibited.—

(1) All common areas and recreational facilities serving any homeowners' association shall be available to parcel owners in the homeowners' association served thereby and their invited guests for the use intended for such common areas and recreational facilities. The entity or entities responsible for the operation of the common areas and recreational facilities may adopt reasonable rules and regulations pertaining to the use of such common areas and recreational facilities. No entity or entities shall unreasonably restrict any parcel owner's right to peaceably assemble or right to invite public officers or candidates for public office to appear and speak in common areas and recreational facilities.

(2)(a) Any homeowner may display one portable, removable United States flag or official flag of the State of Florida in a respectful manner, and one portable, removable official flag, in a respectful manner, not larger than 41/2 feet by 6 feet, which represents the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard, or a POW-MIA flag, regardless of any covenants, restrictions, bylaws, rules, or requirements of the association.

(b) Any homeowner may erect a freestanding flagpole no more than 20 feet high on any portion of the homeowner's real property, regardless of any covenants, restrictions, bylaws, rules, or requirements of the association, if the flagpole does not obstruct sightlines at intersections and is not erected within or upon an easement. The homeowner may further display in a respectful manner from that flagpole, regardless of any covenants, restrictions, bylaws, rules, or requirements of the association, one official United States flag, not larger than 41/2 feet by 6 feet, and may additionally display one official flag of the State of Florida or the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard, or a POW-MIA flag. Such additional flag must be equal in size to or smaller than the United States flag. The flagpole and display are subject to all building codes, zoning setbacks, and other applicable governmental regulations, including, but not limited to, noise and lighting ordinances in the county or municipality in which the flagpole is erected and all setback and locational criteria contained in the governing documents.

(c) This subsection applies to all community development districts and homeowners' associations, regardless of whether such homeowners' associations are authorized to impose assessments that may become a lien on the parcel.

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(3) Any owner prevented from exercising rights guaranteed by subsection (1) or subsection (2) may bring an action in the appropriate court of the county in which the alleged infringement occurred, and, upon favorable adjudication, the court shall enjoin the enforcement of any provision contained in any homeowners' association document or rule that operates to deprive the owner of such rights.

(4) It is the intent of the Legislature to protect the right of parcel owners to exercise their rights to instruct their representatives and petition for redress of grievances before the various governmental entities of this state as protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and s. 5, Art. I of the State Constitution. The Legislature recognizes that "Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation" or "SLAPP" suits, as they are typically called, have occurred when members are sued by individuals, business entities, or governmental entities arising out of a parcel owner's appearance and presentation before a governmental entity on matters related to the homeowners' association. However, it is the public policy of this state that government entities, business organizations, and individuals not engage in SLAPP suits because such actions are inconsistent with the right of parcel owners to participate in the state's institutions of government. Therefore, the Legislature finds and declares that prohibiting such lawsuits by governmental entities, business entities, and individuals against parcel owners who address matters concerning their homeowners' association will preserve this fundamental state policy, preserve the constitutional rights of parcel owners, and assure the continuation of representative government in this state. It is the intent of the Legislature that such lawsuits be expeditiously disposed of by the courts.

(a) As used in this subsection, the term "governmental entity" means the state, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the independent establishments of the state, counties, municipalities, districts, authorities, boards, or commissions, or any agencies of these branches which are subject to chapter 286.

(b) A governmental entity, business organization, or individual in this state may not file or cause to be filed through its employees or agents any lawsuit, cause of action, claim, cross-claim, or counterclaim against a parcel owner without merit and solely because such parcel owner has exercised the right to instruct his or her representatives or the right to petition for redress of grievances before the various governmental entities of this state, as protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and s. 5, Art. I of the State Constitution.

(c) A parcel owner sued by a governmental entity, business organization, or individual in violation of this section has a right to an expeditious resolution of a claim that the suit is in violation of this section. A parcel owner may petition the court for an order dismissing the action or granting final judgment in favor of that parcel owner. The petitioner may file a motion for summary judgment, together with supplemental affidavits, seeking a determination that the governmental entity's, business organization's, or individual's lawsuit has been brought in violation of this

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section. The governmental entity, business organization, or individual shall thereafter file its response and any supplemental affidavits. As soon as practicable, the court shall set a hearing on the petitioner's motion, which shall be held at the earliest possible time after the filing of the governmental entity's, business organization's or individual's response. The court may award the parcel owner sued by the governmental entity, business organization, or individual actual damages arising from the governmental entity's, individual's, or business organization's violation of this section. A court may treble the damages awarded to a prevailing parcel owner and shall state the basis for the treble damages award in its judgment. The court shall award the prevailing party reasonable attorney's fees and costs incurred in connection with a claim that an action was filed in violation of this section.

(d) Homeowners' associations may not expend association funds in prosecuting a SLAPP suit against a parcel owner.

(5)(a) Any parcel owner may construct an access ramp if a resident or occupant of the parcel has a medical necessity or disability that requires a ramp for egress and ingress under the following conditions:

1. The ramp must be as unobtrusive as possible, be designed to blend in aesthetically as practicable, and be reasonably sized to fit the intended use.
2. Plans for the ramp must be submitted in advance to the homeowners' association. The association may make reasonable requests to modify the design to achieve architectural consistency with surrounding structures and surfaces.

(b) The parcel owner must submit to the association an affidavit from a physician attesting to the medical necessity or disability of the resident or occupant of the parcel requiring the access ramp. Certification used for s. 320.0848 shall be sufficient to meet the affidavit requirement.

(6) Any parcel owner may display a sign of reasonable size provided by a contractor for security services within 10 feet of any entrance to the home.

History.—s. 36, ch. 92-49; s. 51, ch. 2000-258; s. 1, ch. 2002-50; s. 19, ch. 2004-345; s. 16, ch. 2004-353; s. 1, ch. 2008-45; s. 23, ch. 2010-174.

Note.—Former s. 617.304.

720.305 Obligations of members; remedies at law or in equity; levy of fines and suspension of use rights.—

(1) Each member and the member's tenants, guests, and invitees, and each association, are governed by, and must comply with, this chapter, the governing documents of the community, and the rules of the association. Actions at law or in equity, or both, to redress

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alleged failure or refusal to comply with these provisions may be brought by the association or by any member against:

- (a) The association;
- (b) A member;
- (c) Any director or officer of an association who willfully and knowingly fails to comply with these provisions; and
- (d) Any tenants, guests, or invitees occupying a parcel or using the common areas.

The prevailing party in any such litigation is entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees and costs. A member prevailing in an action between the association and the member under this section, in addition to recovering his or her reasonable attorney's fees, may recover additional amounts as determined by the court to be necessary to reimburse the member for his or her share of assessments levied by the association to fund its expenses of the litigation. This relief does not exclude other remedies provided by law. This section does not deprive any person of any other available right or remedy.

(2) The association may levy reasonable fines of up to \$100 per violation against any member or any member's tenant, guest, or invitee for the failure of the owner of the parcel or its occupant, licensee, or invitee to comply with any provision of the declaration, the association bylaws, or reasonable rules of the association. A fine may be levied for each day of a continuing violation, with a single notice and opportunity for hearing, except that the fine may not exceed \$1,000 in the aggregate unless otherwise provided in the governing documents. A fine of less than \$1,000 may not become a lien against a parcel. In any action to recover a fine, the prevailing party is entitled to reasonable attorney fees and costs from the nonprevailing party as determined by the court.

(a) An association may suspend, for a reasonable period of time, the right of a member, or a member's tenant, guest, or invitee, to use common areas and facilities for the failure of the owner of the parcel or its occupant, licensee, or invitee to comply with any provision of the declaration, the association bylaws, or reasonable rules of the association. This paragraph does not apply to that portion of common areas used to provide access or utility services to the parcel. A suspension may not impair the right of an owner or tenant of a parcel to have vehicular and pedestrian ingress to and egress from the parcel, including, but not limited to, the right to park.

(b) A fine or suspension may not be imposed without at least 14 days' notice to the person sought to be fined or suspended and an opportunity for a hearing before a committee of at least three members appointed by the board who are not officers, directors, or employees of the association, or the spouse, parent, child, brother, or sister of an officer, director, or employee. If the committee, by majority vote, does not approve a proposed fine or suspension, it may not be imposed. If the association imposes a fine or suspension, the association must provide written notice of such fine or suspension by mail or hand delivery to the parcel owner and, if applicable, to any tenant, licensee, or invitee of the parcel owner.

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(3) If a member is more than 90 days delinquent in paying a monetary obligation due to the association, the association may suspend the rights of the member, or the member's tenant, guest, or invitee, to use common areas and facilities until the monetary obligation is paid in full. This subsection does not apply to that portion of common areas used to provide access or utility services to the parcel. Suspension does not impair the right of an owner or tenant of a parcel to have vehicular and pedestrian ingress to and egress from the parcel, including, but not limited to, the right to park. The notice and hearing requirements under subsection (2) do not apply to a suspension imposed under this subsection.

(4) An association may suspend the voting rights of a parcel or member for the nonpayment of any monetary obligation due to the association that is more than 90 days delinquent. A voting interest or consent right allocated to a parcel or member which has been suspended by the association may not be counted towards the total number of voting interests for any purpose, including, but not limited to, the number of voting interests necessary to constitute a quorum, the number of voting interests required to conduct an election, or the number of voting interests required to approve an action under this chapter or pursuant to the governing documents. The notice and hearing requirements under subsection (2) do not apply to a suspension imposed under this subsection. The suspension ends upon full payment of all obligations currently due or overdue to the association.

(5) All suspensions imposed pursuant to subsection (3) or subsection (4) must be approved at a properly noticed board meeting. Upon approval, the association must notify the parcel owner and, if applicable, the parcel's occupant, licensee, or invitee by mail or hand delivery.

History.—s. 37, ch. 92-49; s. 55, ch. 95-274; s. 2, ch. 97-311; s. 51, ch. 2000-258; s. 20, ch. 2004-345; s. 17, ch. 2004-353; s. 12, ch. 2007-173; s. 8, ch. 2008-202; s. 24, ch. 2010-174; s. 18, ch. 2011-196; s. 16, ch. 2013-188.

Note.—Former s. 617.305.

720.3053 Failure to fill vacancies on board of directors sufficient to constitute a quorum; appointment of receiver upon petition of member.—

(1) If an association fails to fill vacancies on the board of directors sufficient to constitute a quorum in accordance with the bylaws, any member may give notice of the member's intent to apply to the circuit court within whose jurisdiction the association lies for the

appointment of a receiver to manage the affairs of the association. The form of the notice shall be as follows:

NOTICE OF INTENT TO
APPLY FOR RECEIVERSHIP

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YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that the undersigned member of (name of homeowners' association) intends to file a petition in the circuit court for appointment of a receiver to manage the affairs of the association on the grounds that the association has failed to fill vacancies on the board of directors sufficient to constitute a quorum. This petition will not be filed if the vacancies are filled within 30 days after the date on which this notice was sent or posted, whichever is later. If a receiver is appointed, the receiver shall have all of the powers of the board and shall be entitled to receive a salary and reimbursement of all costs and attorney's fees payable from association funds.

(name and address of petitioning member)

(2) The notice required by subsection (1) must be provided by the member to the association by certified mail or personal delivery, must be posted in a conspicuous place within the homeowners' association, and must be provided to every member of the association by certified mail or personal delivery. The notice must be posted and mailed or delivered at least 30 days prior to the filing of a petition seeking receivership. Notice by mail to a member shall be sent to the address used by the county property appraiser for notice to the member.

(3) If the association fails to fill the vacancies within 30 days after the notice required by subsection (1) is posted and mailed or delivered, the member may proceed with the petition.

(4) If a receiver is appointed, all members shall be given written notice of such appointment as provided in s. 720.313.

(5) The association shall be responsible for the salary of the receiver, court costs, and attorney's fees. The receiver shall have all powers and duties of a duly constituted board of directors and shall serve until the association fills vacancies on the board sufficient to constitute a quorum and the court relieves the receiver of the appointment.

History.—s. 9, ch. 2008-202.

720.3055 Contracts for products and services; in writing; bids; exceptions.—

(1) All contracts as further described in this section or any contract that is not to be fully performed within 1 year after the making thereof for the purchase, lease, or renting of materials or equipment to be used by the association in accomplishing its purposes under this chapter or the governing documents, and all contracts for the provision of services, shall be in writing. If a contract for the purchase, lease, or renting of materials or equipment, or for the provision of services, requires payment by the association that exceeds 10 percent of the total annual budget of the association, including reserves, the association must obtain competitive bids for the materials, equipment, or services. Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to require the association to accept the lowest bid.

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(2)(a)1. Notwithstanding the foregoing, contracts with employees of the association, and contracts for attorney, accountant, architect, community association manager, engineering, and landscape architect services are not subject to the provisions of this section.

2. A contract executed before October 1, 2004, and any renewal thereof, is not subject to the competitive bid requirements of this section. If a contract was awarded under the competitive bid procedures of this section, any renewal of that contract is not subject to such competitive bid requirements if the contract contains a provision that allows the board to cancel the contract on 30 days' notice. Materials, equipment, or services provided to an association under a local government franchise agreement by a franchise holder are not subject to the competitive bid requirements of this section. A contract with a manager, if made by a competitive bid, may be made for up to 3 years. An association whose declaration or bylaws provide for competitive bidding for services may operate under the provisions of that declaration or bylaws in lieu of this section if those provisions are not less stringent than the requirements of this section.

(b) Nothing contained in this section is intended to limit the ability of an association to obtain needed products and services in an emergency.

(c) This section does not apply if the business entity with which the association desires to enter into a contract is the only source of supply within the county serving the association.

(d) Nothing contained in this section shall excuse a party contracting to provide maintenance or management services from compliance with s. 720.309.

History.—s. 21, ch. 2004-345; s. 18, ch. 2004-353.

720.306 Meetings of members; voting and election procedures; amendments.—

(1) QUORUM; AMENDMENTS.—

(a) Unless a lower number is provided in the bylaws, the percentage of voting interests required to constitute a quorum at a meeting of the members shall be 30 percent of the total voting interests. Unless otherwise provided in this chapter or in the articles of incorporation or bylaws, decisions that require a vote of the members must be made by the concurrence of at least a majority of the voting interests present, in person or by proxy, at a meeting at which a quorum has been attained. A meeting of the members must be held at a location that is accessible to a physically handicapped person if requested by a physically handicapped person who has a right to attend the meeting.

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(b) **Unless otherwise provided in the governing documents** or required by law, and other than those matters set forth in paragraph (c), any governing document of an association may be amended by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting interests of the association. Within 30 days after recording an amendment to the governing documents, the association shall provide copies of the amendment to the members. However, if a copy of the proposed amendment is provided to the members before they vote on the amendment and the proposed amendment is not changed before the vote, the association, in lieu of providing a copy of the amendment, may provide notice to the members that the amendment was adopted, identifying the official book and page number or instrument number of the recorded amendment and that a copy of the amendment is available at no charge to the member upon written request to the association. The copies and notice described in this paragraph may be provided electronically to those owners who previously consented to receive notice electronically.

(c) **Unless otherwise provided in the governing documents** as originally recorded or permitted by this chapter or chapter 617, an amendment may not materially and adversely alter the proportionate voting interest appurtenant to a parcel or increase the proportion or percentage by which a parcel shares in the common expenses of the association unless the record parcel owner and all record owners of liens on the parcels join in the execution of the amendment. For purposes of this section, a change in quorum requirements is not an alteration of voting interests. The merger or consolidation of one or more associations under a plan of merger or consolidation under part I of chapter 607 or chapter 617 is not a material or adverse alteration of the proportionate voting interest appurtenant to a parcel.

(d) The Legislature finds that the procurement of mortgagee consent to amendments that do not affect the rights or interests of mortgagees is an unreasonable and substantial logistical and financial burden on the parcel owners and that there is a compelling state interest in enabling the members of an association to approve amendments to the association's governing documents through legal means. Accordingly, and notwithstanding any provision of this paragraph to the contrary:

1. As to any mortgage recorded on or after July 1, 2013, any provision in the association's governing documents that requires the consent or joinder of some or all mortgagees of parcels or any other portion of the association's common areas to amend the association's governing documents or for any other matter is enforceable only as to amendments to the association's governing documents that adversely affect the priority of the mortgagee's lien or the mortgagee's rights to foreclose its lien or that otherwise materially affect the rights and interests of the mortgagees.

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2. As to mortgages recorded before July 1, 2013, any existing provisions in the association's governing documents requiring mortgagee consent are enforceable.

3. In securing consent or joinder, the association is entitled to rely upon the public records to identify the holders of outstanding mortgages. The association may use the address provided in the original recorded mortgage document, unless there is a different address for the holder of the mortgage in a recorded assignment or modification of the mortgage, which recorded assignment or modification must reference the official records book and page on which the original mortgage was recorded. Once the association has identified the recorded mortgages of record, the association shall, in writing, request of each parcel owner whose parcel is encumbered by a mortgage of record any information that the owner has in his or her possession regarding the name and address of the person to whom mortgage payments are currently being made. Notice shall be sent to such person if the address provided in the original recorded mortgage document is different from the name and address of the mortgagee or assignee of the mortgage as shown by the public record. The association is deemed to have complied with this requirement by making the written request of the parcel owners required under this subparagraph. Any notices required to be sent to the mortgagees under this subparagraph shall be sent to all available addresses provided to the association.

4. Any notice to the mortgagees required under subparagraph 3. may be sent by a method that establishes proof of delivery, and any mortgagee who fails to respond within 60 days after the date of mailing is deemed to have consented to the amendment.

5. For those amendments requiring mortgagee consent on or after July 1, 2013, in the event mortgagee consent is provided other than by properly recorded joinder, such consent shall be evidenced by affidavit of the association recorded in the public records of the county in which the declaration is recorded.

6. Any amendment adopted without the required consent of a mortgagee is voidable only by a mortgagee who was entitled to notice and an opportunity to consent. An action to void an amendment is subject to the statute of limitations beginning 5 years after the date of discovery as to the amendments described in subparagraph 1. and 5 years after the date of recordation of the certificate of amendment for all other amendments. This subparagraph applies to all mortgages, regardless of the date of recordation of the mortgage.

(2) ANNUAL MEETING.—The association shall hold a meeting of its members annually 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, if one is required to be held, must be held at, or in conjunction with, the annual meeting or as provided in the governing documents.

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(3) SPECIAL MEETINGS.—Special meetings must be held when called by the board of directors or, unless a different percentage is stated in the governing documents, by at least 10 percent of the total voting interests of the association. Business conducted at a special meeting is limited to the purposes described in the notice of the meeting.

(4) CONTENT OF NOTICE.—Unless law or the governing documents require otherwise, notice of an annual meeting need not include a description of the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called. Notice of a special meeting must include a description of the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called.

(5) NOTICE OF MEETINGS.—The bylaws shall provide for giving notice to members of all member meetings, and if they do not do so shall be deemed to provide the following: The association shall give all parcel owners and members actual notice of all membership meetings, which shall be mailed, delivered, or electronically transmitted to the members not less than 14 days prior to the meeting. Evidence of compliance with this 14-day notice shall be made by an affidavit executed by the person providing the notice and filed upon execution among the official records of the association. In addition to mailing, delivering, or electronically transmitting the notice of any meeting, the association may, by reasonable rule, adopt a procedure for conspicuously posting and repeatedly broadcasting the notice and the agenda on a closed-circuit cable television system serving the association. When broadcast notice is provided, the notice and agenda must be broadcast in a manner and for a sufficient continuous length of time so as to allow an average reader to observe the notice and read and comprehend the entire content of the notice and the agenda.

(6) RIGHT TO SPEAK.—Members and parcel owners have the right to attend all membership meetings and to speak at any meeting with reference to all items opened for discussion or included on the agenda. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in the governing documents or any rules adopted by the board or by the membership, a member and a parcel owner have the right to speak for at least 3 minutes on any item. The association may adopt written reasonable rules governing the frequency, duration, and other manner of member and parcel owner statements, which rules must be consistent with this subsection.

(7) ADJOURNMENT.—Unless the bylaws require otherwise, adjournment of an annual or special meeting to a different date, time, or place must be announced at that meeting before an adjournment is taken, or notice must be given of the new date, time, or place pursuant to s. 720.303(2). Any business that might have been transacted on the original date of the meeting may be transacted at the adjourned meeting. If a new record date for the adjourned meeting is or must be fixed under s. 607.0707, notice of the adjourned meeting must be given to persons who are entitled to vote and are members as of the new record date but were not members as of the previous record date.

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(8) PROXY VOTING.—The members have the right, unless otherwise provided in this subsection or in the governing documents, to vote in person or by proxy.

(a) To be valid, a proxy must be dated, must state the date, time, and place of the meeting for which it was given, and must be signed by the authorized person who executed the proxy. A proxy is effective only for the specific meeting for which it was originally given, as the meeting may lawfully be adjourned and reconvened from time to time, and automatically expires 90 days after the date of the meeting for which it was originally given. A proxy is revocable at any time at the pleasure of the person who executes it. If the proxy form expressly so provides, any proxy holder may appoint, in writing, a substitute to act in his or her place.

(b) If the governing documents permit voting by secret ballot by members who are not in attendance at a meeting of the members for the election of directors, such ballots must be placed in an inner envelope with no identifying markings and mailed or delivered to the association in an outer envelope bearing identifying information reflecting the name of the member, the lot or parcel for which the vote is being cast, and the signature of the lot or parcel owner casting that ballot. If the eligibility of the member to vote is confirmed and no other ballot has been submitted for that lot or parcel, the inner envelope shall be removed from the outer envelope bearing the identification information, placed with the ballots which were personally cast, and opened when the ballots are counted. If more than one ballot is submitted for a lot or parcel, the ballots for that lot or parcel shall be disqualified. Any vote by ballot received after the closing of the balloting may not be considered.

(9) ELECTIONS AND BOARD VACANCIES.—

(a) Elections of directors must be conducted in accordance with the procedures set forth in the governing documents of the association. All members of the association are eligible to serve on the board of directors, and a member may nominate himself or herself as a candidate for the board at a meeting where the election is to be held; provided, however, that if the election process allows candidates to be nominated in advance of the meeting, the association is not required to allow nominations at the meeting. An election is not required unless more candidates are nominated than vacancies exist. Except as otherwise provided in the governing documents, boards of directors must be elected by a plurality of the votes cast by eligible voters. Any challenge to the election process must be commenced within 60 days after the election results are announced.

(b) A person who is delinquent in the payment of any fee, fine, or other monetary obligation to the association for more than 90 days is not eligible for board membership. A person who has been convicted of any felony in this state or in a United States District or Territorial Court, or has been convicted of any offense in another jurisdiction which would be considered a felony if committed in this state, is not eligible for board membership unless such felon's civil rights have been restored

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for at least 5 years as of the date on which such person seeks election to the board. The validity of any action by the board is not affected if it is later determined that a member of the board is ineligible for board membership.

(c) Any election dispute between a member and an association must be submitted to mandatory binding arbitration with the division. Such proceedings must be conducted in the manner provided by s. 718.1255 and the procedural rules adopted by the division. Unless otherwise provided in the bylaws, any vacancy occurring on the board before the expiration of a term may be filled by an affirmative vote of the majority of the remaining directors, even if the remaining directors constitute less than a quorum, or by the sole remaining director. In the alternative, a board may hold an election to fill the vacancy, in which case the election procedures must conform to the requirements of the governing documents. Unless otherwise provided in the bylaws, a board member appointed or elected under this section is appointed for the unexpired term of the seat being filled. Filling vacancies created by recall is governed by s. 720.303(10) and rules adopted by the division.

(10) RECORDING.—Any parcel owner may tape record or videotape meetings of the board of directors and meetings of the members. The board of directors of the association may adopt reasonable rules governing the taping of meetings of the board and the membership.

History.—s. 38, ch. 92-49; s. 56, ch. 95-274; s. 4, ch. 96-343; s. 1718, ch. 97-102; s. 47, ch. 2000-258; s. 4, ch. 2003-79; s. 22, ch. 2004-345; s. 19, ch. 2004-353; s. 13, ch. 2007-173; s. 25, ch. 2010-174; s. 19, ch. 2011-196; s. 17, ch. 2013-188; s. 4, ch. 2013-218; s. 18, ch. 2014-133; s. 72, ch. 2014-209.

Note.—Former s. 617.306.

720.307 Transition of association control in a community.—With respect to homeowners' associations:

(1) Members other than the developer are entitled to elect at least a majority of the members of the board of directors of the homeowners' association when the earlier of the following events occurs:

(a) Three months after 90 percent of the parcels in all phases of the community that will ultimately be operated by the homeowners' association have been conveyed to members;

(b) Such other percentage of the parcels has been conveyed to members, or such other date or event has occurred, as is set forth in the governing documents in order to comply with the requirements of any governmentally chartered entity with regard to the mortgage financing of parcels;

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(c) Upon the developer abandoning or deserting its responsibility to maintain and complete the amenities or infrastructure as disclosed in the governing documents. There is a rebuttable presumption that the developer has abandoned and deserted the property if the developer has unpaid assessments or guaranteed amounts under s. 720.308 for a period of more than 2 years;

(d) Upon the developer filing a petition seeking protection under chapter 7 of the federal Bankruptcy Code;

(e) Upon the developer losing title to the property through a foreclosure action or the transfer of a deed in lieu of foreclosure, unless the successor owner has accepted an assignment of developer rights and responsibilities first arising after the date of such assignment; or

(f) Upon a receiver for the developer being appointed by a circuit court and not being discharged within 30 days after such appointment, unless the court determines within 30 days after such appointment that transfer of control would be detrimental to the association or its members.

For purposes of this section, the term "members other than the developer" shall not include builders, contractors, or others who purchase a parcel for the purpose of constructing improvements thereon for resale.

(2) Members other than the developer are entitled to elect at least one member of the board of directors of the homeowners' association if 50 percent of the parcels in all phases of the community which will ultimately be operated by the association have been conveyed to members.

(3) The developer is entitled to elect at least one member of the board of directors of the homeowners' association as long as the developer holds for sale in the ordinary course of business at least 5 percent of the parcels in all phases of the community. After the developer relinquishes control of the homeowners' association, the developer may exercise the right to vote any developer-owned voting interests in the same manner as any other member, except for purposes of reacquiring control of the homeowners' association or selecting the majority of the members of the board of directors.

(4) At the time the members are entitled to elect at least a majority of the board of directors of the homeowners' association, the developer shall, at the developer's expense, within no more than 90 days deliver the following documents to the board:

- (a) All deeds to common property owned by the association.
- (b) The original of the association's declarations of covenants and restrictions.
- (c) A certified copy of the articles of incorporation of the association.
- (d) A copy of the bylaws.
- (e) The minute books, including all minutes.

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- (f) The books and records of the association.
- (g) Policies, rules, and regulations, if any, which have been adopted.
- (h) Resignations of directors who are required to resign because the developer is required to relinquish control of the association.
- (i) The financial records of the association from the date of incorporation through the date of turnover.
- (j) All association funds and control thereof.
- (k) All tangible property of the association.
- (l) A copy of all contracts which may be in force with the association as one of the parties.
- (m) A list of the names and addresses and telephone numbers of all contractors, subcontractors, or others in the current employ of the association.
- (n) Any and all insurance policies in effect.
- (o) Any permits issued to the association by governmental entities.
- (p) Any and all warranties in effect.
- (q) A roster of current homeowners and their addresses and telephone numbers and section and lot numbers.
- (r) Employment and service contracts in effect.
- (s) All other contracts in effect to which the association is a party.
- (t) The financial records, including financial statements of the association, and source documents from the incorporation of the association through the date of turnover. The records shall be audited by an independent certified public accountant for the period from the incorporation of the association or from the period covered by the last audit, if an audit has been performed for each fiscal year since incorporation. All financial statements shall be prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and shall be audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, as prescribed by the Board of Accountancy, pursuant to chapter 473. The certified public accountant performing the audit shall examine to the extent necessary supporting documents and records, including the cash disbursements and related paid invoices to determine if expenditures were for association purposes and the billings, cash receipts, and related records of the association to determine that the developer was charged and paid the proper amounts of assessments. This paragraph applies to associations with a date of incorporation after December 31, 2007.

(5) This section does not apply to a homeowners' association in existence on the effective date of this act, or to a homeowners' association, no matter when created, if such association is created in a community that is included in an effective development-of-regional-impact development order as of the effective date of this act, together with any approved modifications thereof.

History.—s. 57, ch. 95-274; s. 2, ch. 98-261; s. 48, ch. 2000-258; s. 14, ch. 2007-173; s. 5, ch. 2013-218.

Note.—Former s. 617.307.

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720.3075 Prohibited clauses in association documents.—

(1) It is declared that the public policy of this state prohibits the inclusion or enforcement of certain types of clauses in homeowners' association documents, including declaration of covenants, articles of incorporation, bylaws, or any other document of the association which binds members of the association, which either have the effect of or provide that:

(a) A developer has the unilateral ability and right to make changes to the homeowners' association documents after the transition of homeowners' association control in a community from the developer to the nondeveloper members, as set forth in s. 720.307, has occurred.

(b) A homeowners' association is prohibited or restricted from filing a lawsuit against the developer, or the homeowners' association is otherwise effectively prohibited or restricted from bringing a lawsuit against the developer.

(c) After the transition of homeowners' association control in a community from the developer to the nondeveloper members, as set forth in s. 720.307, has occurred, a developer is entitled to cast votes in an amount that exceeds one vote per residential lot.

Such clauses are declared null and void as against the public policy of this state.

(2) The public policy described in subsection (1) prohibits the inclusion or enforcement of such clauses created on or after the effective date of s. 3, chapter 98-261, Laws of Florida.

(3) Homeowners' association documents, including declarations of covenants, articles of incorporation, or bylaws, may not preclude the display of one portable, removable United States flag by property owners. However, the flag must be displayed in a respectful manner, consistent with Title 36 U.S.C. chapter 10.

(4)(a) The Legislature finds that the use of Florida-friendly landscaping and other water use and pollution prevention measures to conserve or protect the state's water resources serves a compelling public interest and that the participation of homeowners' associations and local governments is essential to the state's efforts in water conservation and water quality protection and restoration.

(b) Homeowners' association documents, including declarations of covenants, articles of incorporation, or bylaws, may not prohibit or be enforced so as to prohibit any property owner from implementing Florida-friendly landscaping, as defined in s. 373.185, on his or her land or create any requirement or limitation in conflict with any provision of part II of chapter 373 or a water shortage order, other order, consumptive use permit, or rule adopted or issued pursuant to part II of chapter 373.

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(5) It is declared the public policy of the state that prior to transition of control of a homeowners' association in a community from the developer to the nondeveloper members, as set forth in s. 720.307, the right of the developer to amend the association's governing documents is subject to a test of reasonableness, which prohibits the developer from unilaterally making amendments to the governing documents that are arbitrary, capricious, or in bad faith; destroy the general plan of development; prejudice the rights of existing nondeveloper members to use and enjoy the benefits of common property; or materially shift economic burdens from the developer to the existing nondeveloper members.

History.—s. 3, ch. 98-261; s. 49, ch. 2000-258; s. 47, ch. 2000-302; s. 8, ch. 2001-252; s. 2, ch. 2002-50; s. 28, ch. 2009-243; s. 6, ch. 2013-218.

Note.—Former s. 617.3075.

720.308 Assessments and charges.—

(1) **ASSESSMENTS.**—For any community created after October 1, 1995, the governing documents must describe the manner in which expenses are shared and specify the member's proportional share thereof.

(a) Assessments levied pursuant to the annual budget or special assessment must be in the member's proportional share of expenses as described in the governing document, which share may be different among classes of parcels based upon the state of development thereof, levels of services received by the applicable members, or other relevant factors.

(b) While the developer is in control of the homeowners' association, it may be excused from payment of its share of the operating expenses and assessments related to its parcels for any period of time for which the developer has, in the declaration, obligated itself to pay any operating expenses incurred that exceed the assessments receivable from other members and other income of the association.

(c) Assessments or contingent assessments may be levied by the board of directors of the association to secure the obligation of the homeowners' association for insurance acquired from a self-insurance fund authorized and operating pursuant to s. 624.462.

(d) This section does not apply to an association, no matter when created, if the association is created in a community that is included in an effective development-of-regional-impact development order as of October 1, 1995, together with any approved modifications thereto.

(2) **GUARANTEES OF COMMON EXPENSES.**—

(a) Establishment of a guarantee.—If a guarantee of the assessments of parcel owners is not included in the purchase contracts or declaration, any agreement establishing a guarantee shall only be effective upon the approval of a majority of

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the voting interests of the members other than the developer. Approval shall be expressed at a meeting of the members voting in person or by limited proxy or by agreement in writing without a meeting if provided in the bylaws. Such guarantee must meet the requirements of this section.

(b) Guarantee period.—The period of time for the guarantee shall be indicated by a specific beginning and ending date or event.

1. The ending date or event shall be the same for all of the members of an association, including members in different phases of the development.

2. The guarantee may provide for different intervals of time during a guarantee period with different dollar amounts for each such interval.

3. The guarantee may provide that after the initial stated period, the developer has an option to extend the guarantee for one or more additional stated periods. The extension of a guarantee is limited to extending the ending date or event; therefore, the developer does not have the option of changing the level of assessments guaranteed.

(3) MAXIMUM LEVEL OF ASSESSMENTS.—The stated dollar amount of the guarantee shall be an exact dollar amount for each parcel identified in the declaration. Regardless of the stated dollar amount of the guarantee, assessments charged to a member shall not exceed the maximum obligation of the member based on the total amount of the adopted budget and the member's proportionate share of the expenses as described in the governing documents.

(4) CASH FUNDING REQUIREMENTS DURING GUARANTEE.—The cash payments required from the guarantor during the guarantee period shall be determined as follows:

(a) If at any time during the guarantee period the funds collected from member assessments at the guaranteed level and other revenues collected by the association are not sufficient to provide payment, on a timely basis, of all assessments, including the full funding of the reserves unless properly waived, the guarantor shall advance sufficient cash to the association at the time such payments are due.

(b) Expenses incurred in the production of nonassessment revenues, not in excess of the nonassessment revenues, shall not be included in the assessments. If the expenses attributable to nonassessment revenues exceed nonassessment revenues, only the excess expenses must be funded by the guarantor. Interest earned on the investment of association funds may be used to pay the income tax expense incurred as a result of the investment; such expense shall not be charged to the guarantor; and the net investment income shall be retained by the association. Each such nonassessment-revenue-generating activity shall be considered separately. Any portion of the parcel assessment which is budgeted for designated capital contributions of the association shall not be used to pay operating expenses.

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(5) CALCULATION OF GUARANTOR'S FINAL OBLIGATION.—The guarantor's total financial obligation to the association at the end of the guarantee period shall be determined on the accrual basis using the following formula: the guarantor shall pay any deficits that exceed the guaranteed amount, less the total regular periodic assessments earned by the association from the members other than the guarantor during the guarantee period regardless of whether the actual level charged was less than the maximum guaranteed amount.

(6) EXPENSES.—Expenses incurred in the production of nonassessment revenues, not in excess of the nonassessment revenues, shall not be included in the operating expenses. If the expenses attributable to nonassessment revenues exceed nonassessment revenues, only the excess expenses must be funded by the guarantor. Interest earned on the investment of association funds may be used to pay the income tax expense incurred as a result of the investment; such expense shall not be charged to the guarantor; and the net investment income shall be retained by the association. Each such nonassessment-revenue-generating activity shall be considered separately. Any portion of the parcel assessment which is budgeted for designated capital contributions of the association shall not be used to pay operating expenses.
History.—s. 58, ch. 95-274; s. 51, ch. 2000-258; s. 17, ch. 2007-80; s. 15, ch. 2007-173.
Note.—Former s. 617.308.

720.3085 Payment for assessments; lien claims.—

(1) When authorized by the governing documents, the association has a lien on each parcel to secure the payment of assessments and other amounts provided for by this section. Except as otherwise set forth in this section, the lien is effective from and shall relate back to the date on which the original declaration of the community was recorded. However, as to first mortgages of record, the lien is effective from and after recording of a claim of lien in the public records of the county in which the parcel is located. This subsection does not bestow upon any lien, mortgage, or certified judgment of record on July 1, 2008, including the lien for unpaid assessments created in this section, a priority that, by law, the lien, mortgage, or judgment did not have before July 1, 2008.

(a) To be valid, a claim of lien must state the description of the parcel, the name of the record owner, the name and address of the association, the assessment amount due, and the due date. The claim of lien secures all unpaid assessments that are due and that may accrue subsequent to the recording of the claim of lien and before entry of a certificate of title, as well as interest, late charges, and reasonable costs and attorney fees incurred by the association incident to the collection process. The person making payment is entitled to a satisfaction of the lien upon payment in full.

(b) By recording a notice in substantially the following form, a parcel owner or the parcel owner's agent or attorney may require the association to enforce a recorded claim of lien against his or her parcel:

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NOTICE OF CONTEST OF LIEN

TO: (Name and address of association)

You are notified that the undersigned contests the claim of lien filed by you on , (year) , and recorded in Official Records Book at page , of the public records of County, Florida, and that the time within which you may file suit to enforce your lien is limited to 90 days following the date of service of this notice. Executed this day of , (year) .

Signed: (Owner or Attorney)

After the notice of a contest of lien has been recorded, the clerk of the circuit court shall mail a copy of the recorded notice to the association by certified mail, return receipt requested, at the address shown in the claim of lien or the most recent amendment to it and shall certify to the service on the face of the notice. Service is complete upon mailing. After service, the association has 90 days in which to file an action to enforce the lien and, if the action is not filed within the 90-day period, the lien is void. However, the 90-day period shall be extended for any length of time that the association is prevented from filing its action because of an automatic stay resulting from the filing of a bankruptcy petition by the parcel owner or by any other person claiming an interest in the parcel.

(c) The association may bring an action in its name to foreclose a lien for assessments in the same manner in which a mortgage of real property is foreclosed and may also bring an action to recover a money judgment for the unpaid assessments without waiving any claim of lien. The association is entitled to recover its reasonable attorney's fees incurred in an action to foreclose a lien or an action to recover a money judgment for unpaid assessments.

(d) A release of lien must be in substantially the following form:

RELEASE OF LIEN

The undersigned lienor, in consideration of the final payment in the amount of \$, hereby waives and releases its lien and right to claim a lien for unpaid assessments through , (year) , recorded in the Official Records Book at Page , of the public records of County, Florida, for the following described real property:

(PARCEL NO. OR LOT AND BLOCK) OF (subdivision name) SUBDIVISION AS SHOWN IN THE PLAT THEREOF, RECORDED AT PLAT BOOK , PAGE , OF THE OFFICIAL RECORDS OF COUNTY, FLORIDA.

(or insert appropriate metes and bounds description here)

(Signature of Authorized Agent) (Signature of Witness)

(Print Name) (Print Name)

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(Signature of Witness)

(Print Name)

Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me this day of , (year) , by (name of person making statement) .

(Signature of Notary Public)

(Print, type, or stamp commissioned name of Notary Public)

Personally Known OR Produced as identification.

(e) If the parcel owner remains in possession of the parcel after a foreclosure judgment has been entered, the court may require the parcel owner to pay a reasonable rent for the parcel. If the parcel is rented or leased during the pendency of the foreclosure action, the association is entitled to the appointment of a receiver to collect the rent. The expenses of the receiver must be paid by the party who does not prevail in the foreclosure action.

(f) The association may purchase the parcel at the foreclosure sale and hold, lease, mortgage, or convey the parcel.

(2)(a) A parcel owner, regardless of how his or her title to property has been acquired, including by purchase at a foreclosure sale or by deed in lieu of foreclosure, is liable for all assessments that come due while he or she is the parcel owner. The parcel owner's liability for assessments may not be avoided by waiver or suspension of the use or enjoyment of any common area or by abandonment of the parcel upon which the assessments are made.

(b) A parcel owner is jointly and severally liable with the previous parcel owner for all unpaid assessments that came due up to the time of transfer of title. This liability is without prejudice to any right the present parcel owner may have to recover any amounts paid by the present owner from the previous owner. For the purposes of this paragraph, the term "previous owner" shall not include an association that acquires title to a delinquent property through foreclosure or by deed in lieu of foreclosure. The present parcel owner's liability for unpaid assessments is limited to any unpaid assessments that accrued before the association acquired title to the delinquent property through foreclosure or by deed in lieu of foreclosure.

(c) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this section, the liability of a first mortgagee, or its successor or assignee as a subsequent holder of the first mortgage who acquires title to a parcel by foreclosure or by deed in lieu of foreclosure for the unpaid assessments that became due before the mortgagee's acquisition of title, shall be the lesser of:

1. The parcel's unpaid common expenses and regular periodic or special assessments that accrued or came due during the 12 months immediately preceding

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the acquisition of title and for which payment in full has not been received by the association; or

2. One percent of the original mortgage debt.

The limitations on first mortgagee liability provided by this paragraph apply only if the first mortgagee filed suit against the parcel owner and initially joined the association as a defendant in the mortgagee foreclosure action. Joinder of the association is not required if, on the date the complaint is filed, the association was dissolved or did not maintain an office or agent for service of process at a location that was known to or reasonably discoverable by the mortgagee.

(d) An association, or its successor or assignee, that acquires title to a parcel through the foreclosure of its lien for assessments is not liable for any unpaid assessments, late fees, interest, or reasonable attorney's fees and costs that came due before the association's acquisition of title in favor of any other association, as defined in s. 718.103(2) or s. 720.301(9), which holds a superior lien interest on the parcel. This paragraph is intended to clarify existing law.

(3) Assessments and installments on assessments that are not paid when due bear interest from the due date until paid at the rate provided in the declaration of covenants or the bylaws of the association, which rate may not exceed the rate allowed by law. If no rate is provided in the declaration or bylaws, interest accrues at the rate of 18 percent per year.

(a) If the declaration or bylaws so provide, the association may also charge an administrative late fee not to exceed the greater of \$25 or 5 percent of the amount of each installment that is paid past the due date.

(b) Any payment received by an association and accepted shall be applied first to any interest accrued, then to any administrative late fee, then to any costs and reasonable attorney fees incurred in collection, and then to the delinquent assessment. This paragraph applies notwithstanding any restrictive endorsement, designation, or instruction placed on or accompanying a payment. A late fee is not subject to the provisions of chapter 687 and is not a fine.

(4) A homeowners' association may not file a record of lien against a parcel for unpaid assessments unless a written notice or demand for past due assessments as well as any other amounts owed to the association pursuant to its governing documents has been made by the association. The written notice or demand must:

(a) Provide the owner with 45 days following the date the notice is deposited in the mail to make payment for all amounts due, including, but not limited to, any attorney's fees and actual costs associated with the preparation and delivery of the written demand. The notice must be in substantially the following form:

NOTICE OF INTENT
TO RECORD A CLAIM OF LIEN

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RE: Parcel or (lot/block) (lot/parcel number) of (name of association)

The following amounts are currently due on your account to (name of association) , and must be paid within 45 days after your receipt of this letter. This letter shall serve as the association's notice of intent to record a Claim of Lien against your property no sooner than 45 days after your receipt of this letter, unless you pay in full the amounts set forth below:

Maintenance due (dates) \$.

Late fee, if applicable \$.

Interest through (dates) * \$.

Certified mail charges \$.

Other costs \$.

TOTAL OUTSTANDING \$.

*Interest accrues at the rate of percent per annum.

(b) Be sent by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, and by first-class United States mail to the parcel owner at his or her last address as reflected in the records of the association, if the address is within the United States, and to the parcel owner subject to the demand at the address of the parcel if the owner's address as reflected in the records of the association is not the parcel address. If the address reflected in the records is outside the United States, then sending the notice to that address and to the parcel address by first-class United States mail is sufficient.

(5) The association may bring an action in its name to foreclose a lien for unpaid assessments secured by a lien in the same manner that a mortgage of real property is foreclosed and may also bring an action to recover a money judgment for the unpaid assessments without waiving any claim of lien. The action to foreclose the lien may not be brought until 45 days after the parcel owner has been provided notice of the association's intent to foreclose and collect the unpaid amount. The notice must be given in the manner provided in paragraph (4)(b), and the notice may not be provided until the passage of the 45 days required in paragraph (4)(a). The notice must be in substantially the following form:

DELINQUENT ASSESSMENT

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This letter is to inform you a Claim of Lien has been filed against your property because you have not paid the (type of assessment) assessment to (name of association) . The association intends to foreclose the lien and collect the unpaid amount within 45 days of this letter being provided to you.

You owe the interest accruing from (month/year) to the present. As of the date of this letter, the total amount due with interest is \$. All costs of any action and interest from this day forward will also be charged to your account.

Any questions concerning this matter should be directed to (insert name, addresses, and telephone numbers of association representative) .

(a) The association may recover any interest, late charges, costs, and reasonable attorney's fees incurred in a lien foreclosure action or in an action to recover a money judgment for the unpaid assessments.

(b) The time limitations in this subsection do not apply if the parcel is subject to a foreclosure action or forced sale of another party, or if an owner of the parcel is a debtor in a bankruptcy proceeding.

(6) If after service of a summons on a complaint to foreclose a lien the parcel is not the subject of a mortgage foreclosure or a notice of tax certificate sale, the parcel owner is not a debtor in bankruptcy proceedings, or the trial of or trial docket for the lien foreclosure action is not set to begin within 30 days, the parcel owner may serve and file with the court a qualifying offer at any time before the entry of a foreclosure judgment. For purposes of this subsection, the term "qualifying offer" means a written offer to pay all amounts secured by the lien of the association plus amounts accruing during the pendency of the offer. The parcel owner may make only one qualifying offer during the pendency of a foreclosure action. If a parcel becomes the subject of a mortgage foreclosure or a notice of tax certificate sale while a qualifying offer is pending, the qualifying offer becomes voidable at the election of the association. If the parcel owner becomes a debtor in bankruptcy proceedings while a qualifying offer is pending, the qualifying offer becomes void.

(a) The parcel owner shall deliver a copy of the filed qualifying offer to the association's attorney by hand delivery, obtaining a written receipt, or by certified mail, return receipt requested.

(b) The parcel owner's filing of the qualifying offer with the court stays the foreclosure action for the period stated in the qualifying offer, which may not exceed 60 days following the date of service of the qualifying offer and no sooner than 30 days before the date of trial, arbitration, or the beginning of the trial docket, whichever occurs first, to permit the parcel owner to pay the qualifying offer to the association plus any amounts accruing during the pendency of the offer.

(c) The qualifying offer must be in writing, be signed by all owners of the parcel and the spouse of any owner if the spouse resides in or otherwise claims a homestead interest in the parcel, be acknowledged by a notary public, and be in substantially the following form:

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QUALIFYING OFFER
AUTOMATIC STAY INVOKED
PURSUANT TO F.S. 720.3085

I/We, [Name(s) of Parcel Owner(s)], admit the following:

1. The total amount due the association is secured by the lien of the association.
2. The association is entitled to foreclose its claim of lien and obtain a foreclosure judgment for the total amount due if I/we breach this qualifying offer by failing to pay the amount due by the date specified in this qualifying offer.
3. I/We will not permit the priority of the lien of the association or the amounts secured by the lien to be endangered.
4. I/We hereby affirm that the date(s) by which the association will receive \$ [specify amount] as the total amount due is [specify date, no later than 60 days after the date of service of the qualifying offer and at least 30 days before the trial or arbitration date], in the following amounts and dates:
5. I/We hereby confirm that I/we have requested and have received from the homeowners' association a breakdown and total of all sums due the association and that the amount offered above is equal to or greater than the total amount provided by the association.
6. This qualifying offer operates as a stay to all portions of the foreclosure action which seek to collect unpaid assessments as provided in s. 720.3085.

Signed: (Signatures of all parcel owners and spouses, if any)

Sworn to and subscribed this (date) day of (month) , (year) , before the undersigned authority.

Notary Public: (Signature of notary public)

If the parcel owner makes a qualifying offer under this subsection, the association may not add the cost of any legal fees incurred by the association within the period of the stay other than costs acquired in defense of a mortgage foreclosure action concerning the parcel, a bankruptcy proceeding in which the parcel owner is a debtor, or in response to filings by a party other than the association in the lien foreclosure action of the association.

(7) If the parcel owner breaches the qualifying offer, the stay shall be vacated and the association may proceed in its action to obtain a foreclosure judgment against the parcel and the parcel owners for the amount in the qualifying offer and any amounts accruing after the date of the qualifying offer.

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(8)(a) If the parcel is occupied by a tenant and the parcel owner is delinquent in paying any monetary obligation due to the association, the association may demand that the tenant pay to the association the subsequent rental payments and continue to make such payments until all the monetary obligations of the parcel owner related to the parcel have been paid in full to the association and the association releases the tenant or until the tenant discontinues tenancy in the parcel.

1. The association must provide the tenant a notice, by hand delivery or United States mail, in substantially the following form:

Pursuant to section 720.3085(8), Florida Statutes, we demand that you make your rent payments directly to the homeowners' association and continue doing so until the association notifies you otherwise.

Payment due the homeowners' association may be in the same form as you paid your landlord and must be sent by United States mail or hand delivery to (full address) , payable to (name) .

Your obligation to pay your rent to the association begins immediately, unless you have already paid rent to your landlord for the current period before receiving this notice. In that case, you must provide the association written proof of your payment within 14 days after receiving this notice and your obligation to pay rent to the association would then begin with the next rental period.

Pursuant to section 720.3085(8), Florida Statutes, your payment of rent to the association gives you complete immunity from any claim for the rent by your landlord.

2. A tenant is immune from any claim by the parcel owner related to the rent timely paid to the association after the association has made written demand.

(b) If the tenant paid rent to the landlord or parcel owner for a given rental period before receiving the demand from the association and provides written evidence to the association of having paid the rent within 14 days after receiving the demand, the tenant shall begin making rental payments to the association for the following rental period and shall continue making rental payments to the association to be credited against the monetary obligations of the parcel owner until the association releases the tenant or the tenant discontinues tenancy in the unit. The association shall, upon request, provide the tenant with written receipts for payments made. The association shall mail written notice to the parcel owner of the association's demand that the tenant pay monetary obligations to the association.

(c) The liability of the tenant may not exceed the amount due from the tenant to the tenant's landlord. The tenant shall be given a credit against rents due to the landlord in the amount of assessments paid to the association.

(d) The association may issue notice under s. 83.56 and sue for eviction under ss. 83.59-83.625 as if the association were a landlord under part II of chapter 83 if the tenant fails to pay a monetary obligation. However, the association is not otherwise considered a landlord under chapter 83 and specifically has no obligations under s. 83.51.

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(e) The tenant does not, by virtue of payment of monetary obligations, have any of the rights of a parcel owner to vote in any election or to examine the books and records of the association.

(f) A court may supersede the effect of this subsection by appointing a receiver.

History.—s. 1, ch. 2007-183; s. 1, ch. 2008-175; s. 26, ch. 2010-174; s. 20, ch. 2011-196; s. 7, ch. 2013-218; s. 6, ch. 2014-146.

720.30851 Estoppel certificates.—Within 15 days after the date on which a request for an estoppel certificate is received from a parcel owner or mortgagee, or his or her designee, the association shall provide a certificate signed by an officer or authorized agent of the association stating all assessments and other moneys owed to the association by the parcel owner or mortgagee with respect to the parcel. An association may charge a fee for the preparation of such certificate, and the amount of such fee must be stated on the certificate.

(1) Any person other than a parcel owner who relies upon a certificate receives the benefits and protection thereof.

(2) A summary proceeding pursuant to s. 51.011 may be brought to compel compliance with this section, and the prevailing party is entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees.

(3) The authority to charge a fee for the certificate shall be established by a written resolution adopted by the board or provided by a written management, bookkeeping, or maintenance contract and is payable upon the preparation of the certificate. If the certificate is requested in conjunction with the sale or mortgage of a parcel but the closing does not occur and no later than 30 days after the closing date for which the certificate was sought the preparer receives a written request, accompanied by reasonable documentation, that the sale did not occur from a payor that is not the parcel owner, the fee shall be refunded to that payor within 30 days after receipt of the request. The refund is the obligation of the parcel owner, and the association may collect it from that owner in the same manner as an assessment as provided in this section.

History.—s. 7, ch. 2008-240.

720.3086 Financial report.—In a residential subdivision in which the owners of lots or parcels must pay mandatory maintenance or amenity fees to the subdivision developer or to the owners of the common areas, recreational facilities, and other properties serving the lots or parcels, the developer or owner of such areas, facilities, or properties shall make public, within 60 days following the end of each fiscal year, a complete financial report of the actual, total receipts of mandatory maintenance or amenity fees received by it, and an itemized listing of the expenditures made by it from such fees, for that year. Such report shall be made public by mailing it to each lot or parcel owner in the subdivision, by publishing it in a publication regularly distributed within the subdivision,

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or by posting it in prominent locations in the subdivision. This section does not apply to amounts paid to homeowner associations pursuant to chapter 617, chapter 718, chapter 719, chapter 721, or chapter 723, or to amounts paid to local governmental entities, including special districts.

History.—s. 64, ch. 95-274; s. 26, ch. 2004-345; s. 22, ch. 2004-353.

Note.—Former s. 689.265.

720.309 Agreements entered into by the association.—

(1) Any grant or reservation made by any document, and any contract that has a term greater than 10 years, that is made by an association before control of the association is turned over to the members other than the developer, and that provides for the operation, maintenance, or management of the association or common areas, must be fair and reasonable.

(2) If the governing documents provide for the cost of communications services as defined in s. 202.11, information services or Internet services obtained pursuant to a bulk contract shall be deemed an operating expense of the association. If the governing documents do not provide for such services, the board may contract for the services, and the cost shall be deemed an operating expense of the association but must be allocated on a per-parcel basis rather than a percentage basis, notwithstanding that the governing documents provide for other than an equal sharing of operating expenses. Any contract entered into before July 1, 2011, in which the cost of the service is not equally divided among all parcel owners may be changed by a majority of the voting interests present at a regular or special meeting of the association in order to allocate the cost equally among all parcels.

(a) Any contract entered into by the board may be canceled by a majority of the voting interests present at the next regular or special meeting of the association, whichever occurs first. Any member may make a motion to cancel such contract, but if no motion is made or if such motion fails to obtain the required vote, the contract shall be deemed ratified for the term expressed therein.

(b) Any contract entered into by the board must provide, and shall be deemed to provide if not expressly set forth therein, that a hearing-impaired or legally blind parcel owner who does not occupy the parcel with a non-hearing-impaired or sighted person, or a parcel owner who receives supplemental security income under Title XVI of the Social Security Act or food assistance as administered by the Department of Children and Families pursuant to s. 414.31, may discontinue the service without incurring disconnect fees, penalties, or subsequent service charges, and may not be required to pay any operating expenses charge related to such service for those parcels. If fewer than all parcel owners share the expenses of the communications services, information services, or Internet services, the expense must be shared by all participating parcel owners. The association may use the provisions of s. 720.3085 to enforce payment by the parcel owners receiving such services.

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(c) A resident of any parcel, whether a tenant or parcel owner, may not be denied access to available franchised, licensed, or certificated cable or video service providers if the resident pays the provider directly for services. A resident or a cable or video service provider may not be required to pay anything of value in order to obtain or provide such service except for the charges normally paid for like services by residents of single-family homes located outside the community but within the same franchised, licensed, or certificated area, and except for installation charges agreed to between the resident and the service provider.

History.—s. 59, ch. 95-274; s. 51, ch. 2000-258; s. 21, ch. 2011-196; s. 284, ch. 2014-19.
Note.—Former s. 617.309.

720.31 Recreational leaseholds; right to acquire; escalation clauses.—

(1) Any lease of recreational or other commonly used facilities serving a community, which lease is entered into by the association or its members before control of the homeowners' association is turned over to the members other than the developer, must provide as follows:

(a) That the facilities may not be offered for sale unless the homeowners' association has the option to purchase the facilities, provided the homeowners' association meets the price and terms and conditions of the facility owner by executing a contract with the facility owner within 90 days, unless agreed to otherwise, from the date of mailing of the notice by the facility owner to the homeowners' association. If the facility owner offers the facilities for sale, he or she shall notify the homeowners' association in writing stating the price and the terms and conditions of sale.

(b) If a contract between the facility owner and the association is not executed within such 90-day period, unless extended by mutual agreement, then, unless the facility owner thereafter elects to offer the facilities at a price lower than the price specified in his or her notice to the homeowners' association, he or she has no further obligations under this subsection, and his or her only obligation shall be as set forth in subsection (2).

(c) If the facility owner thereafter elects to offer the facilities at a price lower than the price specified in his or her notice to the homeowners' association, the homeowners' association will have an additional 10 days to meet the price and terms and condition of the facility owner by executing a contract.

(2) If a facility owner receives a bona fide offer to purchase the facilities that he or she intends to consider or make a counteroffer to, his or her only obligations shall be to notify the homeowners' association that he or she has received an offer, to disclose the price and material terms and conditions upon which he or she would consider selling the facilities, and to consider any offer made by the homeowners' association. The facility owner shall be under no obligation to sell to the homeowners' association or to interrupt or delay other

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negotiations, and he or she shall be free at any time to execute a contract for the sale of the facilities to a party or parties other than the homeowners' association.

(3)(a) As used in subsections (1) and (2), the term "notify" means the placing of a notice in the United States mail addressed to the president of the homeowners' association. Each such notice shall be deemed to have been given upon the deposit of the notice in the United States mail.

(b) As used in subsection (1), the term "offer" means any solicitation by the facility owner directed to the general public.

(4) This section does not apply to:

(a) Any sale or transfer to a person who would be included within the table of descent and distribution if the facility owner were to die intestate.

(b) Any transfer by gift, devise, or operation of law.

(c) Any transfer by a corporation to an affiliate. As used herein, the term "affiliate" means any shareholder of the transferring corporation; any corporation or entity owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by the transferring corporation; or any other corporation or entity owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by any shareholder of the transferring corporation.

(d) Any transfer to a governmental or quasi-governmental entity.

(e) Any conveyance of an interest in the facilities incidental to the financing of such facilities.

(f) Any conveyance resulting from the foreclosure of a mortgage, deed of trust, or other instrument encumbering the facilities or any deed given in lieu of such foreclosure.

(g) Any sale or transfer between or among joint tenants in common owning the facilities.

(h) The purchase of the facilities by a governmental entity under its powers of eminent domain.

(5)(a) The Legislature declares that the public policy of this state prohibits the inclusion or enforcement of escalation clauses in land leases or other leases for recreational facilities, land, or other commonly used facilities that serve residential communities, and such clauses are hereby declared void. For purposes of this section, an escalation clause is any clause in a lease which provides that the rental rate under the lease or agreement is to increase at the same percentage rate as any nationally recognized and conveniently available commodity or consumer price index.

(b) This public policy prohibits the inclusion of such escalation clauses in leases entered into after the effective date of this amendment.

(c) This section is inapplicable:

1. If the lessor is the Federal Government, this state, any political subdivision of this state, or any agency of a political subdivision of this state; or

2. To a homeowners' association that is in existence on the effective date of this act, or to an association, no matter when created, if the association is created in a community that is included in an effective development-of-regional-impact

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development order as of the effective date of this act, together with any approved modifications thereto.

(6) An association may enter into agreements to acquire leaseholds, memberships, and other possessory or use interests in lands or facilities, including, but not limited to, country clubs, golf courses, marinas, submerged land, parking areas, conservation areas, and other recreational facilities. An association may enter into such agreements regardless of whether the lands or facilities are contiguous to the lands of the community or whether such lands or facilities are intended to provide enjoyment, recreation, or other use or benefit to the owners. All leaseholds, memberships, and other possessory or use interests existing or created at the time of recording the declaration must be stated and fully described in the declaration. Subsequent to recording the declaration, agreements acquiring leaseholds, memberships, or other possessory or use interests not entered into within 12 months after recording the declaration may be entered into only if authorized by the declaration as a material alteration or substantial addition to the common areas or association property. If the declaration is silent, any such transaction requires the approval of 75 percent of the total voting interests of the association. The declaration may provide that the rental, membership fees, operations, replacements, or other expenses are common expenses; impose covenants and restrictions concerning their use; and contain other provisions not inconsistent with this subsection. An association exercising its rights under this subsection may join with other associations that are part of the same development or with a master association responsible for the enforcement of shared covenants, conditions, and restrictions in carrying out the intent of this subsection. This subsection is intended to clarify law in existence before July 1, 2010.

History.—s. 60, ch. 95-274; s. 107, ch. 97-102; s. 51, ch. 2000-258; s. 27, ch. 2010-174.
Note.—Former s. 617.31.

720.311 Dispute resolution.—

(1) The Legislature finds that alternative dispute resolution has made progress in reducing court dockets and trials and in offering a more efficient, cost-effective option to litigation. The filing of any petition for arbitration or the serving of a demand for presuit mediation as provided for in this section shall toll the applicable statute of limitations. Any recall dispute filed with the department pursuant to s. 720.303(10) shall be conducted by the department in accordance with the provisions of ss. 718.112(2)(j) and 718.1255 and the rules adopted by the division. In addition, the department shall conduct mandatory binding arbitration of election disputes between a member and an association pursuant to s. 718.1255 and rules adopted by the division. Neither election disputes nor recall disputes are eligible for presuit mediation; these disputes shall be arbitrated by the department. At the conclusion of the proceeding, the department shall charge the parties a fee in an amount adequate to cover all costs and expenses incurred by the department in conducting the proceeding. Initially, the petitioner shall remit a filing fee of at least \$200 to the department. The fees paid to the department shall become a recoverable cost in the arbitration proceeding, and the

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prevailing party in an arbitration proceeding shall recover its reasonable costs and attorney's fees in an amount found reasonable by the arbitrator. The department shall adopt rules to effectuate the purposes of this section.

(2)(a) Disputes between an association and a parcel owner regarding use of or changes to the parcel or the common areas and other covenant enforcement disputes, disputes regarding amendments to the association documents, disputes regarding meetings of the board and committees appointed by the board, membership meetings not including election meetings, and access to the official records of the association shall be the subject of a demand for presuit mediation served by an aggrieved party before the dispute is filed in court. Presuit mediation proceedings must be conducted in accordance with the applicable Florida Rules of Civil Procedure, and these proceedings are privileged and confidential to the same extent as court-ordered mediation. Disputes subject to presuit mediation under this section shall not include the collection of any assessment, fine, or other financial obligation, including attorney's fees and costs, claimed to be due or any action to enforce a prior mediation settlement agreement between the parties. Also, in any dispute subject to presuit mediation under this section where emergency relief is required, a motion for temporary injunctive relief may be filed with the court without first complying with the presuit mediation requirements of this section. After any issues regarding emergency or temporary relief are resolved, the court may either refer the parties to a mediation program administered by the courts or require mediation under this section. An arbitrator or judge may not consider any information or evidence arising from the presuit mediation proceeding except in a proceeding to impose sanctions for failure to attend a presuit mediation session or to enforce a mediated settlement agreement. Persons who are not parties to the dispute may not attend the presuit mediation conference without the consent of all parties, except for counsel for the parties and a corporate representative designated by the association. When mediation is attended by a quorum of the board, such mediation is not a board meeting for purposes of notice and participation set forth in s. 720.303. An aggrieved party shall serve on the responding party a written demand to participate in presuit mediation in substantially the following form:

STATUTORY OFFER TO PARTICIPATE

IN PRESUIT MEDIATION

The alleged aggrieved party, _____, hereby demands that _____, as the responding party, engage in mandatory presuit mediation in connection with the following disputes, which by statute are of a type that are subject to presuit mediation:

(List specific nature of the dispute or disputes to be mediated and the authority supporting a finding of a violation as to each dispute.)

Pursuant to section 720.311, Florida Statutes, this demand to resolve the dispute through presuit mediation is required before a lawsuit can be filed concerning the dispute. Pursuant to the statute, the

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parties are required to engage in presuit mediation with a neutral third-party mediator in order to attempt to resolve this dispute without court action, and the aggrieved party demands that you likewise agree to this process. If you fail to participate in the mediation process, suit may be brought against you without further warning.

The process of mediation involves a supervised negotiation process in which a trained, neutral third-party mediator meets with both parties and assists them in exploring possible opportunities for resolving part or all of the dispute. By agreeing to participate in presuit mediation, you are not bound in any way to change your position. Furthermore, the mediator has no authority to make any decisions in this matter or to determine who is right or wrong and merely acts as a facilitator to ensure that each party understands the position of the other party and that all options for reasonable settlement are fully explored.

If an agreement is reached, it shall be reduced to writing and becomes a binding and enforceable commitment of the parties. A resolution of one or more disputes in this fashion avoids the need to litigate these issues in court. The failure to reach an agreement, or the failure of a party to participate in the process, results in the mediator declaring an impasse in the mediation, after which the aggrieved party may proceed to court on all outstanding, unsettled disputes. If you have failed or refused to participate in the entire mediation process, you will not be entitled to recover attorney's fees, even if you prevail.

The aggrieved party has selected and hereby lists five certified mediators who we believe to be neutral and qualified to mediate the dispute. You have the right to select any one of these mediators. The fact that one party may be familiar with one or more of the listed mediators does not mean that the mediator cannot act as a neutral and impartial facilitator. Any mediator who cannot act in this capacity is required ethically to decline to accept engagement. The mediators that we suggest, and their current hourly rates, are as follows:

(List the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and hourly rates of the mediators. Other pertinent information about the background of the mediators may be included as an attachment.)

You may contact the offices of these mediators to confirm that the listed mediators will be neutral and will not show any favoritism toward either party. The Florida Supreme Court can provide you a list of certified mediators.

Unless otherwise agreed by the parties, section 720.311(2)(b), Florida Statutes, requires that the parties share the costs of presuit mediation equally, including the fee charged by the mediator. An average mediation may require three to four hours of the mediator's time, including some preparation time, and the parties would need to share equally the mediator's fees as well as their own attorney's fees if they choose to employ an attorney in connection with the mediation. However, use of an attorney is not required and is at the option of each party. The mediators may require the advance payment of some or all of the anticipated fees. The aggrieved party hereby agrees to pay or prepay one-half of the mediator's estimated fees and to forward this amount or such other reasonable advance deposits as the mediator requires for this purpose. Any funds deposited will be returned to you if these are in excess of your share of the fees incurred.

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To begin your participation in presuit mediation to try to resolve the dispute and avoid further legal action, please sign below and clearly indicate which mediator is acceptable to you. We will then ask the mediator to schedule a mutually convenient time and place for the mediation conference to be held. The mediation conference must be held within ninety (90) days of this date, unless extended by mutual written agreement. In the event that you fail to respond within 20 days from the date of this letter, or if you fail to agree to at least one of the mediators that we have suggested or to pay or prepay to the mediator one-half of the costs involved, the aggrieved party will be authorized to proceed with the filing of a lawsuit against you without further notice and may seek an award of attorney's fees or costs incurred in attempting to obtain mediation.

Therefore, please give this matter your immediate attention. By law, your response must be mailed by certified mail, return receipt requested, and by first-class mail to the address shown on this demand.

RESPONDING PARTY: YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR AGREEMENT TO THAT CHOICE.

AGREEMENT TO MEDIATE

The undersigned hereby agrees to participate in presuit mediation and agrees to attend a mediation conducted by the following mediator or mediators who are listed above as someone who would be acceptable to mediate this dispute:

(List acceptable mediator or mediators.)

I/we further agree to pay or prepay one-half of the mediator's fees and to forward such advance deposits as the mediator may require for this purpose.

Signature of responding party #1

Telephone contact information

Signature and telephone contact information of responding party #2 (if applicable)(if property is owned by more than one person, all owners must sign)

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(b) Service of the statutory demand to participate in presuit mediation shall be effected by sending a letter in substantial conformity with the above form by certified mail, return receipt requested, with an additional copy being sent by regular first-class mail, to the address of the responding party as it last appears on the books and records of the association. The responding party has 20 days from the date of the mailing of the statutory demand to serve a response to the aggrieved party in writing. The response shall be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, with an additional copy being sent by regular first-class mail, to the address shown on the statutory demand. Notwithstanding the foregoing, once the parties have agreed on a mediator, the mediator may reschedule the mediation for a date and time mutually convenient to the parties. The parties shall share the costs of presuit mediation equally, including the fee charged by the mediator, if any, unless the parties agree otherwise, and the mediator may require advance payment of its reasonable fees and costs. The failure of any party to respond to a demand or response, to agree upon a mediator, to make payment of fees and costs within the time established by the mediator, or to appear for a scheduled mediation session without the approval of the mediator, shall constitute the failure or refusal to participate in the mediation process and shall operate as an impasse in the presuit mediation by such party, entitling the other party to proceed in court and to seek an award of the costs and fees associated with the mediation. Additionally, notwithstanding the provisions of any other law or document, persons who fail or refuse to participate in the entire mediation process may not recover attorney's fees and costs in subsequent litigation relating to the dispute. If any presuit mediation session cannot be scheduled and conducted within 90 days after the offer to participate in mediation was filed, an impasse shall be deemed to have occurred unless both parties agree to extend this deadline.

(c) If presuit mediation as described in paragraph (a) is not successful in resolving all issues between the parties, the parties may file the unresolved dispute in a court of competent jurisdiction or elect to enter into binding or nonbinding arbitration pursuant to the procedures set forth in s. 718.1255 and rules adopted by the division, with the arbitration proceeding to be conducted by a department arbitrator or by a private arbitrator certified by the department. If all parties do not agree to arbitration proceedings following an unsuccessful presuit mediation, any party may file the dispute in court. A final order resulting from nonbinding arbitration is final and enforceable in the courts if a complaint for trial de novo is not filed in a court of competent jurisdiction within 30 days after entry of the order. As to any issue or dispute that is not resolved at presuit mediation, and as to any issue that is settled at presuit mediation but is thereafter subject to an action seeking enforcement of the mediation settlement, the prevailing party in any subsequent arbitration or litigation proceeding shall be entitled to seek recovery of all costs and attorney's fees incurred in the presuit mediation process.

(d) A mediator or arbitrator shall be authorized to conduct mediation or arbitration under this section only if he or she has been certified as a circuit court civil mediator or arbitrator, respectively, pursuant to the requirements established by the Florida Supreme Court. Settlement agreements resulting from mediation shall not have precedential value in proceedings involving parties other than those participating in the mediation to support either a claim or defense in other disputes.

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(e) The presuit mediation procedures provided by this subsection may be used by a Florida corporation responsible for the operation of a community in which the voting members are parcel owners or their representatives, in which membership in the corporation is not a mandatory condition of parcel ownership, or which is not authorized to impose an assessment that may become a lien on the parcel.

History.—s. 61, ch. 95-274; s. 50, ch. 2000-258; s. 23, ch. 2004-345; s. 20, ch. 2004-353; s. 16, ch. 2007-173.

Note.—Former s. 617.311.

720.312 Declaration of covenants; survival after tax deed or foreclosure.—All provisions of a declaration of covenants relating to a parcel that has been sold for taxes or special assessments survive and are enforceable after the issuance of a tax deed or master's deed, or upon the foreclosure of an assessment, a certificate or lien, a tax deed, tax certificate, or tax lien, to the same extent that they would be enforceable against a voluntary grantee of title to the parcel immediately before the delivery of the tax deed or master's deed or immediately before the foreclosure.

History.—s. 62, ch. 95-274; s. 51, ch. 2000-258.

Note.—Former s. 617.312.

720.313 Receivership notification.—Upon the appointment of a receiver by a court for any reason relating to a homeowners' association, the court shall direct the receiver to provide to all members written notice of his or her appointment as receiver. Such notice shall be mailed or delivered within 10 days after the appointment. Notice by mail to a member shall be sent to the address used by the county property appraiser for notice to the owner of the property.

History.—s. 10, ch. 2008-202.

720.315 Passage of special assessments.—Before turnover, the board of directors controlled by the developer may not levy a special assessment unless a majority of the parcel owners other than the developer has approved the special assessment by a majority vote at a duly called special meeting of the membership at which a quorum is present.

History.—s. 28, ch. 2010-174.

720.316 Association emergency powers.—

(1) To the extent allowed by law, unless specifically prohibited by the declaration or other recorded governing documents, and consistent with s. 617.0830, the board of directors, in response to damage caused by an event for which a state of emergency is declared

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pursuant to s. 252.36 in the area encompassed by the association, may exercise the following powers:

- (a) Conduct board or membership meetings after notice of the meetings and board decisions is provided in as practicable a manner as possible, including via publication, radio, United States mail, the Internet, public service announcements, conspicuous posting on the association property, or any other means the board deems appropriate under the circumstances.
 - (b) Cancel and reschedule an association meeting.
 - (c) Designate assistant officers who are not directors. If the executive officer is incapacitated or unavailable, the assistant officer has the same authority during the state of emergency as the executive officer he or she assists.
 - (d) Relocate the association's principal office or designate an alternative principal office.
 - (e) Enter into agreements with counties and municipalities to assist counties and municipalities with debris removal.
 - (f) Implement a disaster plan before or immediately following the event for which a state of emergency is declared, which may include, but is not limited to, turning on or shutting off elevators; electricity; water, sewer, or security systems; or air conditioners for association buildings.
 - (g) Based upon the advice of emergency management officials or upon the advice of licensed professionals retained by the board, determine any portion of the association property unavailable for entry or occupancy by owners or their family members, tenants, guests, agents, or invitees to protect their health, safety, or welfare.
 - (h) Based upon the advice of emergency management officials or upon the advice of licensed professionals retained by the board, determine whether the association property can be safely inhabited or occupied. However, such determination is not conclusive as to any determination of habitability pursuant to the declaration.
 - (i) Mitigate further damage, including taking action to contract for the removal of debris and to prevent or mitigate the spread of fungus, including mold or mildew, by removing and disposing of wet drywall, insulation, carpet, cabinetry, or other fixtures on or within the association property.
 - (j) Notwithstanding a provision to the contrary, and regardless of whether such authority does not specifically appear in the declaration or other recorded governing documents, levy special assessments without a vote of the owners.
 - (k) Without owners' approval, borrow money and pledge association assets as collateral to fund emergency repairs and carry out the duties of the association if operating funds are insufficient. This paragraph does not limit the general authority of the association to borrow money, subject to such restrictions contained in the declaration or other recorded governing documents.
- (2) The authority granted under subsection (1) is limited to that time reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the association and the parcel owners and their family members, tenants, guests, agents, or invitees, and to mitigate further damage and make emergency repairs.

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History.—s. 19, ch. 2014-133.