Preparing for Coachella and Stagecoach

By Jeffrey A. French, Esq., and Holly L. Amaya, Esq.

Green Bryant & French, LLP

It’s April in the Coachella Valley, which can only mean one thing: the arrival of the Coachella and Stagecoach music festivals. These events, both venued at the Empire Polo Club in Indio, will flood desert communities for three out of the four weekends in April (with the revelry sure to bleed into the weeks between). And while the concerts are sure to bring with them an increase in noise and traffic, there are ways communities can plan for the onslaught.

First, association boards should carefully review, together with legal counsel and management, their community’s governing documents. Specifically, boards should pay particular attention to provisions regarding short-term rentals, nuisance, quiet enjoyment, and parking, as these subjects typically generate the most complaints during music festival season. Boards may also wish to dispatch several directors, and, if applicable, homeowner committee members, to be on guard for and document violations during the festival weekends.

According to manager Iyad Khoury, MBA, CMCA of Avail Property Management, communication to homeowners is crucial to ensure a community is well-prepared for Coachella and Stagecoach. Khoury recommends that associations send multiple letters to homeowners prior to the event to remind them of the applicable provisions of the governing documents regarding short-term rentals, quiet enjoyment, and parking, among other subjects.

“The Board and management should emphasize that each owner is responsible for their guests’ behavior, and should recommend to all owners that guests read the association’s rules and regulations,” he says.

If short-term rentals are not permitted in a community, the board of directors may wish to provide security with a roster of registered owners and tenants to aid in the screening process. If short-term rentals are found to have occurred in violation of the community’s CC&Rs, a due process hearing should be held with the responsible homeowner to discuss the violation and, if applicable, impose disciplinary action to bring the property into compliance with the governing documents. Boards should also consider “tuning up” fine schedules to create economic disincentives for owners considering short-term rentals.

With a little planning, associations may be able to avoid incidents like one that occurred during last year’s festivities at a community Khoury manages.

“We had reports of intoxicated people jumping from the rooftops into the pools at 2 a.m.,” he said. “We had reports of tents being erected in backyards to sleep more people. Driveways were turned into campgrounds, [and] security patrols reported people attempting to disassemble the arms on gate operators to push the gates open.”

To that end, community manager Dayton Dickey, CCM, of Personalized Property Management, recommends that associations increase security patrols within their communities from the Thursday evening prior to each weekend until the following Monday morning. If communities are gated, the association may employ round-the-clock guards to screen visitors and watch for suspicious activity.

If homeowners decide to flee the desert during festival weekends, they should take appropriate precautions. Specifically, owners should be warned against leaving valued items of personal property in yards or on patios, as they may be taken or defaced. Owners should also ensure all exterior lights are in good working order, and all vehicles should remain locked and parked in garages or in driveways.

While these festivals bring business and entertainment opportunities to the area, they also bring some negative side effects that can be mitigated by associations and their boards via some pre-planning and consultation with management and other professionals.

*Jeffrey A. French is a partner at Green Bryant & French, LLP, in San Diego and Palm Desert. He can be reached at (619) 239-7900, extension 118, or by email at* *jfrench@gbflawyers.com**. Holly L. Amaya is an associate with Green Bryant & French, LLP, in San Diego and Palm Desert. She can be reached at (619) 239-7900, extension 114, or by email at* *hamaya@gbflawyers.com**.*