

THE COOPERATOR

News and updates for leaders of resident-owned communities

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'If You Host It, They Will Come'

Hosting community events helps build strong ROCs

Your Board has likely considered hosting a community event or gathering this year. In addition to getting outside and having a good time, these gatherings promote community pride and allow for sharing information and skills. Connecting with one another at a gathering is vital to establishing and sustaining relationships in your community, which can support your Board efforts throughout the year.

A great way to get started with hosting community events is to host

a National Night Out (NNO) gathering. National Night Out events happen all across the country every August on the first Tuesday of the month.

As stated on the NNO website: "National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, more caring places to live."

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Save the Date!

First-ever leadership conference scheduled for this November

On Saturday, November 11, 2017, NCF is sponsoring an all-day conference, called ROC Summit, for resident-owned community (ROC) leaders. The Summit will provide an opportunity for leaders from across Minnesota and Wisconsin to meet, exchange ideas, and attend breakout sessions on topics related to Board governance, property management, and public policy and advocacy.



ROC Summit 2017 is the first-ever regional convening of all NCF-supported resident-owned communities.

ROC Summit will be held at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minnesota, and coincides with another conference of small regional food cooperatives.

NCF staff are in the process of planning conference session topics. Please share session ideas with your Technical Assistance Provider.

NCF will reimburse all Summit attendees for mileage and overnight

hotel lodging. NCF Technical Assistance providers will update Boards of Directors with details as they become available.

In the meantime, please mark your calendars for ROC Summit 2017!

If You Host It from page 1

Thousands of communities from across the United States take part in NNO every year. Neighborhoods host block parties, festivals, parades, cookouts and various other community events with safety demonstrations, seminars, youth events, visits from emergency personnel, and more.

Park Plaza Cooperative in Fridley, Minnesota has hosted a NNO event five out of the six years they have been a ROC.

“At our event, the Co-op offers food and beverages along with raffle items for the residents to win. Our local fire department comes with

a firetruck, the local police bring a cruiser, and our town mayor stops by. The community looks forward to it every year as a night to make new memories, talk about how to keep our community safe, and connect with the local police and fire departments,” Natividad Seefeld, Chair of the Park Plaza Board of Directors said.

Even if your ROC does not have time to coordinate a NNO event this year, organizing a simple community grill-out or potluck is a great way to get residents out of their homes and engage with one another.

Learn more about how to host a National Night Out by visiting: www.natw.org



Natividad Seefeld

Children at Park Plaza Cooperative line up to receive a free backpack filled with school supplies at the Co-op's annual National Night Out celebration.

Event Organizing Tips

Expand The Invite List.

Community events provide a great opportunity to connect with local and state officials. Legislators like to visit constituents during breaks in the legislative session (Easter/Passover) and in the summer months when the legislature is on break. You may consider inviting neighbors outside your immediate community as well!

Find Event Partners. Community events are a great opportunity to engage local businesses and organizations to get involved



in your community. Can a local restaurant donate food? Is there a social services agency that could do free health screenings during the event?

Co-Organize. Is there another manufactured housing community nearby that could partner with you on an event? Or an apartment building nearby? A library? Another neighborhood organization? Think outside the box!

Get The Word Out. Set event dates well enough in advance that you have plenty of time to get the word out. Invite residents through your community newsletter, post event flyers in the mailroom, and use sandwich boards at the entrances to your community to get the message to everyone.



Get New People Involved.

Before asking the Board to plan and host the event, consider inviting other people in the community to form a committee to organize it! Events are a fun and rewarding way for less-involved residents to contribute to the life of the community.



Key Steps to a 'Project-Ready' ROC



Angela Romeo
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Is your community ready for a major infrastructure project? In most resident-owned communities (ROCs), water, wastewater, and electric utilities are the most likely to need repair or replacement, with drainage and roads not far behind.

Replacing any of these systems is no small project. However, proper planning can help them proceed more smoothly, and with less stress on the community and its directors. The best time to start planning a project is two to three years before you need the work to begin.

Start planning early for major projects in your resident-owned community. Projects in ROCs take place in several phases:

1) Feasibility and planning.

Are there any alternatives to replacing the system? What would those alternatives cost? What would their ongoing operations and maintenance cost? A planning, or feasibility, study completed by an engineer can answer these questions. Some funders require the completion of specific studies before they'll commit funds for construction. Be sure to consult with your Technical Assistance Provider to ensure your community is tackling the right scope of planning and/or feasibility study.

2) Funding.

How will your ROC pay for the project? Be sure to factor in not only the construction costs, but also design and construction oversight costs. Knowing how a major project will be financed and its impact, if any, on lot rents, helps co-op members make educated decisions on whether to move forward.

ROCs use a myriad of funding resources to create project funding packages. These sources include, but are not limited to, Community Development Block Grants,

grants and low interest loan from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture–Rural Development, the ROC's own cash reserves, refinancing the ROC to tap into its equity, and financing from other area funders.

3) Design.

Once the co-op's members approve a project and funds have been secured, the ROC chooses a professional engineering firm.

4) Construction.

Once funding has been secured and the design is approved by the appropriate state authorities, the project is "out to bid." Hopefully, multiple contractors bid on the project. The co-op selects a qualified contractor, and construction begins.

In addition to planning such a project, it is important that your ROC is "project-ready." What does this mean? Technical Assistance Providers recommend that the following are in place before a ROC plans and carries out a project.

- A full board that meets, or is willing, to meet monthly.
- A solid financial history with accurate monthly reports and three years of year-end financial reports. The community should also have minimal delinquent accounts.
- All local and federal tax filings must be current.
- Community must be in good standing as a consumer cooperative with the state.
- A completed project plan that shows a narrative of the need, plan, and anticipated costs. If using outside or government funds, this plan would come from a planning study or a Property Conditions Report done by a licensed engineer. If using community funds, this plan can come from plans and estimates obtained according to the Board of Directors Pro-

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ROC the Boat! *News from all across the resident-owned midwest*

Bennett Park Cooperative (Moorhead, MN)

A member of the Board recently took the initiative to send a monthly printed newsletter to park residents. The simple, one-page newsletter: 1) recognizes volunteers who've recently completed tasks, 2) provides highlights of the last board meeting; and 3) describes any questions and concerns expressed by residents at the last board meeting.

Hillcrest Community Cooperative (Clarks Grove, MN)

The Town of Clarks Grove was devastated by a tornado in March that severely damaged the City Hall Building and adjoining Fire Department, among several other buildings in town. Fortunately, HCC has a shop building they were preparing to rent out when the storm hit. The City is now renting the space temporarily for use by the Fire Department. It has been a win-win with the Fire Department being able to relocate quickly, and the Co-op collecting rental income.

Five Lakes Cooperative (Fairmont, MN)

In early May, the Five Lakes Co-op purchased a home that was in danger of leaving the community due to foreclosure. The Board acted quickly and worked with the homeowner and bank to reach a solution that benefitted everyone. They are processing applications for the 3-bedroom/2-bath-home, and hope to continue preserving homes and filling vacant sites. The Co-op also had a logo designed to help with marketing and communication with residents (see below).



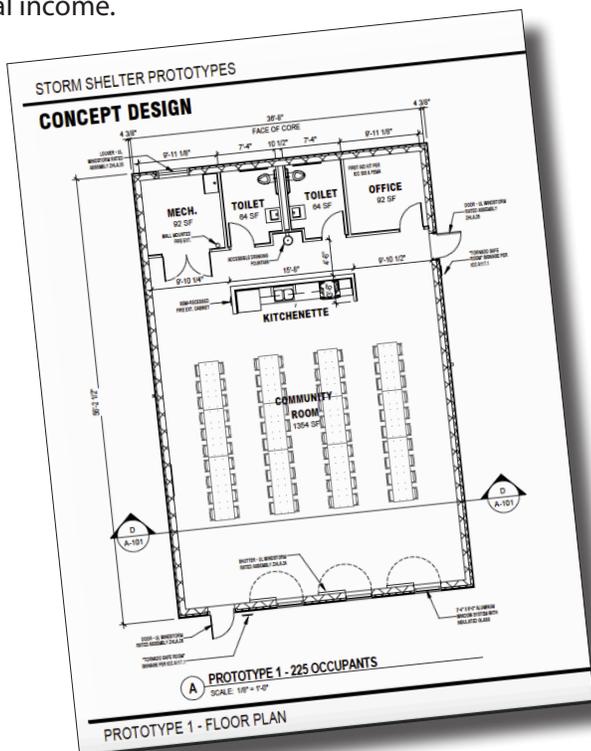
Madelia Mobile Village Cooperative (Madelia, MN)

The Watonwan County Food Partnership has provided the MMV Coop with building materials, soil, and plants for two raised garden beds. Volunteers will construct the raised beds when the weather cooperates.

Park Plaza Cooperative (Fridley, MN)

In early May, Park Plaza was awarded a \$350,000 grant from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency for the construction of a new storm shelter. The Board is now working with their architect and NCF staff to finalize the project site and design. The Co-op is also hosting a tour for Minnesota legislators in mid-July to help drum up legislative support for resident-owned communities.

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Storm shelter prototype design used as part of Park Plaza Cooperative's grant application to Minnesota Housing Finance Agency.

ROC the Boat continued from page 4

Stonegate Cooperative (Lindstrom, MN)

The Board and Operations Committee are working with an engineering firm to complete a study of the Co-op's water and sewer infrastructure. The finished study will allow the Co-op to plan and prioritize infrastructure projects in the coming years. The Board also adopted a Storage Lot Policy to ensure greater fairness in use of the community's common storage area.

Sunrise Villa Cooperative (Cannon Falls, MN)

When residents purchased their community in 2004, one of their first actions was to construct a playground. Over the years, the playground has become weed-infested and equipment has started to break down. Several members formed a playground committee to research the problem, and made a \$3,500 request to the Board for new equipment. The Board recently approved the request, and to the delight of community parents and children, the committee is now rehabbing the playground surface and will be installing new playground equipment.

Prairie Lake Estates Homeowners Co-op (Kenosha, WI)

Several park-owned fire hydrants are located within the co-op's property, and a recent City inspection determined the hydrants did not have sufficient water pressure to protect the park in event of a fire. After hiring a contractor to diagnose the problem, the Board discovered that, at some point in the past, the City had partially closed a valve that serviced the park's main water line. After a call to the City to open the valve, the hydrants are now fully functional ... at a fraction of the cost to do any excavation work!

Pammel Creek Estates (La Crosse, WI)

PCE has been preparing for the introduction of Town water services being connected to their community, currently serviced by two wells. When the residents purchased in December 2016 it was thought that the existing water system was from the '60s and near the end of its useful life, meaning the ROC would need to install new watermains and laterals to support the Town's water coming in. Through some research the Board recently discovered that almost all lines on that side of the community have been replaced in the last 15 years, it just was not clearly documented. This means a significant savings and reduced disruption to residents.

Project Ready ROC continued from page 3

- curement Policy.
- A commitment from co-op members to support the board in the project's planning, funding, and execution.
- Board of Directors must have adopted and signed Code of Ethics, procurement, and conflict of interest policies.
- If seeking funding from a government agency, the ROC's bylaws need to include its purpose as a low/moderate-income housing initiative. (Check with your technical assistance provider if you are unsure.)
- If seeking funding from a government agency, the community must be willing and able to conduct an income survey to demonstrate that the community serves low- to moderate-income residents.
- Board must have a current signatory's resolution of all board members.
- If support from your Technical Assistance Provider is requested, board must sign a Technical Assistance Contract and an agreement to pay the required fee.

Considering infrastructure work? Don't wait! Proper planning leads to productive and timely projects!

Angela Romeo has worked at ROC-NH since 2009. Angela specializes in acquisitions and utility upgrades. In the eight years she has been with ROC-NH, Angela has helped residents of 13 communities purchase their communities. This article was reprinted with permission from ROC-NH's blog also titled The Cooperator. Visit blog.communityloanfund.org for more articles from the ROC-NH Technical Assistance team.

Did you miss the last issue of *The Cooperator*? Check out the archive on the NCF website for all past issues. Visit northcountryfoundation.org/the-cooperator.

Minnesota Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Short-term disappointments, but major progress in establishing strong foundations

The Minnesota 2016-17 legislative session is relatively wrapped up, minus a pending special session to hash out disagreements over a controversial tax bill.

A \$988 million infrastructure bill was passed, Sunday liquor sales were approved, and funding for broadband development throughout the state were just a few of the major accomplishments. So how did manufactured housing resident-owned communities fair this session? The answer is mixed.

On the face of it, ROC's yielded no major legislative wins this year: the infrastructure fund for manufactured housing communities was established, but not funded. And,

the restoration of the renter's credit was not included in the final tax bill. A disappointment on both fronts.

However, if you look at the past legislative session from a long-range perspective, it was truly a banner year. More board members and residents than ever before got engaged in advocating for their communities. Board member and resident involvement went a long way in strengthening relationships with legislators and solidifying the case for preserving and supporting manufactured housing communities across the state.

NCF also established a Manufactured Housing Legislative Working Group, made up of over a dozen

legislators, that are excited about working with NCF and ROC's in the future. The Working Group is scheduled to visit Park Plaza Cooperative in mid-July to get a first-hand look at what resident-ownership is like.

NCF also learned valuable lessons from this year that will help reshape how the organization coordinates advocacy efforts in the future.

Legislative policy change is incredibly slow-going work. It takes a boatload of patience and a long-range vision to reach any substantial goals. The good news is: we are well on our way. Thank you for walking the long road to progress with us.

Residents of Zumbro Ridge Estates Work Toward Resident-Ownership



Zumbro Ridge Estates Interim Board of Directors. Back row, left to right: Hilari Erickson (Secretary), George Ross (Operations Manager), Leroy Milliken (Chair). Front row, left to right: Sopheng Oum (Director-At-Large), Krista Paulsen (Treasurer), Tammy Ogroske (Vice Chair).

Residents from Zumbro Ridge Estates (ZRE), in Zumbrota, Minnesota, have been working toward becoming the Midwest's next resident-owned community. The community held their first resident meeting on April 27 and hope to finalize their purchase in late summer or early fall.

ZRE is a 119 unit community located just a few miles from Rochester, Minnesota. Please keep ZRE in your thoughts as they work toward becoming a ROC.