

Q1 2026

High Desert Dispatch

A newsletter by CAI-New Mexico



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CAI Launches Love Where You Live Campaign

CAI's Love Where You Live campaign celebrates the moments, connections, and everyday experiences that make community association living meaningful. From neighborhood events and acts of kindness to small interactions that strengthen the bonds between residents, this initiative invites us all to share what we cherish most about where we live.

Join the conversation by posting photos, videos, and stories on social media with #LoveWhereYouLive. Whether it's a neighborhood clean-up, a community gathering, or a favorite local spot that brings people together, your story can inspire others – and remind us all of what makes community association living so special.



Welcome, Members!

CAI-New Mexico is back and energized for the year ahead. The chapter kicked off 2026 with its first event at Top Golf in Albuquerque on February 1st, bringing members together for a chapter update and an opportunity to connect. The board extends its sincere thanks to everyone who attended, and to the event sponsors whose generosity made it possible: Association Reserves, Green Summit Landscaping, SAX Insurance, and Friedman, Walcott, Henry & Winston Law.

We look forward to seeing you at a future event!



New Mexico Member Exchange

Did you know that your CAI membership includes access to the Exchange – CAI's exclusive, members-only hub for knowledge-sharing? Whether you have questions about governance, legislation, or the day-to-day realities of managing a community association, the Exchange connects you with trusted industry peers who have been there. Log in through your CAI account and start the conversation.



2026 NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT



During New Mexico's 2026 legislative session – which ran from January 20 to February 19 – CAI members, partners, and staff advocated on behalf of the approximately 130,000 New Mexicans living in 51,100 homes across nearly 2,000 community associations statewide. A special thank you to CAI's New Mexico Chapter-In-Organization board for their continued work tracking and advocating on legislation affecting community associations in Santa Fe. Throughout the session, CAI partnered with legislators to advance amendments that better align statutory language with CAI's established public policy positions..

SB 96 CHILDCARE

As originally written, SB 96 would have required community associations to permit home-based childcare facilities without preserving their ability to enforce reasonable, uniformly applied rules governing parking, traffic, common-area use, amenities, liability, insurance, and architectural standards. CAI–New Mexico opposed the bill in its original form and successfully negotiated amendments that:

- Preserve uniform rule enforcement;
- Allow recovery of cost-based, documented fees;
- Ensure that state licensing requirements do not supersede neutral association rules;
- Protect associations' authority to regulate health, safety, and property; and
- Preserve control over common areas.

Special thanks to Senator Heather Berghmans and Early Care and Education Department attorney Shelley Strong for their collaborative spirit throughout this process.

CAI recognizes the growing need for accessible, affordable childcare. At the same time, community associations must retain the ability to self-govern and respond to the real, objective impacts that home-based facilities can have – from parking and drop-off traffic to amenity use, liability exposure, and architectural compliance. A one-size-fits-all statutory mandate is not the answer. As reflected in CAI's Residential Childcare Facility Public Policy, these decisions are best made at the community level.

Status: Successfully AMENDED and PASSED.

2026 NEW MEXICO LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT



HB 17 Accessory Dwelling Units

As introduced, HB 17 would have required associations statewide to permit the construction of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), regardless of existing covenants or potential strain on shared infrastructure such as roads and water systems.

CAI supports expanded housing options, including ADUs, as part of addressing New Mexico's broader housing needs – and advocates for responsible ADU policies that increase both flexibility and affordability. CAI worked to amend HB 17 to better protect existing covenants, allow associations to impose reasonable infrastructure-related restrictions, and explicitly exclude condominiums and communities where ADU construction would be impractical.

A call-to-action campaign mobilized New Mexico residents to contact the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee ahead of the bill's hearing. Six advocates each sent six emails to committee members, generating a total of 66 messages in support of the amendments.

Status: Successfully TABLED in Committee.

Review CAI's
Public Policy Positions



Help Shape Future Legislation

Join our CAI Advocacy Ambassador program and become a part of the movement to create positive change. Your voice matters, so sign up now to make your mark!



www.caionline.org/Ambassadors

Doing it right: Tips for Hiring HOA Contractors

By *Laura Otto*

Whether it's landscaping, a plumbing fix, or a major clubhouse renovation, selecting the right contractor for your HOA or condo requires ethical and diligent work from board members. It's important for board members to specify exactly what services the association needs to avoid a conflict of interest. For example, if a board member owns a lawn care company and the association is seeking bids for lawn care services, the board member could face a conflict of interest.

Steve Cousino, CMCA, AMS, senior association manager with Caribou Property Management in Madison, Wis., shares his top three tips for hiring contractors.

First, do your research. Check Google reviews, Yelp, and other online resources regarding the contractor's services. "There are tips online on how to read reviews and interpret fake ones from real ones, and how to know if a review is trustworthy or not. Reviews need to be vetted as much as the contractor."

Next, provide an accurate scope of work, and ask questions about the bid to ensure you understand it. Never make assumptions about what is or is not included. Finally, get a W-9 form, proof of insurance, and verify any required licenses needed by the contractor before work commences. "Requesting this information is a reasonable ask that any contractor should have no problem providing," says Cousino.

When writing the contract, try to align the goals of the association and the partner company. "The contract should clearly identify the association as the client (with c/o the management company, if relevant) and identify both the billing address and the job site address, if different," says Cousino. "If a management company is involved, they should not be listed as the responsible party in place of the association."

The full scope of work should be detailed on the contract. When requesting changes, hand write them and initial the changes.

Contracts should also include the vendor's terms and conditions, payment terms, the rights of the association for unsatisfactory work, how the vendor handles corrections, and contract cancellation conditions. These can be negotiated, explains Cousino. "Many terms and conditions are written to benefit the vendor, so don't be shy about requesting changes to make it fairer, if necessary," he says.

Final pro tip: Don't assume a partner company follows all state and local regulations or has all necessary licenses, certifications, or permits. Your association should require a copy of all licenses, certificates, and permits before the contract is signed.

By Laura Otto

Why is it important to hire a licensed contractor? When hiring accredited tradespeople, the association has assurances that the individual doing the work has knowledge of proper work practices and local building codes, explains Cousino. “An unlicensed contractor is also an uninsured contractor. If that contractor suffers injury while on the property, the association is liable.”

Where do boards find qualified prospective candidates who can bid for the services they need? Search CAI’s National Service Directory.

Check out Bids & Contracts from the CAI Press bookstore for more information.



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Most people think three is the number when it comes to bids but according to Cousino, the answer is as many bids as it takes within reason. “You want enough bids to understand if the pricing is out of whack or in line with other vendors, and to compare terms and conditions and any ‘extras’ that a vendor may include in addition to the requested scope of service,” he says.



Upcoming Chapter Events

*Be on the lookout for these upcoming chapter events!
Details can be viewed on our website at www.nm-cai.org*

Board Leader Certificate Course: March 2026

Reserve Studies Webinar: April 2026

April Board Meeting: April 1, 2026 at 1 P.M.



2026
Board Leader Certificate Course
2 Hour Abridged
Live Instructor Led Overview

Come join your local New Mexico Chapter and check out our Board Leadership Course Overview for Free!

An overview of the CAI Board Leader Certificate Course and a look at the resources, tools, and education that CAI and your local chapter can offer!

Virtual Live Instructor Tom Engblom, Ph.D,
CMCA, AMS, PCAM, ARM, CPM, EBP

Access to additional online resources, training,
and full course videos.
(\$199 Savings for your Board Members)

March 26, 2026
5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M.
Free Registration



For Questions, Email Info@nm-cai.org

CAI Board Leader Certificate Course

BECOME A MORE INFORMED AND EFFECTIVE BOARD

The new CAI Board Leader Certificate Course teaches you how to communicate with association residents, hire qualified managers and service providers, develop enforceable rules, interpret governing documents, and more. It provides a comprehensive look at the roles and responsibilities of community association leaders and conveys information to help create and maintain the kind of community people want to call home.

In addition to a toolbox of support materials, each student receives a certificate of completion and recognition on the CAI website.

www.caionline.org/BoardLeaderCertificate





CAI New Mexico Chapter Sponsor Spotlight

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