

PRACTICE PARTNER

Interview by Kiara Candelaria

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CYNTHIA A. JONES, AN ATTORNEY at Sellers, Ayers, Dortch and Lyons in Charlotte, N.C., has practiced law for almost 18 years and is licensed in both North and South Carolina. She initially worked with real estate developers on establishing residential communities before moving to community association law in 2008. Jones is chair of CAI's 2022 Business Partners Council and president-elect of the CAI North Carolina Chapter board. She also volunteers on the South Carolina Bar's community association law committee to discuss legislation and previously volunteered on the Mecklenburg County (N.C.) Real Property Council. As chair of the Business Partners Council, Jones hopes to continue delivering resources that benefit professional business partners and highlight the value they provide to community associations. —Interview by Kiara Candelaria

How have you helped boards navigate collections during the COVID-19 pandemic?

I've always encouraged boards to work with owners who fall behind on assessment payments. Since many people have been severely impacted by the pandemic, I've advised clients to communicate with homeowners experiencing financial hardship. It's hard because associations have financial obligations but also need to be reasonable and work with homeowners.

What are your priorities as chair of the Business Partners Council?

We want to continue helping our business partners succeed. We've focused on promoting CAI's Business Partner Essentials course as well as updating the CAI Business Partners Toolkit. I would like to see what we can do to further enhance those resources. In addition, I want us to educate CAI members about what professional business partners can do for them by highlighting who they are or the products and services they provide.

What motivates you to volunteer with CAI?

I've gained so much knowledge, and I want to share it. I wouldn't be here if not for the people who helped me, and now I feel that I'm in a position where I can do the same.

What are some of the challenges that community associations face?

A lot of my clients struggle with finding good business partners. It's important to help educate them about the distinctions and designations that show knowledge specific to community associations. A service provider who has a CAI Educated Business Partner distinction truly understands the inner workings of community associations, which is highly beneficial to a board and makes working together much easier.

What advice do you have for attorneys starting out in community association law?

Find a mentor who can guide you and to whom you can ask questions, and then get involved. It's so invaluable to volunteer your time, attend events, and see if someone wants to join you in speaking about an issue impacting associations.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I attended Clemson University in South Carolina, where I met my husband, and we're die-hard fans of the Tigers. We go back there with our kids for weekend football games and meet up with our friends for meals or to tailgate. I also enjoy fishing. I grew up in Florida and would live on the water if I could. **CG**



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