1

A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to homeowners' associations; amending 3 s. 34.01, F.S.; conforming a cross-reference; amending 4 s. 468.436, F.S.; providing grounds for disciplinary 5 actions against community association managers; 6 amending s. 720.303, F.S.; requiring a homeowners' 7 association to maintain an internal dispute resolution 8 procedure in the association's official records; 9 requiring official records to be maintained within a 10 specified distance of the association for a specified 11 time; authorizing associations to maintain such 12 records online; requiring associations to permit 13 members to take photographs of such records using portable devices at no charge; revising provisions 14 15 allowing the association to charge fees for personnel 16 costs related to records access; requiring budgets to 17 designate permissible uses of reserve accounts; 18 requiring a community association manager, or the association in the absence of a community association 19 20 manager, to report certain information to the Division of Florida Condominiums, Timeshares, and Mobile Homes; 21 22 providing for expiration of reporting requirements; 23 creating s. 720.3033, F.S.; requiring association 24 directors to file with the association secretary 25 written certification that they have read certain 26 association documents, will uphold the documents, and 27 will uphold their fiduciary responsibility to the 28 members; providing for an educational certificate in

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29 lieu of written certification; providing that such 30 certification or certificate is valid while the 31 director is on the board; providing penalties for 32 failure to file such certification or certificate; 33 requiring the association to retain such certification 34 or certificate for 5 years; requiring the board to 35 follow specified procedures relating to contracts or transactions between the association and certain 36 37 entities; providing for disclosure of the contract or transaction to members; providing for the cancellation 38 of such contract or transaction under certain 39 40 circumstances; prohibiting any association officer, director, or manager from soliciting or receiving 41 42 certain personal benefits from any person providing or 43 offering to provide goods or services to the 44 association; providing for removal from office for 45 violations; providing an exception; providing for the 46 removal of any director or officer charged with a 47 felony theft or embezzlement offense involving association funds or property; providing for the 48 reinstatement of such person under certain 49 50 circumstances; prohibiting a member with pending 51 criminal charges from certain positions; requiring the 52 association to maintain insurance or a bond to cover 53 funds that will be in the custody of the association 54 or its management agent; providing a definition; 55 amending s. 720.306, F.S.; revising procedures for the 56 election of directors; amending s. 720.307, F.S.;

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7119 2013 providing additional circumstances for authorizing

57	providing additional circumstances for authorizing
58	members to elect a majority of association board
59	members; providing circumstances under which members
60	other than the developer are authorized to elect a
61	specified number of members to the board of directors;
62	amending s. 720.311, F.S.; requiring associations to
63	adopt internal dispute resolution procedures;
64	providing minimum requirements for such procedures;
65	providing for an internal dispute resolution in the
66	absence of a procedure adopted by the association;
67	providing that certain resolutions and agreements are
68	binding and judicially enforceable; amending s.
69	720.315, F.S.; prohibiting increases in assessments
70	levied pursuant to the annual budget under certain
71	circumstances; providing a definition; providing an
72	effective date.
73	
74	Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
75	
76	Section 1. Paragraph (d) of subsection (1) of section
77	34.01, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:
78	34.01 Jurisdiction of county court
79	(1) County courts shall have original jurisdiction:
80	(d) Of disputes occurring in the homeowners' associations
81	as described in s. <u>720.311(4)(a)</u> 720.311(2)(a) , which shall be
82	concurrent with jurisdiction of the circuit courts.
83	Section 2. Paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section
84	468.436, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:
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85	468.436 Disciplinary proceedings
86	(2) The following acts constitute grounds for which the
87	disciplinary actions in subsection (4) may be taken:
88	(b)1. Violation of any provision of this part.
89	2. Violation of any lawful order or rule rendered or
90	adopted by the department or the council.
91	3. Being convicted of or pleading nolo contendere to a
92	felony in any court in the United States.
93	4. Obtaining a license or certification or any other
94	order, ruling, or authorization by means of fraud,
95	misrepresentation, or concealment of material facts.
96	5. Committing acts of gross misconduct or gross negligence
97	in connection with the profession.
98	6. Contracting, on behalf of an association, with any
99	entity in which the licensee has a financial interest that is
100	not disclosed.
101	7. Failing to report to the division as required in s.
102	720.303(13).
103	8. Violating any provision of chapter 718, chapter 719, or
104	chapter 720 during the course of performing community
105	association management services pursuant to a contract with a
106	community association.
107	Section 3. Subsection (5) and paragraph (d) of subsection
108	(6) of section 720.303, Florida Statutes, are amended, paragraph
109	(m) is added to subsection (4), and subsection (13) is added to
110	that section, to read:
111	720.303 Association powers and duties; meetings of board;
112	official records; budgets; financial reporting; association
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113 funds; recalls.-

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

117 (m) A copy of the association internal dispute resolution 118 procedure.

INSPECTION AND COPYING OF RECORDS. - The official 119 (5) 120 records shall be maintained within the state for at least 7 121 years and shall be made available to a parcel owner for 122 inspection or photocopying within 45 miles of the community or 123 within the county in which the association is located within 10 124 business days after receipt by the board or its designee of a 125 written request must be open to inspection and available for 126 photocopying by members or their authorized agents at reasonable 127 times and places within 10 business days after receipt of a 128 written request for access. This subsection may be complied with 129 by having a copy of the official records available for 130 inspection or copying in the community or, at the option of the 131 association, by making the records available to a parcel owner 132 electronically via the Internet or by allowing the records to be 133 viewed in electronic format on a computer screen and printed 134 upon request. If the association has a photocopy machine 135 available where the records are maintained, it must provide 136 parcel owners with copies on request during the inspection if 137 the entire request is limited to no more than 25 pages. The 138 association shall allow a member or the member's authorized 139 representative to use a portable device, including a smartphone, 140 tablet, portable scanner, or any other technology capable of

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141 scanning or taking photographs, to make an electronic copy of 142 the official records in lieu of providing the member or his or 143 her authorized representative with a copy of the records. The 144 association may not charge a fee to a member or his or her 145 authorized representative for such 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.

157 The association may adopt reasonable written rules (C) 158 governing the frequency, time, location, notice, records to be 159 inspected, and manner of inspections, but may not require a 160 parcel owner to demonstrate any proper purpose for the 161 inspection, state any reason for the inspection, or limit a 162 parcel owner's right to inspect records to less than one 8-hour 163 business day per month. The association may impose fees to cover 164 the costs of providing copies of the official records, including, without limitation, the costs of copying and the 165 166 costs required for personnel to retrieve and copy the records if 167 retrieving the records exceeds 30 minutes and if the personnel 168 costs do not exceed \$20 per hour. Personnel costs may not be

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169 charged for records requests that result in the copying of 25 or 170 fewer pages. The association may charge up to 25 50 cents per 171 page for copies made on the association's photocopier. If the 172 association does not have a photocopy machine available where 173 the records are kept, or if the records requested to be copied 174 exceed 25 pages in length, the association may have copies made by an outside duplicating service vendor or association 175 176 management company personnel and may charge the actual cost of 177 copying, as supported by the vendor invoice including any reasonable costs involving personnel fees and charges at an 178 179 hourly rate for vendor or employee time to cover administrative 180 costs to the vendor or association. The association shall 181 maintain an adequate number of copies of the recorded governing 182 documents, to ensure their availability to members and 183 prospective members. Notwithstanding this paragraph, the 184 following records are not accessible to members or parcel 185 owners:

Any record protected by the lawyer-client privilege as 186 1. described in s. 90.502 and any record protected by the work-187 188 product privilege, including, but not limited to, a record 189 prepared by an association attorney or prepared at the 190 attorney's express direction which reflects a mental impression, 191 conclusion, litigation strategy, or legal theory of the attorney or the association and which was prepared exclusively for civil 192 193 or criminal litigation or for adversarial administrative 194 proceedings or which was prepared in anticipation of such 195 litigation or proceedings until the conclusion of the litigation 196 or proceedings.

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197 2. Information obtained by an association in connection
198 with the approval of the lease, sale, or other transfer of a
199 parcel.

3. Personnel records of the association's 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 employee or budgetary or financial records that indicate the compensation paid to an association employee.

4. Medical records of parcel owners or communityresidents.

209 5. Social security numbers, driver's license numbers, 210 credit card numbers, electronic mailing addresses, telephone numbers, facsimile numbers, emergency contact information, any 211 212 addresses for a parcel owner other than as provided for 213 association notice requirements, and other personal identifying information of any person, excluding the person's name, parcel 214 designation, mailing address, and property address. However, an 215 216 owner may consent in writing to the disclosure of protected 217 information described in this subparagraph. The association is 218 not liable for the disclosure of information that is protected under this subparagraph if the information is included in an 219 official record of the association and is voluntarily provided 220 221 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.

224

7. The software and operating system used by the

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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.

228 (d) The association or its authorized agent is not 229 required to provide a prospective purchaser or lienholder with 230 information about the residential subdivision or the association 231 other than information or documents required by this chapter to 232 be made available or disclosed. The association or its 233 authorized agent may charge a reasonable fee to the prospective 234 purchaser or lienholder or the current parcel owner or member 235 for providing good faith responses to requests for information 236 by or on behalf of a prospective purchaser or lienholder, other 237 than that required by law, if the fee does not exceed \$150 plus 238 the reasonable cost of photocopying and any attorney's fees 239 incurred by the association in connection with the response.

(6) BUDGETS.-

240

241 An association is deemed to have provided for reserve (d) accounts if reserve accounts have been initially established by 242 the developer or if the membership of the association 243 244 affirmatively elects to provide for reserves. If reserve 245 accounts are established by the developer, the budget must 246 designate the components for which the reserve accounts are 247 established. If reserve accounts are not initially provided by 248 the developer, the membership of the association may elect to do 249 so upon the affirmative approval of a majority of the total 250 voting interests of the association. Such approval may be 251 obtained by vote of the members at a duly called meeting of the 252 membership or by the written consent of a majority of the total

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253 voting interests of the association. The approval action of the 254 membership must state that reserve accounts shall be provided 255 for in the budget and must designate the components for which 256 the reserve accounts are to be established. Upon approval by the 257 membership, the board of directors shall include the required 258 reserve accounts in the budget in the next fiscal year following 259 the approval and each year thereafter. Once established as 260 provided in this subsection, the reserve accounts must be funded 261 or maintained or have their funding waived in the manner 262 provided in paragraph (f).

263 (13) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—The community association
 264 manager, or the association when there is no community
 265 association manager, shall report to the division by November
 266 22, 2013, and annually thereafter, in a manner and form
 267 prescribed by the division.
 268 (a) The report shall include the association's:
 269 1. Legal name.

270	2.	Federal	employer	identification	number.
-----	----	---------	----------	----------------	---------

- 3. Mailing and physical addresses.
- 272 <u>4. Total number of parcels.</u>
- 273 <u>5. Total amount of revenues and expenses from the</u>
- 274 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. 279 2. Mailing address.

280

271

3. Total number of parcels owned on the date of reporting.



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281	(c) By October 1, 2013, the department shall establish and
282	implement a registration system through an Internet website that
283	provides for the reporting requirements of paragraphs (a) and
284	<u>(b).</u>
285	(d) The department shall prepare an annual report of the
286	data reported pursuant to this subsection and present it to the
287	Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the
288	House of Representatives by December 1, 2013, and each year
289	thereafter.
290	(e) The department may adopt rules pursuant to ss.
291	120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement the provisions of this
292	subsection.
293	(f) This subsection expires July 1, 2016, unless reenacted
294	by the Legislature.
295	Section 4. Section 720.3033, Florida Statutes, is created
296	to read:
297	720.3033 Officers and directors
298	(1)(a) Within 90 days after being elected or appointed to
299	the board, each director shall certify in writing to the
300	secretary of the association that he or she has read the
301	association's declaration of covenants, articles of
302	incorporation, bylaws, and current written rules and policies;
303	that he or she will work to uphold such documents and policies
304	to the best of his or her ability; and that he or she will
305	faithfully discharge his or her fiduciary responsibility to the
306	association's members. Within 90 days after being elected or
307	appointed to the board, in lieu of such written certification,
308	the newly elected or appointed director may submit a certificate

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309 of having satisfactorily completed the educational curriculum 310 administered by a division-approved education provider within 1 311 year before or 90 days after the date of election or 312 appointment. 313 The written certification or educational certificate (b) 314 is valid for the uninterrupted tenure of the director on the 315 board. A director who does not timely file the written 316 certification or educational certificate shall be suspended from 317 the board until he or she complies with the requirement. The 318 board may temporarily fill the vacancy during the period of 319 suspension. 320 (c) The association shall retain each director's written 321 certification or educational certificate for inspection by the 322 members for 5 years after the director's election. However, the 323 failure to have the written certification or educational 324 certificate on file does not affect the validity of any board 325 action. 326 (2) If the association enters into a contract or other 327 transaction with any of its directors or a corporation, firm, 328 association, or other entity in which an association director is 329 also a director or officer or is financially interested, the 330 board must: (a) Comply with the requirements of s. 617.0832. 331 Enter the disclosures required by s. 617.0832 into the 332 (b) 333 written minutes of the meeting. 334 (c) Approve the contract or other transaction by an 335 affirmative vote of two-thirds of the directors present. 336 (d) At the next regular or special meeting of the members,

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337	disclose the existence of the contract or other transaction to
338	the members. Upon motion of any member, the contract or
339	transaction shall be brought up for a vote and may be canceled
340	by a majority vote of the members present. If the members cancel
341	the contract, the association is only liable for the reasonable
342	value of goods and services provided up to the time of
343	cancellation and is not liable for any termination fee,
344	liquidated damages, or other penalty for such cancellation.
345	(3) An officer, director, or manager may not solicit,
346	offer to accept, or accept any good or service of value for
347	which consideration has not been provided for his or her benefit
348	or for the benefit of a member of his or her immediate family
349	from any person providing or proposing to provide goods or
350	services to the association. If the board finds that an officer
351	or director has violated this subsection, the board shall
352	immediately remove the officer or director from office. The
353	vacancy shall be filled according to law until the end of the
354	officer or director's term of office. However, an officer,
355	director, or manager may accept food to be consumed at a
356	business meeting with a value of less than \$25 per individual or
357	a service or good received in connection with trade fairs or
358	education programs.
359	(4) A director or officer charged by information or
360	indictment with a felony theft or embezzlement offense involving
361	the association's funds or property must be removed from office.
362	The board shall immediately remove such director or officer from
363	office and shall fill the vacancy according to general law until
364	the end of the period of the suspension or the end of the
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365 director or officer's term of office, whichever occurs first. 366 However, if the charges are resolved without a finding of guilt 367 or without acceptance of a plea of guilty or nolo contendere, 368 the director or officer shall be reinstated for any remainder of 369 his or her term of office. A member who has such criminal 370 charges pending may not be appointed or elected to a position as 371 a director or officer. 372 (5) An association with total annual revenues of more than 373 \$100,000 shall maintain insurance or a fidelity bond for all persons who control or disburse funds of the association. The 374 375 insurance policy or fidelity bond must cover the maximum funds 376 that will be in the custody of the association or its management 377 agent at any one time. As used in this subsection, the term 378 "persons who control or disburse funds of the association" 379 includes, but is not limited to, persons authorized to sign 380 checks on behalf of the association, and the president, 381 secretary, and treasurer of the association. The association 382 shall bear the cost of any insurance or bond. 383 Section 5. Paragraph (a) of subsection (9) of section 384 720.306, Florida Statutes, is amended to read: 385 720.306 Meetings of members; voting and election 386 procedures; amendments.-387 (9) (a) ELECTIONS AND BOARD VACANCIES.-Elections of 388 directors must be conducted in accordance with the procedures 389 set forth in the governing documents of the association. All 390 members of the association are eligible to serve on the board of 391 directors, and a member may nominate himself or herself as a 392 candidate for the board at a meeting where the election is to be

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393 held; provided, however, that or, if the election process allows 394 candidates to nominate themselves in advance of the balloting, 395 the association need not allow nominations at the meeting voting 396 by absentee ballot, in advance of the balloting. An election is 397 not required unless more candidates are nominated than vacancies 398 exist. Except as otherwise provided in the governing documents, 399 boards of directors must be elected by a plurality of the votes 400 cast by eligible voters.

401 Section 6. Subsection (1) of section 720.307, Florida 402 Statutes, is amended, subsections (2) through (4) are renumbered 403 as subsections (4) through (6), respectively, and new 404 subsections (2) and (3) are added to that section, to read:

405 720.307 Transition of association control in a community.406 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; or

(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;

419 (c) Two years after the developer has ceased construction
 420 or ceased to offer parcels for sale in the ordinary course of

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421	business;
422	(d) Upon the developer abandoning or deserting its
423	responsibility to maintain and complete the advertised amenities
424	or infrastructure. There is a rebuttable presumption that the
425	developer has abandoned and deserted the property if the
426	developer has not engaged in construction or sale of properties
427	or has unpaid assessments or guaranteed amounts under s. 720.308
428	for a period of more than 2 years;
429	(e) Upon the developer filing a petition seeking
430	protection under chapter 7 of the federal Bankruptcy Code;
431	(f) Upon the developer losing title to the property
432	through a foreclosure action or the transfer of a deed in lieu
433	of foreclosure unless the successor owner has accepted an
434	assignment of developer rights and responsibilities; or
435	(g) Upon a receiver for the developer being appointed by a
436	circuit court and not being discharged within 30 days after such
437	appointment, unless the court determines within 30 days after
438	such appointment that transfer of control would be detrimental
439	to the association or its members.
440	
441	For purposes of this section, the term "members other than the
442	developer" shall not include builders, contractors, or others
443	who purchase a parcel for the purpose of constructing
444	improvements thereon for resale.
445	(2) Members other than the developer are entitled to elect
446	at least one member of the board of directors of the homeowners'
447	association if 15 percent of the parcels in all phases of the
448	community which will ultimately be operated by the association
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449 have been conveyed to members.

450 (3) Members other than the developer are entitled to elect
451 at least two members of the board of directors of the
452 homeowners' association if 50 percent of the parcels in all
453 phases of the community which will ultimately be operated by the
454 association have been conveyed to members.

455 Section 7. Subsection (1) of section 720.311, Florida 456 Statutes, is amended, subsection (2) of that section is 457 renumbered as subsection (4), and new subsections (2) and (3) 458 are added to that section, to read:

459

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, participation in an internal dispute resolution process, or the serving of a demand for presuit mediation as provided for in this section shall toll the applicable statute of limitations.

467 Any recall dispute filed with the department pursuant (2) 468 to s. 720.303(10) shall be conducted by the department in 469 accordance with the provisions of ss. 718.112(2)(j) and 718.1255 470 and the rules adopted by the division. In addition, the 471 department shall conduct mandatory binding arbitration of election disputes between a member and an association pursuant 472 473 to s. 718.1255 and rules adopted by the division. Neither 474 election disputes nor recall disputes are eligible for internal 475 dispute resolution or presuit mediation; these disputes shall be arbitrated by the department. At the conclusion of the 476

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477 proceeding, the department shall charge the parties a fee in an 478 amount adequate to cover all costs and expenses incurred by the 479 department in conducting the proceeding. Initially, the 480 petitioner shall remit a filing fee of at least \$200 to the 481 department. The fees paid to the department shall become a 482 recoverable cost in the arbitration proceeding, and the 483 prevailing party in an arbitration proceeding shall recover its 484 reasonable costs and attorney's fees in an amount found 485 reasonable by the arbitrator. The department shall adopt rules 486 to effectuate the purposes of this section.

487 (3) The association shall provide a fair, reasonable, and
488 expeditious procedure for resolving disputes concerning rights,
489 duties, or liabilities under this chapter and the governing
490 documents. If the association has not adopted such a procedure
491 by rule, it shall use the procedure in paragraph (b).

492 (a) The internal dispute resolution shall meet the
493 following criteria:
494 1. The procedure must be in writing.

495 <u>2. A member of the association may not be charged a fee to</u>
496 participate in the procedure.

497 <u>3. The procedure may be initiated by either party to a</u>
498 <u>dispute.</u>
499 <u>4. Requests to initiate the procedure must be in writing.</u>
500 <u>5. The procedure must use prompt deadlines and specify the</u>

501 <u>maximum time for the association to respond to requests to</u>

502 <u>initiate the procedure.</u>

503 <u>6. If the procedure is initiated by a member, the</u>

504 association shall participate in the procedure.

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505	7. If the procedure is initiated by the association, the
506	member may refuse to participate in the procedure.
507	8. The procedure shall provide a means by which the
508	parties may explain their positions.
509	9. If the dispute is resolved other than by agreement of
510	the parties, the member may appeal to the association's board of
511	directors.
512	10. Whenever feasible, neutral third parties shall be used
513	to facilitate resolution.
514	11. The procedure may not prevent the member from
515	retaining an attorney or other representative.
516	(b) If the association has not adopted an internal dispute
517	resolution process, either party to a dispute may initiate the
518	following procedure, which is subject to the requirements of
519	paragraph (a):
520	1. The party may request, in writing, the other party to
521	meet and confer in an effort to resolve the dispute.
522	2. The association's board of directors shall deliver a
523	written response to a request from a member within 5 business
524	days. The response shall designate a member of the board to meet
525	and confer with the member and include contact information for
526	the board member.
527	3. The parties shall meet at a mutually convenient time
528	and place to explain their positions and confer in good faith in
529	an effort to resolve the dispute within 30 days after the
530	initial request. The parties may extend this time period by
531	agreement.
532	4. A resolution of the dispute agreed to by the parties

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533	shall be memorialized in writing and signed by the parties,
534	including the association's board designee.
535	(c) A resolution of the dispute, which is not in conflict
536	with general law or the governing documents, is binding on the
537	association and is judicially enforceable. A written agreement
538	signed by the parties, which is not in conflict with general law
539	or the governing documents, is binding on the parties and is
540	judicially enforceable.
541	Section 8. Section 720.315, Florida Statutes, is amended
542	to read:
543	720.315 Passage of special assessments <u>before turnover</u>
544	(1) Before turnover, the board of directors controlled by
545	the developer may not levy a special assessment unless a
546	majority of the <u>members</u> parcel owners other than the developer
547	has approved the special assessment by a majority vote at a duly
548	called special meeting of the membership at which a quorum is
549	present.
550	(2) Before turnover, the board of directors controlled by
551	the developer may not increase assessments by more than 15
552	percent unless a majority of the members other than the
553	developer has approved the increase by a majority vote at a duly
554	called special meeting of the membership at which a quorum is
555	present. Increases in assessments pursuant to a schedule of
556	planned increases provided in the initial governing documents
557	are not subject to this subsection.
558	
559	For purposes of this section, the term "members other than the
560	developer" does not include builders, contractors, or other

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561 persons who purchase a parcel for the purpose of constructing 562 improvements on the parcel for resale.

563 Section 9. This act shall take effect July 1, 2013.

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