

**Bylaws of the  
Columbus Board of REALTORS® , Inc.**  
Updated January 1, 2019

**Article 1 - Name**

**Section 1. Name.** The name of this organization shall be the Columbus Board of REALTORS®, Incorporated, hereinafter referred to as the "association."

**Section 2. REALTORS®.** Inclusion and retention of the Registered Collective Membership Mark REALTORS® in the name of the association shall be governed by the *Constitution and Bylaws of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®* as from time to time amended.

**Article 2 - Objectives**

The objectives of the association are:

**Section 1.** To unite those engaged in the recognized branches of the real estate profession for the purpose of exerting a beneficial influence upon the profession and related interests.

**Section 2.** To promote and maintain high standards of conduct in the real estate profession as expressed in the Code of Ethics of the National Association of REALTORS®.

**Section 3.** To provide a unified medium for real estate owners and those engaged in the real estate profession whereby their interests may be safeguarded and advanced.

**Section 4.** To further the interests of home and other real property ownership.

**Section 5.** To unite those engaged in the real estate profession in this community with the Georgia Association of REALTORS® and the National Association of REALTORS®, thereby furthering their own objectives throughout the state and nation, and obtaining the benefits and privileges of membership therein.

**Section 6.** To designate, for the benefit of the public, individuals authorized to use the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS® as licensed, prescribed, and controlled by the National Association of REALTORS®.

**Article 3 - Jurisdiction**

**Section 1.** The territorial jurisdiction of the association as a Member of the National Association of REALTORS® is Columbus and vicinity, Georgia (Muscogee County) and the counties of Harris, Talbot, and Chattahoochee.

**Section 2.** Territorial jurisdiction is defined to mean:

The right and duty to control the use of the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS®, subject to the conditions set forth in these Bylaws and those of the National Association of REALTORS®, in return for which the association agrees to protect and safeguard the property rights of the National Association in the terms.

**Article 4 – Membership**

**Section 1.** There shall be five classes of members, as follows:

**(a) REALTOR® Members.** REALTOR® Members, whether primary or secondary shall be:

- (1) **Individuals** who, as sole proprietors, partners, corporate officers, or branch office managers, are engaged actively in the real estate profession, including buying, selling, exchanging, renting or leasing, managing, appraising for others for compensation, counseling, building, developing or

subdividing real estate, and who maintain or are associated with an established real estate office in the state of Georgia or a state contiguous thereto. All persons who are partners in a partnership, or all officers in a corporation who are actively engaged in the real estate profession within the state or a state contiguous thereto shall qualify for REALTOR® Membership only, and each is required to hold REALTOR® Membership (except as provided in the following paragraph) in an association of REALTORS® within the state or a state contiguous thereto unless otherwise qualified for Institute Affiliate Membership, as described in Section 1(b) of Article 4.

In the case of a real estate firm, partnership, or corporation, whose business activity is substantially all commercial, only those principals actively engaged in the real estate business in connection with the same office, or any other offices within the jurisdiction of the Association in which one of the firm's principals holds REALTOR® membership, shall be required to hold REALTOR® membership unless otherwise qualified for Institute Affiliate Membership, as described in Section 1(b) of Article 4. (amended 1/05)

*NOTE: REALTOR® Members may obtain membership in a "secondary" association in another state.*

(2) **Individuals** who are engaged in the real estate profession other than as sole proprietors, partners, corporate officers, or branch office managers and are associated with a REALTOR® Member and meet the qualifications set out in Article 5.

(3) **Franchise REALTOR® Membership.** Corporate officers (who may be licensed or unlicensed) of a real estate brokerage franchise organization with at least one hundred fifty (150) franchisees located within the United States, its insular possessions and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico, elected to membership pursuant to the provisions in the NAR *Constitution and Bylaws*. Such individuals shall enjoy all of the rights, privileges and obligations of REALTOR® membership (including compliance with the Code of Ethics) except: obligations related to association-mandated education, meeting attendance, or indoctrination classes or other similar requirements; the right to use the term REALTOR® in connection with their franchise organization's name; and the right to hold elective office in the local association, state association and National Association.

(4) **Primary and Secondary REALTOR® Members.** An individual is a primary member if the association pays state and National dues based on such Member. An individual is a secondary member if state and National dues are remitted through another association. One of the principals in a real estate firm must be a Designated REALTOR® member of the association in order for licensees affiliated with the firm to select the association as their "primary" association.

(5) **Designated REALTOR® Members.** Each firm (or office in the case of firms with multiple office locations) shall designate in writing one REALTOR® Member who shall be responsible for all duties and obligations of membership, including the obligation to arbitrate or to mediate pursuant to Article 17 of the Code of Ethics and the payment of association dues as established in Article 10 of the Bylaws. The Designated REALTOR® must be a sole proprietor, partner, corporate officer, or branch office manager acting on behalf of the firm's principal(s), and must meet all other qualifications for REALTOR® membership established in Article 5, Section 2, of the Bylaws.

**(b) Institute Affiliate Members.** Institute Affiliate Members shall be individuals who hold a professional designation awarded by an Institute, Society, or Council affiliated with the National Association of REALTORS® that addresses a specialty area other than residential brokerage or individuals who otherwise hold a class of membership in such Institute, Society or Council that confers the right to hold office. Any such individual, if otherwise eligible, may elect to hold REALTOR® membership, subject to payment of applicable dues for such membership.

**(c) Affiliate Members.** Affiliate Members shall be real estate owners and other individuals or firms who, while not engaged in the real estate profession as defined in paragraphs (a) or (b) of this Section, have

interests requiring information concerning real estate and are in sympathy with the objectives of the association. Affiliate Membership shall also be granted to individuals licensed or certified to engage in real estate practice who, if otherwise eligible, do not elect to hold REALTOR® membership in the association, provided the applicant is engaged exclusively in a specialty of the real estate business other than brokerage of real property.

**(d) Public Service Members.** Public Service Members shall be individuals who are interested in the real estate profession as employees of or affiliated with educational, public utility, governmental or other similar organizations, but are not engaged in the real estate profession on their own account or in association with an established real estate business.

**(e) Honorary Members.** Honorary Members shall be individuals not engaged in the real estate profession who have performed notable service for the real estate profession, for the association, or for the public.

## **Article 5 - Qualification and Election to Membership**

**Section 1. Application.** An application for membership shall be made in such manner and form as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors and made available to anyone requesting it. The application form shall contain among the statements to be signed by the applicant:

- A) that applicant agrees as a condition to membership to thoroughly familiarize himself/herself with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of REALTORS®, the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Rules and Regulations of the association, the State and National Associations and, if elected a Member, will abide by the Constitutions and Bylaws and Rules and Regulations of the association, State and National Associations, and if a REALTOR® Member, will abide by the Code of Ethics of the National Association of REALTORS®, including the obligation to arbitrate or to mediate controversies arising out of real estate transactions as specified by Article 17 of the Code of Ethics, and as further specified in the *Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual* of the National Association of REALTORS®, as from time to time amended, and
- B) that applicant consents that the association, through its Membership Committee or otherwise, may invite and receive information and comment about applicant from any Member or other persons, and that applicant agrees that any information and comment furnished to the association by any person in response to the invitation shall be conclusively deemed to be privileged and not form the basis of any action for slander, libel, or defamation of character. The applicant shall, with the form of application, have access to a copy of the Bylaws, Constitution, Rules and Regulations, and Code of Ethics referred to above.

### **Section 2. Qualification.**

- A) An applicant for REALTOR® Membership who is a sole proprietor, partner, corporate officer, or branch office manager of a real estate firm shall supply evidence satisfactory to the association, through its Membership Committee or otherwise, that he/she is actively engaged in the real estate profession, and maintains a current, valid real estate broker's or salesperson's license or is licensed or certified by an appropriate state regulatory agency to engage in the appraisal of real property, has a place of business within the state or a state contiguous thereto (unless a secondary member), has no record of recent or pending bankruptcy\*, has no record of official sanctions involving unprofessional conduct\*\*, agrees to complete a course of instruction covering the Bylaws and Rules and Regulations of the association, the Bylaws of the State Association, and the *Constitution and Bylaws* and Code of Ethics of the National Association of REALTORS®, and shall pass such reasonable and nondiscriminatory written examination thereon, as may be required by the Committee, and shall agree that if elected to membership, he/she will abide by such *Constitution, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, and Code of Ethics.*

*\*No recent or pending bankruptcy is intended to mean that the applicant or any real estate firm in which the applicant is a sole proprietor, general partner, corporate officer, or branch office manager,*

*is not involved in any pending bankruptcy or insolvency proceedings or, has not been adjudged bankrupt in the past 3 years. If a bankruptcy proceeding as described above exists, membership may not be rejected unless the association establishes that its interests and those of its members and the public could not be adequately protected by requiring that the bankrupt applicant pay cash in advance for association and MLS fees for up to one (1) year from the date that membership is approved or from the date that the applicant is discharged from bankruptcy (whichever is later). In the event that an existing member initiates bankruptcy proceedings, the member may be placed on a "cash basis" from the date that bankruptcy is initiated until one (1) year from the date that the member has been discharged from bankruptcy.*

*\*\*No record of official sanctions involving unprofessional conduct is intended to mean that the association may only consider:*

*A. judgments against the applicant within the past 3 years of violations of (1) civil rights laws, (2) real estate license laws, and (3) or other laws prohibiting unprofessional conduct against the applicant rendered by the courts or other lawful authorities*

*B. criminal convictions if (1) the crime was punishable by death or imprisonment in excess of one year under the law under which the applicant was convicted, and (2) no more than ten (10) years have elapsed since the date of the conviction or the release of the applicant from the confinement imposed for that conviction, whichever is the later date.*

*NOTE: Article IV, Section 2, of the National Association of REALTORS® Bylaws prohibits Member associations from knowingly granting REALTOR® membership to any applicant who has an unfulfilled sanction pending which was imposed by another association of REALTORS® for violation of the Code of Ethics.*

B) Individuals who are actively engaged in the real estate profession other than as sole proprietors, partners, corporate officers, or branch office managers, in order to qualify for REALTOR® Membership, shall at the time of application be associated either as an employee or as an independent contractor with a Designated REALTOR® Member of the association or a Designated REALTOR® Member of another association (if a secondary member) and must maintain a current, valid real estate broker's or salesperson's license or be licensed or certified by an appropriate state regulatory agency to engage in the appraisal of real property, has no record of official sanctions involving unprofessional conduct\*, shall complete a course of instruction covering the Bylaws and Rules and Regulations of the association, the Bylaws of the State Association, and *the Constitution and Bylaws* and Code of Ethics of the National Association of REALTORS®, and shall pass such reasonable and nondiscriminatory written examinations thereon as may be required by the Membership Committee and shall agree in writing that if elected to membership he/she will abide by such *Constitution, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations, and the Code of Ethics.*

*\*No record of official sanctions involving unprofessional conduct is intended to mean that the association may only consider:*

*A. judgments against the applicant within the past 3 years of violations of (1) civil rights laws, (2) real estate license laws, and (3) or other laws prohibiting unprofessional conduct against the applicant rendered by the courts or other lawful authorities*

*B. criminal convictions if (1) the crime was punishable by death or imprisonment in excess of one year under the law under which the applicant was convicted, and (2) no more than ten years have elapsed since the date of the conviction or the release of the applicant from the confinement imposed for that conviction, whichever is the later date.*

The association will also consider the following in determining an applicant's qualifications for REALTOR® membership:

- 1) all final findings of Code of Ethics violations and violations of other membership duties in this or any other REALTOR® association within the past three years;
- 2) pending ethics complaints (or hearings);
- 3) unsatisfied discipline pending;
- 4) pending arbitration requests (or hearings);
- 5) unpaid arbitration awards or unpaid financial obligations to this or any other REALTOR® association or REALTOR® association MLS;
- 6) any misuse of the term REALTOR® or REALTORS® in the name of the applicant's firm.

“Provisional” membership may be granted in instances where ethics complaints or arbitration requests (or hearings) are pending in other associations or where the applicant for membership has unsatisfied discipline pending in another association (except for violations of the Code of Ethics; see Article 5, Section 2(a) NOTE 2), provided all other qualifications for membership have been satisfied. Associations may reconsider the membership status of such individuals when all pending ethics and arbitration matters (and related discipline) have been resolved or if such matters are not resolved within six (6) months from the date that provisional membership is approved. Provisional members shall be considered REALTORS® and shall be subject to all of the same privileges and obligations of REALTOR® membership. If a member resigns from another association with an ethics complaint or arbitration request pending, the association may condition membership on the applicant’s certification that he/she will submit to the pending ethics or arbitration proceeding (in accordance with the established procedures of the association to which the applicant has made application) and will abide by the decision of the hearing panel.

**Section 3. Election to Membership.** The procedure for election to membership shall be as follows:

- a) Applicants for REALTOR® membership shall be granted provisional membership immediately upon submission of a completed application form and remittance of applicable association dues and any application fee. Provisional members shall be considered REALTORS® -and shall be subject to all of the same privileges and obligations of membership. Provisional membership is granted subject to subsequent review of the application by the Board of Directors. If the Board of Directors determines that the individual does not meet all of the qualifications for membership as established in the association's Bylaws, or, if the individual does not satisfy all of the requirements of membership (except for New Member Orientation and Code of Ethics) within 30 days from the association's receipt of their application, membership may, at the discretion of the Board of Directors, be terminated. Individuals must attend New Member Orientation and Code of Ethics within 90 days of receipt of their application. Failure to satisfy this requirement may, at the discretion of the Board of Directors, result in termination of individual’s provisional membership.
- b) Dues shall be computed from the date of application and shall be non-refundable unless the association's Board of Directors terminates the individual's membership in accordance with Subsection (a) above. In such instances, dues shall be returned to the individual less a prorated amount to cover the number of days that the individual received association services and any application fee.
- c) The Board of Directors may not terminate any provisional membership without providing the provisional member with advance notice, an opportunity to appear before the Board of Directors, to call witnesses on his/her behalf, to be represented by counsel, and to make such statements as he/she deems relevant. The Board of Directors may also have counsel present. The Board of Directors shall require that written minutes be made of any hearing before it or may electronically or mechanically record the proceedings.
- d) If the Board of Directors determines that provisional membership should be terminated, it shall record its reasons with the CEO/AE. If the Board of Directors believes that termination of provisional membership may become the basis of litigation and a claim of damage by a provisional member, it may specify that termination shall become effective upon entry in a suit by the association for a declaratory judgment by a court of competent jurisdiction of a final judgment declaring that the termination violates no rights of the individual.

**Section 4. New Member Code of Ethics Orientation.** Applicants for REALTOR® membership and provisional REALTOR® members shall complete an orientation program on the Code of Ethics of not less than 2 hours and 30 minutes of instructional time. This requirement does not apply to applicants for REALTOR® membership or provisional members who have completed comparable orientation in another association, provided that REALTOR® membership has been continuous, or that any break in membership is for 1 year or less. Failure to satisfy this requirement within 90 days of the date of application will result in denial of the membership application or termination of provisional membership.

Note: Orientation programs must meet the learning objectives and minimum criteria established from time to time by the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®.

**Section 5. REALTOR® Code of Ethics Training.** Effective January 1, 2019, through December 31, 2021 and for successive three year periods thereafter, each REALTOR® member of the association (with the exception of REALTOR® members granted REALTOR® Emeritus status by the National Association) shall be required to complete ethics training of not less than two (2) hours and thirty (30) minutes of instructional time. This requirement will be satisfied upon presentation of documentation that the member has completed a course of instruction conducted by this or another REALTORS® association, the State Association of REALTORS® or the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, which meets the learning objectives and minimum criteria established by the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® from time to time. REALTOR® members who have completed training as a requirement of membership in another association and REALTOR® members who have completed the New Member Code of Ethics Orientation during any three year cycle shall not be required to complete additional ethics training until a new three year cycle commences.

Failure to satisfy the required periodic ethics training shall be considered a violation of a membership duty. Failure to meet the requirement in any three year cycle will result in suspension of membership for the first two months (January and February) of the year following the end of any three year cycle or until the requirement is met, whichever occurs sooner. On March 1 of that year, the membership of a member who is still suspended as of that date will be automatically terminated.

**Section 6. Status Changes.**

(a) A REALTOR® who changes the conditions under which he/she holds membership shall be required to provide written notification to the association within 30 days. A REALTOR® (non-principal) who becomes a principal in the firm with which he/she has been licensed or, alternatively, becomes a principal in a new firm which will be comprised of REALTOR® principals may be required to satisfy any previously unsatisfied membership requirements applicable to REALTOR® (principal) members but shall, during the period of transition from one status of membership to another, be subject to all of the privileges and obligations of a REALTOR® (principal). If the REALTOR® (non-principal) does not satisfy the requirements established in these Bylaws for the category of membership to which they have transferred within 30 days of the date they advised the association of their change in status, their new membership application will terminate automatically unless otherwise so directed by the Board of Directors.

A REALTOR® who is transferring his/her license from one firm comprised of REALTOR® principals to another firm comprised of REALTOR® principals shall be subject to all of the privileges and obligations of membership during the period of transition. If the transfer is not completed within 30 days of the date the association is advised of the disaffiliation with the current firm, membership will terminate automatically unless otherwise so directed by the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors, at its discretion, may waive any qualification which the applicant has already fulfilled in accordance with the association's Bylaws.

(b) Any application fee related to a change in membership status shall be reduced by an amount equal to any application fee previously paid by the applicant.

- (c) Dues shall be prorated from the first day of the month in which the member is notified of election by the Board of Directors and shall be based on the new membership status for the remainder of the year.

## **Article 6 - Privileges and Obligations**

**Section 1.** The privileges and obligations of Members, in addition to those otherwise provided in these Bylaws, shall be specified in this Article.

**Section 2.** Any Member of the association may be reprimanded, fined, placed on probation, suspended, or expelled by the Board of Directors for a violation of these Bylaws and association Rules and Regulations consistent with these Bylaws, after a hearing as provided in the *Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual* of the association. Although Members other than REALTORS® are not subject to the Code of Ethics, nor its enforcement by the association, such Members are encouraged to abide by the principles established in the Code of Ethics of the National Association of REALTORS® and conduct their business and professional practices accordingly. Further, Members other than REALTORS® may, upon recommendation of the Membership Committee, or upon recommendation by a hearing panel of the Professional Standards Committee, be subject to discipline as described above, for any conduct, which in the opinion of the Board of Directors, applied on a nondiscriminatory basis, reflects adversely on the terms REALTOR® or REALTORS®, and the real estate industry, or for conduct that is inconsistent with or adverse to the objectives and purposes of the local association, the State Association, and the National Association of REALTORS®.

**Section 3.** Any REALTOR® Member of the association may be disciplined by the Board of Directors for violations of the Code of Ethics or other duties of membership, after a hearing as described in the *Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual* of the association, provided that the discipline imposed is consistent with the discipline authorized by the Professional Standards Committee of the National Association of REALTORS® as set forth in the *Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual* of the National Association.

**Section 4. Resignations.** Resignations of Members shall become effective when received in writing by the Board of Directors, provided, however, that if any Member submitting the resignation is indebted to the association for dues, fees, fines, or other assessments of the association or any of its services, departments, divisions, or subsidiaries, the association may condition the right of the resigning Member to reapply for membership upon payment in full of all such monies owed.

**Section 5. Resignations with complaint pending.** If a Member resigns from the association or otherwise causes membership to terminate with an ethics complaint pending, the complaint shall be processed until the decision of the association with respect to disposition of the complaint is final by this association (if respondent does not hold membership in any other association) or by any other association in which the respondent continues to hold membership. If an ethics respondent resigns or otherwise causes membership in all Boards to terminate before an ethics complaint is filed alleging unethical conduct occurred while the respondent was a REALTOR®, the complaint, once filed, shall be processed until the decision of the association with respect to disposition of the complaint is final. In any instance where an ethics hearing is held subsequent to an ethic respondent's resignation or membership termination, any discipline ratified by the Board of Directors shall be held in abeyance until such time as the respondent rejoins an association of REALTORS®.

(a) If a member resigns or otherwise causes membership to terminate, the duty to submit to arbitration (or mediation if required by the association) continues in effect even after membership lapses or is terminated, provided that the dispute arose while the former member was a REALTOR®. (Amended 1/00 and 11/11)

**Section 6. REALTOR® Members.** REALTOR® Members, whether primary or secondary, in good standing whose financial obligations to the association are paid in full shall be entitled to vote and to hold elective office in the association; may use the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS®, which use shall be subject to the provisions of Article 8; and have the primary responsibility to safeguard and promote the standards, interests, and welfare of the association and the real estate profession.

- (a) If a REALTOR® Member is a sole proprietor in a firm, a partner in a partnership or an officer in a corporation, and is suspended or expelled, the firm, partnership or corporation shall not use the terms REALTOR® or REALTORS® in connection with its business during the period of suspension, or until readmission to REALTOR® Membership, or unless connection with the firm, partnership or corporation is severed, or management control, is relinquished, whichever may apply. The membership of all other principals, partners, or corporate officers shall suspend or terminate during the period of suspension of the disciplined Member, or until readmission of the disciplined Member or unless connection of the disciplined Member with the firm, partnership, or corporation is severed, or unless the REALTOR® who is suspended or expelled removes himself /herself from any form or degree of management control of the firm for the term of the suspension or until readmission to membership, whichever may apply. Removal of an individual from any form or degree of management control must be certified to the association by the Member who is being suspended or expelled and by the individual who is assuming management control and the signatures of such certification must be notarized. In the event the suspended or expelled Member is so certified to have relinquished all form or degree of management control of the firm, the membership of other partners, corporate officers, or other individuals affiliated with the firm shall not be affected, and the firm, partnership or corporation may continue to use the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS® in connection with its business during the period of suspension or until the former Member is admitted to membership in the association. The foregoing is not intended to preclude a suspended or expelled Member from functioning as an employee or independent contractor, providing no management control is exercised. Further, the membership of REALTORS® other than principals who are employed or affiliated as independent contractors with the disciplined Member shall suspend or terminate during the period of suspension of the disciplined Member or until readmission of the disciplined Member, or unless connection of the disciplined Member with the firm, partnership, or corporation is severed, or management control is relinquished, or unless the REALTOR® Member (non-principal) elects to sever his/her connection with the REALTOR® and affiliate with another REALTOR® Member in good standing in the association, whichever may apply.

If a REALTOR® Member other than a sole proprietor in a firm, partner in a partnership, or an officer of a corporation is suspended or expelled, the use of the terms REALTOR® or REALTORS® by the firm, partnership or corporation shall not be affected.

- (b) In any action taken against a REALTOR® Member for suspension or expulsion under Section 6(a) hereof, notice of such action shall be given to all REALTORS® employed by or affiliated as independent contractors with such REALTOR® Member and they shall be advised that the provisions in Article VI, Section 6(a) shall apply.

**Section 7. Institute Affiliate Members.** Institute Affiliate Members shall have rights and privileges and be subject to obligations prescribed by the Board of Directors consistent with the *Constitution and Bylaws of the National Association of REALTORS®*.

*NOTE: Local associations establish the rights and privileges to be conferred on Institute Affiliate Members except that **no** Institute Affiliate Member may be granted the right to use the term REALTOR®, REALTOR-ASSOCIATE®, or the REALTOR® logo; to serve as President of the local association; or to be a Participant in the local association's Multiple Listing Service.*

**Section 8. Affiliate Members.** Affiliate Members shall have rights and privileges and be subject to obligations prescribed by the Board of Directors.

**Section 9. Public Service Members.** Public Service Members shall have rights and privileges and be subject to obligations prescribed by the Board of Directors.

**Section 10. Honorary Members.** Honorary Membership shall confer only the right to attend membership meetings and participate in discussions.

**Section 11. Certification by REALTOR®.** Designated REALTOR® Members of the association shall certify to the association during the month of September on a form provided by the association, a

complete listing of all individuals licensed or certified in the REALTOR®'s office(s) and shall designate a primary association for each individual who holds membership. Designated REALTORS® shall also identify any non-member licensees in the REALTOR®'s office(s) and if Designated REALTOR® dues have been paid to another association based on said non-member licensees, the Designated REALTOR® shall identify the association to which dues have been remitted. These declarations shall be used for purposes of calculating dues under Article 10, Section 2(a) of the Bylaws. Designated REALTOR® members shall also notify the association of any additional individual(s) licensed or certified with the firm(s) within 30 days of the date of affiliation or severance of the individual.

**Section 12. Harassment.** Any member of the association may be reprimanded, placed on probation, suspended or expelled for harassment of an association or MLS employee or association officer or director after an investigation in accordance with the procedures of the association. As used in this section, harassment means any verbal or physical conduct including threatening or obscene language, unwelcome sexual advances, stalking, actions including strikes, shoves, kicks, or other similar physical contact, or threats to do the same, or any other conduct with the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating a hostile, intimidating or offensive work environment. The decision of the appropriate disciplinary action to be taken shall be made by the investigatory team comprised of the President, and President-elect and/or Vice President and one member of the Board of Directors selected by the highest ranking officer not named in the complaint, upon consultation with legal counsel for the association. Disciplinary action may include any sanction authorized in the association's Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual. If the complaint names the President, President-Elect or Vice President, they may not participate in the proceedings and shall be replaced by the Immediate Past President or, alternatively, by another member of the Board of Directors selected by the highest ranking officer not named in the complaint.

*NOTE: Suggested procedures for processing complaints of harassment are available online at <http://www.realtor.org> or from the Member Policies Department.*

#### **Article 7 - Professional Standards and Arbitration**

**Section 1.** The responsibility of the association and of association Members relating to the enforcement of the Code of Ethics, the disciplining of Members, and the arbitration of disputes, and the organization and procedures incident thereto shall be governed by the *Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual* of the National Association of REALTORS®, as amended from time to time, which is by this reference incorporated into these Bylaws, provided, however, that any provision deemed inconsistent with state law shall be deleted or amended to comply with state law.

**Section 2.** It shall be the duty and responsibility of every REALTOR® Member of this association to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws and the Rules and Regulations of the association, the Constitution and Bylaws of the State Association, the *Constitution and Bylaws of the National Association of REALTORS®*, and to abide by the Code of Ethics of the National Association of REALTORS®, including the duty to mediate and arbitrate controversies arising out of real estate transactions as specified by Article 17 of the Code of Ethics, and as further defined and in accordance with the procedures set forth in the *Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual* of this association, as from time to time amended.

**Section 3.** The responsibility of the association and association members relating to the enforcement of the Code of Ethics, the disciplining of members, the arbitration of disputes, and the organization and procedures incident, thereto, shall be consistent with the cooperative professional standards enforcement agreement entered into by the association, which by this reference is made a part of these Bylaws.

#### **Article 8 - Use of the Terms REALTOR® and REALTORS®**

**Section 1.** Use of the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS® by Members shall, at all times, be subject to the provisions of the *Constitution and Bylaws of the National Association of REALTORS®* and to the Rules and Regulations prescribed by its Board of Directors. The association shall have the authority to control, jointly and in full cooperation with the National Association of REALTORS®, use of the terms within its jurisdiction. Any misuse of the terms by members is a violation of a membership duty and may

subject members to disciplinary action by the Board of Directors after a hearing as provided for in the association's Code of Ethics and Arbitration Manual.

**Section 2.** REALTOR® Members of the association shall have the privilege of using the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS® in connection with their places of business within the state or a state contiguous thereto so long as they remain REALTOR® Members in good standing. No other class of Members shall have this privilege.

**Section 3.** A REALTOR® Member who is a principal of a real estate firm, partnership, or corporation may use the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS® only if all the principals of such firm, partnership, or corporation who are actively engaged in the real estate profession within the state or a state contiguous thereto are REALTOR® Members or Institute Affiliate Members, as described in Section 1(b) of Article 4.

In the case of a REALTOR® member who is a principal of a real estate firm, partnership, or corporation whose business activity is substantially all commercial, the right to use the term REALTOR® or REALTORS® shall be limited to office locations in which a principal, partner, corporate officer, or branch office manager of the firm, partnership, or corporation holds REALTOR® membership. If a firm, partnership, or corporation operates additional places of business in which no principal, partner, corporate officer, or branch office manager holds REALTOR® membership, the term REALTOR® or REALTORS® may not be used in any reference to those additional places of business.

**Section 4.** Institute Affiliate Members shall not use the terms REALTOR® or REALTORS®, nor the imprint of the emblem seal of the National Association of REALTORS®.

#### **Article 9 - State and National Memberships**

**Section 1.** The association shall be a Member of the National Association of REALTORS® and the Georgia Association of REALTORS®. By reason of the association's Membership, each REALTOR® Member of the Member association shall be entitled to membership in the National Association of REALTORS® and the Georgia Association of REALTORS® without further payment of dues. The association shall continue as a Member of the State and National Associations, unless by a majority vote of all of its REALTOR® Members, decision is made to withdraw, in which case the State and National Associations shall be notified at least one month in advance of the date designated for the termination of such membership.

**Section 2.** The association recognizes the exclusive property rights of the National Association of REALTORS® in the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS®. The association shall discontinue use of the terms in any form in its name, upon ceasing to be a Member of the National Association, or upon a determination by the Board of Directors of the National Association that it has violated the conditions imposed upon the terms.

**Section 3.** The association adopts the Code of Ethics of the National Association of REALTORS® and agrees to enforce the Code among its REALTOR® Members. The association and all of its Members agree to abide by the *Constitution, Bylaws, Rules and Regulations*, and policies of the National Association and the Georgia Association of REALTORS®.

#### **Article 10 - Dues and Assessments**

**Section 1. Application Fee.** The Board of Directors may adopt an application fee for REALTOR® Membership in reasonable amount, not exceeding 3 times the amount of the annual dues for REALTOR® Membership, which shall be required to accompany each application for REALTOR® Membership and which shall become the property of the association upon final approval of the application.

**Section 2. Dues.** The annual dues of Members shall be as follows:

- (a) **Designated REALTOR® Members:** The annual dues of each Designated REALTOR® Member shall be in such amount as established annually by the Board of Directors, plus an additional amount to be

established annually by the Board of Directors times the number of real estate salespersons and licensed or certified appraisers who (1) are employed by or affiliated as independent contractors, or who are otherwise directly or indirectly licensed with such REALTOR® member, and (2) are not REALTOR® members of any association in the state or a state contiguous thereto or Institute Affiliate members of the association. In calculating the dues payable to the association by a Designated REALTOR® Member, non-member licensees as defined in (1) and (2) of this paragraph shall not be included in the computation of dues if the Designated REALTOR® has paid dues based on said non-member licensees in another association in the state or a state contiguous thereto, provided the Designated REALTOR® notifies the association in writing of the identity of the association to which dues have been remitted. In the case of a Designated REALTOR® Member in a firm, partnership, or corporation whose business activity is substantially all commercial, any assessments for non-member licensees shall be limited to licensees affiliated with the Designated REALTOR® (as defined in (1) and (2) of this paragraph) in the office where the Designated REALTOR® holds membership, and any other offices of the firm located within the jurisdiction of this association.

For the purpose of this Section, a REALTOR® Member of a Member association shall be held to be any member who has a place or places of business within the state or a state contiguous thereto and who, as principal, partner, corporate officer, or branch office manager of a real estate firm, partnership, or corporation, is actively engaged in the real estate profession as defined in Article III, Section 1, of the Constitution of the National Association of REALTORS®. An individual shall be deemed to be licensed with a REALTOR® if the license of the individual is held by the REALTOR®, or by any broker who is licensed with the REALTOR®, or by any entity in which the REALTOR® has a direct or indirect ownership interest and which is engaged in other aspects of the real estate business (except as provided for in Section 2(a) (1) hereof) provided that such licensee is not otherwise included in the computation of dues payable by the principal, partner, corporate officer, or branch office manager of the entity.

A REALTOR® with a direct or indirect ownership interest in an entity engaged exclusively in soliciting and/or referring clients and customers to the REALTOR® for consideration on a substantially exclusive basis shall annually file with the association on a form approved by the association a list of the licensees affiliated with that entity and shall certify that all of the licensees affiliated with the entity are solely engaged in referring clients and customers and are not engaged in listing, selling, leasing, renting, managing, counseling or appraising real property. The individuals disclosed on such form shall not be deemed to be licensed with the REALTOR® filing the form for purposes of this Section and shall not be included in calculating the annual dues of the Designated REALTOR®.

The exemption for any licensee included on the certification form shall automatically be revoked upon the individual being engaged in real estate licensed activities (listing, selling, leasing, renting, managing, counseling, or appraising real property) other than referrals, and dues for the current fiscal year shall be payable.

Membership dues shall be prorated for any licensee included on a certification form submitted to the association who during the same calendar year applies for REALTOR® membership in the association. However, membership dues shall not be prorated if the licensee held REALTOR® membership during the preceding calendar year.

- (b) **REALTOR® Members.** The annual dues of REALTOR® Members other than the Designated REALTOR® shall be as established annually by the Board of Directors.
- (c) **Institute Affiliate Members.** The annual dues of each Institute Affiliate Member shall be as established in Article II of the *Bylaws of the National Association of REALTORS®*.

*NOTE: The Institutes, Societies and Councils of the National Association shall be responsible for collecting and remitting dues to the National Association for Institute Affiliate Members (\$75.00). The National Association shall credit \$25.00 to the account of a local association for each Institute Affiliate Member whose office address is within the assigned territorial jurisdiction of that association, provided, however, if the office location is also within the territorial jurisdiction of a*

*Commercial Overlay Board (COB), the \$25.00 amount will be credited to the COB, unless the Institute Affiliate Member directs that the dues be distributed to the other association. The National Association shall also credit \$25.00 to the account of state associations for each Institute Affiliate Member whose office address is located within the territorial jurisdiction of the state association. Local and state associations may not establish any additional entrance, initiation fees or dues for Institute Affiliate Members, but may provide service packages to which Institute Affiliate Members may voluntarily subscribe.*

- (d) **Affiliate Members.** The annual dues of each Affiliate Member shall be as established annually by the Board of Directors.
- (e) **Public Service Members.** The annual dues of each Public Service Member shall be as established annually by the Board of Directors.
- (f) **Honorary Members.** Dues payable, if any, shall be at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

**Section 3. Payment of Dues.** Dues for all members shall be payable annually for the upcoming year on or before the (30<sup>th</sup>) day of December. Dues for new members shall be computed from the date of application and granting of provisional membership.

(Adopted 1/98, Amended 6/17)

A 10% late fee will be added to dues that are paid during January. Dues remaining unpaid as of February 1<sup>st</sup> will incur a 15% late fee.

In the event a sales licensee or licensed or certified appraiser who holds REALTOR® membership is dropped for nonpayment of association dues, and the individual remains with the designated REALTOR®'s firm, the dues obligation of the Designated REALTOR® (as set forth in Article 10, Section 2 [a]) will be increased to reflect the addition of a NON-MEMBER LICENSEE firm. Dues for this NON-MEMBER LICENSEE shall be calculated from the first day of the current fiscal year and are payable within thirty (30) days of the notice of termination.

If a member is terminated for nonpayment of financial obligations and wishes to be reinstated in the same calendar year as a REALTOR® member, they may do so upon payment of all financial obligations, including annual association dues, plus all late fees, plus a reinstatement fee of \$50.00.

**Section 4. Nonpayment of Financial Obligations.** If dues, fees, fines, or other assessments including amounts owed to the association or the association's Multiple Listing Service are not paid within forty-five (45) days after the due date, the nonpaying Member is subject to suspension at the discretion of the Board of Directors. Seventy-five (75) days after the due date, membership of the nonpaying Member shall automatically terminate unless within that time the amount due is paid. However, no action shall be taken to suspend or expel a Member for nonpayment of disputed amounts until the accuracy of the amount owed has been confirmed by the Board of Directors. A former Member who has had his membership terminated for nonpayment of dues, fees, fines, or other assessments duly levied in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws or the provisions of other Rules and Regulations of the association or any of its services, departments, divisions or subsidiaries may apply for reinstatement in a manner prescribed for new applicants for membership, or as prescribed in Section 3 for nonpayment of annual dues, after making payment in full of all accounts due as of the date of termination.

**Section 5. Deposit and Expenditures.** Deposits and expenditures of funds shall be in accordance with the policies established by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall administer the day to day finances of the association. Capital expenditures in excess of \$25,000 must first be authorized by a majority vote of the association members present and qualified to vote at any meeting at which a quorum is present. Absentee voting on capital expenditures in excess of \$25,000 will be allowed no more than 2 weeks prior to the meeting at which expenditures are to be considered. All requests to vote must be made to the CEO/AE in writing and all voting must be done in person at the association Office prior to the said meeting. (Amended 9/10)

**Section 6. Notice of Dues, Fees, Fines, Assessments, and Other Financial Obligations of Members.** All dues, fees, fines, assessments, or other financial obligations to the association or association Multiple Listing Service shall be noticed to the delinquent association Member in writing setting forth the amount owed and due date.

**Section 7. Emeritus Members.** The dues of REALTOR® Members who are REALTOR® Emeriti (as recognized by the National Association), Past Presidents of the National Association or recipients of the Distinguished Service Award shall be as determined by the Board of Directors.

*NOTE: A Member association's dues obligation to the National Association is reduced by an amount equal to the amount which the association is assessed for a REALTOR® Member, times the number of REALTOR® Emeriti (as recognized by the National Association), Past Presidents of the National Association, and recipients of the Distinguished Service Award of the National Association who are REALTOR® Members of the association. The dues obligation of such individuals to the local association should be reduced to reflect the reduction in the association's dues obligation to the National Association. The association may, at its option, choose to have no dues requirement for such individuals except as may be required to meet the association's obligation to the State Association with respect to such individuals. Member associations should determine whether the dues payable by the association to the State Association are reduced with respect to such individuals. It should be noted that this does not affect a "designated" REALTOR®'s dues obligation to the association with respect to those licensees employed by or affiliated with the "designated" REALTOR® who are not Members of the local association.*

**Section 8. President's Dues.** The Columbus Board of REALTORS® will waive the local portion of association annual dues for the current year's president and will pay on behalf of the president the state and national portions of the annual dues.

## **Article 11 - Officers and Directors**

**Section 1. Officers.** The elected officers of the association shall be a President, a President-Elect, and an Immediate Past President. They each shall serve for a term of 1 year. The office of President-Elect shall automatically advance to the office of President. The office of Immediate Past President shall automatically be filled by the previous year's President. In the event that the President is unable to fulfill his/her obligation as such, the President-Elect will assume the role of President until such time as the President is able to resume their duties. The qualifications for serving as an Officer will include having previously served for a full term as a Local Director. The qualifications for serving as a Local Director will include having held REALTOR® membership in good standing for a minimum of 2 years and having actively served at least 1 year on a local standing committee, with a verification of such involvement from the committee chair.

**Section 2. Duties of Officers.** The duties of the officers shall be such as their titles, by general usage, would indicate and such as may be assigned to them by the Board of Directors. It shall be the particular duty of the CEO/AE to keep the records of the association and to carry on all necessary correspondence with the National Association of REALTORS® and the Georgia Association of REALTORS®

### **Section 3. Board of Directors.**

- a) The governing body of the association shall be a Board of Directors consisting of the elected officers, the elected State Directors (as many as are allowed by state bylaws), six (6) elected Local Directors, Honorary State Directors, the REACH Committee Chair, the GARPAC Committee Chair, the MLS Committee Chair, and the Commercial Committee Chair, all of which shall be appointed by the President. The current President of the Phenix City Board of REALTORS® will serve as an ex-officio officer.
- b) State and Local Directors shall serve for terms of 2 years. The Officers, the REACH Committee Chair, the GARPAC Committee Chair, the MLS Committee Chair, the Commercial Committee Chair, and the Phenix City Board President shall serve for a term of 1 year. As many directors shall be elected each year as are required to fill vacancies.

- (c) No REALTOR® firm shall have more than 2 REALTORS® as Officers, no more than 2 REALTORS® as Local Directors, and no more than 2 REALTORS® as State Directors serving simultaneously, except that the REACH Committee Chair, the GARPAC Committee Chair, the MLS Committee Chair, and the Commercial Committee Chair may be from the same company as an Officer, State Director or Local Director.

#### **Section 4. Election of Officers and Directors.**

- a) **Nominating Committee.** At least 2 months before the annual election, a Nominating Committee of 7 REALTOR® Members shall be appointed by the President with the approval of the Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee shall select at least 2 candidates for the offices of President Elect and at least 2 candidates for each State and Local Director place to be filled on the Board of Directors. The report of the Nominating Committee shall be brought forth to the Board of Directors for approval, and upon approval, the slate of approved candidates will be mailed, or where permitted by state law, electronically transmitted, to each Member eligible to vote at least 3 weeks preceding the election. Additional candidates for the offices to be filled may be placed in nomination by petition signed by at least 10% percent of the REALTOR® Members eligible to vote. The petition shall be filed with the CEO/AE at least 2 weeks before the election. The CEO/AE shall send notice of such additional nominations to all Members eligible to vote before the election.
- b) **Ballot Voting / Absentee Voting.** The election of Officers and Directors shall take place at the annual meeting. Election shall be by ballot. The ballot shall contain the names of all candidates and the offices for which they are nominated. The Columbus Board of REALTORS® will allow absentee voting no more than 2 weeks prior to the annual election. All requests to vote absentee must be made to the CEO/AE in writing and all voting must be done in person at the association Office by 5:00 p.m. the business day before the election. Absentee ballots will be placed in the official Ballot Box along with the ballots that are completed at the annual meeting to be counted after the election.
- c) **Election Committee.** The President, with the approval of the Board of Directors, shall appoint an Election Committee of seven (7) REALTOR® Members to conduct the counting of votes. In case of a tie vote, the issue shall be determined by lot.

**Section 5. Vacancies.** Vacancies among the Officers and the Board of Directors shall be filled by a simple majority vote of the Board of Directors until the next annual election.

**Section 6. Removal of Officers and Directors.** In the event that an Officer or Director is deemed to be incapable of fulfilling the duties for which elected, but will not resign from office voluntarily, the Officer or Director may be removed from office under the following procedure:

- a) a petition requiring the removal of an Officer or Director and signed by not less than one-third of the voting membership or a majority of all Directors shall be filed with the President, or if the President is the subject of the petition, with the President-Elect, and shall specifically set forth the reasons the individual is deemed to be disqualified from further service.
- b) Upon receipt of the petition, and not less than 20 days or more than 45 days thereafter, a special meeting of the voting membership of the association shall be held, and the sole business of the meeting shall be to consider the charge against the Officer or Director, and to render a decision on such petition.
- c) The special meeting shall be noticed to all voting Members at least 10 days prior to the meeting, and shall be conducted by the President of the association unless the President's continued service in office is being considered at the meeting. In such case, the President-Elect will conduct the meeting of the hearing by the Members. Provided a quorum is present, a three-fourths vote of Members present and voting shall be required for removal from office.

**Section 8. Chief Staff Executive.** There shall be a chief staff executive (Chief Executive Officer /Association Executive), hired by the Board of Directors, who shall be the chief administrative officer of the association. The CEO/AE shall have the authority to hire, supervise, evaluate and terminate other staff, if any, and shall perform such other duties as prescribed by the board of directors.

The Association Executive shall report to the President of the Columbus Board of Realtors®. The President shall have the authority to temporarily, prior to a vote by the Board of Directors, relieve the Association Executive of their duties for the following:

- a) The Association Executive is under suspicion of or arrested for any criminal activity.
- b) The Association Executive is involved in any conduct of moral turpitude.

Unless expressly stated in this section, the Association Executive may only be relieved of their duties by a majority vote of the Board of Directors at any scheduled or called meeting. (Amended 10/15)

## **Article 12- Meetings**

**Section 1. Annual Meetings.** The annual meeting of the association shall be held during September of each year (unless otherwise specified), the date, place, and hour to be designated by the Board of Directors. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of the total number of all association members eligible and present to vote. (Amended 5/10)

**Section 2. Meetings of Directors.** The Board of Directors shall designate a regular time and place of meetings. Absence from three regular board meetings without an excuse deemed valid by the Board of Directors shall be construed as resignation.

**Section 3. Other Meetings.** Meetings of the Members may be held at other times as the President or the Board of Directors may determine, or upon the written request of at least 10% of the Members eligible to vote.

**Section 4. Notice of Meetings.** Written notice shall be given to every Member entitled to participate in the meeting at least one (1) week preceding all meetings. If a special meeting is called, it shall be accompanied by a statement of the purpose of the meeting.

**Section 5. Quorum.** A quorum for the transaction of business at Board of Directors meetings shall be one half of the total Board members plus one. A quorum for the transaction of business at membership meetings shall consist of the total number of all association members eligible and present to vote. (Amended 5/10)

**Section 6. Electronic Transaction of Business.** To the fullest extent permitted by law, the Board of Directors or membership may conduct business by electronic means.

**Section 7. Board of Directors Action without Meeting.** Unless specifically prohibited by the articles of incorporation, any action required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the Board of Directors may be taken without a meeting if consent in writing, setting forth the action so taken, shall be signed by all of the Directors. The consent shall be evidenced by one or more written approvals, each of which sets forth the action taken and bears the signature of one or more Directors. All the approvals evidencing the consent shall be delivered to the CEO/AE to be filed in the corporate records. The action taken shall be effective when all the directors have approved the consent unless the consent specifies a different effective date.

**Section 8. Review of Financial Records.** The adopted budget and current financials for the fiscal year of the Columbus Board of Realtors® shall be available by request for review at the board office by all Association Members during business hours. (Amended 10/15)

## Article 13 – Committees

**Section 1. Standing Committees.** The President shall appoint from among the REALTOR® Members, subject to confirmation by the Board of Directors, the following standing committees:

- Awards/Recognitions
- Budget / Finance
- Bylaws
- Circle of Excellence
- Commercial
- Cultural Diversity
- Education
- Entertainment
- GARPAC
- Grievance
- Legislative & Political Affairs
- Membership
- MLS
- Professional Standards
- Programs
- Property Management
- Public Relations & Communication
- R.E.A.C.H. (REALTORS® Extending a Caring Hand)

*Appointments to the Professional Standards Committee and Grievance Committee shall be consistent with the cooperative professional standards enforcement agreement of the association.*

**Section 2. Special Committees.** The President shall appoint, subject to confirmation by the Board of Directors, special committees as deemed necessary.

**Section 3. Organization.** All committees shall be of such size and shall have duties, functions, and powers as assigned by the President or the Board of Directors except as otherwise provided in these Bylaws.

**Section 4. President.** The President shall be an ex-officio member of all standing committees and shall be notified of their meetings.

**Section 5. Committee Action without Meeting.** Any committee may act by unanimous consent in writing without a meeting. The consent shall be evidenced by one or more written approvals, each of which sets forth the action taken and bears the signature of one or more of the members of the committee.

## Article 14 - Fiscal and Elective Year

**Section 1.** The Calendar year of the association shall be January 1 to December 31. *(amended 10/16)*

**Section 2.** The Elective year of the association shall be January 1 to December 31.

## Article 15 - Rules of Order

**Section 1.** *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition, shall be recognized as the authority governing the meetings of the association, its Board of Directors, and committees, in all instances wherein its provisions do not conflict with these Bylaws.

## Article 16 – Amendments

### Section 1. Amendment Procedures

- (a) These Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the Members present and qualified to vote at any meeting at which a quorum is present, provided the substance of such proposed amendment or amendments shall be plainly stated in the call for the meeting, except that the Board of Directors may, at any regular or special meeting of the Board of Directors at which a quorum is present, approve amendments to the Bylaws which are mandated by NAR policy.
- (b) Absentee voting on proposed amendments will be allowed no more than 2 weeks prior to the meeting at which amendments are to be considered. All requests to vote absentee must be made to the

CEO/AE in writing and all voting must be done in person at the association Office no later than 5:00 p.m. on the business day before the meeting.

**Section 2.** Notice of all meetings at which amendments are to be considered shall be mailed or electronically distributed to every member eligible to vote at least 1 (one) week prior to the meeting.

**Section 3.** Amendments to these Bylaws affecting the admission or qualification of REALTOR® and Institute Affiliate Members, the use of the terms REALTOR® and REALTORS®, or any alteration in the territorial jurisdiction of the association shall become effective upon their approval as authorized by the Board of Directors of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®.

#### **Article 17 – Dissolution**

**Section 1.** Upon the dissolution of this association, the Board of Directors, after providing for the payment of all obligations, shall distribute any remaining assets to the Georgia Association of REALTORS® or, within its discretion, to any other non-profit tax exempt organization.

#### **Article 18 - Multiple Listing**

**Section 1. Authority.** The association of REALTORS® shall maintain for the use of its Members a Multiple Listing Service, which shall be subject to the Bylaws of the association of REALTORS® and such rules and regulations as may be hereinafter adopted. (M)

**Section 2. Purpose.** A Multiple Listing Service is a means by which authorized Participants make blanket unilateral offers of compensation to other Participants (acting as subagents, buyer agents, or in other agency or non-agency capacities defined by law); by which cooperation among participants is enhanced: by which information is accumulated and disseminated to enable authorized Participants to prepare appraisals, analyses, and other valuations of real property for bona fide clients and customers: by which Participants engaging in real estate appraisal contribute to common databases; and is a facility for the orderly correlation and dissemination of listing information so participants may better serve their clients and the public. Entitlement to compensation is determined by the cooperating broker's performance as a procuring cause of the sale (or lease). (M)

#### **Section 3. Participation.**

Any REALTOR® Member of this or any other association who is a principal, partner, or corporate officer, or branch office manager acting on behalf of a principal, without further qualification, except as otherwise stipulated in these Bylaws, shall be eligible to participate in Multiple Listing upon agreeing in writing to conform to the rules and regulations thereof and to pay the costs incidental thereto. However, under no circumstances is any individual or firm, regardless of membership status, entitled to Multiple Listing Service membership or participation unless they hold a current, valid real estate broker's license and offer or accept compensation to and from other Participants or are licensed or certified by an appropriate state regulatory agency to engage in the appraisal of real property. Use of information developed by or published by an association Multiple Listing Service is strictly limited to the activities authorized under a Participant's licensure(s) or certification and unauthorized uses are prohibited. Further, none of the foregoing is intended to convey participation or membership or any right of access to information developed by or published by an association Multiple Listing Service where access to such information is prohibited by law.

Mere possession of a broker's license is not sufficient to qualify for MLS participation. Rather, the requirement that an individual or firm offers or accepts cooperation and compensation means that the participant actively endeavors during the operation of its real estate business to list real property of the type listed on the MLS and/or to accept offers of cooperation and compensation made by listing brokers or agents in the MLS. "Actively" means on a continual and ongoing basis during the operation of the participant's real estate business. The "actively" requirement is not intended to preclude MLS participation by a participant or potential participant that operates a real estate business on a part-time, seasonal, or

similarly time-limited basis or that has its business interrupted by periods of relative inactivity occasioned by market conditions. Similarly, the requirement is not intended to deny MLS participation to a participant or potential participant who has not achieved a minimum number of transactions despite good faith efforts. Nor is it intended to permit an MLS to deny participation based on the level of service provided by the participant or potential participant as long as the level of service satisfies state law.

The key is that the participant or potential participant actively endeavors to make or accept offers of cooperation and compensation with respect to properties of the type that are listed on the MLS in which participation is sought. This requirement does not permit an MLS to deny participation to a participant or potential participant that operates a "Virtual Office Website" (VOW) (including a VOW that the participant uses to refer customers to other participants) if the participant or potential participant actively endeavors to make or accept offers of cooperation and compensation. An MLS may evaluate whether a participant or potential participant actively endeavors during the operation of its real estate business to offer or accept cooperation and compensation only if the MLS has a reasonable basis to believe that the participant or potential participant is in fact not doing so. The membership requirement shall be applied in a nondiscriminatory manner to all participants and potential participants.

Participants and subscribers may be required, at the discretion of the MLS, to complete additional training of not more than 4 classroom hours in any 12-month period when deemed necessary by the MLS to familiarize participants and subscribers with system changes or enhancement and/or changes to MLS rules or policies. Participants and subscribers must be given the opportunity to complete any mandated additional training remotely.

**Nonmember Participatory Rights.** A nonmember applicant for MLS participation who is a principal, partner, corporate officer, or branch office manager acting on behalf of a principal, shall supply evidence satisfactory to the Membership Committee that he/she has no record of recent or pending bankruptcy; has no record of official sanctions involving unprofessional conduct; agrees to complete a course of instruction (if any) covering the MLS rules and regulations and computer training related to MLS information entry and retrieval, and shall pass such reasonable and non-discriminatory written examination thereon as may be required by the MLS; and shall agree that if elected as a Participant, he/she will abide by such rules and regulations and pay the MLS fees and dues, including the nonmember differential (if any), as from time to time established. Under no circumstances is any individual or firm entitled to MLS participation or membership unless they hold a current, valid real estate broker's license and offer or accept compensation to and from other Participants, or are licensed or certified by an appropriate state regulatory agency to engage in the appraisal of real property. Use of information developed by or published by an association Multiple Listing Service is strictly limited to the activities authorized under a Participant's licensure(s) or certification and unauthorized uses are prohibited. Further, none of the foregoing is intended to convey participation or membership or any right of access to information developed by or published by an association Multiple Listing Service where access to such information is prohibited by law. (Amended 3/10)

*NOTE: The association may choose to have the membership committee consider the following in determining a nonmember applicant's qualification for MLS participation or membership:*

- *All findings of Code of Ethics violations and violations of other membership duties in any other association within the past 3 year*
- *Pending ethics complaints (or hearings)*
- *Unsatisfied discipline pending*
- *Pending arbitration requests (or hearings)*
- *Unpaid arbitration awards or unpaid financial obligations to any other association or association MLS (M)*

**Section 4. Supervision.** The activity shall be operated under the supervision of the Multiple Listing Committee, in accordance with the rules and regulations, subject to approval of the Board of Directors.

**Section 5. Appointment of Committee.** The President shall appoint, subject to the confirmation of the Board of Directors, a Multiple Listing Committee of 9 REALTOR® members. At least 5 members of the

Committee shall be Participants in the Multiple Listing Service. The Committee members shall serve three-year staggered terms. The President shall select its Chairperson from among the members thereof.

**Section 6. Vacancies.** Vacancies in unexpired terms shall be filled as in the case of original appointees.

**Section 7. Attendance.** Any Committee member who fails to attend 3 regular or special meetings of the Committee, without excuse acceptable to the Chairperson of the Committee, shall be deemed to have resigned from the Committee and the vacancy shall be filled as herein provided for original appointees.

**Section 8. Subscribers.** Subscribers (or users) of the MLS include non-principal brokers, sales associates, and licensed and certified appraisers affiliated with Participants. Subscribers also include affiliated unlicensed administrative and clerical staff, personal assistants, and individuals seeking licensure or certification as real estate appraisers who are under the direct supervision of an MLS Participant or the Participant's licensed designee.

### **Membership Policy Statements Approved by the Board of Directors NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®**

(The following policy statements are informational, and not part of the Bylaws.)

#### **Statements of Membership Policy Related to Implementation of Board of Choice**

That, effective upon approval by the Board of Directors, the following statements of membership policy and amendments to the Model association Bylaws to implement the board of choice proposal be adopted.

1. The primary association of affiliation elected by a REALTOR® must be in the state where the REALTOR® is licensed and maintains his/her principal place of business. Licensees affiliated with a REALTOR® firm may choose as their "primary" association any association in the state where the firm maintains a "Designated" REALTOR®.

2. Membership shall be available in a secondary association on terms and conditions no more stringent than the requirements established in the association's Bylaws for REALTOR® and (REALTOR-ASSOCIATE® where applicable) membership. The privileges of membership shall be the same including the right to vote and hold office. Membership will be granted to individuals who hold REALTOR® or REALTOR-ASSOCIATE® membership in their primary association without any requirement that the Designated REALTOR®/Broker they are licensed or affiliated with hold membership in the secondary association. However, MLS services will only be available if the Designated REALTOR®/Broker participates in the MLS. Association dues shall not include a national allocation since NAR dues have been paid through the member's primary association. A state allocation may only be included if the member's primary association is located in a different state.

3. REALTORS® shall be entitled to purchase services from associations other than their primary association without the necessity of holding membership in those associations. Service fees will be determined by the individual associations. However, the association may require that a REALTOR® (principal) be licensed in the state as a condition of MLS participation.

#### **Concerning Board of Choice across State Lines**

That the membership choices currently provided under Board of Choice be expanded across state lines as follows:

Members may join a primary association across contiguous state lines. State association membership would be in the state where primary association membership is held.

#### **Portability of Membership Records (Files)**

In order to facilitate timely processing of applications for membership and to assist associations in determining an applicant's qualification for REALTOR® or REALTOR-ASSOCIATE® membership, associations shall, based on a request from another association, share information about current or former members. Minimum "core" member information shall include:

1. Previous applications for membership
2. All final findings of Code of Ethics violations and violations of other membership duties within the past three (3) years (when available)
3. Pending complaints alleging violations of the Code of Ethics or alleging violations of other membership duties
4. Incomplete or (pending) disciplinary measures
5. Pending arbitration requests (or hearings)
6. Unpaid arbitration awards or unpaid financial obligations to the association or its MLS
7. Any misuse of the term REALTOR® or REALTORS® in the name of the applicant's firm

An association may, at its discretion, consider information received from other associations when determining whether an applicant satisfies the association's membership requirements as established in the association's bylaws (not to exceed NAR's Membership Qualification Criteria).

#### **Clarification of the Term "Principal"**

The term "principal" as used in the NAR Constitution and Bylaws and in other relevant policies, includes licensed or certified individuals who are sole proprietors, partners in a partnership, officers or majority shareholders of a corporation, or office managers (including branch office managers) acting on behalf of principals of a real estate firm.

#### **Secondary Membership in a Board/Association**

When a member has joined a primary association and paid local, state, and national dues, secondary membership may be held in a local association in another state (provided the applicant meets all of the qualifications for membership) without holding membership in that state association, or alternatively, secondary membership may be held directly in the state association without holding membership in a local association in that state.

#### **Membership Requirements Related to Multiple Office Locations**

When considering an applicant for REALTOR® membership who is a principal in a real estate firm, associations have an obligation to determine that all of the principals of the real estate firm who are actively engaged in the real estate business in the state are either applying for or already hold REALTOR® membership (or Institute Affiliate membership, if applicable) in a board or association.

If an association (local, state, national) is notified by another association that a REALTOR® member has an office location elsewhere in the state that is not functioning as a "REALTOR®-office" (i.e., licensees affiliated with the office are not members or are not accounted for under the DR dues formula) the association where the REALTOR® holds primary membership shall be responsible, in cooperation with the state and national associations, for ensuring compliance with applicable membership policies (i.e., that said licensees hold membership in the REALTOR®'s primary association - or some other association in the state where the firm maintains a Designated REALTOR®/Broker presence - or that dues have been paid to an association based on non-member licensees affiliated with the office).