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*Q: Our Board spends an inordinate amount of time trying to resolve shareholder disputes. Our most recent dispute involves a complaint, where one shareholder is complaining that the son of a nearby share-holder is making too much noise when practicing his trumpet for the school band. What should we do?  
 Board Member, Queens*

A: The Board must determine whether the dispute involves a violation of the House Rules and/or terms of the Proprietary Lease. The Board must determine whether the playing was done in the proper time framework so as not to violate the House Rules. Most House Rules prohibit instrument playing during certain hours, usually during evening and sleeping hours. If there is a House Rule violation, the Board should have Management send a letter to the offending shareholder. If the violations persist, the Board should get their attorney involved.

What if the playing does not violate any House Rule? The Board has two options: 1) be proactive and try to have the shareholders settle their differences in a meeting with a Board volunteer; or 2) recommend an independent outside mediator. If no House Rule is violated it is incumbent upon the Board to maintain a neutral position. However, more and more Boards are recommending that the shareholders take their dispute to an independent mediation service. These professionally run mediations are often very successful and can lead to harmony amongst neighbors. In order to find these services you should check with your local Bar Association or check with your attorney to see what they suggest.

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