ADLER: Sisters education had a shaping impact

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"I didn't know what I wanted to do with that; I realize I probably should've gone into business, but I knew I wanted to be tech focused," he said.

His business began its startup process in 2015, coming out of his senior project with a team who sought to come up with a design for a water consumption monitor/sensor. They decided to do something about this because of the California drought at the time.

"We would love to wakeboard at lakes and we couldn't because the lakes would be dried up, so we had it impacting us in every way," he said.

The idea behind the sensor project was to help people to understand their water consumption and "make water conservation sexy."

Adler and his team went through the accelerated course classes at Cal Poly and were able to get investors. The business officially launched a year ago with its own website, investors and selling of the sensor and data system. Adler is the CEO of Flume, and his main job is to recruit investors and work with cities to get the sensor into metropolitan as well as rural areas.

The sensor works as a way to measure water consumption, which is a difficult set of data to measure. The small sensor attaches to a water meter and sends the information through a home or city's WiFi system to a mobile device and it produces realtime data as to how many gallons are used in a home per hour and per day.

There are two pieces to the sensor; the "deck," that is similar to an Amazon Echo, that goes inside the home to pick up the sensor's

PHOTO BY CEILI CORNELIUS

Eric Adler has developed a sensor that measures water consumption.

data, then the sensor itself which attaches to the water meter.

"The protocol for it is sort of like walkie-talkies, where the data from the sensor is communicated to the deck and then onto a phone so the user can easily read their own water consumption," Adler explained.

Adler says it is a user-friendly device, and takes less than 15 minutes to install, and if a user runs into issues, the team is ready to communicate with the customer via instant chat. The app is then downloadable for iPhone and Android that gives the user a set of data they can check on and read.

"We want it to be user-friendly, and once people start using the sensor, they see how much they use," he said.

Then through awareness of the data, they are able to see a huge reduction in consumption home to home. The sensor for homeowners helps reduce a water bill, and for a city, helps the city become more sustainable in their water consumption.

The sensor has been picked up by many major metropolitan areas in California; Texas; Oregon and the Southwest; as well as Chicago, which is a different market entirely,

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What if an HOA has questionable finances?

Dear Property Guy

By Mike Zoormajian

Dear Property Guy-

I'm looking at investment property in a subdivision with a homeowners association (HOA). A friend recently bought a home in the same subdivision and (the) lender required a review of HOA documents. These documents turned out to be in a significant state of disarray, which delayed the closing process.

Should this concern me? How big of a red flag is it when the HOA won't provide financials? Could poor HOA management impact the value of the property? If I buy in this community am I on the hook for their poor management?

Confused in Sisters

Dear Confused:

HOAs can be a blessing or a curse. At their best, they maintain standards of living and property values. At their worst, they become fiefdoms for power-hungry, petty residents with nothing better to do than check paint colors, measure grass, and ensure fences are set back properly. The problem with many associations is they are run by volunteers who have neither the expertise nor experience to manage what is essentially a good-sized business.

A well-run HOA will maximize property values and minimize drama. That's the best you can hope for. A poorly run HOA can destroy property values by limiting potential buyers, sow enmity among residents, and create financial liability for residents by mismanagement.

Oregon has some laws on the books regarding HOA handling of financial documents. They need to be sufficiently detailed for accounting purposes. They need to consist of a balance sheet and income statement. Finally, these statements need to be reviewed by a CPA, and distributed to each owner.

That's it.

This is all a pretty low legal bar. Notice the law doesn't require third-party review of individual journal entries, or any specific requirements as to review of expenditures.

Financial data should be available on the HOA website. If the Board isn't forthcoming with financial data or expenses seem out of whack this should be a major red flag to any resident or potential buyers. As a buyer, HOA docs should be part of your disclosure packet. Make sure to review them.

Finally, realize that when you are buying into an HOA property, you are assuming liability for the actions of the HOA. Meaning if the finances go bad, you may be on the hook for a (potentially large) special assessment.

For these reasons, I always recommend every resident in an HOA neighborhood take an active part in the oversight and management of what is likely your largest single asset, your residence.

Mike Zoormajian is Principal at WetDog Properties in Sisters, OR. Providing investor, property management, and relocation services. Questions to: letters@wetdogpnw.com.

Legal advice is worth what you pay for it. Consult a real attorney before doing anything crazy.