



## **Sunday Column**

**By Kim Bragman, 2020 Chairman**

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### **Do you know what you're signing? Read the forms and ask questions**

You'd be surprised how many people sign real estate documents without ever reading them. Then again, maybe you wouldn't. Perhaps you've put your signature at the bottom of a contract or form that you merely skimmed over. That approach to such important documents is a bad idea.

#### **Words have meaning**

From beginning to end, a real estate transaction will present you with more notices, disclosures, contracts and applications than just about any other activity you'll ever undertake. The numbers on these documents matter, but it doesn't stop there – the words matter, too. In fact, if any party disputes who was obligated to do what, how or when, the words on the page carry more weight than any verbal discussions or agreements. The written words may even spell out how a dispute gets resolved – like mandatory mediation, for example.

#### **Start off on the right foot**

Early in the process, sellers will likely be presented with a listing agreement, and buyers may be asked to sign a buyer's representation agreement. These contracts outline the agency arrangement between you and your real estate broker. They protect both parties by spelling out what services the broker will provide, as well as details about compensation and duration of the agreement.

If there's anything you don't understand about the listing or buyer's representation agreement, ask your REALTOR® to explain it to you. These agreements are not typically complex, but they do cover many specifics and potential scenarios.

#### **Ask questions**

Whether you're a buyer or seller, you will eventually deal with a contract offer. And as you might imagine, the Texas Real Estate Commission's contract for the sale of a one- to four-family home covers quite a bit more than just the purchase price.

Go over the contract and discuss it with your REALTOR® before making or accepting an offer. That way, you can work out any confusion before you find yourself facing an important decision with a deadline looming.

The contract is only one of many key documents that go into a transaction. Real estate forms can be overwhelming, so you should never be embarrassed to ask for clarification about disclosure forms, loan applications and disclosures, appraisals, title commitments, surveys,

contract addenda, and other documents. If you can't get a straight answer from a service provider, I recommend you ask your REALTOR®.

**Keep your eyes open at the close**

If you've never participated in a real estate closing, bring your pen and be prepared to sign ... and sign and sign and sign. Many people don't look at closing documents until they show up to the closing itself. They may glance at the title on a form and listen to a one-sentence explanation of the document's purpose before signing it. Occasionally, a person *will* read every page right at the closing table, slowing the process to a crawl.

A better approach is to request the closing documents prior to the day you close. You can then spend time reviewing the materials to make sure that you understand everything and that all facets of the transaction are properly represented. You also should check for accuracy. It's not unheard of for an error to pop up – either in the numbers or some other important aspect of the deal.

When you thoroughly examine the paperwork involved in purchasing or selling a home and rely on your REALTOR® to assist you along the way, you minimize the chance of future surprises. After all, the documents you fill out and sign form the basis of a decision you will be living with for some time to come.

For more information on buying or selling your home visit [SABOR.com](http://SABOR.com) and use a San Antonio area REALTOR®.

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