

A New Chapter for Highland Lakes

Member Questions and Answers

August 20, 2026

Today the Highland Lakes Association of REALTORS® and the Austin Board of REALTORS® announced an agreement to combine into one organization. If members approve, HLAoR continues as the Highland Lakes Chapter of the Austin Board of REALTORS®, and Highland Lakes MLS unifies with Unlock MLS.

Your Board initiated this, negotiated its terms, and is recommending a vote in favor. The decision belongs to you. Highland Lakes members vote on September 8, and it takes two-thirds approval to pass.

These are the questions we expect first. More will be added as they come in, and this page is updated as open items are settled.

1. WHY NOW

Why is our Board doing this now?

Because we would rather choose our future than have it narrowed for us. Every small association in the country is facing the same squeeze — softening membership, rising platform and technology costs, rising member benefit expenses, and margins that get thinner each year. The reality is, those pressures are real and they are not getting better anytime soon.

Your Board decided to act while Highland Lakes is still viable: strong reserves, a valuable MLS, and a respected local brand. That is exactly what let us negotiate on our terms rather than someone else's. Waiting two or three years would have shrunk both our options and our leverage.

Are we in financial trouble? Is that the real reason?

No — and that is the point. We are acting from strength, not distress. Like every small association, we face rising platform and technology costs alongside softening revenue, and we are not going to pretend those headwinds do not exist. But we are healthy today, and doing this while we are healthy is what earned us the commitments below. Waiting until our options had narrowed would have been the mistake. Your Board looked at where that line goes if nothing changes, and decided it's smarter to act from strength now than to wait until "healthy" isn't the word anymore.

Who's on our Board, and why should we trust their read on this?

[Your directors](#) are working agents and brokers in this market — the same softening membership numbers and rising platform costs hit their own businesses. They're not outside consultants recommending something they don't have to live with. They've asked the hard questions, and are recommending this because they care about the future of their association.

What did acting early actually buy us?

Terms we could not have commanded from a weaker position. These were negotiated by your Board, not offered to us:

- The Highland Lakes name continues as the chapter name.
- The Marble Falls office continues, committed for a minimum of five years.
- Our current staff transfer with the combination.
- Our 2026 Board of Directors continues as the Highland Lakes Chapter Council.
- A permanent Chapter seat on the ABoR and Unlock MLS Boards, with the first director appointed by our own Board.
- A dedicated Highland Lakes Policy Team, TREPAC events, Chapter luncheons, education programming, and support for the local affiliate expo.
- No application fee for transferring members.

Did the Board look at other options?

Yes — the Board looked at this from every real angle before landing here: staying fully independent, cutting expenses to close the gap, and partnering with others. None held up the way this deal does. Independence doesn't solve the problem members already feel — roughly two-thirds of our own MLS subscribers already pay for a second Unlock MLS subscription today, because one system doesn't cover their whole market. Cutting costs doesn't work either, since nearly everything HLAoR spends goes to benefits members actually rely on — "cut expenses" just means less service by another name. And weighed against other partnership options, this deal was the only path that gave us terms we negotiated rather than terms handed to us later, with a partner strong enough to maintain and build on what Highland Lakes has already done, not replace it.

6. Is this Austin pushing into our market?

No. Any licensed agent in Texas can already work anywhere in the state — our market was never fenced off, and this does not change who can list or sell where. What changes is our cost structure and the back office behind us. Your local knowledge, your relationships, and your reputation remain your advantage, and this market stays yours.

Doesn't a bigger association mean we get standardized into it?

Both organizations agree that would be a bad outcome, and neither is arguing that bigger is better. The chapter structure exists precisely because some things are distinct and need to stay distinct. Everything local stays local, with more behind it when you want it.

2. WHY THIS WAS CONFIDENTIAL, AND WHY THE TIMELINE LOOKS TIGHT

Why did we hear about this only now?

Because the early work was a study, not a decision. Boards work through a question like this privately before there is anything real to decide — talking publicly about a maybe would have created uncertainty for members and staff, put our subscriptions and our negotiating position at risk, and stirred worry about something that might never happen.

The moment there was an actual proposal, it came to the membership. That is today.

Why does the schedule feel so fast?

The early evaluation was confidential for the same reason any board studies a major decision privately before it's real — so it doesn't create uncertainty for members and staff over something that might never happen. The moment there was a real proposal, it came to the membership, and members hold the deciding vote. The timeline is set by NAR approval for 2027 dues billing, not by anyone forcing it through.

Who actually decides?

You do. This happens only if two-thirds of voting members approve in September. Our Board brought it forward and shaped every term; the membership has the final say. There is no version of this that gets done to us.

3. WHAT CONTINUES

What stays in place?

- The Highland Lakes name, as the Highland Lakes Chapter of the Austin Board of REALTORS®.
- The Marble Falls office, with a local staff presence, committed for a minimum of five years.
- Our current employees, who transfer with the combination.
- Local advocacy, community involvement, volunteer opportunities, and dedicated Highland Lakes events.
- Your Supra eKEY and lockboxes, with no interruption in service. Forewarn continues as well.
- Local association dues at \$175, and the same MLS and key billing dates — March 31 and September 30.

How will Highland Lakes members be represented?

Three ways, all specific:

- A Highland Lakes Chapter Council made up of Highland Lakes REALTORS®. Our 2026 Board of Directors becomes the initial Council. It sets chapter priorities and shapes chapter programming and local initiatives.

- A permanent Chapter seat on the ABoR Board of Directors, held by a member whose broker of record has a principal office in the Highland Lakes area. Because ABoR and Unlock MLS elect the same slate of directors, that seat carries a vote on both boards. Our Board appoints the first director, through the end of 2028; from 2029 the seat is filled by election, and the Highland Lakes geographic requirement stays attached to it permanently.
- A dedicated Highland Lakes Policy Team, so local issues are worked by people who live and sell here.

Does my REALTOR® membership change?

You remain a REALTOR® and a member of Texas REALTORS® and the National Association of REALTORS®. Your local association becomes ABoR, and you belong to the Highland Lakes Chapter within it. You do not submit an application, and there is no application fee. Both organizations already use the same membership system, so records transfer directly.

4. WHAT CHANGES

We are not going to tell you nothing changes. Here is what does.

What happens to Highland Lakes MLS?

Highland Lakes MLS unifies with Unlock MLS, so both markets sit in one complete, cooperatively maintained record. A complete record is what keeps a market accurate and fair, and it is what makes your advice to a client hold up.

I use Paragon. Will I have to learn Matrix?

Eventually, yes. About 65% of Highland Lakes MLS subscribers already subscribe to Unlock MLS and already work in Matrix. For the remaining 35%, this is a real change to how you work, and we are not going to minimize it. The migration is planned for 2027, and you will have several months of dedicated training and support — hands-on here in the Marble Falls office and online — before you move.

What happens to what I have saved in Paragon?

Carrying Highland Lakes listing and sales history into the combined record is a priority in migration planning. The specifics on saved searches, contacts, CMAs and history are being worked out now, and we will publish them well ahead of any conversion rather than guess at them today.

What legally happens to HLAoR?

The proxy materials use precise legal language, and we encourage you to read it.. Members are asked to approve a Plan of Distribution under which HLAoR would wind up its business, satisfy its debts and obligations, transfer its remaining assets to the Austin Board of REALTORS®, and formally terminate as a Texas nonprofit corporation. The assets that transfer include the Marble Falls building, contracts and licenses, our trademarks and name, our website and phone numbers, employment

relationships with current staff, and the shares of Highland Lakes MLS, Inc., which then combines into Unlock MLS.

That is the legal mechanism that allows one organization to continue rather than two. Nothing is sold, no member receives any payment or distribution, and your REALTOR® membership carries over without a lapse. What continues, continues inside ABoR — the name, the office, the staff, the Council, and the seat.

What are we giving up?

Three things, plainly. HLAoR ceases to exist as a separate corporation. We stop electing our own association board — the Chapter Council carries local governance, and from 2029 the Chapter seat is filled by a vote of the full ABoR membership rather than by Highland Lakes members alone. And Highland Lakes MLS is governed under Unlock MLS rules going forward, with our voice carried through the Chapter Board of Directors seat and Chapter Council.

5. WHAT IT COSTS YOU

Will my costs go up or down?

It depends on whether you work one market or both. Your local association dues stay at \$175 either way, and billing dates do not change. Where costs move, it is on the MLS and Supra eKEY lines. These figures are annual and after tax:

Your situation today	Annual change
Agent, Highland Lakes and Unlock MLS	\$575 less
Broker, Highland Lakes and Unlock MLS	\$745 less
Agent, Highland Lakes only	\$177 more
Broker, Highland Lakes only	\$6 more

So members who work only this market pay more.

Some do. If you work only the Highland Lakes market, MLS and eKEY fees will be higher than Highland Lakes-only pricing is today — about \$177 a year for an agent, about \$6 for a broker. What that buys is the full Unlock MLS toolset, a larger suite of education offerings, and member benefits that a smaller association cannot fund on its own.

And members who work both markets?

About 65% of Highland Lakes MLS subscribers already carry both subscriptions and pay twice for overlapping coverage. That stops. An agent saves about \$575 a year and a broker about \$745.

Are there other fees?

Unlock MLS offers an optional Leasing Management Service at \$85 a year. If you do not handle leases or property management, you do not buy it. Full price sheets for both organizations are published side by side at hlaor.realtor/newchapter so you can check your own situation rather than take a summary's word for it.

6. THE VOTE

What am I voting on, and when?

Date	What happens
Mon., Aug. 31, 10:00 a.m.	Annual Meeting and Town Hall, Marble Falls office — leadership walks through the proposal and takes questions.
Fri., Aug. 28	Proxy ballots and voting instructions sent.
Fri., Sept. 4, 5:00 p.m. CT	Proxy deadline.
Tue., Sept. 8	Member vote.

You may vote in person or by proxy. Approval requires two-thirds of the members voting, and a quorum must be present for the meeting to act at all — so submitting a proxy matters even if you cannot attend, and even if you intend to vote against.

Is there a second vote?

Yes. ABoR members vote August 24–26 on a Bylaws amendment that creates the chapter framework and the Chapter seat. Both votes have to pass. That one is theirs; September 8 is ours.

What happens if we vote no?

Both associations keep operating exactly as they do today — no immediate change. But the pressures we described above don't reverse on their own just because the vote fails. Absent this agreement, your Board would be facing real decisions on its own: adjustments to dues, to member benefits, and to staffing, on a timeline we don't control as well as we do today. We're not telling you the outcome is decided — it isn't, and the vote is genuinely yours. We just want you deciding with the full picture, not a partial one.

Does anyone else have to approve it?

Yes. After both member votes, the change goes to the National Association of REALTORS® for administrative approval, which needs to land in time for 2027 dues billing.

7. WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW YET

Some answers are not settled, and we would rather list them than fill the space with something vague. Each of these will be published at **hlaor.realtor/newchapter** as it is resolved, and the substantive ones will be addressed at the August 31 town hall.

- The firm date Paragon is retired and Matrix conversion completes, and whether there is a period of access to both systems.
- Exactly what transfers from Paragon — listing and sales history, saved searches, contacts, CMAs, photos — and any limitations.
- How existing Supra accounts move onto Unlock MLS billing, and what members need to do.
- What brokers need to file, and by when — office paperwork, participation agreements, designated broker documentation.
- IDX feeds, broker data feeds, and website vendor integrations during conversion.
- How the September 1 billing cycle is handled for members who subscribe only to Highland Lakes MLS.
- Whether locally raised TREPAC funds stay allocated to Highland Lakes-area advocacy.
- The scholarship program, 2026 awards already committed, and local sponsorships.

8. WHERE TO GET ANSWERS

I have a question that isn't here.

Bring it to the Annual Meeting and Town Hall on Monday, August 31 at 10:00 a.m. at the Marble Falls office — that is what it is for, and questions submitted beforehand get answered there. You can also contact Luanne Coleman, CEO, at luanne@hlaor.realtor, or submit a question through the form at **hlaor.realtor/newchapter**.

Where do I find the documents?

hlaor.realtor/newchapter carries this FAQ, the transaction documents, fee comparisons and both organizations' price sheets, and the transition schedule.

Will this be updated?

Yes. It is a living document, updated as questions come in and as open items are settled. When something changes, we will say what changed.