
Condo Smarts

Headline: Building Commissioning

Topic: Operations Planning

Publication / Date: The Province, Dec 12, 2019

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Dear Tony: I am on the first strata council of a new building in Metro Vancouver and we are having some challenges trying to determine our obligations. We have a management company who are helping us set up the operations but we don't have any type of master plan of operations. Who would normally set this up? Do we hire a consultant or can we expect our manager to set up an operations plan? We are concerned that we might be missing obligations which could result in building systems being affected or risk our warranty.

Carol Myers

Dear Carol: To ensure your strata corporation is properly budgeting for operations and administering the common property and common assets through a management plan, a best practice is to start with a complete building commissioning. You are absolutely correct, it is critical to establish a complete operations plan to ensure your assets are maintained and inspected on a routine basis, and for any defects or building claims to be properly documented for your strata corporation to file warranty claims.

When a new building is completed, the owner developer at the first Annual General Meeting, which occurred in your case 3 months after the first unit was occupied, must transfer to your strata corporation a complete list of:

- names and addresses of all contractors, subcontractors and persons who supplied labour or materials to the project, as required by the regulations;

- manuals, warranties, plans that were required to obtain a building permit and any amendments to the building permit plans that were filed with the issuer of the building permit;
- any document in the owner developer's possession that indicates the actual location of a pipe, wire, cable, chute, duct or other facility for the passage or provision of systems or services, if the owner developer has reason to believe that the pipe, wire, cable, chute, duct or other facility is not located as shown on a plan or plan amendment filed with the issuer of the building permit;
- all contracts entered into by or on behalf of the strata corporation; and
- all records required by the corporation under the *Act* and the Regulations.

An inventory of the records provided by the developer is a good place to start, and a website for your strata corporation to host all of these records will be valuable for your strata corporation, your manager, contractors and service suppliers.

When a building is commissioned a complete inventory of all services and facilities is established, along with the service and inspections requirements. Everything that is an obligation of the strata corporation to maintain and repair is identified. This will include mechanical equipment such as elevators, heating and ventilation blowers, fire safety systems, water pump circulation systems, drainage systems, hydro/geo thermal systems, heating and air conditioning, sump pumps, security and door entry systems, roofing drainage and access, and emergency back up generators. This is best done by an experienced building consultant who understands how

these systems operate and the best practices for maintenance and inspection. The consultant will create a vital inventory along with your service obligations which are valuable for the development of a depreciation report, and to quickly identify any deficiencies.

Working closely with the owner developer/contractor is also a valuable exercise as they retain the intimate knowledge of how your building was constructed. Once you have completed a building commissioning, a proactive operations plan ensures your building performs to its best energy and service levels, will reduce the risk of insurance claims or equipment losses, and protects your owners' investments. What is the greatest challenge many strata corporations face? They don't know what to repair or maintain if they don't have an inventory that itemizes all common components and the annual duties for maintenance and repairs.