

**Condo Smarts**

Headline: What is a voting card?

Topic: Voting

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**Dear Tony:** Could you please explain to strata owners the difference between a voting card and a ballot? Our strata corporation is an 88 unit townhouse and we consistently melt down into anarchy at our general meetings because they are poorly run and there is so much confusion over the procedures. At our recent meeting, owners were issued a ballot for council elections with 7 spaces, but no voting cards. The manager and president of council insisted that these were voting cards as well. Once all of the ballots for council election were collected, the manager and president left the room with the ballots to count, and there was nothing left to identify any of the eligible voters for the last 2 resolutions.

*Karl S. Vancouver*

**Dear Karl:** You are absolutely correct. A voting card is not a ballot. If you read the standard bylaws of the *Strata Property Act* or most bylaws as amended by strata corporations, they require that voting cards must be issued. A voting card identifies the eligible voter in person or by proxy who has registered, which in turn provides the chairperson with an identity of those eligible voters and the applicable number of votes per strata lot. The voting card is also important as it ensures a verifiable audit of ballots in the event a secret ballot is requested. On presentation of a voting card a ballot is then issued to ensure only those persons representing their strata lots or proxies have been included and recorded on the voting register as having received a ballot for the corresponding voting card.

Voting cards are best issued with the strata lot number on each card. When a person raises their voting card it is easy to identify the

strata lot number. This makes it easy to maintain a list of eligible voters who wish to speak to a motion, make or second a motion, or exercise other voting privileges, such as calling for the vote or to challenge a decision of the chair. At meetings in mixed use strata corporations it is important to clearly identify those non residential strata lots by a separate colour voting card to ensure that when a vote is called by show of voting card, or ballots are issued to a corresponding voting card, the relevant number of votes is applied to each strata lot. A show of generic voting cards for a majority vote may not be sufficient if one strata lot, such as a commercial grocery store has 38.75 votes due to its size and those votes are not considered. If the voting cards have strata lot numbers, the chairperson can easily look at the schedule of voting entitlement to determine other voting allocations.

I have seen a serious number of errors committed because of this oversight where every strata lot regardless of voting entitlement is simply given a blank voting card or hybrid ballot/voting card and the allocated votes are not considered. It is too late to discover that your ballots for council elections were also your voting cards and you still have business remaining. If there is other business remaining that requires voting, the strata corporation may actually have to re-register each eligible voter and proxy to be able to proceed with any level of accuracy. If a strata corporation is voting on a \$3 million dollar repair, accuracy is essential. A set of laminated voting cards with each strata lot can easily be created and maintained by the strata corporation and use for consecutive meetings. Read the bylaws and issue voting cards.

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