

Condo Smarts

Headline: Start the year off well organized

Topic: Strata Council

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Dear Tony: Our strata council are entirely new as of December 15th. The previous council who have served us well have retired and we had our first council meeting on Saturday the 2nd to start planning for the new year. As a past chair of foundations and associations, I have to say that I am appalled at the lack of organization and resources our council had to work with. The past president and treasurer came to the meeting to assist with transition but had no records or information to pass along. Our manager evidently shows up at meetings with information on the agenda and instructs council on their decisions, with the pertinent documents for each meeting. We like our manager and don't want a change, but we also want to be proactive in the management of our property. How do we develop a better working model without creating a power struggle with our manager?

Margaret M. Vancouver

Dear Margaret: A clearly defined business relationship with your strata manager is the best place to start. Information and communication are the two most powerful assets and tools for any organization, especially strata corporations. Strata councils are responsible for the administration and operation of the strata and that includes the administration of the annual budget, bylaw enforcement, contract negotiations and supervision, and maintenance and repair of the common property and assets. While your strata may choose to delegate some of its authority for operations to the manager, you the strata council are still responsible and liable for all those duties and actions. For your strata council to be effective you require information. How could you be expected to make any competent decisions without the documents? A good business relationship with your strata manager is essential for your strata to operate efficiently and

effectively, and for your strata council to be able to make decisions based on shared information.

Every strata council member requires a current operations binder or dedicated online access to all of the records that includes: a copy of the *Strata Property Act & Regulations*, your registered strata plan with the schedule of voting rights and unit entitlement, any easements or agreements that affect the operation and cost allocations of property, an updated version of the registered bylaws of the strata, a current copy of any rules of the strata, a copy of the strata insurance policy, minutes of past council and general meetings that affect current business decisions, copies of the current budgets and any three quarters vote resolutions approving expenses for special projects, a copy of the most recent depreciation report, any engineering reports that have current implications to the strata, copies of any service agreements and contracts currently in effect for your strata, and any other records or documents that may affect your strata operations. Whether your council are enforcing bylaws, reviewing service agreements, approving purchases, or reviewing maintenance and operations plans, you will require reliable information on which to base your decisions. As new council, an operations binder will provide you with the basic tools necessary to administer your strata.