Condominium Home Owners Association of British Columbia
Leadership, Education and Resources for Strata Owners Across BC
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Condo Smarts

Headline: Violence at Meetings
Topic: Annual General Meeting / Special General Meeting
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Written by: Tony Gioventu

Dear Tony: What happens when an owner is violent or abusive at our general meetings? Are we allowed to remove them from meetings? Many owners in our strata are now afraid to attend in-person meetings because of the threats and recent violence at our Special General Meeting. We sympathize with the frustrations of this owner because he cannot afford a much needed special levy, but the roofing in our Richmond complex is leaking, and there is no other option. At our annual meeting in May, he arrived drunk, was abusive to the manager at registration and then proceed to yell at the chair of the meeting and throw a chair at a wall. The meeting was motioned to terminate, at which point he left the meeting and we finished the balance of the business. We doubt we are not the only community addressing the rise in violence and aggression.

Jenna W.

Dear Jenna: Yes, violence and aggression are definitely on the rise. Our staff assist, host or chair meetings for strata corporations every week, and high-tension situations with special levies or significant strata fee increases often fuel plenty of conflict. Everyone is feeling financial pressures and it is being directed towards council members, on site staff and strata managers.

Whether a meeting is in-person or on line, there is no acceptable reason for aggression or abuse towards the management team or council members. Many strata corporations and managers are refusing in-person meetings now because of the aggression. It is important to ensure the safety of all participants at meetings.

If a person is hostile, violent or exhibits an altered behaviour and there is a suspicion that they are under the influence of any substance, do not wait for the incident to create a dangerous situation. It is possible to take a short pause or recess in the meeting to call the police and have the person removed and provide them with a proxy form to enable their voting rights.

With electronic meetings a person can be removed into the waiting room and permitted access once again when a vote is called.

Harassment and bullying bylaws are a common appearance for strata corporations. The purpose is to manage aggressive situations when they arise, but they are not to be used to censor opposing opinions.

When the strata corporation issues a notice of meeting, include a reminder on the first page regarding acceptable behaviour, the opportunity for all eligible owners/proxies to speak to motions, and how voting will be conducted. A bylaw that establishes the basic rules of order for your meetings is also helpful. When there are common understandings of procedure and behaviour, conflict is greatly reduced.

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