

Condo Smarts

Headline: Rigging the Votes

Topic: Voting

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Dear Condo Smarts: The column on secret ballots and voting booths was very interesting. The same strata council has been in control of our community for the past 11 years. We would like to share our experience and gain your insight. 2 years ago, we had a new manager show up to assist council the agm. Our regular manager was away. The new manager was quickly put in his place by the president, who said the council would run the elections and voting without the manager's assistance. The owners were rather suspicious, considering our regular manager has always run the meetings. We had 3 new owners, who are very popular with everyone that were nominated to council, and once again they did not get elected. The new manager offered to assist with counting votes, collecting ballots, and reporting the results, but council declined. With a great tip from your office, to flush out the fraud, we made sure that 10 voters in the crowd signed their ballots with purple ink. When the vote was called, not surprisingly the same council was once again elected. The owners at the meeting demanded to see the ballots, which ensued into a bit of a melee, with the president finally giving in. Not surprisingly, none of the purple inked ballots could be found. The president of council collects the ballots each year, and switched them when they went into a different room to count. Needless to say, everyone was outraged at the fraud, and new council elections have changed the landscape of our strata dramatically. Not a single past council member was elected back in. Do you have some thoughts on how to prevent balloting fraud? We suspect we are not the only ones with this issue. JVW in Metro Vancouver

illegal transfer of voting cards, and to ensure the voting rights of owners are protected, is to follow a step by step format for voting procedures. Step 1, voting cards with the strata lot numbers on them are issued at registration, Step 2, the voting booth and the voting box, held at the chairperson's or scrutineer's table, are set up and open for inspection. Step 3 if a secret ballot is called, voters then file to the chair/scrutineer table where they are issued ballots for each voting card, and the ballot issued is logged against their registration. Step 4 voters may use the secure voting booth and exercise their votes and place them in the ballot box. Step 5 last votes are called for and voting is closed Step 6 the votes are counted at a table in the meeting room by the appointed scrutineers Step 7 The result of the vote of those who voted in favour and against the resolution are tallied and the calculation is announced. For example, a 3/4 vote resolution, and whether the resolution has passed or failed. Each of these steps ensures a prudent level of transparency and no one handles the ballots but the registered voter, until they are counted. The counting is executed by the appointed scrutineers, which is commonly decided by a majority vote, and the procedures stay entirely visible. I have applied these procedures at meetings with as few as 8 strata lots and as many as 705 strata lots, and the procedures contribute greatly to a level of security that ensures the meetings run smoothly, while at the same time protecting the privacy and integrity of the owners and the strata corporation.

Dear JW: Voter and balloting fraud and ballot stuffing are easily prevented. The recent court decision involving Strata NW 971, brings to light not only the importance of voting honesty, but the protection of the voting rights of strata lot owners. To begin with, voting cards must be issued at registration to each eligible voter present in person or by proxy to the person representing those votes. Secret ballots are only required if requested by a person at the meeting, a majority vote of the voters, or the chairperson of the meeting. The best procedure to prevent voter abuses,

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