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MODERN URBAN LIVING IN CALGARY

Editor's note: Readers are encouraged to ask their most confounding condo questions to our resident condo specialist: Maria Bartolotti.

ASK MARIA

By Maria Bartolotti

THE BULLY AND THE BOARD

How to deal with pushy members of your condo board

Q: I know you've talked about this topic a couple of years ago, but, we have a board member who continues to disregard the President's opinions, and intimidate other members of the board, interrupts others and is extremely rude. Do you have any tips on handling this situation?

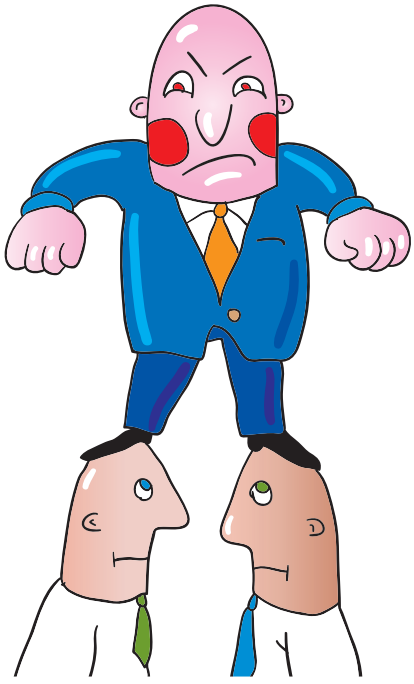
A: Being a member of a condo board can sometimes be a thankless task, and its only reward is the thought of doing good while in good company. But even that can turn into a burden, when one of the board members turns out to be someone with control issues, and consequently bullies everyone else to get his or her way.

The bully turns a nonprofit board into a corporation of one, and can deprive the directors and the management company the benefit of using the expertise and skills of other board members and residents that contribute to running the Condominium Corporation.

If not handled appropriately the "bully on the board" will have a far reaching effect on your board's productivity and can be an added hurdle to getting directives completed for your condo.

Here are some tips to help you deal with this type of situation.

- Stay calm: most individuals who feel they are being attacked, automatically get their defences up and want to attack back. When addressing the situation, it's always best to keep your cool, believe it or not, it does act as a diffuser between you and the bully. As a condo manager, I'll admit, it's not easy and I have lost my temper a time or two but it sure does make a difference if you can be the rational one in the situation.
- Most times, the "bully on the board" is dealing with an issue at work or home, try not to take it personally. Confront the situation in a diplomatic manner and hopefully the individual will acknowledge and apologize for their behaviour.
- If you feel comfortable, you may want to have a face-to-face with the bully outside the board meeting to discuss their behaviour. Address the issue immediately in a non-confrontational manner. Ignoring the situation does not make it go away, it may make it worse. Be willing to accommodate, if possible. Agree to disagree. If you cannot establish some common ground, move on, no need to argue about it endlessly.
- Boards can establish codes of conducts for their board meetings which could curtail bullying behaviour: limit the length of time for each speaker, this will give board members an opportunity to voice their opinions. No abusive language or insulting remarks against anyone. No personal attacks. No yelling or interruptions when someone is speaking or during the meeting. It is important to put the code of conduct in writing and circulate a copy to each board member.
- Focus on facts. Facts divert the discussion from opinions and feelings, making it easier to stay on track. Don't let poor behaviour divert your intentions for the good of the corporation. Stay focused.
- If necessary engage a third party such as a mediator or lawyer to help resolve the issue. People aren't always aware that they are being difficult and sometimes, having a neutral party might help in your efforts. If not, don't be afraid to take the necessary steps to remove them from the board.



It's important for board members to realize that personal differences and proving a point are secondary to the board's objectives. A good leader puts their energy towards a solution that will move the board forward not backwards.

Until next time... CL

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