

The Guidance of Governance

Strictly speaking, governance is the simple act of governing. I have personally, however, always preferred the more denotative meaning of the term, which indicates the sway a manager has over the community they manage.

Managers are professional generalists, Jacks and Jills of all trades, amateur mediators and professional jugglers. We have legislative frameworks within which we practice the governance of our communities: The *Protecting Condominium Owners Act*, the *Condominium Management Services Act*, and the *Condominium Act*, the CAO, the CMRAO and, of course, the declaration, bylaws and rules of each condominium corporation within which we work. These set clear boundaries regarding how condominium communities operate.

Given so many rules and laws, the environment can feel restrictive, binding, and suffocating. I don't know about you, but I doubt any condominium owner would describe their ideal living situation using any of those words. Everyone I've met has

had more of a "my home is my castle" attitude. Not surprisingly, conflict arises when these fiefdoms collide.

Are these concepts mutually exclusive? Are condominium communities fated to endless rounds at the Condominium Authority Tribunal? This is where the manager's influence comes in.

The legislation and decisions at the CAT require kinder, gentler enforcement of the governance tools at our disposal. Condominium managers are expected to educate the community concerning their governing documents, not only quote them chapter and verse, but offer creative solutions to mediate conflict.

Understanding the rationale behind each of these laws and restrictions is essential. Describe "what's in it for me." Contextualizing the ask often achieves compliance. In specific situations, customization of your communications and empathy matters when you're talking about someone's home. Such communications best position the corporation should enforcement be required in the future.

Condominium managers are also the consigliere of the board: "an adviser or counsellor to the boss, with the addi-

tional responsibility of representing the boss in important meetings within the community and with other communities." This requires the manager and board to be synchronized in their objectives, vision for the community, and understanding of governance.

As community outsiders, condominium managers often view the community most objectively. Frankly, we have no stake in specific agendas. We're looking to ensure a safe, well-maintained, contented community. Hearing the complaints and suggestions of the whole community often affords us the most balanced view.

Condominium management is necessarily an iterative process. Our role is to have important meetings with the community and individual members. In a perfect world, we have the time and opportunity to help each of the communities we serve to develop a shared community vision. ■



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