



## I DIDN'T KNOW I HAD TO DO THAT

For those that have been following my journey to self-management we had our unusual covid-19 detour and while we are still observing the emergency health directives, it has so far been a very enlightening experience not only for me but our Owners as well. (I thought I would talk about “still staying at home and very bored”, but anyone who has seen our zoom offerings of late knows I am anything but bored!)

### **One of our most difficult challenges has been getting trade support and maintenance issues dealt with. Which brings up our first “learning”:**

Have an alternate for all your trades and do your due diligence now to save scrambling around later. Most of our maintenance contractors experienced severe shortage of labour, partially because of various government programs and partially due to their own health concerns. Because we have a practice of over-maintaining our units, these delays, while inconvenient, have not resulted in any adverse incremental costs to repair a unit – so far.

### **This brings up the second “learning”:**

For good maintenance both literally and figuratively, regularly keep in touch with all of your trades, pay them as quickly as possible, and give them as much lead time as possible. This is about continuing to build important relationships.

The same goes for your Owners - communicate, communicate, communicate!

I have never been known for my patience, but a supportive board really helps when you get 8 emails over 4 hours from the same owner for the same reason and you've already told them six different ways there is nothing you can do. During this period, I have been learning to rely more heavily on my fellow Board members for support and they all come through.

### **Third lesson learned:**

Keep Board members informed in a seamless and regular fashion regarding all segments of Condo development and concerns, listen to and heed their advice.

Having all this extra time on my hands has allowed me to re-read the Declaration, By-Laws, and Common Element Rules (I didn't know how many rules we were breaking but then the question became does it really matter?) I now have a list of possible amendments for consideration. One interesting item I picked up was how to deal with AGMs and in particular quorums and deferred/postponed meetings – if you have not had your AGM and are worried about holding it with a quorum you might want to give this section a read!

One of the more unpleasant revelations during this period concerned our lovely outdoor swimming pool. We found out that we are subjected to several rules and regulations that we had no idea applied to us. There is a Nova Scotia guideline passed in 2014 that notionally classifies condominium pools as “public” and subject to RLSS (Royal Life-Saving Society) regulations – not nice! We are looking into it but the bottom line – we did not open our pool this year.

Funny thing, we have seen a tremendous up-tick in modification requests (exceptions to Common Use and Exclusive Common use areas). We developed processes to deal with them and in a couple of cases we even set up ad hoc committees to look at the request bearing in mind the issue of precedence. As a result of some of the requests being granted we are also reviewing our rules and regulations – you know those rules that are subject to Owner concurrence but are not registered on title and should always be included with any estoppel certificate issued.

As we continue to be in semi-self-isolation, we are continuing our digitization process and now have all the various Board and AGM minutes available to both the Board and Owners on request. Our ink

costs have decreased as has our paper usage. We have also developed processes for most of our work and we are already seeing more consistency and time-savings leaving me more time for an afternoon nap!

Hopefully, we can get back on track with the continuing efforts to self-management by the time our next newsletter is published. In the interim, stay safe, and stay socially engaged whenever possible.

### Coming next: “It’s time to move on” or “Is this the real new normal?”

I have three requests:

1. If you are not already a member of the CCI-NS, consider joining as either an individual or a corporation,
2. Pass this article along to someone who is not a member of the CCI-NS; and,
3. Provide feedback on the article (so far, I've had no feedback so fell like a mushroom!)

*Tom Birchall has been the president of his local condominium corporation since 2012 and together with his board operate a 79-unit townhouse type development that is still growing. They have agreed to share their many “lessons learned” from changing to a self-managed corporation in 2011. The views expressed herein are theirs and do not necessarily reflect the opinion or views of the CCI-NS. ■*



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