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An Interview with Condo Director George Bernashawi of the Mondeo Townhomes

Positive stories on shared facilities are few and far between in the world of condo boards, but some have found a way forward. Condo director George Bernashawi of the Mondeo Townhomes in Scarborough shares his insights in building harmony in a community that was developed over four phases almost 20 years ago.

Steve: What made you interested in serving as a director on your board?

George: I like to be part of the decision making process that is going to determine the future of the site. I feel that I can contribute by ensuring that spending aligns with value and ultimately has a positive impact on my condo community.

Steve: You've had a 15 year tenure on the board. What have you learned over that time?

George: A lot happens in 15 years. There were times when it was very tough being a member of the board; working toward difficult decisions when we didn't always have consensus on what was best.

The process of how you elect board members is very free, in the sense that, you get a bunch of people that are varied in their backgrounds, and some of them don't have much in terms of administrative and managerial experience. As a result, you have to work very hard to steer the decision making process in the right direction. That was pretty challenging at times because people were more emotional than they were logical. But, we survived that, and are doing well.

Also, it is very important to select a management company that is competent and keeps things on track. Currently we have a combination of skilled members of the board along with excellent management (Malvern), and that makes for smooth sailing.

Steve: Your corporation is a little different than most condo boards. Can you describe what makes yours unique?

George: We're a group of townhomes created from four building phases that came at different times over 4-5 years.

Each of these phases was incorporated as its own condo corporation. So four different boards have been merged into one super board that oversees the operations of all four phases.

We're also a gated community with our own streets. Common space includes everything within our boundaries, but not what's within the townhouses themselves. We're responsible for all common space including roads and sidewalks.

Steve: Superboards aren't very common. Can you describe the way yours works?

George: There are three positions from each of the four phases, so a full board has twelve members. Sometimes we cannot get three volunteers from a phase to join the board, but the minimum we go with is two. Each phase must agree to each action. So if 2 of 3 members from one phase vote against a motion, it doesn't carry, even if every other member of the superboard votes in favour of a motion. This way, all four condo corps making



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The superboard does have its own characteristics. You have four phases that all came on scene at different times, and therefore needs can differ. Fortunately we all understand that we're one site and one community

up the superboard must work together to reach agreement.

Steve: That must create some interesting challenges.

George: The superboard does have its own characteristics. You have four phases that all came on scene at different times, and therefore needs can differ. Fortunately we all understand that we're one site and one community, and it's best when we deal with issues in a united fashion.

Steve: One community, four condo corporations, built in different years - how do you handle maintenance fees?

George: Maintenance fees may differ from one phase to the other and that's understandable because the condos were built at different times. It's not always easy, but it's the right way to handle it.

Steve: That is a challenging situation from an accounting perspective. Do you see alignment happening in the future when the age difference between the corporations is less significant?

George: I believe as time passes the difference in age is going to become less significant. At some point the complexity of

accounting for different rates, and dealing with different corporations uniquely in what's practically speaking one community will lead to a common maintenance fee and approach to repair.

Steve: How do you ensure that repairs made to typically municipal features like roads and sidewalks are consistent with standards outside your walls?

George: We always want to make sure we align with what happens outside the site. Now we may be a little bit different in how we do things, but it's typically very minor in nature. And certainly we would never do anything different enough that we could be accused of being off-side in anyway.

Steve: Gated communities aren't as typical in Canada as they are in the United States. Can you describe living in a gated community?


George: I see living in a gated community as being primarily positive. I think it has a sense of being more secure. We have guards patrolling the space twice a day and if you have an issue you can phone the gate house and they'll help you out. Of course there's a cost associated with that, but in my view, I think it's worth it.

Steve: How tight is your security?

George: For cars security is very tight. Only an owner, resident or authorized guest is permitted past the gate. It's a little bit easier for a pedestrian to sneak in here because there are entry points outside the view of the gatehouse. But frankly, individuals passing through the community don't present much concern, and it hasn't been a problem because guards recognize the people who live here. If there's suspicion that a person doesn't belong, security keeps an eye on them, but typically it's neighbourhood kids exploring.

Steve: Any advice you'd like to share with you fellow condo directors?

George: In my experience the two most helpful aspects of running a condominium site are: One, having a cooperative and unified board. It's an additional blessing if the existing board members can invite people to fill vacant positions that they know are going to be a positive addition to the board. And two, find the right management company to partner with in running the site. We went through a long and challenging process to ensure we had the right management company that aligned with our sense of value and expectations. It was worth all the effort. **CV**



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