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Why Won't They Call Me Back? Tips to Avoid Construction FOMO in 2022

The impact of the pandemic to construction in terms of interrupted labour, material shortage and the resulting increase in material cost created a bottleneck in the second half of this year which caused many condo corporations to delay work to 2022. With this knowledge there will be a race to complete work that is both necessary and promised to owners and residents. Without proper planning throughout the winter months, many corporations will find themselves waiting in line behind those who were more prepared. A clear action plan should be in place for all corporations so that there is a transparent path to navigate throughout the year. With the increased demand on construction expected in spring 2022 the importance of including capital planning to the



fall/winter portion of your annual calendar will be more paramount this year than ever before.

For most large capital projects, planning must start in fall in order to be completed in the first half of the following year. Having a methodical approach to the planning process will allow the board and manager to work with the engineer over the winter months to determine the most accurate scope of work and allow time for thinking, asking questions and discussing the potential problems that may arise during the project. This time will also allow time for the board to hold information meetings or borrowing by-law meetings depending on what the project requires.

Starting the planning process in the spring will put the corporation into a time-trap whereby the pressure to go to tender and get the project into the schedule of engineer and contractor before they are booked up will rush the process leaving room for error with less time for review and oversight. Rushing into a project in the spring will increase the risk that something will be missed. Allowing for extra time in the fall and winter months will provide all parties the opportunity to review together and brainstorm the possibility for errors to occur and therefore get ahead of them before they do.

After scheduling all fall preventative maintenance items and finishing up the projects from the current year, a meeting should be held with manager and board to determine priority projects for the following year. Self-managed condos should take the same approach with the Board taking on the role of manager and director.

The reason for this is that when completing a condition assessment or any walks with the engineer or contractor, you want to ensure that it is not snowing when you're doing that walkaround. Once the condition assessment is completed, throughout the winter months

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the engineer, manager and board can work on finalizing the scope of work so that invitations can be sent to the contractors as soon as the snow starts to melt for a site walk. An important note is that the condition may have changed over the winter and so expectations should be clear from the start. The engineer should be asked about this risk and any cost for changes to the scope of work should be outlined in the proposal and agreed to by both the engineer and corporation prior to starting this phase of the project.

Each corporation should have an annual plan in place so that the manager and board are on the same page in terms of upcoming regular maintenance or project action plans. This annual plan should be unique to each corporation so that the parties involved are always acting proactively rather than playing catch-up.

Adding a capital project planning meeting to the end of the calendar year will force everyone to take notice, put on their thinking caps and come to the meeting prepared with ideas on how to plan the following year. This teamwork and forward thinking will put the corporation in a favourable position by allowing time to review the Reserve Fund Study and financial statements together

and making time a friend not an enemy when contractors and engineers are booked solid in the early months of the year.

In any year, without proper planning there is an increased risk that the project may be delayed simply due to the supply of contractors not meeting the demand of condominiums. In 2022 this will be amplified due to the number of projects deferred in 2021. As with everything in life there is no guarantee that the planning in the fall will work out exactly as planned or if the priority in the spring is the same as it was in the fall. These possibilities however will always be there and should not be used as an excuse not to plan.

Being prepared for what is known based on the annual calendar and project planning allows management and the board time to pivot and react to the unknown when such incidents occur and that is the largest benefit of planning ahead.

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