

I am a homeowner in support of SF1063. Here's why an Office of the Ombudsman is a valuable resource for both homeowners and board members:

- **It Is Available to Everyone:**

What few resources there are currently available to homeowners, they often come with qualifications or conditions to be able to access them. For example, Legal Aid will help in certain cases, but a homeowner has to be income qualified to access their services.

- **Access To Reliable, Credible Information**

Sometimes a homeowner – or a board member – will have a question or is looking for a resource and isn't sure where to look or how to find a credible source. Sometimes they will know what issues they want to solve, but aren't sure what questions to ask to get there. The typical current process is to ask a management company or a trade association, but that information tends to be biased toward the interests of those organizations, not the best interest of the homeowners.

- **Facilitates Informal Resolution:**

This is a way to offer a non-adversarial, confidential avenue for individuals to voice concerns and seek resolution, often preventing issues from escalating into formal complaints or lawsuits.

The current dispute process available to homeowners is to go back to the board who made the decision and ask for a different outcome. However, there is no requirement for the board to respond, let alone respond without bullying, intimidation or a rational justification for their decision. There are many instances where the board will get a lawyer – paid for with the dues of the homeowners – involved to get the homeowner to comply with a decision the board doesn't have to explain or justify.

While this office may not be able to directly resolve issues, this office would be instrumental in documenting the approach taken by the board and/or homeowner in order to better determine what training or information is needed for both sides.

- **Identifies Systemic Issues:**

Having a central place to collect data on business practices that are working well, those that are not working well and identifying trends of what else needs to be done is greatly needed.

By listening to a wide range of concerns, this office can identify patterns and systemic problems that may require organizational changes or policy revisions.

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