

Senate Bill No. 1560

CHAPTER 310

An act to amend Sections 1363.03 and 1365.2 of the Civil Code, relating to common interest developments, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor September 18, 2006. Filed with
Secretary of State September 18, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1560, Battin. Common interest developments: governance.

(1) The Davis-Stirling Common Interest Development Act governs the establishment and management of common interest developments. These provisions require that a common interest development be managed by an association and that elections related to the governance or administration of the common interest development conform to specified requirements. Existing law authorizes a member of an association to bring a civil action to enforce his or her rights and authorizes a court to impose a civil penalty of up to \$500 for a violation of the provisions governing elections.

This bill would revise provisions governing the conduct of elections in a common interest development. Among other things, the bill would require an association to adopt rules to allow one or more inspectors to appoint or oversee independent 3rd parties to verify signatures and count and tabulate votes, specify that a quorum shall only be required if so stated in the governing documents of the association or other provision of law, permit a ballot received by the inspector of elections to be treated as a member present for purposes of a quorum, authorize a secret ballot to be distributed and voted upon by the membership without a meeting, and impose other requirements relating to proxies and secret ballots, as specified.

(2) Existing law also requires the association of a common interest development to make the accounting books and records and the minutes of proceedings of the association available for inspection and copying by a member of the association, or the member's designated representative. The act permits the association to withhold or redact information from the association records regarding interior architectural plans and security features for individual homes. The act prohibits the association or an officer, director, employee, agent or volunteer of the association from being liable for damages for failing to withhold or redact information unless the failure to withhold or redact information was intentional or negligent.

This bill would revise and recast those provisions to permit the association to withhold or redact information from the association records regarding interior architectural plans for individual homes, including

security features. This bill would additionally prohibit a 3rd party from being liable for damages for failing to withhold or redact information unless the failure to withhold or redact information was intentional or negligent. This bill would permit the associate to deliver documents by electronic transmission or machine-readable storage if those records are transmitted in a redacted format, as specified.

(3) The bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute, but its provisions would become operative on July 1, 2006.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 1363.03 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1363.03. (a) An association shall adopt rules, in accordance with the procedures prescribed by Article 4 (commencing with Section 1357.100) of Chapter 2, that do all of the following:

(1) Ensure that if any candidate or member advocating a point of view is provided access to association media, newsletters, or Internet Web sites during a campaign, for purposes that are reasonably related to that election, equal access shall be provided to all candidates and members advocating a point of view, including those not endorsed by the board, for purposes that are reasonably related to the election. The association shall not edit or redact any content from these communications, but may include a statement specifying that the candidate or member, and not the association, is responsible for that content.

(2) Ensure access to the common area meeting space, if any exists, during a campaign, at no cost, to all candidates, including those who are not incumbents, and to all members advocating a point of view, including those not endorsed by the board, for purposes reasonably related to the election.

(3) Specify the qualifications for candidates for the board of directors and any other elected position, and procedures for the nomination of candidates, consistent with the governing documents. A nomination or election procedure shall not be deemed reasonable if it disallows any member of the association from nominating himself or herself for election to the board of directors.

(4) Specify the qualifications for voting, the voting power of each membership, the authenticity, validity, and effect of proxies, and the voting period for elections, including the times at which polls will open and close, consistent with the governing documents.

(5) Specify a method of selecting one or three independent third parties as inspector, or inspectors, of election utilizing one of the following methods:

(A) Appointment of the inspector or inspectors by the board.

(B) Election of the inspector or inspectors by the members of the association.

(C) Any other method for selecting the inspector or inspectors.

(6) Allow the inspector, or inspectors, to appoint and oversee additional persons to verify signatures and to count and tabulate votes as the inspector or inspectors deem appropriate, provided that the persons are independent third parties.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law or provision of the governing documents, elections regarding assessments legally requiring a vote, election and removal of members of the association board of directors, amendments to the governing documents, or the grant of exclusive use of common area property pursuant to Section 1363.07 shall be held by secret ballot in accordance with the procedures set forth in this section. A quorum shall be required only if so stated in the governing documents of the association or other provisions of law. If a quorum is required by the governing documents, each ballot received by the inspector of elections shall be treated as a member present at a meeting for purposes of establishing a quorum. An association shall allow for cumulative voting using the secret ballot procedures provided in this section, if cumulative voting is provided for in the governing documents.

(c) (1) The association shall select an independent third party or parties as an inspector of election. The number of inspectors of election shall be one or three.

(2) For the purposes of this section, an independent third party includes, but is not limited to, a volunteer poll worker with the county registrar of voters, a licensee of the California Board of Accountancy, or a notary public. An independent third party may be a member of the association, but may not be a member of the board of directors or a candidate for the board of directors or related to a member of the board of directors or a candidate for the board of directors. An independent third party may not be a person, business entity, or subdivision of a business entity who is currently employed or under contract to the association for any compensable services unless expressly authorized by rules of the association adopted pursuant to paragraph (5) of subdivision (a).

(3) The inspector or inspectors of election shall do all of the following:

(A) Determine the number of memberships entitled to vote and the voting power of each.

(B) Determine the authenticity, validity, and effect of proxies, if any.

(C) Receive ballots.

(D) Hear and determine all challenges and questions in any way arising out of or in connection with the right to vote.

(E) Count and tabulate all votes.

(F) Determine when the polls shall close, consistent with the governing documents.

(G) Determine the tabulated results of the election.

(H) Perform any acts as may be proper to conduct the election with fairness to all members in accordance with this section, the Corporations Code, and all applicable rules of the association regarding the conduct of the election that are not in conflict with this section.

(4) An inspector of election shall perform his or her duties impartially, in good faith, to the best of his or her ability, and as expeditiously as is practical. If there are three inspectors of election, the decision or act of a majority shall be effective in all respects as the decision or act of all. Any report made by the inspector or inspectors of election is prima facie evidence of the facts stated in the report.

(d) (1) For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

(A) “Proxy” means a written authorization signed by a member or the authorized representative of the member that gives another member or members the power to vote on behalf of that member.

(B) “Signed” means the placing of the member’s name on the proxy (whether by manual signature, typewriting, telegraphic transmission, or otherwise) by the member or authorized representative of the member.

(2) Proxies shall not be construed or used in lieu of a ballot. An association may use proxies if permitted or required by the bylaws of the association and if those proxies meet the requirements of this article, other laws, and the association’s governing documents, but the association shall not be required to prepare or distribute proxies pursuant to this section.

(3) Any instruction given in a proxy issued for an election that directs the manner in which the proxyholder is to cast the vote shall be set forth on a separate page of the proxy that can be detached and given to the proxyholder to retain. The proxyholder shall cast the member’s vote by secret ballot. The proxy may be revoked by the member prior to the receipt of the ballot by the inspector of elections as described in Section 7613 of the Corporations Code.

(e) Ballots and two preaddressed envelopes with instructions on how to return ballots shall be mailed by first-class mail or delivered by the association to every member not less than 30 days prior to the deadline for voting. In order to preserve confidentiality, a voter may not be identified by name, address, or lot, parcel, or unit number on the ballot. The association shall use as a model those procedures used by California counties for ensuring confidentiality of voter absentee ballots, including all of the following:

(1) The ballot itself is not signed by the voter, but is inserted into an envelope that is sealed. This envelope is inserted into a second envelope that is sealed. In the upper left hand corner of the second envelope, the voter shall sign his or her name, indicate his or her name, and indicate the address or separate interest identifier that entitles him or her to vote.

(2) The second envelope is addressed to the inspector or inspectors of election, who will be tallying the votes. The envelope may be mailed or delivered by hand to a location specified by the inspector or inspectors of election. The member may request a receipt for delivery.

(f) All votes shall be counted and tabulated by the inspector or inspectors of election or his or her designee in public at a properly noticed open meeting of the board of directors or members. Any candidate or other member of the association may witness the counting and tabulation of the

votes. No person, including a member of the association or an employee of the management company, shall open or otherwise review any ballot prior to the time and place at which the ballots are counted and tabulated. The inspector of election, or his or her designee, may verify the member's information and signature on the outer envelope prior to the meeting at which ballots are tabulated. Once a secret ballot is received by the inspector of elections, it shall be irrevocable.

(g) The tabulated results of the election shall be promptly reported to the board of directors of the association and shall be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the board of directors and shall be available for review by members of the association. Within 15 days of the election, the board shall publicize the tabulated results of the election in a communication directed to all members.

(h) The sealed ballots at all times shall be in the custody of the inspector or inspectors of election or at a location designated by the inspector or inspectors until after the tabulation of the vote, and until the time allowed by Section 7527 of the Corporations Code for challenging the election has expired, at which time custody shall be transferred to the association. If there is a recount or other challenge to the election process, the inspector or inspectors of election shall, upon written request, make the ballots available for inspection and review by an association member or his or her authorized representative. Any recount shall be conducted in a manner that preserves the confidentiality of the vote.

(i) After the transfer of the ballots to the association, the ballots shall be stored by the association in a secure place for no less than one year after the date of the election.

(j) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the rules adopted pursuant to this section may provide for the nomination of candidates from the floor of membership meetings or nomination by any other manner. Those rules may permit write-in candidates for ballots.

(k) Except for the meeting to count the votes required in subdivision (f), an election may be conducted entirely by mail unless otherwise specified in the governing documents.

(l) The provisions of this section apply to both incorporated and unincorporated associations, notwithstanding any contrary provision of the governing documents.

(m) The procedures set forth in this section shall apply to votes cast directly by the membership, but do not apply to votes cast by delegates or other elected representatives.

(n) In the event of a conflict between this section and the provisions of the Nonprofit Mutual Benefit Corporation Law (Part 3 (commencing with Section 7110) of Division 2 of Title 1 of the Corporations Code) relating to elections, the provisions of this section shall prevail.

(o) The amendments made to this section by the act adding this subdivision shall become operative on July 1, 2006.

SEC. 2. Section 1365.2 of the Civil Code is amended to read:

1365.2. (a) For the purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) “Association records” means all of the following:

(A) Any financial document required to be provided to a member in Section 1365.

(B) Any financial document or statement required to be provided in Section 1368.

(C) Interim financial statements, periodic or as compiled, containing any of the following:

(i) Balance sheet.

(ii) Income and expense statement.

(iii) Budget comparison.

(iv) General ledger. A “general ledger” is a report that shows all transactions that occurred in an association account over a specified period of time.

The records described in this subparagraph shall be prepared in accordance with an accrual or modified accrual basis of accounting.

(D) Executed contracts not otherwise privileged under law.

(E) Written board approval of vendor or contractor proposals or invoices.

(F) State and federal tax returns.

(G) Reserve account balances and records of payments made from reserve accounts.

(H) Agendas and minutes of meetings of the members, the board of directors and any committees appointed by the board of directors pursuant to Section 7212 of the Corporations Code; excluding, however, agendas, minutes, and other information from executive sessions of the board of directors as described in Section 1363.05.

(I) (i) Membership lists, including name, property address, and mailing address, if the conditions set forth in clause (ii) are met and except as otherwise provided in clause (iii).

(ii) The member requesting the list shall state the purpose for which the list is requested which purpose shall be reasonably related to the requester’s interest as a member. If the association reasonably believes that the information in the list will be used for another purpose, it may deny the member access to the list. If the request is denied, in any subsequent action brought by the member under subdivision (f), the association shall have the burden to prove that the member would have allowed use of the information for purposes unrelated to his or her interest as a member.

(iii) A member of the association may opt out of the sharing of his or her name, property address, and mailing address by notifying the association in writing that he or she prefers to be contacted via the alternative process described in subdivision (c) of Section 8330 of the Corporations Code. This opt-out shall remain in effect until changed by the member.

(J) Check registers.

(2) “Enhanced association records” means invoices, receipts and canceled checks for payments made by the association, purchase orders approved by the association, credit card statements for credit cards issued in the name of the association, statements for services rendered, and reimbursement requests submitted to the association, provided that the person submitting the reimbursement request shall be solely responsible for removing all personal identification information from the request.

(b) (1) The association shall make available association records and enhanced association records for the time periods and within the timeframes provided in subdivisions (i) and (j) for inspection and copying by a member of the association, or the member’s designated representative. The association may bill the requesting member for the direct and actual cost of copying requested documents. The association shall inform the member of the amount of the copying costs before copying the requested documents.

(2) A member of the association may designate another person to inspect and copy the specified association records on the member’s behalf. The member shall make this designation in writing.

(c) (1) The association shall make the specified association records available for inspection and copying in the association’s business office within the common interest development.

(2) If the association does not have a business office within the development, the association shall make the specified association records available for inspection and copying at a place that the requesting member and the association agree upon.

(3) If the association and the requesting member cannot agree upon a place for inspection and copying pursuant to paragraph (2), or if the requesting member submits a written request directly to the association for copies of specifically identified records, the association may satisfy the requirement to make the association records available for inspection and copying by mailing copies of the specifically identified records to the member by first-class mail within the timeframes set forth in subdivision (j).

(4) The association may bill the requesting member for the direct and actual cost of copying and mailing requested documents. The association shall inform the member of the amount of the copying and mailing costs, and the member shall agree to pay those costs, before copying and sending the requested documents.

(5) In addition to the direct and actual costs of copying and mailing, the association may bill the requesting member an amount not in excess of ten dollars (\$10) per hour, and not to exceed two hundred dollars (\$200) total per written request, for the time actually and reasonably involved in redacting the enhanced association records as provided in paragraph (2) of subdivision (a). The association shall inform the member of the estimated costs, and the member shall agree to pay those costs, before retrieving the requested documents.

(d) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the association may withhold or redact information from the association records for any of the following reasons:

(A) The release of the information is reasonably likely to lead to identity theft. For the purposes of this section, “identity theft” means the unauthorized use of another person’s personal identifying information to obtain credit, goods, services, money, or property. Examples of information that may be withheld or redacted pursuant to this paragraph include bank account numbers of members or vendors, social security or tax identification numbers, and check, stock, and credit card numbers.

(B) The release of the information is reasonably likely to lead to fraud in connection with the association.

(C) The information is privileged under law. Examples include documents subject to attorney-client privilege or relating to litigation in which the association is or may become involved, and confidential settlement agreements.

(D) The release of the information is reasonably likely to compromise the privacy of an individual member of the association.

(E) The information contains any of the following:

(i) Records of a-la-carte goods or services provided to individual members of the association for which the association received monetary consideration other than assessments.

(ii) Records of disciplinary actions, collection activities, or payment plans of members other than the member requesting the records.

(iii) Any person’s personal identification information, including, without limitation, social security number, tax identification number, driver’s license number, credit card account numbers, bank account number, and bank routing number.

(iv) Agendas, minutes, and other information from executive sessions of the board of directors as described in Section 1363.05, except for executed contracts not otherwise privileged. Privileged contracts shall not include contracts for maintenance, management, or legal services.

(v) Personnel records other than the payroll records required to be provided under paragraph (2).

(vi) Interior architectural plans, including security features, for individual homes.

(2) Except as provided by the attorney-client privilege, the association may not withhold or redact information concerning the compensation paid to employees, vendors, or contractors. Compensation information for individual employees shall be set forth by job classification or title, not by the employee’s name, social security number, or other personal information.

(3) No association, officer, director, employee, agent or volunteer of an association shall be liable for damages to a member of the association or any third party as the result of identity theft or other breach of privacy because of the failure to withhold or redact that member’s information

under this subdivision unless the failure to withhold or redact the information was intentional, willful, or negligent.

(4) If requested by the requesting member, an association that denies or redacts records shall provide a written explanation specifying the legal basis for withholding or redacting the requested records.

(e) (1) The association records, and any information from them, may not be sold, used for a commercial purpose, or used for any other purpose not reasonably related to a member's interest as a member. An association may bring an action against any person who violates this section for injunctive relief and for actual damages to the association caused by the violation.

(2) This section may not be construed to limit the right of an association to damages for misuse of information obtained from the association records pursuant to this section or to limit the right of an association to injunctive relief to stop the misuse of this information.

(3) An association shall be entitled to recover reasonable costs and expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, in a successful action to enforce its rights under this section.

(f) A member of an association may bring an action to enforce the member's right to inspect and copy the association records. If a court finds that the association unreasonably withheld access to the association records, the court shall award the member reasonable costs and expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, and may assess a civil penalty of up to five hundred dollars (\$500) for the denial of each separate written request. A cause of action under this section may be brought in small claims court if the amount of the demand does not exceed the jurisdiction of that court. A prevailing association may recover any costs if the court finds the action to be frivolous, unreasonable, or without foundation.

(g) The provisions of this section apply to any community service organization or similar entity, as defined in paragraph (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 1368, that is related to the association, and this section shall operate to give a member of the community service organization or similar entity a right to inspect and copy the records of that organization or entity equivalent to that granted to association members by this section.

(h) Requesting parties shall have the option of receiving specifically identified records by electronic transmission or machine-readable storage media as long as those records can be transmitted in a redacted format that does not allow the records to be altered. The cost of duplication shall be limited to the direct cost of producing the copy of a record in that electronic format. The association may deliver specifically identified records by electronic transmission or machine-readable storage media as long as those records can be transmitted in a redacted format that prevents the records from being altered.

(i) The time periods for which specified records shall be provided is as follows:

(1) Association records shall be made available for the current fiscal year and for each of the previous two fiscal years.

(2) Minutes of member and board meetings shall be permanently made available. If a committee has decisionmaking authority, minutes of the meetings of that committee shall be made available commencing January 1, 2007, and shall thereafter be permanently made available.

(j) The timeframes in which access to specified records shall be provided to a requesting member are as follows:

(1) Association records prepared during the current fiscal year, within 10 business days following the association's receipt of the request.

(2) Association records prepared during the previous two fiscal years, within 30 calendar days following the association's receipt of the request.

(3) Any record or statement available pursuant to Section 1365 or 1368, within the timeframe specified therein.

(4) Minutes of member and board meetings, within the timeframe specified in subdivision (d) of Section 1363.05.

(5) Minutes of meetings of committees with decisionmaking authority for meetings commencing on or after January 1, 2007, within 15 calendar days following approval.

(6) Membership list, within the timeframe specified in Section 8330 of the Corporations Code.

(k) There shall be no liability pursuant to this section for an association that fails to retain records for the periods specified in subdivision (i) that were created prior to January 1, 2006.

(l) As applied to an association and its members, the provisions of this section are intended to supersede the provisions of Sections 8330 and 8333 of the Corporations Code to the extent those sections are inconsistent.

(m) The provisions of this section shall not apply to any common interest development in which separate interests are being offered for sale by a subdivider under the authority of a public report issued by the Department of Real Estate so long as the subdivider or all subdividers offering those separate interests for sale, or any employees of those subdividers or any other person who receives direct or indirect compensation from any of those subdividers, comprise a majority of the members of the board of directors of the association. Notwithstanding the foregoing, this section shall apply to that common interest development no later than 10 years after the close of escrow for the first sale of a separate interest to a member of the general public pursuant to the public report issued for the first phase of the development.

(n) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2006.

SEC. 3. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to ensure that these changes apply to elections conducted by common interest developments as soon as possible, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.