

Opinion

The Third Board Election of Directors? Let there Not be Even a Hint of Impropriety

It is becoming increasingly evident to most residents of Third Mutual that the 2008 election of Directors will, perhaps, determine the fate of the community for years to come. When only 40% of all Third Mutual residents cast a vote, and a vote of only 15% of the community required for a quorum, it is vital that this election be conducted without even an appearance of impropriety.

How does Third Board preclude even a whisper of impropriety? Should Third Board continue the current practice in which the Inspector of Elections is a resident who votes in the election and is "selected" by the same Board that is running some of their members for re-election....or should Third Board employ an independent election services company?

It would seem only common sense that Third Board Directors not only be eager to preclude any appearance of impropriety by placing the entire election process in the hands of an independent election services company, but that they would insist on it. Beth O'Brien, President of United, commented after the ballots last year were counted, and two candidates were only four votes apart, that she was thankful, indeed, that TrueBallot, an independent election services company, had been employed to count the ballots rather than a resident Inspector of Elections from our community.

United employed the services of TrueBallot last year to run their election campaign for about \$15,000. Third Mutual paid \$8,000 to a local business to print and mail the ballot packages, and resident Hillel Pitlik supervised the receipt, opening, handling and counting of the ballots.

Although most residents are fiscal conservatives a large number believe that spending an additional \$7,000 to guarantee a "problem free" election would be money wisely spent. Prudent Third Board Directors who have no political stake in the election agree. Director Stanley Feldstein reported at the Third Board Meeting that TrueBallot believed they could provide ballot services to both United and Third for about \$12,000 each if both Mutuals were to conduct their election campaign at the same time this year. This would require a change of date in Third's By-Laws, a routine, straightforward procedure which could be accomplished easily in time for the Fall election, and could reduce the additional cost to Third to about \$4,000. Residents urge Third Board to change the By-Laws and follow the example of United who demonstrated wisdom and perception last year in employing the services of an independent election services company, TrueBallot.

This is not an indictment of Hillel Pitlik who is an honorable man and has done a commendable job for the past two years. The community owes him a debt of thanks. But, as one Director succinctly stated in the Third Board Meeting, this is going to be an ugly election. Pitlik, who has served Third well, deserves more than to be remembered as the man who was running the ship when a bitter dispute broke out over the counting of ballots.

TrueBallot is not an unknown service to Laguna Wood Village. It has a proven and successful track record with United Mutual. TrueBallot is a nationally known election services company (TrueBallot.com) who "combines adherence to strict standards of impartiality, anonymity and confidentiality with understanding of a wide variety of election methods...." Included in a lengthy list of clients they have served are: The American Bar Association, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, International Association of Fire Chief, and North Georgia United Methodist Conference.

**Next Residents Voice meetings
June 26 and July 10 at Clubhouse 5, 6:30 pm**