

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2024 SESSION

CHAPTER 324

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 55.1-1800, 55.1-1825, 55.1-1826, 55.1-1900, 55.1-1964, and 55.1-1965 of the Code of Virginia, relating to common interest communities; reserve studies; special assessment rescission or reduction.

[H 1209]

Approved April 2, 2024

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 55.1-1800, 55.1-1825, 55.1-1826, 55.1-1900, 55.1-1964, and 55.1-1965 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 55.1-1800. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Association" means the property owners' association.

"Board of directors" means the executive body of a property owners' association or a committee that is exercising the power of the executive body by resolution or bylaw.

"Capital components" means those items, whether or not a part of the common area, for which the association has the obligation for repair, replacement, or restoration and for which the board of directors determines funding is necessary.

"Common area" means property within a development which is owned, leased, or required by the declaration to be maintained or operated by a property owners' association for the use of its members and designated as a common area in the declaration.

"Common interest community" means the same as that term is defined in § 54.1-2345.

"Common interest community manager" means the same as that term is defined in § 54.1-2345.

"Declarant" means the person or entity signing the declaration and its successors or assigns who may submit property to a declaration.

"Declaration" means any instrument, however denominated, recorded among the land records of the county or city in which the development or any part of such development is located, that either (i) imposes on the association maintenance or operational responsibilities for the common area or (ii) creates the authority in the association to impose on lots, on the owners or occupants of such lots, or on any other entity any mandatory payment of money in connection with the provision of maintenance or services for the benefit of some or all of the lots, the owners or occupants of the lots, or the common area. "Declaration" includes any amendment or supplement to the instruments described in this definition. "Declaration" does not include a declaration of a condominium, real estate cooperative, time-share project, or campground.

"Development" means real property located within the Commonwealth subject to a declaration which contains both lots, at least some of which are residential or are occupied for recreational purposes, and common areas with respect to which any person, by virtue of ownership of a lot, is a member of an association and is obligated to pay assessments provided for in a declaration.

"Electronic means" means any form of communication, not directly involving the physical transmission of paper, that creates a record that may be retained, retrieved, and reviewed by a recipient of such communication. A meeting conducted by electronic means includes a meeting conducted via teleconference, videoconference, Internet exchange, or other electronic methods. Any term used in this definition that is defined in § 59.1-480 of the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act shall have the meaning set forth in such section.

"Lot" means (i) any plot or parcel of land designated for separate ownership or occupancy shown on a recorded subdivision plat for a development or the boundaries of which are described in the declaration or in a recorded instrument referred to or expressly contemplated by the declaration, other than a common area, and (ii) a unit in a condominium association or a unit in a real estate cooperative if the condominium or cooperative is a part of a development.

"Lot owner" means one or more persons who own a lot, including any purchaser of a lot at a foreclosure sale, regardless of whether the deed is recorded in the land records where the lot is located. "Lot owner" does not include any person holding an interest in a lot solely as security for a debt.

"Professionally managed" means a common interest community that has engaged (i) a common interest community manager to provide management services to the community or (ii) a person as an employee for compensation to provide management services to the community, other than a resident of the community who provides bookkeeping, billing, or recordkeeping services for that community.

"Property owners' association" or "association" means an incorporated or unincorporated entity upon which responsibilities are imposed and to which authority is granted in the declaration.

"Resale certificate" means a certificate issued by an association pursuant to §§ 55.1-2309 and

55.1-2310.

"Reserve study" means a capital budget planning tool used to determine the physical status and estimated repair or replacement cost of capital components and an analysis of association funding capacity to maintain, repair, and replace capital components.

"Settlement agent" means the same as that term is defined in § 55.1-1000.

§ 55.1-1825. Authority to levy additional assessments; authority to borrow.

A. In addition to all other assessments that are authorized in the declaration, the board of directors shall have the power to levy a ~~special~~ *an additional* assessment against its members if (i) the purpose in so doing is found by the board to be in the best interests of the association and (ii) the proceeds of the assessment are used primarily for the maintenance and upkeep of the common area and such other areas of association responsibility ~~expressly provided for in the declaration~~, including *maintenance, repair, and replacement of capital expenditures*. A majority of votes cast, in person or by proxy, at a meeting of the membership convened in accordance with the provisions of the association's bylaws within 60 days of promulgation of the notice of the assessment shall rescind or reduce the special assessment. No director or officer of the association shall be liable for failure to perform his fiduciary duty if a special assessment for the funds necessary for the director or officer to perform his fiduciary duty is rescinded by the owners pursuant to this section, and the association shall indemnify such director or officer against any damage resulting from any such claimed breach of fiduciary duty components.

B. The failure of a member to pay the ~~special~~ *additional* assessment allowed by subsection A shall entitle the association to the lien provided by § 55.1-1833 as well as any other rights afforded a creditor under law.

C. The failure of a member to pay the ~~special~~ *additional* assessment allowed by subsection A will provide the association with the right to deny the member access to any or all of the common areas. However, the member shall not be denied direct access to the member's lot over ~~any road within the development that is a common area~~.

D. *Unless the declaration provides greater or lesser authority, the board of directors may borrow money on behalf of the association for maintenance, replacement, repair, and restoration of capital components and for funding recommended reserves and shall have the right and power to assign and pledge all revenues to be received by the association, including annual and additional assessments to secure the repayment of any sums borrowed by the association from time to time for such purposes.*

§ 55.1-1826. Annual budget; reserve study; reserves for capital components.

A. ~~Except to the extent provided in the declaration, the board of directors shall, prior~~ *Prior* to the commencement of the fiscal year, ~~the board of directors shall~~ make available to lot owners either (i) the annual budget of the association or (ii) a summary of such annual budget.

B. ~~Except to the extent otherwise provided in the declaration and unless the declaration imposes more stringent requirements, the~~ *The* board of directors shall:

1. Conduct at least once every five years a study to determine the necessity and amount of reserves required to repair, replace, and restore the capital components as defined in § 55.1-1800;
2. Review the results of that study at least annually to determine if reserves are sufficient; and
3. Make any adjustments ~~to the annual budget and annual assessment~~ the board of directors deems necessary to maintain reserves, as appropriate.

C. To the extent that the reserve study conducted in accordance with this section indicates a need to budget for reserves, the association budget shall include:

1. The current estimated replacement cost, estimated remaining life, and estimated useful life of the capital components as defined in § 55.1-1800;
2. As of the beginning of the fiscal year for which the budget is prepared, the current amount of accumulated cash reserves set aside to repair, replace, or restore capital components and the amount of the expected contribution to the reserve fund for that year;
3. A statement describing the procedures used for estimation and accumulation of cash reserves pursuant to this section; and
4. A statement of the amount of reserves recommended in the study and the amount of current cash for replacement reserves.

D. *The board of directors shall have the discretion to meet repair and replacement requirements through replacement reserves, additional assessments, or borrowed funds.*

§ 55.1-1900. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Capital components" means those items, whether or not a part of the common elements, for which the unit owners' association has the obligation for repair, replacement, or restoration and for which the executive board determines funding is necessary.

"Common elements" means all portions of the condominium other than the units.

"Common expenses" means all expenditures lawfully made or incurred by or on behalf of the unit owners' association, together with all funds lawfully assessed for the creation or maintenance of reserves pursuant to the provisions of the condominium instruments.

"Common interest community manager" means the same as that term is defined in § 54.1-2345.

"Condominium" means real property, and any incidents to or interests in such real property, lawfully subject to this chapter by the recordation of condominium instruments pursuant to the provisions of this chapter. No project shall be deemed a condominium within the meaning of this chapter unless the undivided interests in the common elements are vested in the unit owners.

"Condominium instruments" means, collectively, the declaration, bylaws, and plats and plans recorded pursuant to the provisions of this chapter. Any exhibit, schedule, or certification recorded with a condominium instrument shall be deemed an integral part of that condominium instrument. Once recorded, any amendment or certification of any condominium instrument shall be deemed an integral part of the affected condominium instrument if such amendment or certification was made in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

"Condominium unit" means a unit together with the undivided interest in the common elements appertaining to that unit.

"Contractable condominium" means a condominium from which one or more portions of the submitted land may be withdrawn in accordance with the provisions of the declaration and of this chapter. If such withdrawal can occur only by the expiration or termination of one or more leases, then the condominium shall not be deemed a contractable condominium.

"Conversion condominium" means a condominium containing structures that before the recording of the declaration were wholly or partially occupied by persons other than those who have contracted for the purchase of condominium units and those who occupy with the consent of such purchasers.

"Convertible land" means a portion of the common elements within which additional units or limited common elements may be created in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.

"Convertible space" means a portion of a structure within the condominium that a declarant may convert into one or more units or common elements, including limited common elements, in accordance with the provisions of the declaration and this chapter.

"Declarant" means any person, or group of persons acting in concert, that (i) offers to dispose of its interest in a condominium unit not previously disposed of, including an institutional lender that may not have succeeded to or accepted any special declarant rights pursuant to § 55.1-1947; (ii) reserves or succeeds to any special declarant right; or (iii) applies for registration of the condominium. However, for the purposes of clauses (i) and (iii), "declarant" does not include an institutional lender that acquires title by foreclosure or deed in lieu of foreclosure unless such lender offers to dispose of its interest in a condominium unit not previously disposed of to anyone not in the business of selling real estate for his own account, except as otherwise provided in § 55.1-1947. "Declarant" does not include an individual who acquires title to a condominium unit at a foreclosure sale.

"Dispose" or "disposition" refers to any voluntary transfer of a legal or equitable interest in a condominium unit to a purchaser, but does not include the transfer or release of security for a debt.

"Electronic means" means any form of communication, not directly involving the physical transmission of paper, that creates a record that may be retained, retrieved, and reviewed by a recipient of such communication. A meeting conducted by electronic means includes a meeting conducted via teleconference, videoconference, Internet exchange, or other electronic methods. Any term used in this definition that is defined in § 59.1-480 of the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act has the meaning set forth in that section.

"Executive board" means an executive and administrative entity, by whatever name denominated, designated in the condominium instruments as the governing body of the unit owners' association.

"Expandable condominium" means a condominium to which additional land may be added in accordance with the provisions of the declaration and this chapter.

"Future common expenses" means common expenses for which assessments are not yet due and payable.

"Identifying number" means one or more letters or numbers that identify only one unit in the condominium.

"Institutional lender" means one or more commercial or savings banks, savings and loan associations, trust companies, credit unions, industrial loan associations, insurance companies, pension funds, or business trusts, including real estate investment trusts, any other lender regularly engaged in financing the purchase, construction, or improvement of real estate, or any assignee of loans made by such a lender, or any combination of any of the foregoing entities.

"Land" is a three-dimensional concept and includes parcels with upper or lower boundaries, or both upper and lower boundaries, as well as parcels extending ab solo usque ad coelum. Parcels of airspace constitute land within the meaning of this chapter. Any requirement in this chapter of a legally sufficient description shall be deemed to include a requirement that the upper or lower boundaries, if any, of the parcel in question be identified with reference to established datum.

"Leasehold condominium" means a condominium in all or any portion of which each unit owner owns an estate for years in his unit, or in the land within which that unit is situated, or both, with all such leasehold interests due to expire naturally at the same time. A condominium including leased land, or an interest in such land, within which no units are situated or to be situated is not a leasehold condominium within the meaning of this chapter.

"Limited common element" means a portion of the common elements reserved for the exclusive use of those entitled to the use of one or more, but less than all, of the units.

"Nonbinding reservation agreement" means an agreement between the declarant and a prospective purchaser that is in no way binding on the prospective purchaser and that may be canceled without penalty at the sole discretion of the prospective purchaser.

"Offer" means any inducement, solicitation, or attempt to encourage any person to acquire any legal or equitable interest in a condominium unit, except as security for a debt. Nothing that expressly states that the condominium has not been registered with the Common Interest Community Board and that no unit in the condominium can or will be offered for sale until such time as the condominium has been so registered shall be considered an "offer."

"Officer" means any member of the executive board or official of the unit owners' association.

"Par value" means a number of dollars or points assigned to each unit by the declaration. Substantially identical units shall be assigned the same par value, but units located at substantially different heights above the ground, or having substantially different views, or having substantially different amenities or other characteristics that might result in differences in market value may be considered substantially identical within the meaning of §§ 55.1-1917 and 55.1-1918.

"Person" means a natural person, corporation, partnership, association, trust, or other entity capable of holding title to real property, or any combination thereof.

"Purchaser" means any person, other than a declarant, that acquires by means of a voluntary transfer a legal or equitable interest in a condominium unit, other than (i) a leasehold interest, including renewal options, of less than 20 years or (ii) as security for a debt.

"Reserve study" means a capital budget planning tool used to determine the physical status and estimated repair or replacement cost of capital components and an analysis of association funding capacity to maintain, repair, and replace capital components.

"Settlement agent" means the same as that term is defined in § 55.1-1000.

"Size" means the number of cubic feet, or the number of square feet of ground or floor space, within each unit as computed by reference to the plat and plans and rounded to the nearest whole number. Certain spaces within the units, including attic, basement, or garage space, may be omitted from such calculation or partially discounted by the use of a ratio, so long as the same basis of calculation is employed for all units in the condominium and so long as that basis is described in the declaration.

"Special declarant rights" means any right reserved for the benefit of a declarant, or of a person or group of persons that becomes a declarant, to (i) expand an expandable condominium; (ii) contract a contractable condominium; (iii) convert convertible land or convertible space or both; (iv) appoint or remove any officers of the unit owners' association or the executive board pursuant to subsection A of § 55.1-1943; (v) exercise any power or responsibility otherwise assigned by any condominium instrument or by this chapter to the unit owners' association, any officer, or the executive board; or (vi) maintain sales offices, management offices, model units, and signs pursuant to § 55.1-1929.

"Unit" means a portion of the condominium designed and intended for individual ownership and use. For the purposes of this chapter, a convertible space shall be treated as a unit in accordance with subsection D of § 55.1-1925.

"Unit owner" means one or more persons that own a condominium unit or, in the case of a leasehold condominium, whose leasehold interest in the condominium extends for the entire balance of the unexpired term. "Unit owner" includes any purchaser of a condominium unit at a foreclosure sale, regardless of whether the deed is recorded in the land records where the unit is located. "Unit owner" does not include any person holding an interest in a condominium unit solely as security for a debt.

§ 55.1-1964. Liability for common expenses; late fees; additional assessment; authority to borrow.

A. Except to the extent that the condominium instruments provide otherwise, any common expenses associated with the maintenance, repair, renovation, restoration, or replacement of any limited common element shall be specially assessed against the condominium unit to which that limited common element was assigned at the time such expenses were made or incurred. If the limited common element involved was assigned at that time to more than one condominium unit, however, such expenses shall be specially assessed against each such condominium unit equally so that the total of such special assessments equals the total of such expenses, except to the extent that the condominium instruments provide otherwise.

B. To the extent that the condominium instruments expressly so provide, any other common expenses benefiting less than all of the condominium units, or caused by the conduct of less than all those entitled to occupy the same or by their licensees or invitees, shall be specially assessed against any condominium unit involved, in accordance with such reasonable provisions as the condominium instruments may make for such cases. The executive board may impose reasonable user fees.

C. To the extent that the condominium instruments expressly so provide, (i) any common expenses paid or incurred in making available the same off-site amenities or paid subscription television service to some or all of the unit owners shall be assessed equally against the condominium units involved and (ii) any common expenses paid or incurred in providing metered utility services to some or all of the units shall be assessed against each condominium unit involved based on its actual consumption of such

services.

D. The amount of all common expenses not specially assessed pursuant to subsection A, B, or C shall be assessed against the condominium units in proportion to the number of votes in the unit owners' association appertaining to each such unit, or, if such votes were allocated as provided in subsection B of § 55.1-1953, those common expense assessments shall be either in proportion to those votes or in proportion to the units' respective undivided interests in the common elements, whichever basis the condominium instruments specify. Such assessments shall be made by the unit owners' association annually, or more often if the condominium instruments so provide. No change in the number of votes in the unit owners' association appertaining to any condominium unit shall enlarge, diminish, or otherwise affect any liabilities arising from assessments made prior to such change.

E. ~~Except to the extent otherwise provided~~ *In addition to all other assessments authorized in the condominium instruments, if the executive board determines that the assessments levied by the unit owners' association are insufficient to cover the common expenses of the unit owners' association, the executive board may levy an additional assessment against all of the units in proportion to their respective undivided interests in the common elements. The executive board shall give written notice to the unit owners stating the amount of, the reasons for, and the due date for payment of any additional assessment. If the additional assessment is to be paid in a lump sum, payment shall be due and payable no earlier than 90 days after delivery or mailing of the notice.*

~~All unit owners shall be obligated to pay the additional assessment unless the unit owners by a majority of votes cast, in person or by proxy, at a meeting of the unit owners' association convened in accordance with the provisions of the condominium instruments within 60 days of the delivery or mailing of the notice required by this subsection, rescind or reduce the additional assessment. No director or officer of the unit owners' association shall be liable for failure to perform his fiduciary duty if an additional assessment for the funds necessary for the director or officer to perform his fiduciary duty is rescinded by the unit owners' association in accordance with this subsection. The unit owners' association shall indemnify such director or officer against any damage resulting from any claimed breach of fiduciary duty due to the assessment for the necessary funds rescinded by the unit owners' association in accordance with this subsection.~~

F. Neither a unit owned by the declarant nor any other unit may be exempted from assessments made pursuant to this section by reason of the identity of the unit owner.

G. All condominium instruments for condominiums created prior to January 1, 1981, are hereby validated notwithstanding noncompliance with the first sentence of subsection D if they provide instead that the amount of all common expenses not specially assessed pursuant to subsection A, B, or C shall be assessed against the condominium units in proportion to their respective undivided interests in the common elements.

H. Except to the extent that the condominium instruments or the association's rules or regulations provide otherwise, an executive board may impose a late fee, not to exceed the penalty provided for in § 58.1-3915, for any assessment or installment that is not paid within 60 days of the due date for payment of such assessment or installment.

I. Unless the condominium instruments provide greater or lesser authority, the executive board may borrow money on behalf of the unit owners' association for maintenance, replacement, repair, and restoration of capital components and for funding recommended reserves and shall have the right and power to assign and pledge all revenues to be received by the unit owners' association, including annual assessments to secure the repayment of any sums borrowed by the unit owners' association for such purposes. Any unit owner who pays any creditor of the association a percentage of the total amount due to such creditor equal to such unit owner's common element interest in the condominium shall be entitled to obtain from such creditor a release of any judgment or lien that such creditor otherwise has the right to file against such unit owner's condominium unit or the unit owners' association. Such creditor shall not be entitled to assess the unit for payment of the remaining amount due such creditor.

§ 55.1-1965. Annual budget; reserve study; reserves for capital components.

A. Except to the extent provided in the condominium instruments, the executive board shall, prior to the commencement of the fiscal year, make available to unit owners either (i) the annual budget of the unit owners' association or (ii) a summary of such annual budget.

B. Except to the extent otherwise provided in the condominium instruments, the executive board shall:

1. Conduct a study at least once every five years to determine the necessity and amount of reserves required to repair, replace, and restore the capital components as defined in § 55.1-1900;

2. Review the results of that study at least annually to determine if reserves are sufficient; and

3. Make any adjustments to the annual budget and annual assessment the executive board deems necessary to maintain reserves, as appropriate.

C. To the extent that the reserve study conducted in accordance with this section indicates a need to budget for reserves, the unit owners' association budget shall include:

1. The current estimated replacement cost, estimated remaining life, and estimated useful life of the

capital components as defined in § 55.1-1900;

2. As of the beginning of the fiscal year for which the budget is prepared, the current amount of accumulated cash reserves set aside to repair, replace, or restore the capital components and the amount of the expected contribution to the reserve fund for that fiscal year;

3. A statement describing the procedures used for estimation and accumulation of cash reserves pursuant to this section; and

4. A statement of the amount of reserves recommended in the study and the amount of current cash for replacement reserves.

D. The executive board shall have the discretion to meet repair and replacement requirements through replacement reserves, additional assessments, or borrowed funds.