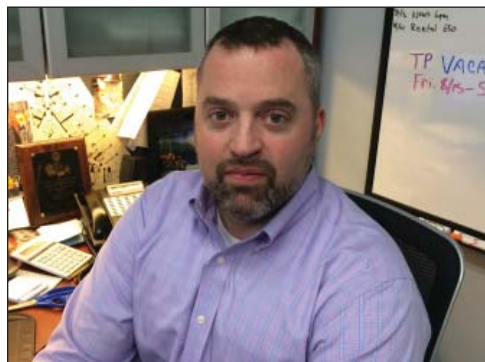


Park Tower Profile

An Interview with Park Tower Property Manager, Tim Patricio

by Sheldon Atovsky

I met with Tim Patricio, Property Manager of Park Tower Condominium Association, on Thursday, April 9th, for a wide-ranging and generous two-hour interview, in the Conference Room of our Management Office. We spoke candidly and honestly. Here follows much of that interview. I confess, before you read the interview, that I am a fan of Tim's and am grateful that he is our property manager. I think he does a super job.



When I entered the office Tim was meeting with our plumber, Louis Mezzano, and maintenance staff member, Matthew Brown. Amir Cobalovic and Marlon Dacres, assistant managers, were busy with memos, conferring back and forth. Idriz Durmic, from our maintenance staff, had just left. Suddenly everyone was conferring with Tim. This was a typical moment of constant activity that never lets up and keeps our building buzzing and our management staff on-the-go. Tim was in the middle of deferring answering hundreds of emails that had piled-up after he took time off to move, and he was deferring answering them until he finished preparing the packets for the upcoming board meeting.

Tim Patricio [TP]: *After I've been taking several days off to move and to visit with my sister, who came into town with my nieces who I haven't seen in a year-and-a-half, you know I had to admit that I had a life outside of work and to prioritize that ... That's how it's been for the past few days ... I had 113 [emails] pending when I left work last night and now I have over 150 that I have to get to today. I have to get to today! But there's a board meeting Monday and that's the*

priority. And stuff does come in. You know I was waiting for emails related to projects on that board report. So I am keeping an eye on things as they come in but I can only do so much in 8 hours.

Tower Talk [TT]: Do you spend more than 8 hours once in a while?

[TP]: *Uh, yeh, I'm being nice. I don't want to sound like too much of a grump. Pretty much, 90% of the time, I'm here for more than 8 hours a day. And then, especially recently, weekends as well. Easter Sunday I did the weekly email because it was the only time I could find and with my 3 year old niece sitting in my lap. But that's something the residents have come to depend on so I prioritize that every week. You know I've taken a vacation and stopped on Friday and have done that email. The residents' feedback has been so positive and some folks are sending me emails, when I'm late, "where is it, you didn't send your email yet."*

[TT]: We've lost 3 people (in order of departure, Jacquie Smith, Jenny Garcia, and Mavis Mather), everyone but you, out of the office within a 5 month period. PTCA also lost 11 years of its history with the departure of Mavis Mather. I presume this has been stressful for you. Do you care to discuss this? Do you have a plan to avoid the repetition of this situation? Why did you stay and not go?

[TP]: *I'd be lying if I didn't say it's been stressful because it has. Particularly after Mavis left. To get someone really up and running in Jacquie's old job, now filled by Marlon, takes 6 months to a year to get that person exposed to everything that needs to be paid attention to ... There are cyclical things that need to get done and to remember to do, e.g., you need to remember to schedule the power washing. You need to know what things to watch for, eg, events, maintenance issues or problems that occur regularly that you have to make a note of for the budget for the next fiscal year. To have at least minimum exposure to all of these things it takes a year to properly train.*

We're all still learning things. New things happen every day. Even if I work here for 30 years there will be something new every day ... For Amir's position [Amir replaced Ma-

vis] it's at some higher exponent that I can't even measure. Mavis got to a point where she could hand me the proposed budget in August. She would just draft it up and say, "OK, Tim, I've got the shell done." And each year she was working on it that shell it became more and more detailed. She knew more and more detail and nuances and things that I expected, that the association expected, that the board expected, and that the budget committee members expected ... Mavis got to the point where she could hand me that budget and I could simply be proofreading it ... The micro attention to detail she had, getting that document ready each August, the more time I would have to spend on things like copper prices and things that could actually save us money one way or another.

A lot of the thanks I get for saving Park Tower money, year after year, should really go to Mavis because a lot of the time, where she progressed in her job, afforded me the extra time that managers at other buildings don't get to pay attention to such things and to look for things like that and to be more pro-active.

That's one of the things where I'm at right now. I'm really struggling and a lot of my stress is all of a sudden it feels not only that the brakes were put on when we were going 60 mph but the emergency brakes were pushed also at the same time and I have to struggle and micro-manage and I'm going to have to for the next year or two to be able to get especially Marlon and Amir up to speed. And I won't be able to do a lot of the things that I've become accustomed to doing, the value added stuff that I've been able to do. That's the biggest obstacle, the biggest disappointment for me, I won't be free to spend time on creative research to save the association money.

And why wouldn't I leave too? This is just another challenge and I believe we can get back to that point. I believe that I have found good people. And with the type of work that has to get done as long as you find good people you can program them to get them to where you need them to be ... I'm fortunate enough to have the trust

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with the current board that I was able to choose my own people, interview them myself and hire them. And the board just said, "these seem like nice people, thanks." And it seemed pretty unanimous, which is rare.

So, I don't want to go anywhere. I like living in this neighborhood. I moved up here to be closer to the building.

So even though it's stressful, I'm working as hard as I can to get back to that point where I can do more of what I enjoy doing, more of the macro-type projects. I like doing research, I like finding things we can do to save money. And not just save money now but also going forward, like the boiler projects. We figured out that we could update our big, tank sized, 41-year-old boilers, that are well past their useful life, and save a lot of money in future years, prolong the use of our current boilers, and get a lot of the updating project paid for by Peoples Energy.

[TT]: What do you see as Park Tower's greatest challenges in the next 10 years?

[TP]: There are three. Number one is the politics. I wouldn't have said this a year ago but I do now after last year's election. I think that a negative style of politics is dangerous and once it gets started it's hard to stop. It can poison and be toxic. Discussion is important; anonymous name-calling is bad. This is a five million dollar business and it's

your home. Get real. Get serious. Let's get down to the business of the association. Once the board votes on something, let's move on.

The second challenge is keeping your momentum with your budget. Your budget right now is on a very healthy trajectory. When I came on board, in 2007, in the middle of budget season, the budget was calling for \$390,000 to be put into the reserves. This building would cost, at that time according to your insurance company, \$120,000,000 to replace, on the low end, and you're only putting away \$400,000. a year! It would take how many years, at that rate, to replace the building? The building's getting older. People are always asking why assessments are always going up.

Think of the building as a human body. Do your medical bills go up every year or do they go down? Do they ever stay the same? Typically as you age there's more to maintain ... And your finance committee has just done a fantastic job. It took a couple of years. In my initial years I went from one line item to another. I cut contracts and other items that were obvious to me and we were able to save money out of the get-go. Now you're up to 1.4 million a year as a reserve contribution. The closest comparison is Harbor Point which puts away 2 million a year. They have a little bit bigger facility, more square footage and they spend more

on cosmetics ... You have to stay on this trajectory and this is the second biggest challenge ... You've never had a special assessment and that's a fantastic thing and you don't want to have one.

The third challenge is keeping a good relationship with your staff and that ties into the politics as well. You've got to remember when you have all this bluster, like with the last election, it really works against you. It really worries people; we're human beings.

Whoever gets elected I'm going to be able to do whatever they want within legal reason. I would be stupid not to point to the 3 people we lost in the past 6 months. That can trickle down or trickle up. I had lots of conversations with the engineers. Our plumber left. ... He hated the infighting; it made him nervous. We really haven't talked about his case that much and I don't think it was the only thing that encouraged him to leave. Obviously the most visible employees are in the management office and they are affected the most **■**

For more of this interview please go to ptcondo.com where it is presented in its entirety, including Tim's background, outside interests, outlook on PTCA's priorities for the next 10 years, his cost-saving projects for PTCA, some introspective revelations and his philosophy of life.



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