

En bloc uproar at Bayshore Park, Mandarin Gardens

Sales committees rein in estate councils, irking owners who want to upkeep homes

By JESSICA CHEAM

THE market for en bloc sales may have gone dead quiet, but the issue is still raising a ruckus at two of Singapore's most iconic condominium developments in the East.

Sales committees pushing for the collective sales of Mandarin Gardens and Bayshore Park have been accused of trying to control the management councils running these estates and voting down proposals to upgrade estate facilities.

The committees, made up of residents who are pro-en bloc, have denied the charges.

Still, things came to a head last Sunday at both condos' respective annual general meetings (AGM), which lasted up to 10 hours each.

Sales committees are ad hoc committees formed by residents to explore the potential of an en bloc sale. They are different from the management council, which is appointed at the AGM by residents to run the estate and look into the upgrading of facilities.

Residents against en bloc sales at both condos claim that the sales committees had gone round collecting proxy votes from residents so as to control the outcome of the AGMs.

Mandarin Gardens' emotional



Raising a ruckus in a quiet market



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TALL ORDER: With \$2 billion each needed to buy Mandarin Gardens (above) or Bayshore Park (left), analysts say their collective sales are unlikely in the current market.

AGM has left the 25-year-old estate with no management council at all. The existing council quit and refused to be re-elected because of some resolutions passed at the AGM. At the centre of the dispute was a controversial proposal by the sales committee, which was formed

last year, to reduce the management council's current limit of \$300,000 for expenses on urgent matters to \$50,000. This was successful as the sales committee had enough proxy votes to form the majority. Council chairman Neoh Chin Chee said in a letter to resi-

dents last week that the resolutions passed made it "untenable or difficult to carry on as a council member". Proposals to upgrade the condo's rainshields and swimming pool tiles were also not approved.

The AGM was eventually adjourned when not enough candidates were nominated.

One resident Jeannette Aruldoss, 44, a lawyer, told The Straits Times that the \$50,000 limit restricted the role of the council to run the estate. In emergencies, this fund may not be enough to address safety issues, she said.

But sales committee chairman Mr Tan Kok Khoo said some residents had felt the \$300,000 limit was too high.

Over at the 21-year-old Bayshore Park estate, the sales committee proposed and pushed through a resolution to reduce the council members from 14 to nine.

Of the nine, four are also on the sales committee, so some residents are upset about the change.

Bayshore resident Mr S.K. Cheah, 40, a sales director, feels there could be a conflict of interest since sales committee members are likely to act in the interest of a sale, above that of the estate.

He noted that at the AGM, some resolutions for maintenance and upgrading were also voted down.

Another Bayshore Park resident, who declined to be named, commented that one common tactic used by many sales committees is to "run the estate down" or keep maintenance to a minimum, so residents have little choice but to vote for a sale later.

But Bayshore's sales committee member Alan Chua told The Straits Times that they had no intention of doing that.

"We've lived here for many years and love this place, why would we do that?" he said.

On the en bloc sale potential, Savills Singapore director (marketing and business development) Ku Swee Yong noted that at least \$2 billion each would be needed to buy each estate - a tall order even when the market is good. "With the current market, the sale is impossible," he said.

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EN BLOC SYSTEM NEEDS RELOOK, AS BAYSHORE SHOWS, FORUM H10

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