

Got a Maintenance Question?

ASK THE PANEL

Each month this column addresses a specific maintenance concern that every association faces. Our panel of experts is here to help answer questions you might have. We hope that you will find this page to be informative and—please—Ask The Panel!

Question: Our association will be starting a major re-roofing job in the spring. We want to retain a construction manager to provide oversight for this work. How can we be sure we select a good contractor?

Answer: The answer to this month's inquiry is provided by **Dick Tippett** of ERTECH.

Prior to retaining a construction manager or consultant, you should satisfy yourself that the firm you are considering is the best for your project. To help in making that decision, invite each candidate, individually, to a board or committee meeting, sit with him or her and conduct your interview. Their answers to the following questions will help you choose the individual or firm that best meets your needs.

1. How long has the company been in business?
2. What type of projects do they consult on?
3. Does the company specialize in working with homeowner associations?
4. What professional organizations does the company belong to?
5. Does the company have a full-time office staff?
6. What types and amounts of insurance does the firm have?
7. Will the firm provide you with references for both current projects and projects more than two years old?
8. Who will be the person on their staff assigned to your project?
9. How long has he/she been employed by the firm?
10. How many years experience does he/she have with projects similar to yours?
11. Will a firm representative be available to attend board meetings to give periodic progress updates?
12. Do they require a retainer fee or deposit? If so, how much?
13. What is their federal tax ID Number?
14. Will the company analyze your problems and present alternatives?
15. Will the company develop cost estimates for the alternatives?
16. Do they conform their design work to local building code requirements? To the CSI format?
17. What is their estimate of the length of time that it will take to complete your project?
18. What will they do to minimize the disruption of life at your association while work is underway?
19. Do they provide any form of construction quality observation or auditing? Please describe.
20. Has the firm ever been let go from a project by a client? What was the reason?
21. What do they believe separates them from their competition?

Other questions may come to mind as you read this list. Be sure to write them down and ask them of your prospects.

Interview your prospective consultants carefully and compare their answers. You will be relying on the results of their work for many years.

Remember, also, that the least expensive consultant may not always be the best choice; a little extra money spent on knowledge and experience can often produce savings in the cost of the construction of the project itself.

Look for a consultant who wants to work with you, is willing to meet your special needs and schedule, and with whom you feel comfortable. Enjoy the process!

Please use this information as a guide. It is recommended that you seek advice from your professional association manager or affiliated service provider. Should you have a question for the ECHO Maintenance Panel, please contact us at the ECHO office via email at info@echo-ca.org, or FAX the panel at 408-297-3517.