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YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 045. Know Thy Neighbours

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Intro: Welcome to Your Strata Property. The podcast for property owners looking for reliable, accurate, and bite-sized information from an experienced and authoritative source. To access previous episodes and useful strata tips, go to www.yourstrataproperty.com.au.

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome. I'm Amanda Farmer and this is Your Strata Property. Today I have an episode that's a little bit different for everybody.

I want to read to you a blog post that captured my attention this week. Yes, it is specific to strata and community living. I stumbled across it just this week. I was doing my usual early morning walk which is a time when I often listen to some podcast usually something that is centered on personal development. It gets me going in the morning, gets me excited for the day, inspires me and I've just started listening to this podcast which is called The Optimal Living Daily Podcast.

Now, it is a podcast where Justin Malik reads out amazing blogs on personal development. He does a fantastic job. I know he records quite a few audio books as well and I've really gone into listening to his short episodes each day.

The episode that I listened to this week included a reading from a blog by 'The Minimalists'. Now you might have heard these guys. Their names are Joshua Fields Milburn and Ryan Nicodemus. They have a blog, a website; a book, a podcast and they are all about helping people live more meaningful lives with less stuff.

A really great introduction to them and their philosophy; is their documentary which is called 'The Minimalist' which you can find on Netflix if you are a subscriber. It's something that I enjoyed over the holiday break.

And I was on my walk earlier this week and listening to Justin Malik read out a blog post from Ryan Nicodemus, so one of The Minimalists and all of a sudden I hear that they are talking about community living. Specifically, community living in the U.S. And I was so impacted by this post, and what I was hearing Ryan Nicodemus write about that I thought I need to share this with my listeners.

So that's what I'm going to do today. It's less than 3-minutes long and I will make sure there is a link to both Justin Malik's podcast and The Minimalists' website in the show notes to this episode on my website www.yourstrataproperty.com.au. So, you can find the text of this blog at www.theminimalists.com/neighbors and that is spelled the U.S. way n-e-i-g-h-b-o-r-s so the post is called Know Thy Neighbours. And it is by Ryan Nicodemus. Here it is:

"Do you know your neighbors? I mean, do you really know your neighbors?"

I lived in a condo development in which there were roughly 80 units, and I really didn't know any of the people living there other than a few of their names and faces. I didn't value the relationships, or potential relationships.

When I first moved into the neighborhood, I looked at the situation like any other single bachelor—it was an opportunity to live in a nice place virtually maintenance-free. With a busy life, I enjoyed the thought of not spending hours on upkeep every week, doing maintenance work that people who own houses do regularly.

Or so I thought.

After the first few months of living there, I realized there were a plethora of issues with the condo association. They hardly did anything around the place other than mow the grass and keep up on small odds and ends (roof leaks, siding repairs, etc.). With the tough economic times they had not been able to add much value to the property.

At one point I was solicited by several board members to impeach other members on the board. I was asked to pick sides and support the election of a new board. Since I didn't know any of my neighbors it was hard to choose which side was right, and it was



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difficult to decipher who was right and who was wrong—it felt like everyone was being negative, including myself.

After just a year of living there I wanted to leave because of this, and after adopting a minimalist lifestyle I especially wanted out of there, realizing I had this gigantic place all to myself. It was overwhelming.

I spent many days frustrated and blamed the board for the bickering and inability to manage the budget. This was their fault, not mine. I fell into this “why me” stage, which only exacerbated my frustration.

One of my neighbors (who was on the board) sent out an email asking for everyone in the community to pitch in and volunteer to do some upkeep around the community—to make the place a little nicer and increase morale. My first thought when I saw this email was, “Why do I pay condo dues if I have to do the upkeep myself?” Then I realized that this attitude toward the board, and the “why me” attitude, was only worsening the situation. So I did the opposite of what I wanted to do: I replied and said I would help.

When the workday rolled around there were six owners including myself out of roughly 80 who showed up to help. I did not let this discourage me, because, again, I was sick of fueling my frustration. I worked my ass off and did what needed to be done for the day.

As we worked, I got to know my five neighbors and I realized they were just as frustrated as me. I also developed a good relationship with the board member who arranged the community workday. I felt better about the changes he was trying to make. It took the board about five years to sink the association, and after talking with him, I realized it was probably going to take a few years to repair the damage.

Until I actually got to know my neighbors that day I honestly thought everyone was out for themselves, which may still be the case with some of them, but they were just like me. After we all spent the day with each other, we felt much closer and formed a bond that was beneficial to our entire community.”

And that’s the end of the post from Ryan Nicodemus; one of The Minimalists. All credit for that to Justin Malik from Optimal Living Daily which is how I accessed that post and certainly The Minimalists themselves who are at www.theminimalists.com.

Now I wonder if you like me listening to that saying ‘wow a lot of this sounds incredibly familiar’. Buildings that lose sight of how to add value. It’s something we’ve talked about a number of times on the podcast. Buildings where committees and committee members owners are frustrated by the fact that they seem to be the only ones who care, the only ones who are willing to pitch in to make the community a nice place and an enjoyable place to live.

The politicking and the politics around having members removed from the committee, having new committees elected, the confusion that abounds when owners simply aren’t involved so they don’t know who to support which way to direct their vote.

And the wondrous things that can happen when you do get involved in your community. When you do get to know your neighbours. When you give up some of your time and donate your expertise whether it’s a work day around the building or joining a sub-committee to deal with the specific issue, the sense of fulfillment and achievement that you can gain as an owner or even a tenant, when you do the opposite of what you might feel like doing. You put up your hand and you say I’ll help.

So often I hear about that experience and of course, I’m at the desperate end of things as a strata lawyer. But I hear that experience of feeling that everybody is out for themselves. The chairperson is drunk on power, the secretary just wants to raise enough money to pay for their bathroom renovation, forget about anybody else is.

And because of that sense that everybody’s in it for themselves, good people don’t get involved. Good people do nothing. Good people say why should I waste my time with this? I just want to come home to my own privacy, watch my TV, and go to work the next day. Why should I care? I think good people should care because as Ryan Nicodemus says good people can make a difference and your perception that everybody’s in it for themselves might be wrong. There might well be a group out there part of

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your community that needs somebody just like you to help them out and to help add value to your building and make it a great place to live.

So head over to the show notes for this episode or alternatively www.theminimalists.com/neighbors. There's no 'u' in neighbors and have another read of that post. I think there's a lot in there that we can all learn from and I really wanted to share that with you this week. Maybe you can share it with some of your neighbours or if you're a strata manager with some of your buildings. Put that one on file and you can whip it out when you need to send a message home about how one person can impact and improve their community. Thanks for listening. Catch you next time.

Outro: Thank you for listening to Your Strata Property. The podcast which consistently delivers to property owner's reliable and accurate information about their strata property. You can access all the information below this episode by the show notes at www.yourstrataproperty.com.au. You can also ask questions in the comment section which Amanda will answer in her upcoming episodes. How can Amanda help you today?

