

Staffing

UNDERSTAND WHAT'S AT STAKE

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Choosing sides. Now that co-ops and condos have to decide between paying employees the prevailing wage or losing their property-tax abatement, they're looking at third-party companies to provide maintenance services for their buildings. But the move to outside companies was already happening prior to the new rule, because outsourcing eliminates not only payroll expenses but also insurance, benefits, pensions and disability. Now the trend is really in play, and all positions — supers, doormen, porters — are on the table.

Due diligence. If a board decides to make the switch to an independent company, there are two key issues the board and its managing agent need to focus on. The first is vetting the individuals just as though you were hiring them by asking for résumés and checking their employment history and references, and perhaps

doing the same for anyone who is regularly coming into the building. The second is to review the insurance policy of the maintenance company to make sure that any worker injuries won't fall exclusively on the co-op or condo.

Pros and cons. Aside from weighing the economics and balancing the cost of keeping your employees versus the amount of the property-tax abatement that residents will lose, boards need to realize that these choices cut both ways. With an outside company, you don't have to scramble to find replacements when the regular staff isn't there. On the other hand you won't develop the same kind of relationship as you would with a single superintendent and longtime porters. There's a special thing when you have a great staff that works directly for the building, and you're giving that up. ■