

# PALOS VERDES PENINSULA NEWS

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## PALOS VERDES ESTATES

# Homeowners board election hits quorum snag (again)

By David Rosenfeld  
Staff writer

The Palos Verdes Homes Association is once again fighting over election results to fill its board of directors, two years after a Superior Court Judge ordered it to tally ballots even though the group considered the election invalid.

At issue is the inability of the association—which represents Palos Verdes Estates homeowners—to reach a quorum. Normally, 50% of property owners must vote for the election to be valid. But this year's mail-in election, announced Jan. 14, required 35%. Yet, the group missed that target, too, though barely.

When an election doesn't reach a quorum, it gets invalidated and current board members either continue serving or appoint new members. But the association, which regulates views and architectural designs in this upscale community, has reached a

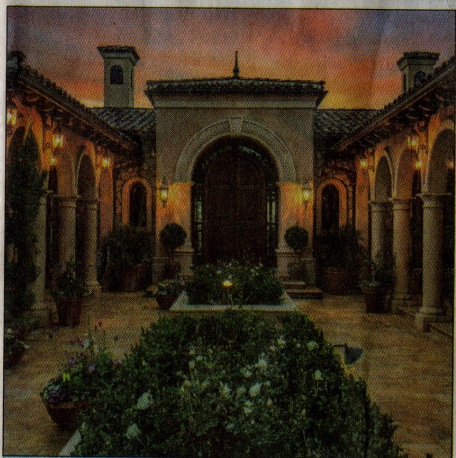
quorum three times in 25 years—the last time was in 2009—sparking a dispute that eventually went to Superior Court in 2018, during which a judge used an informal tally to help decide how to rule.

This year, 1,864 valid ballots were counted, or 34.4% of properties; 221 ballots, however, were invalidated because they were unsigned—an unusually high number, according to those familiar with the association's elections.

At the association's meeting Tuesday night, Feb. 25, about two dozen residents were vocal, and many were frustrated, about wanting the board to count all the ballots, including the invalidated ones. They outnumbered the few who said they believed the board should follow its rules and declare the election invalid.

Two of the five board members resigned at the Jan. 28 meeting, leaving

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The entrance to a home in Palos Verdes Estates. The Palos Verdes Homes Association regulates views and architectural designs, yet the organization has ongoing difficulty conducting a valid election for board members.

## Quorum

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three board members — Marlene Breene, Richard Fay and Charles Tang — to decide the matter. Fay put forward two motions, one to count the invalidated ballots and another to appoint new members based on the outcome; both failed to get a second, let alone a full vote.

John Harbison, who received the most votes in the election, said he would refuse an appointment, as did Ried Scott, who came in third.

"This country is based on democracy," said resident Rose Ramsay. "We had an election and everyone worked hard to get people to vote. Are we going to honor this election and the spirit of democracy or put a stumbling block in place

and follow the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law? Did this election exist or didn't it exist?"

Harbison, who helped organize a group called Residents for Open Board Elections, said accepting an appointment would defeat the purpose of reforming the elections.

"The reason some of us organized ROBE in the beginning," he said, "was to bring an open democratic

process to our community."

In the end, the board decided to continue doing business with three members.

"We're trying to do things right," Breene said. "I don't want to take an action that might sound good today but have implications down the line. So (I) want to make sure what we do is correct."