

May 28, 2021



Dave Windsor's 'Alaska Real Estate'

as published in the Anchorage Daily News

No Two Moose Are Created Equal

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Our backyard hosts a number of four legged visitors each year, including moose who, over many years, have established a traditional trail that includes, on occasions, a birthing bed on the lawn behind our back deck. We have even gone to naming them since they hang out with the Windsors for several weeks. However, no two moose are ever the same. We had a really handsome guy one year we called "Branson". Another time a very nervous calf we called "Cagey" (a nickname also applied to one of our family members).

People, as well as animals, are not created equal. Like snowflakes, each one is entirely individual. In real estate, your transaction involves several individuals, handsome, cagey or flakes, and these individuals determine the comfort of the roller coaster ride from finding a home to closing your purchase (or sale).

The main human components of your real estate deal are the Lender, the Realtor, the Home Inspector, the Appraiser and the Title Company. Where you have a choice, exercise it because, like your choice of other service providers, it can make your life comfortable or uncomfortable.

Most Lenders will offer very similar deals to you and, indeed, you are federally protected by the statutory Loan Estimate each lender must give you to compare one provider with another. Before closing you must also be given a Closing Disclosure to

review so that you can discover any changes from when you first applied for the loan. However, although lenders are a common breed or species, you will find that the individual loan officers are, like moose, all different. Their experience, availability and level of service vary and you ought to carefully choose your loan officer.

Your Realtor (member of the National Association of Realtors), or non-member Licensee, is probably your most critical choice as they will guide and counsel you throughout your transaction. Choose with care.

There are around 20 Home Inspectors performing the same service to homebuyers in Anchorage, for similar fees, but they are not all created equal. Depending on the property, you may even need a P.E. (Professional Engineer) to provide a satisfactory assessment of the structure you are purchasing. Make sure, at minimum, your Inspector is ASHI certified (American Society of Home Inspectors). Experience and attitude matter.

Now the Appraiser is not someone you can choose. Not even the lender can select who establishes value of the property for your loan. The roulette wheel spins and it can be anybody - i.e. the next appraiser on the list of the independent appraiser selection agency (usually Mercury Network or Rels Valuation) used by the lender. So handsome, cagey or flake is out of your control here.

The Title Company and, more specifically, the escrow officer at that title company, is generally selected by the buyer so be thoughtful about this choice, in consultation with your Realtor, when writing an offer.

The whole point is that you would be surprised at how pleasant or unpleasant your real estate transaction can be, depending on the personnel involved. Unfortunately, I once was involved in an event where an offshore drilling rig sank in the Indian Ocean. The ensuing investigation, and lawsuit, found that a number of people did not do their job right. Remember that you, the customer, can choose the personnel for your real estate transaction, just as you might choose your heart surgeon. These choices are important because no two moose are created equal.

