

State of the Green Village

Jerri Allyn, President

VGOA Annual Meeting

Saturday, February 6, 2016

Welcome. It's good to see so many familiar faces.

We've lived through another year of tremendous changes, challenges and accomplishments. We've lost some dear friends, lost some neighbors to foreclosure, and do have a loss of revenues. In 2015 we also saw the prices of 28 newly purchased units edge up, along with our property taxes, proof that our architectural complex and urban forest - awarded historic status from the nation, state and the city - continue to increase in value.

Two years ago, my tenure and that of the directors was marked by a struggle to break free of mistrust, lawsuit threats, and one drama after another. In the 2015 election, members said, "Enough!" and changed that direction with their vote. This proved to be a turning point that restored civility to the community, positioning all of us to examine and improve the ways we function.

Then, the Association was hit by a set of new challenges. Our arborist died after a brief illness, our general manager resigned, and we lost our tree trimming company. In the heat of summer and drought, severe pump damage shut down the well for six weeks, and then we lost an experienced office employee of 15 years.

Leadership and Management

The board and staff decided to turn this series of events into an opportunity. Directors looked at board and staff functions and interactions and analyzed how to improve them. We appointed an executive committee of directors Ben Ginsberg, Ethan Markowitz, Norma Miller, and Steve Haggerty to research management structures and bring back a proposal for a staffing arrangement that would best meet the Association's needs. We unanimously adopted their proposal to replace the old manager/assistant manager structure with an operations manager and facilities engineer.

Former assistant manager Sherri Giles accepted our offer to become operations manager, and we expect a facilities engineer to be hired in the next few months. In partnership with our staff, we will implement strategies throughout the next two years aimed at providing greater accountability and efficiency to the community. Steve, Norma, and I continue as a transition team.

This challenging period has been marked by outstanding teamwork and service to you, the owners. We've all gone the extra mile. Among many other accomplishments, more than 2,200 work orders were handled in a timely manner, and we've seen a distinct decrease in complaints. Scheduled preventive maintenance was completed, with special attention to cleanouts and tree limbs because of El Nino predictions. Garage inspections were conducted in three courts. (And I know the rest of you are waiting eagerly for yours this year!)

We thought we had finished replacing the original sewers in all courts. But it turned out that ten years ago, sewers in Courts 4/5 were not done correctly. Last summer, the situation became intolerable. The directors applaud Ms. Giles for her responsiveness in recognizing the urgency and for her selflessness in taking on another project, even with a reduced staff. Through her initiative in developing a comprehensive cost analysis proposal, Sherri convinced the board that Court 4/5 sewers were a priority.

In all, your directors voted for \$1.3 million dollars worth of Reserve and Special Assessment projects. With our staff, we've improved the standard of living and financial appreciation of our condos for owners. We did not overspend. And we contributed over \$99,000 to Reserves.

Directors' and Committees' Volunteer Contributions in 2015

2015 was a busy year for committees and board liaisons. Here are some highlights:

Vice-president Joe Khoury and director Ben Ginsberg drafted new "Committees" bylaws, vetted by our attorney, that clarified and restored the proper relationship between the board and committees. Committees become increasingly important and productive in Village life last year.

Ben also has worked tirelessly assisting Ms. Giles with legal, liability, and foreclosure issues, as have I. Joe was always ready to meet with neighbors to discuss their concerns and also represented the board in Internal Dispute Resolution sessions.

Treasurer Steve Haggerty continued to work hard as an unofficial CPA, assisting the office with budget drafts and completing the legally required Reserve Study Report

Secretary Claire Joyce produced clear, prompt, and accurate minutes every month and contributed greatly to the board's stability. In addition to also serving as the court council liaison, Claire has been developing a new website that will enable prompt posting of a wide range of material.

We are ever grateful to our elections inspectors for the exacting contribution they make to the Association in ensuring our elections are done in complete legal compliance with all state, CCR, and VG bylaws and rules. Thank you to chief inspector Cynthia Cyrus; inspectors Steven Keylon and Robert Creighton; and alternate Mickey Fielding.

Director Lucy Fried headed a communications/publications team that continued to provide an attractive and necessary monthly newsletter, the *Monthly Highlights*. Appreciation to Jeanne Gaignard and all who contributed to this effort. Lucy also served as the board's liaison to our landscape maintenance company, providing linkage and follow-through to the monthly joint landscape walk arounds. Committee chair Matt Redman and members diligently worked to improve landscape maintenance. Appreciation to Teresa Thompson for her successful campaign for a consulting horticulturist.

Director Ethan Markowitz served as liaison to the safety committee during a year when security was on the minds of many residents. The board decided to replace our escort and patrol company and appointed an ad hoc hiring committee of Ethan, court council co-chair Nat Nutton, and former director Malcolm Carson. Following their recommendation, in March the directors voted to

hire a local company, Public Security. Special appreciation to safety committee chair John Howell and members, who have demonstrated ongoing leadership in addressing the recent increase in crime with strategies to de-escalate incidents.

Court council co-chairs Teresa Markowitz and Nat Hutton and the court representatives and alternates have continued to ably fill the special place they hold in Village life – the link between the board and all residents. Thanks for their indispensable work as couriers, faithfully delivering newsletters and notices every month, and for their attention to quality of life issues, their sponsorship of the candidate forums, and more.

Director Norma Miller, liaison to the budget and finance committee, contributed importantly to contract oversight and adherence to best practices. Appreciation to committee chair Cynthia Singleton and members, who trolled over our budgets to recommend cost saving measures.

Cultural affairs chair Allison Grover Khoury and committee members, with liaison Joe Khoury, continued to organize exciting events for residents, families, and their guests. From holiday festivities to lectures and jazz concerts, these events remain the best glue for cementing community relationships. Appreciation also to Bill Beemer and the annual yard sale team and the Drinks on the Green crew for their co-sponsored activities.

Design review committee chair Wendell Conn and committee members regularly submitted recommendations to the board from owners desiring upgrades and gave special attention to questions from new owners.

Tree planting assist won board support for the planting of 27 more trees, all of which are replacements from original landscape plans. Also, for the first time, tree replacements have been given a funding line in the reserves budget. As the board's liaison for "trees," I am very pleased at these developments.

Challenges

I would like to acknowledge another achievement – and challenges looking ahead. The landscape committee's board-approved pilot for Buildings 8 and 14 introduced important labor and water-saving irrigation improvements. By replacing the lawn in front of 8 with a drought tolerant native, the pilot restored an important element of the original Barlow design and used shrub selections from both the 1940's and 1960's landscape plans. The pilot may be seen as a blended design, and the results continue to be debated. I applaud the committee members for their commitment to tackling landscape challenges.

More discussion and consensus building is to come. There continues to be a debate about whether we should prioritize funds for infrastructure *only*, and simply *maintain* our landscape.

Another debate concerns how to deal with the diverse designs and plantings that characterize our landscape.

We have only just begun this year of fresh beginnings. If we splinter into intractable, dogmatic factions once more, progress will be slowed.

Please consider this example. I love mid-century modern aesthetics and think the resale value of my apartment will increase if we highlight design features in the Cultural Landscape Report and

Historic Structures Report. But this is *my* reality. *Our* reality is that I don't own the Green Village. Not one of us owns this architectural gem or this urban forest. Owners of 629 units us *share* this place.

I can sell my Village condo. Get my own little spot, design and landscape any way I want. But life in the Emerald Isle? That entails negotiating with 200-300 active, participating neighbors. I've heard from many who purchased a condo in a grassy, colorful park and don't want to see it change.

Compromise is going to be needed by all.

Due to historic status, we've been granted tax breaks (which a majority benefit from), and we're obliged to follow design guides. Yet, it's obvious we need more thoughtful forums. How can the word "guide" include a range of interpretations, particularly in view of reconciling seven decades of other plant materials, including Winans' contributions? We need to discuss how to meet one another half way, somewhere on the big green by the Coral tree, and bargain until we can strike a balance regarding design features.

The 1940's architectural and complementing landscape design was the "period of significance" that brought us our historic status. How can we highlight that, and also find the ways to acknowledge the Winans 1960s design which has characterized so much of our landscape since the flood of 1963? And driving everything is the reality of global warming and predictions of long-term drought in Southern California.

We need your help. Attend some forthcoming forums. Continue to contribute cost-saving ideas at board meetings. Join a committee.

Appreciation

I was surprised last month to see a neighbor come into the office with fruit. I learned that some of you also bring home-baked cookies or drop off thank you notes. Our staff got appreciations from about 100 owners over the holidays. One of our maintenance employees grabbed me recently to share just how much these appreciations mean. "Otherwise," he said, "it can seem like ... same old, same old...snaking crap out of the plumbing lines."

The directors and I cannot underscore enough the importance of this simple gesture to one another: noting a job well done. Thank you – truly. May we look forward to more appreciations. May we strive to report complaints and make suggestions for improvement in a civil manner and with respect in 2016.

I remain honored to serve you in this Emerald Isle. .

-//-