

# **State of the Green Village: Report to 2017 Annual Meeting,**

**Jerri Allyn, Board President**

Welcome everyone! It's great to see familiar faces and new ones. I speak for the board and staff in thanking you for being here.

When casting about for ideas to give a sense of 2016, our operations manager, Ms. Giles, said: "What about team? That's what's gotten the work done during this transition." I looked up the definition of TEAM. *In Old English, it meant: childbearing, brood, a set of draft beasts.* Many times during the last four years, I have felt our boards were draft beasts giving arduous birth – to something. I didn't always know what.

Your board has had some ferocious challenges to contend with: the economy still bringing liens and foreclosures of our neighbors; staffing shortages; the drought and well failure; trees toppling .... Yet anyone attending the meetings knows that while this board could get feisty, we made many important decisions.

Ms. Giles, the staff and board, like childbearing draft beasts ... we gave birth to one solution after another that kept us serving you, the membership.

## **Overall Financial Picture**

We've had more funds than anticipated to put into our Reserves Account last year because we were lacking and thus not paying for, a key management position for 13 months. But the reality? Fair labor practices require us to pay more, materials continue to rise in cost, and we continue to hear a steady litany from new, younger owners and directors with 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations. They have different needs and make more demands on the office than our "seasoned" Villagers. In the future, their demands may require more staff.

I and the directors before you remained committed to ensuring a stable financial status. As TEAM, we worked to produce three approved budgets for 2017, yet our Reserve Funding Study indicates the Association is still underfunded. There are a number of deferred maintenance and capital improvement projects we'll undertake this year, but upon careful review, for now your directors have held off on increasing monthly fees. Increasing the fees could have increased funding to the reserve account and

permitted us to do more. We decided to complete the 10-year Special Assessment/Mills Act projects first, which conclude in Feb 2021. Village Green's dues remain in the middle, cost-wise, with comparable HOA's.

We will continue to roll out our new leadership and management structure in 2017, and we are striving for the office to be fully operational again by December. Many longtime residents have been patient through this period, and we can't thank you enough.

### **Balancing Act**

However a new owner recently vetted me as an incumbent candidate, and I paraphrase: "This neighborhood is changing - rapidly. Buyers are in bidding wars, with the winners snatching up units. I'd like to know how this Association is going to remain fluid to change, and serve individuals who are paying half a million for a small condo that cost \$250,000 just five years ago. This place is special and unusual. But how are you going to juggle the balance between historic features - windows and doors that no longer fit right, and old, flattened insulation that no longer keeps in winter heat or summer cool – with the need for a 21<sup>st</sup> century, ecologically efficient infrastructure, including air conditioning? How are you going to serve younger, tech savvy neighbors, who expect more?"

INDEED! How are we? Sure, it's great to see our property values continue to climb, but the board, staff and committees have been facing these budget challenges and juggling the rising cost of everything all year. The City of Angels, along with New York – is the most expensive place to live in the country. How are we going to meet the expectations of ALL our neighbors in this inter-generational Green Village with widely varied incomes?

Another definition of TEAM refers to *a group of people or animals linked in a common purpose. Human teams are especially appropriate for conducting tasks that are high in complexity and have many interdependent subtasks.* (Wikipedia). I am sure whoever comprises the 2017 Board will welcome all interdependent ideas from new and long-time owners alike, to solve these complex challenges.

## Moving Forward Last Year and This

First, another TEAM definition: *a group of people or animals linked in a common purpose. Human teams are especially appropriate for conducting tasks that are high in complexity and have many interdependent subtasks.* (Wikipedia).

Last year we turned a corner and saw things settle down from the drama of previous years. We're now squarely in the middle of the block. Here are some of the "interdependent subtasks" we took on last year. Some are continuing:

- The board acted carefully and decisively to save our well, which will give it 10-20 more years of life.
- Following inspection by supervising architect Russell Tyner for cracks that re-surfaced in Buildings 8 and 14, we mitigated these with repairs and continue monitoring. The good news was that Mr. Tyner conclusively determined the structure, exterior walls and pilings are safe and sound.
- Responding to complaints about the increase in short term rentals (like Air B&B), the board took a resolute stance and clarified that these are prohibited in our founding documents. We asked management to initiate the enforcement process for owners who continue to violate this regulation.
- During this period, the Board assisted Ms. Giles with several legal cases. In another decisive action, a director headed up our successful defense against a long-running Small Claims Court suit that challenged our 2016 election procedure. The judge ruled decisively in favor of the Association.
- Ms. Giles negotiated a great deal with the highly regarded arborist Cy Carlberg, whose firm provides significant services. With experience in historic landscape restoration, this company now oversees the care and rehabilitation of our "urban forest," including the input of data about our 2000+ trees into a satellite tracking program. We restored the historic Olive tree allee behind the Clubhouse, which had not been re-planted for 20 years. Those Olives are flourishing and are a delight to behold.
- **Landscape maintenance contract:** The important 1940s landscape design that complements Village Green's mid-century modern architecture was greatly

damaged by the 1963 dam-break flood. The landscape was then redesigned by a second architect. For decades, the landscape has rarely had professional guidance. Most of the design elements carefully drawn up by both landscape architects have not been followed, and many areas have become degraded. To top that, in 2011, the general manager negotiated a contract that reduced the landscape maintenance contract from \$30,000 to \$24,000 a month, which soon resulted in decreased quality of service. As the decrease in care became more evident, the landscape committee and concerned owners began to insist on proper maintenance. Today, this TEAM is assisting management in vetting vendors, so a new contract can be considered by the board soon.

- For the past 21 months, under the competent, hard-working and diplomatic leadership of Sherri Giles, the staff has done a pretty decent job with work orders; and yes, there is room for improvement. Soon your TEAM will be rolling out a **pilot program testing a new, online, work order system** that we expect will increase the efficiency of responding to residents. Heads up: Then we'll be recruiting volunteers to assist owners without computers!

### **Committees and Volunteers**

Yet another definition: *A TEAM becomes more than a collection of people when a strong sense of mutual commitment creates synergy, thus generating a performance greater than the sum of its individual members.* –Wikipedia.

A few years ago, persistent unresolved conflict resulted in the complete dissolution of two committees and weakening of others. This year has seen TEAM re-build several committees so they are flourishing and increasingly effective. Committees are the arms of the Board, and that's why they're so important. Board meetings are designed largely for final business decisions, but committees allow for a lengthier process, the opportunity to air opinions and have productive debates, which we hear more of these days. Committees provide appropriate, useful reports and recommendations to the directors so we can make more informed decisions. May all our committees continue to grow and provide a variety of opportunities for participation!

**Your Inspectors of the 2017 Election:** I want to honor chief inspector Cynthia Cyrus, and Rob Creighton, Heidi Oglesby and Mickey Fielding who ensure procedures follow all legal requirements.

Not everyone participates on committees; yet, woven into the fabric of this community, many residents do their part. I'm referring to those who manage the unofficial Facebook page; the unofficial pet owners page and the families list; the residents who alert Public Security when something seems amiss; neighbors who put a note on the broken dryer, and better yet, call the company and ask for repair. A big salute to owners who fill out work orders to let our staff know about a leaky irrigation head, etc.; the people who pick up the trash that blows onto our open campus instead of just complaining about it; and those who take the time to write a letter to the board or offer suggestions at a board meeting. All of these simple tasks come from owners and renters who understand that they are part of the fabric of civil society within this HOA, part of the TEAM.

Will everyone who contributed to this community in 2016, please stand. Let's give **US** a big hand for serving on the Village Green Team!

**What does democracy look like?** In "civil society," people who participate are *democracy in action*. It's a messy process – a never ending one that takes time, often involves conflict, demands compromise, and offers enormous rewards. What does democracy look like at Village Green? This is what democracy looks like. ☹