

NEW MARK COMMONS HOMES ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, March 7, 2019

New Mark Commons Clubhouse, 7:00 p.m.

Minutes Taken by Shireen Ambush

Attendees

Board Members: Alex Belida, John Daroff, Alex Manolatos, Kathleen Moran, Ellen Stein and Magnus Turesson.

Abaris Community Management: Shireen Ambush and Henry Leung

1. Call to Order

John Daroff called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Board Candidate Forum

John Daroff introduced the 6 running candidates for the upcoming Board election. Each resident gave a brief introductory statement about themselves and why they want to serve on the Board. Alex Belida read a statement on behalf of Ron Tipton who could not attend in person.

A question and answer session was held as follows:

Pat Reber asked a 2-part question: What are the most pressing capital needs and how would you address them?

Responses:

Joe Jordan – Retaining walls, amenities and tree maintenance are among the top priorities. Good budgeting is essential and we should survey residents for their opinions.

Becky Phillips – Infrastructure, lake dredging, amenities, erosion and trees. We must prioritize safety issues.

David Sloan – Lake dredging, complete repaving and amenities. Good budgeting is important. We are in a good place now headed towards making it better.

Karin Boychyn - Infrastructures are a top priority. Future budgeting and planning is very important so we can all live here happily ever after.

Spokesperson on behalf of Ron Tipton – Ron Tipton is the CEO of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and is an expert in environmental issues.

Robin _____ (1 Farsta Court) asked what is your top qualification?

Responses:

David Sloane – Stated that he has past experience serving on Boards and with non-profit organizations. He previously managed a 10 million dollar budget with a 60 person staff and stated that he loves his community.

Karin Boychyn – Her goal is to unite the single family homeowners with the townhouse owners so we can work together to resolve problems.

Joe Jordan – Stated that he is a 32-year resident of the community and previously served on the Board for 7 years. He has time to devote to the community now that he is retired. He has attended almost every meeting since Abaris was hired. He has managed large groups of people and he wants to work towards common goals for the community.

Becky Phillips – Stated she has 11 years of experience with non-profit organizations. She has budget experience and loves the neighborhood and desires to keep it beautiful.

Steve Bernstein asked what is your opinion on the management company (Abaris)

Responses:

Becky Phillips – Stated that the expertise and experience that Abaris brings to the community is important for leverage and she thinks this is a positive thing for the community.

Joe Jordan – Stated he has a good relationship with Shireen Ambush and he thinks Abaris is doing a fantastic job managing the community so far. He thinks Abaris came in at the right time and provided the professional expertise that the community needs to leverage relationships with vendors. Abaris has been nothing but beneficial to New Mark Commons and if it were his decision, he would vote to renew the contract again.

Karin Boychyn – Stated that the expertise of a professional management company is beneficial to the community. We must manage expectations of our residents and work with the management company as a team, using their expertise.

David Sloane – Agreed that having Abaris as the management company has brought a more professional touch to the neighborhood. He agrees with all of the positive comments made about Abaris. He is pleasantly pleased with how Abaris has helped us prioritize our major projects and brought us economies of scale.

Sam ____ asked if there have been any mis-steps in the past few years that could have been done better?

Responses:

Karin Boychyn - Stated that 20/20 hindsight is easy. Abaris knows their role. There may have been some misunderstandings at first impression but through improved communication and community involvement, those things have been overcome.

David Sloane – It is clear that this community has not addressed the infrastructure issues by the time Abaris came on board. This is a 52 year old community that is playing catch-up.

Becky Phillips – It is evident that the finances have been mis-managed as evident by the severe dues increase which we cannot un-do. We must stay on top of things now going forward.

Joe Jordan – There have not been many mis-steps by the current Board. Communications have vastly improved and more residents are attending Board meetings. The Board has done a great job!

Rose Krasnow asked about the divisiveness between single family homeowners and townhome owners and what each candidate would do to minimize it?

Responses:

Joe Jordan – There is occasional divisiveness. This is one community we all pay for. If the townhouse areas get neglected, it will impact the values of all homes in the community. We must be open minded.

Becky Phillips – We are all one community and we must educate our homeowners on property ownership issues. She hopes the community can be united as one to work together in the future.

David Sloane – We are all part of the same community. We need input from single family owners and townhome owners alike in order to have adequate representation.

Karin Boychyn – As a 3 year old resident, she never understood the divisiveness argument. We are one community.

Brent Gulick arrived at this time and provided an introductory statement as to why he is interested in running for the Board.

Ms. Wilkins (2 Watchwater Way) asked about the plans for dredging the lake which is overdue:

Responses:

Brent Gulick – The lake was last dredged in 2005 and it was a lot of work. Requirements have become more strict for a project like this. He suggested this project may be deferred for another 3 years or so.

Joe Jordan – Has lived in the community long enough to have witnessed the last 2 dredgings of the lake. We are overdue for the dredging now. The erosion problem is only contributing to the silt build-up in the lake. Something must be done within the next 5 years.

Karin Boychyn – The lake must be taken care of eventually and in order of priority with other capital improvement projects. We need to put it on the list but it is not the first priority.

Becky Phillips – If experts say the lake needs dredging then she trusts their opinion and agrees that it needs to be done.

David Sloane – We need to take a long-term look at the lake dredging. Soil conservation needs to be considered and we must keep the lake free of litter and debris.

Dave (7 Don Mills) asked how you would reduce spending to avoid the 100% dues increase proposed by the current Board?

Responses:

David Sloane – we need to be more educated on the budget. We are now in a better financial position than we were before.

Becky Phillips – We need to evaluate the budget. The dues increase was a shock and she hopes this will not be needed in the future. We must get multiple opinions in order to prioritize and be fiscally responsible.

Karin Boychyn – We were overdue for a correction of the dues level. We won't need to do this again every year if we carefully budget and plan for projects over the next 5 years.

Joe Jordan – The dues increase is a problem but the alternative would have been a one-time special assessment as has been done before. We need to be more transparent on finances when there is a significant dues increase. It will be tough to sell homes if there is an unlimited potential for dues to increase.

Brent Gulick – Sandra Talley, a fellow homeowner has filed a complaint with the CCOC against the Board for the dues increase. We cannot drive people who are on a fixed income out of the community by increasing dues so much.

Madeline Gupta asked what thoughts you have to increase resident participation in the community:

Responses:

Becky Phillips – Communication is very important NextDoor is a great vehicle for communication with our neighbors.

David Sloane – Perhaps we could offer a 5% dues reduction to those who show up to meetings. We should send more surveys to our homeowners to get their opinions. We need a buddy system to recruit neighbors to attend the meetings.

Karin Boychyn – It's usually the same volunteers that come forward. Perhaps we could start a Welcoming Committee to greet new neighbors and engage them. The newsletter has greatly improved since Pat Reber took it over.

Brent Gulick – Look after your neighbors and have face-to-face contact with them. Take care of each other.

Joe Jordan – The demographics of the neighborhood have changed. There was much more involvement in the past and our annual social events have dropped in resident participation. We need to keep trying.

Candidate Closing Statements:

Joe Jordan – Our home is our most valuable investment. We need careful budgeting and community input.

Becky Phillips – Would be honored to get votes from her neighbors. She is a good communicator with non-profit experience who loves living here and is very happy to help in any way she can.

David Sloane – Trees are an amazing resource in New Mark Commons. As a photographer, he has captured several photographs of nature including a woodpecker recently. He has a visual approach on how the community looks and appreciates it if his neighbors vote for him.

Karin Boychyn – She is an energetic team player. Diversity on the Board is important. She is currently not working and therefore has the time to devote to the community and would be honored to serve on the Board.

Brent Gulick – Fought the Board on an architectural issue and agrees that the Board needs a long term view. Face-to-face communication is key. We should consider other ways to raise money to build our own infrastructure.

Statement Read on behalf of Ron Tipton – Ron retired in December 2017 and is an environmental expert who has led an organization of thousands of members. He is a very good listener and communicator.

John Daroff announced that the ballot box is available for those homeowners who wish to cast their votes now. The Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, March 11, 2019 at 7:00 pm. There will be an organizational meeting of the Board to elect officer positions on March 14, 2019 at 7:00 pm.

3. Community Forum 1 and Board Response

Arthur Katz – Commented about the proposed plans to widen I-270 which is a big issue that could have significant impact on New Mark Commons. There is a group that is involved in fighting the project and they are meeting at 3:00 pm this Saturday at the Senior Center. He asked if there is anything the Board is working on to reduce expenditures?

Board Response:

John Daroff stated we have an extensive budget process. It's not so much about reducing expenses as it is being realistic on what it costs to maintain the community. Overspending is mainly for snow removal and for removal of hazardous, dead trees which are both unpredictable circumstances beyond our immediate control. We consistently get multiple bids for projects to ensure we are getting the best value for the dollars we spend.

4. Agenda and Prior Meeting Minutes

A. **Board Meeting Agenda, 3-7-19:** Alex Belida moved to approve the agenda as amended. The motion was seconded by Kathleen Moran and carried unanimously.

B. **Board Meeting Minutes, 2-7-19:** Ellen Stein moved to approve the minutes as amended. Alex Manolatos seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

5. Appeals

None

6. Committee Reports

Architectural Control Committee (ACC) –

Alex Manolatos reported that the ACC met and reviewed 4 applications of which 3 were approved and 1 is still pending as we are working with the homeowner on a few issues. There is an issue with some new roofs that have been installed without ACC approval which are not in compliance with ACC guidelines. A general notice should go out to all homeowners in the next newsletter reminding them of the Association requirements for obtaining prior approval from the ACC before making any exterior modifications to their home or lot.

The ACC discussed the CCOC settlement reached with the owner of 160 New Mark Esplanade. John Daroff reported on the complaint that was filed by this owner against the Association for an erroneous ACC approval for the front door. A mediation session was held with the homeowner and a non-monetary settlement was reached. The Board will grant a limited exemption due to the previous error that was made and no enforcement action will occur for the front door. This exemption will convey to the next subsequent owner of the home where it will end. Any subsequent owner of the home after that will be required to bring the front door into compliance. Alex Belida moved to accept the proposed exemption and settlement. The motion was seconded by Alex Manolatos and carried unanimously. John Daroff will execute the settlement agreement on behalf of the Association.

On another ACC matter, John agreed the Board will file a complaint with the CCOC against the owner of 13 Tapiola Court, who has failed to attend a number of scheduled hearings and has refused to remove a shed from his property that violates the Covenants.

Communications Committee (CC) – Pat Reber reported she is doing a story on the candidate forum that will be posted on the website for those who could not attend. She will send out a reminder of the upcoming Annual meeting.

Pool Committee – Kathleen Moran reported that the Committee did not meet in February. They reviewed the report from Pool Consultant and agreed that we should purchase the replacement cartridge filters to get us through this year’s pool season until the filtration system replacement can be further considered and researched. The biggest concern is whether the County will approve the proposed plan to convert to the sand filtration system or if they will require modifications which will slow down the process. We do not have sufficient time to get this project completed before the pool is scheduled to open for the season. We need more expert opinions on the longevity of the pool itself and what the future replacement cost will be. Alex Belida moved to approve replacement of the cartridge filters. The motion was seconded by Kathleen Moran and carried unanimously.

The Board reviewed the request from a resident to have a wireless water temperature sensor installed at the pool. The Board requested Abaris to obtain a proposal from the pool contractor for the Board’s consideration at the next meeting.

The Board discussed the fee for non-resident pool memberships and agreed to keep it at \$625 for the 2019 season. The Board will consider increasing the maximum number of non-resident memberships and requested that Abaris provide a listing of last year’s non-resident members and how many individuals in each household.

Landscape Committee (LC) – Ellen Stein reported as follows:

- New residents of the community recently had a huge tree fall across their driveway and front yard. This is an example of why hazardous, dead trees must be removed on an emergency basis since safety takes priority.
- A large tree split on Tapiola Court
- Another tree at 246 New Mark Esplanade needs to come down. We need to speak with the homeowner who owns half of the tree to follow up on the 3 estimates we obtained for the tree removal and confirm which one she wants to accept so we can have the tree removed as soon as possible.
- The turf area that was damaged by S&P Tree will be damaged again when the tree at 246 New Mark Esplanade is removed so there is no sense in repairing the turf until after that.
- We received the Rainscapes Grant and the new trees will be planted this spring!

Social Committee – None

7. Treasurer’s Report

Kathleen Moran reported that the pre-paid dues have helped with cash flow. We have over \$700,000 in total cash balances as of January 31, 2019. There are several delinquencies that are outstanding which Abaris is following up on.

8. CCOC Complaint Update

John Daroff reported that in the CCOC challenge to the dues increase filed by Sandra Talley, the parties engaged in mediation, but were unable to resolve the matter. We are now waiting for the CCOC to decide on the next steps.

9. Management Report

Shireen Ambush presented the report from Abaris:

A. **Clubhouse Use Request** - The Board discussed a request from a resident requesting permission to use the clubhouse once a month free of charge for a non-profit group. The Board discussed the fact that the fee charged for private use of the clubhouse helps offset costs to operate the facility such as utilities, insurance and maintenance. Furthermore, if the Board grants this request, it would set a precedent for future similar requests. For these reasons, the Board voted unanimously to deny the request. The resident is welcome to use the facility if she is agreeable to paying the corresponding fees.

B. **Palmer Brothers Proposal for Interior Clubhouse Steps** - The Board reviewed the proposal from Palmer Brothers for modifications needed to the interior steps of the clubhouse in order for the new flooring treads to be installed. John Daroff moved to accept the proposal which was seconded by Kathleen Moran and carried unanimously. The Board reviewed the color and pattern selections for the stair treads and agreed to select a charcoal color with a circular raised pattern for anti-skid.

C. **Tennis Court & Basketball Court Repair Proposals** - The Board reviewed multiple bids obtained by Abaris for the refurbishment of both courts. After careful consideration and discussion, Alex Belida moved to accept the proposal from ATC to include painting of pickleball lines on the tennis courts. Alex Manolatos seconded the motion which carried unanimously. Abaris will request the price for the pickleball lines and notify the Board accordingly.

D. **Clubhouse Alarm System Upgrades** – The Board reviewed various proposals from Johnson Controls for upgrades to the main alarm panel as well as for installation of security cameras and 2 additional fob readers. After careful consideration, John Daroff moved to accept the proposal for the alarm panel upgrade only. The motion was seconded by Ellen Stein and carried with 5 votes in favor and 1 opposing vote (Alex Belida).

E. **Sand Clean-Up** – The Board discussed the accumulation of sand in the townhouse parking lots from the winter and requested that Abaris obtain bids for street sweeping to remove the sand.

10. Old Business

A. None

11. New Business

A. None

12. Adjournment

Ellen Stein made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Magnus Turesson seconded and the motion which carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.