

Montebello to engage a consulting firm to review fiber optic plan

By *Mikhailina Karina*

At the very end of the Board of Directors April 26 work session, Board Vice President Greg Bender announced important news not mentioned on the printed agenda: the impending signing of a consulting agreement with a firm to review Montebello's fiber optic plan.

About two dozen residents, three of them candidates for the Board of Directors, attended the work session.

In email answers to follow-up questions, Bender wrote, "We are engaging a consulting firm, but I learned after last night's meeting the consulting agreement won't be finalized until early next week. The consulting firm will take 30 days to review all we have done to date, including Honeywell's concept design. They will address our residents' questions. They will provide recommendations for moving forward or altering course."

He did not say why the Board was taking this route, reveal the name of the consulting firm, or provide any information about the firm's expertise.

"Once we have received and reviewed their report, we will schedule a Townhall. Further information will be announced at the May Board meeting."

When asked whether Montebello would owe Honeywell money for its work on the proposed – and widely debated – fiber optic plan, Bender wrote, "At this point, we have paid Honeywell nothing and we owe Honeywell nothing. If we walk away from Honeywell, we would still owe them nothing."

Demographic data collection

The 2017 resident re-registration process may include additional questions to get a more complete picture of Montebello's demographics, said Board member and Quality Improvement Committee Chair Guido Zanni.

For example, some possible questions could be about email access, the number of residents in a unit, and any special skills residents could share with the community, Zanni said. Answering these questions would be optional.

While other Board members generally supported this undertaking, director Doug Kleine wondered whether Montebello had the "capacity to store and analyze this information."

Fitness Center update

John Powers, head of the fitness center ad hoc committee, presented his report (available on the Montebello website under the Board packet for this meeting), which listed ongoing improvements based on extensive resident suggestions and meetings.

Four complex issues – what to do with the locker rooms antechamber, whether to add a defibrillator, all the pool issues, and installing electric door openers – were sent to the Board for further discussion.

According to General Manager Liz Foltin, the door accessibility problem will be ameliorated this week with a contractor lessening the pressure on the doors. Otherwise, she said, the center is in compliance with Fairfax County ADA regulations.

The discussion then took a turn toward personal trainers, and physical/occupational therapists working with residents in the fitness center. Several Board members expressed concern that

not all personal trainers are certified and insured, thus making the association liable for any injury. Furthermore, what is the enforcement mechanism for personal trainers coming in as guests?

Shopping carts

Lately, management has sent out several emails asking residents to return shopping carts to their building hobby rooms. To crack down on the "hoarders," Assistant General Manager Marco Mendoza proposed attaching a coin-operated gizmo onto the existing carts – a model similar to that at Aldi grocery chain, where a quarter pops out when the cart is returned. Another possibility would be a special coin attached to a keychain.

At least one Board member found this system "too awkward." Bruce Shaw doesn't want any coin or keychain to operate a simple cart. He proposed more resident education on good manners.

Taking a high-tech Big Brother approach, Bender suggested swiping the Montebello ID card each time the cart is checked out, which would make the cart easier to locate if the culprit is known.

But Zanni countered that the sheer amount of time for the staff to track down the carts brings up the issue of enforcement. He'd rather invest in additional carts, perhaps have five per building, not alternative check-out and tracking systems.

Board member Lynn Tjeerdsma agreed that residents should be responsible for returning carts. "It's a human behavior problem," said Board Treasurer Joe Riccobono. "We need to appeal to people's courtesy." Board President Doug Kennett concurred, "Reminding people to be kind to their neighbors is our best bet." 