

The **MONTEBELLO** Voice

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EXTRA!

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Sunrise over the Potomac. Photo by Mary Tjeerdsma.

Board votes in new officers, discusses fitness center equipment, and considers temporary bus service to Metro

By Mikhailina Karina

With a secret ballot vote, the new Board of Directors elected a new slate of board officers during the May 24 meeting: Greg Bender as president, Lynn Tjeerdsma as vice-president, Doug Kleine as treasurer, and Bonnie Daniel as secretary.

The three first-time board members, Lauren Pierce, Jerry Stedje, and Bonnie Daniel, listened to association counsel Bob Segan's detailed presentation on the board's fiduciary responsibilities and the code of ethics.

In the coming days, the new board members will undergo orientation with office management, Zalco, and board members on the ins and outs of Montebello facilities and governance.

Master insurance approved

Don Owens of the Griffin Owens Insurance Group lauded Montebello for its civil and formal meetings that strictly adhere to the Robert's Rules of Order. As a result of Montebello's efficient and professional management, the master policy premium has gone up by 1.5 percent this year to \$293,938.25. Bender said other area condos have seen an increase of 5 percent, but Montebello's slight increase is a direct result of being "well managed."

Owens said the policy includes coverage from four A- and A+ -rated firms: Greater New York, Can, Nationwide, and Philadelphia Insurance.

Owens explained that Greater New York covers the common elements as

the developer sold it. "Unit owners' policy covers any improvements," he said. In fact, he suggested conducting a seminar on the intricacies of unit owners' insurance policies as they relate to Montebello's master policy.

30-second surveys

Director Guido Zanni, who heads the Quality Improvements Committee, suggested implementing single-question, 30-second surveys to gauge the residents' views. "There is an inverse relationship between the length of a survey and the response rate," Zanni said.

Such surveys would go out on the MMLs about twice a month and will ask a thumbs-up or thumbs-down question, such as feedback on the walking trails.

Any comments would be included in *The Times of Montebello* readers' forum. "We'll let the editorial board decide which comments to publish," he said.

"What happens to the comments that are not published?" asked Pierce. "They will be put into a reading file and any resident can have access to the comments," responded Zanni.

"I am 100 percent in favor of getting everyone's thoughts on the trails," said Stedje. "But what do we do with this information? If 90 percent of the responders say they don't like it, are we going to rip out the material?"

Again, Zanni responded, "Say an overwhelming majority doesn't like it [the new material on the trails]. It won't be prudent to change it immediately, but could be done in the next cycle."

Tjeerdsma said it was important to make it clear that the surveys are not a vote for change. Bender called survey results and comments "a snapshot" of residents' views.

Zanni said he would solicit recommendations from committees and the community for potential survey topics in July.

More fitness center equipment

In addition to the \$10,000 the board recently approved to replace three faulty exercise machines, John Powers, head of the fitness center ad hoc committee and newly re-elected to the board, said about \$3,000 more was needed for additional fitness center equipment as recommended by the committee:

- ✓ lower back/ab machine for \$2,249
- ✓ BOSU Pro Balance Trainer (on the right) for \$139
- ✓ stepper platform with four risers for \$75
- ✓ two pack steppers at \$27.50 each
- ✓ 20"- 22" bench for beneath entry window and ladies locker room at \$250 each



While Zanni agreed that a machine to strengthen the lower back – a com-

mon problem for many people – was a good idea, he had serious reservations about the BOSU ball. "I see it as a major risk," he said.

Powers, who used to exercise at Gold's Gym on Route 1, said according to the gym's manager, Gold's has had a BOSU ball for the past decade without any reports of injuries.

During the few times Zanni has been to Gold's, he said, he observed "young and fit" people using the ball.

But for the elderly, balance is problematic and reaction time is slower, Zanni said. "I am not sure we can compare the demographics of Gold's and Montebello," he said. "I see it as a liability and increased risk."

Kleine and Bender echoed Zanni's reservations. "My physical therapist said it's for people who do extreme sports," said Kleine. "If someone falls down, they could hit another piece of equipment," added Bender.

The board agreed was to wait until the July financial information became available to decide whether to fund these equipment requests.

In addition, according to the board packet, facilities manager Peter Ng "is pricing automatic door openers to the locker room doors."

Metro service interruption

The impending repairs to Metro's infrastructure means slow downs and shut downs of stretches of Metro's rails. Assistant General Manager Marco Mendoza reported that Metro hopes to mitigate the situation with 40 additional buses. He also said people should explore alternatives such as telecommuting or ride-sharing.

The first slowdown will take place in July with single-tracking on the Yellow Line starting at Huntington.

Mendoza said he'd priced a 55-passenger bus for two weeks, which came to nearly \$70,000.

Bender said there would be a problem with liability for private carriers. He said a group of residents could charter a bus at their own risk, but it

couldn't be done under the auspices of the board or the Bus Club.

"We could have six people get an Uber each morning," suggested Zanni for ride-sharing. Carole Hall, president of the Montebello Bus Club, repeatedly shook her head during the board discussion. "The board completely misunderstands this proposal," she said of the club's solution. Other condos in the area are renting private buses to the Pentagon City Metro stop.

In a nutshell, the Bus Club proposes renting two 33-passenger buses for two weeks for a total cost of \$12,000. The buses would run between Montebello and Pentagon City at one-hour intervals and would be self-funding, at riders' expense, without Montebello support.

On a weekly basis:
\$6,000 divided by 100 riders = \$60/week per person (or \$12/day for 5 days)
\$6,000 divided by 80 riders = \$75/week pp (or \$15/day for 5 days)
\$6,000 divided by 50 riders = \$120/week pp (or \$24/day for 5 days)

*Rates would be higher for a 4-day holiday week.

In an email, Hall wrote, "Keep in mind that it takes 50 buses to offload one Metro train, so given that Yellow and Blue trains enter stations every 3 minutes on average, this means that it would take 500 buses every half hour for Metro to accommodate all Metro train riders to transfer by bus between closed stations. This will certainly lead to long lines, overcrowding and delayed time getting to work. The rental bus proposal to transport residents express to/from Pentagon City Metro station via Route 1 HOV lanes could provide easier, more convenient and reliable service for residents, IF the board approves this and IF management can get buses at a reasonable contract rate. Alternatively, residents could commute via the 11Y public bus route via the GW Parkway, Uber/Lyft ride-sharing, car-pooling, biking, or teleworking from home during the Metro shutdowns of the Yellow Line in July. If you have any comments for the Bus Club, please contact Carole Hall at chall@brookings.edu." 📞