



# The **MONTEBELLO** Voice

an independent gazette

spring forward

March 3, 2023



### Early spring blooms on our apricot tree

The last family to live at the Mount Eagle estate might have planted this apricot tree. It continues to bear fruit.

Apricots have been cultivated since antiquity in Central Asia, Persia, Greece, and China. The species of our apricot tree, *Prunus armeniaca*, is the most widely cultivated species of apricot and numerous varieties and cultivars are grown today around the world.

Apricots are in the same genus (*Prunus*) as plums, cherries, peaches, almonds, and nectarines. They are all in the same large plant family, the rose (*Rosaceae*), as apples, pears, berries, hawthorns, and of course, roses. – *Patricia Jacobec* 📖

### Here Ye! Here Ye! Writers Group to sponsor poetry reading

*By Rebecca Long Hayden*

“Poetry is the liquid voice that can wear through stone.” – Adrienne Rich

“Poetry is like a bird, it ignores all frontiers.” – Yevgeny Yevtushenko

April is National Poetry Month, and the Montebello Writers Group (MWG) will hold a poetry reading in the Community Lounge on Saturday, April 22 from 4 to 5 pm. All residents are invited to participate.

The MWG is a new, informal group of Montebello residents with an interest in writing of all types. Kris Amundson initiated the group through a Montebello-wide email. “I’m a writer,” Kris said, “and I know there must be others here. I was seeking kindred spirits – and I found some!”

The group welcomes published and unpublished writers, aspiring writers, and anyone with a love of the written word. Further potential group activities are under discussion.

MWG members will read poems on April 22 in celebration of National Poetry Month, and they enthusiastically encourage fellow residents to join in. Everyone is welcome to read a poem of their choice, one they have written, or any poem that has inspired, moved, or challenged them.

“It will be a fun event, and a friendly audience,” observed Donna Fowler, an MWG member. “People can sit back and enjoy the poetry shared by others, or read a poem they love.”

For more information, contact Kris Amundson ([kjamundson@gmail.com](mailto:kjamundson@gmail.com)); Rebecca Long Hayden ([viarebecca@aol.com](mailto:viarebecca@aol.com)); or Donna Fowler ([donnaflower09@comcast.net](mailto:donnaflower09@comcast.net)). 📖

*Cover photo by Don Savage*

**The** MONTEBELLO **Voice**

an independent gazette  
Alexandria, Virginia

*This publication accepts no funding or oversight from advertisers, residents, or the Montebello Condominium Unit Owners Association. All opinions are encouraged and reflect the diversity of views in the community. All articles and photographs come from Montebello residents. To receive or contribute to this email-only gazette, contact [montebellovoice@cox.net](mailto:montebellovoice@cox.net) or visit on the web at [www.montebellovoice.com](http://www.montebellovoice.com).*

*Editor & Designer*  
Mikhailina Karina

*Contributors*

Tom Ahern, Paul Bundick, Steve Clark, Heather Click, Susan Dexter, Amy Garcia, Jane Anne Gleason, Rebecca Hayden, Ruth Heineman, Patricia Jacobec, Jon Kandel, Doug Kleine, Rob Maruca, Andrew Masiuk, Dian McDonald, Elaine Miller, Nick Nickerson, Jack Quick, Virginia Sagredo, Don Savage, Bruce Shaw, Bob Shea, Chester Taylor, Richard Titus, Christine Winter, Guido Zanni

From 1983 to 2023

# Farewell to Montebello from Jack & Susie Quick

By Jack B. Quick

I was one of the first to move into Montebello on February 19, 1983 into Building 2, unit 1101. I settled and officially purchased 2-1101 on March 24, 1983. Building 3 was under construction when I moved in and Building 4 came later. The sales office was in what is now Building 5.

I was 35 when I moved in and the average age was lower than it is now. The Huntington Metro Station opened up on December 17, 1983. Most of the residents worked and filled the shuttle bus to and from work. Once back from work, we took advantage of the MB amenities, bowling, hot tub, swimming, etc. We also played tennis on a plastic surface, put there because they thought a normal surface would add too much weight to the Community Center roof structure. It was very slippery and caused a few falls.

We walked the trail, which was all natural, carved out basically by the residents and visually shielded from the adjoining properties. It got very muddy sometimes.

The residents were extremely active. Ten of us started the Montebello Half-Fast Social Club, which was not affiliated with Montebello. We were just neighbors who wanted

to do things beyond our campus. Giuseppe Cecchi, Montebello developer, was amused with the Social Club and had someone make us a flag that I still have. We took trips to New York City, did a pub crawl on St. Paddy's Day, and went to the Mall for concerts where I flew the flag so members could find us.

Giuseppe Cecchi, International Developers, Inc. (IDI) built many premier condominium communities. Richard

Grizzard was his onsite representative and we became friends. Mr. Cecchi and Richard Grizzard offered me the first opportunity to lease the Montebello Café. The original design was set up to be a deli. Some of you may have seen the unused meat refrigeration unit in the previous market. I put careful thought into it for five minutes and turned it down. I think they were surprised, but I was at the University Club in DC and I told them I liked getting a paycheck. We continued to be friends anyway.

Back then, I think there were only 20 staff members in the office. It all seemed to work well, but the mission has changed and the activity level has skyrocketed. We had a few committees. I was on the Asset Committee, which was the forerunner of the Finance and Budget Committee. We were responsible to oversee the assets of the community and to make sure they were trans-



Easement for the shuttle road with the Metro.

In 1989 I met Susie, we got married in 1990, and moved to North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida until we returned to Montebello in 2019. It has been a pleasure for us to be back for almost four years. After deliberating for some time, we decided to move to a retirement community in North Carolina

and will be leaving before the end of March.

I was honored to serve on the Board and was extremely passionate about maintaining our quality of life, watching our costs to avoid waste, and limit cost overruns. I trust the board will continue to place these items on their radar. 🍷



ferred to the Association properly. One claim to fame we had was working with IDI to get the Perpetual

## ¡buen provecho!

*Members of the Spanish Discussion Club experimented with their language and culinary skills by making a paella feast. Sangria and flan completed the menu. The club functions with a mix of intermediate learners and native speakers who come from Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia and Puerto Rico. At our weekly meetings we discuss, in Spanish, current events, TV shows, Hispanic culture, and share family stories and backgrounds.*

*Everyone is welcome to join us on Mondays at 7 p.m. in Party Room 3.*

*Christine Winter*



# Full house

By Chester Taylor

The United States is overpopulated. That's right, we're full. Not just my assessment, but many in the scientific community agree. To make matters worse, we're in debt and our southern border is being overrun by migrants. Overpopulation, debt, and taking in too many migrants has caused a whole host of problems. Our classrooms are overcrowded, and we are short teachers (4% nationwide and rising). The pandemic has contributed to lost learning. Many of our students are below par in math. We have many who are learning English as a second language. Our hospitals are short of beds and lack robust emergency care capacity. There are too few lab techs, nurses, pharmacists, and doctors. We aren't prepared for disaster or war casualties. Our police are overwhelmed by crime. They lack training and do not have the resources for modern forensics laboratories capable of rapid DNA testing.

Overpopulation has also taken a toll on our environment. Our forests, grasslands, wetlands, and deserts are being bulldozed, destroying the habitats of our animals and plants to make way for subdivisions and strip malls. Each day millions of commuters are choking on the very smog they help create. Our rivers, lakes, bayous, streams, and bays are polluted and most of our fish, oysters, and crabs from them are unfit to eat due to pollutants, much from plastic waste. We have a severe drought in the Southwest that is endangering our food supply and electrical power. Wildfires are now more common than ever ravaging our forests out west. Soon most of our coastal lands will be under salt-water from melting glaciers.

We need money to fix our infrastructure. Many of our roads, bridges, airports, electric power grids, waste management and clean water systems, irrigation canals, levees, and dams are kaput. None of these fixes will be cheap. The Hudson River Tunnel infrastructure project for example is expected to cost \$16 billion.

With a debt level at \$31.12 trillion, our nation's credit card is maxed out. Our options are to raise the debt ceiling

and incur interest payments that will eat away at other needed budget spending to fix our infrastructure, maintain our social services, and improve the environment. We can decrease spending with the same effect. We can raise taxes, but it still won't be enough. Most probably we will have to implement all of these measures to dig ourselves out of the hole we created.

To help stabilize our population, we need legislation to update our immigration policies and border enforcement to control the number of immigrants entering the United States. When looking at current immigration law, it is dazzling complex. Not even the Federal Acquisition Regulations come close. As a general plan, I propose:



1. We allow temporary workers permits to work in the various fields such as agricultural, nursing, research, and construction as needed as currently defined by the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service.

2. We grant citizenship to the current 800,000 Dreamers, those covered by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

3. We, on a case-by-case basis, approve bona fide political asylum requests for those individuals as we have done in the past for the Vietnamese boat people, the Afghans who supported us in the war against Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban, and those fleeing the war in Ukraine. We should accept political prisoners like the 222 who had been held in prison in Nicaragua. The State Department needs to modernize taking advantage of Artificial Intelligence software to maintain a current "pre-approved list" of those countries that are eligible and whose citizens could enter the United States and apply for political asylum.

4. We approve citizenship or Permanent Resident Cards (green cards) to those under special circumstances such as those married to U.S. citizens or those deemed vital for the security or economic interests of the United States. We continue to allow those non-citizens who serve in the Armed Forces a path to citizenship.

We no longer have room or can afford to allow entry into the United States all those (around 272 million and increasing) seeking to avoid their economic depressed or failed states. If their country is not on the State Department's pre-approved list, these people would not be permitted entry into the United

## global affairs

States. No more requesting asylum at the border, entering the United States, and then disappearing before ruling. Applications for exceptions would be submitted abroad, either electronically or in writing. Finally, our borders need to be secured. Those that illegally enter the United States will be returned to their country of origin or other countries that will accept them. We must stop the drug cartel mules smuggling fentanyl across the border that kills 150 people here each day.

Some things we can do to mitigate the problem of economically depressed

states is better target our foreign policy to assist those in need of help or those that want to stay in their native country. For example, we could lift the failed 61-year-old trade embargo against Cuba. Another example would be to ensure that we uphold our treaty to deliver 1.5 million acre-feet of water from the Colorado River to Mexico each year – free of salt and chemicals from our agricultural runoff canals like we are doing now, making that water essentially unusable. We should encourage others to better fund international organizations like the World Food Programme, World Health Program, and World Bank; and increase our fund-

ing to the Refugee and Humanitarian Assistance Program. Finally, we need plans and preparedness to be able to respond more quickly and completely to humanitarian operations using DoD assets with their hospital ships, air transport, and offshore shipping assets.

We see what is happening in the world: the wars, the famines, droughts, wildfires, melting glaciers, and diseases. It is heart-breaking, but we can't fund the whole world, nor can we accept everyone to live here. We are full. The United States must make hard decisions. 🇺🇸

## Good deaths, and bad

Hearing about the earthquake in Turkey and Syria brought to mind Philippe Aries' *The Hour of Our Death*. In it he describes The Good Death, as it was thought of a few centuries ago. In bed in one's home, the room filled with the significant individuals from one's life, the person exchanges expressions of gratitude, affection, contrition, and final goodbyes with those present. A priest administers confession and the Last Rites. The person peacefully dies. No pain, no terror. (A caricature, based on this notion of a proper death, is in Puccini's Gianni Schicchi).

By contrast, in Turkey and Syria there are persons whose buildings have collapsed on them but not killed them. Most are probably unable to move and may be having difficulty breathing. It is dark and cold; hypothermia is limiting how much time searchers have to find and extricate them. One avoids thinking about what their thoughts and feelings must be.

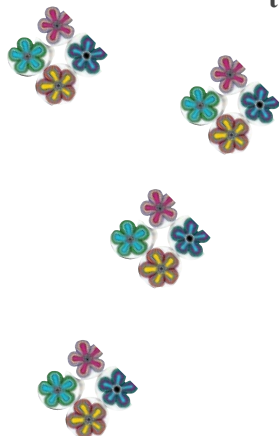
In the 1960 earthquake and tsunami in southern Chile, hordes of would-be helpers flooded down from the north, whom organizers now also had to feed and house. They became an additional problem. We won't do that, but we can contribute to appropriate charities, and we should. Just watch out for con artists, who feast on this sort of opportunity. – Richard Titus 🇺🇸

# Polymer Clay Play Let's Welcome Spring!



Polymer Clay is a synthetic clay that can be cured in a home toaster oven. This time, let's make flowers and pattern canes! A cane is a cylinder with the same design all the way through. If you can roll, squeeze and cut - you can make a cane! we will use the cane to make beads, cover objects, make coasters, anything you can imagine. Eat some chocolates too!!!!

**Join us — even if you have never used clay before! You can make it, bake it and take it!**



**See you in March**

**Tuesday Mar 7, 2023**

**CC Underground 2pm -5pm**



AiM Polymer Clay Group

## Voting: an obligation

By Bob Shea

**B**ased on our recent history, it would be easy to feel overdosed and fed up with voting.

We have had primaries, general elections, and run-off elections. Our TVs have been taken over by political ads, poll soothsayers, and talking heads who have “expert” opinions on every single issue. We may reach the saturation point and scream “enough already!” Not yet.

Our next election will be upon us in March 2023. The residents of Montebello will be called upon to elect three new members for the Board of Directors, those civic-minded volunteers who take on almost a full-time job, without compensation, to make decisions that impact all of us. In some past elections, it was a challenge to meet the established minimum number of voters to make the election legal. Shame on any of us who did not participate.

Once volunteers step forward to place their names on the ballot, the process starts.

We will be provided biographies on all the candidates. We will have an opportunity to meet the candidates, ask questions of them in a Zoom forum on Sunday, February 26, and evaluate who should earn our vote. An in-person meeting would be preferred, but for a multitude of excellent and well-thought out reasons the forum will be by Zoom. And finally, we will cast our votes for the men and women who we determine will best represent our interests.

As with so many things, I also have VERY strong opinions about our Montebello election process.

👉 Voting is an obligation, made so much easier by recent changes in the Montebello elections. If one does not vote, both residents and absentee owners, our opinions belong in the trash bin. One has an opportunity to cast a ballot. If one does not do that, we have

no right to share opinions about how our complex is managed. That having been said, place a piece of duct tape over your mouth and “shut up.” Elections demand participation – no vote, no whining voices after the election.

👉 When we do vote, we also have an obligation to select the very best candidates based on an assessment of their personal history and campaign statements. Evaluate the candidates, especially in the Meet The Candidates Zoom forum. Submit questions, think about the replies, and vote your conscience. Do your homework.

👉 Beware of “one issue” candidates. We would all like lower condo fees just as the folks in hell would like ice water, but is it realistic? Acting as our fiduciary, the Board of Directors must make some very tough decisions. Their decisions are driven by many factors that are often beyond their collective abilities to control: inflation, prevailing wages in the industry, code compliance, and the age of our properties, to name just a few. Add to that the expressed wishes (demands?) of the owners to protect our investments and to continually improve the quality of our lives by adding even more amenities.

Everything has a price, and every decision requires a cost-benefit analysis. There are very few free rides in life. There are other issues besides condo fees. Opinions without solutions are like elbows; most of us have one or two.

👉 Ask yourself the question: How involved has the candidate been in Montebello’s day-to-day activities? Does the candidate even live full time at Montebello? Any current Board member will attest to the fact that being here lets them keep a finger on the pulse of the community, not to mention having “face time” with residents at various Montebello functions. That is difficult to do from afar. Have they served on committees and played a role in the art of compromise that is so necessary to craft workable decisions?

👉 What background does the candidate have in management on the scale that Montebello presents? Even the most dedicated and well-intentioned candidates can be easily overwhelmed by the complex legal, financial, personnel, and administrative responsibilities that they assume once on the Board. We have had past Board members who rose to the challenge and have done magnificent jobs. However, on-the-job training is risky at best. Seasoned professionals who have managed money, people, facilities, and time are ready to do just that at the first Board meeting after the election.

👉 At the Meet The Candidates Zoom forum, how did they answer direct questions posed by the attendees? Did they recite platitudes, fail to answer the question, or tap dance through a non-answer? Were they honest enough to simply say “I don’t know,” or “I would have to do research on that question” if appropriate. A lot can be learned about an individual by how he/she fields an unrehearsed answer to a potential constituent’s question. Communication skills coupled with honesty are a mandatory personal attribute.

Do not overdose on voting yet. Our next election will impact each one of us probably more directly and personally than any election we have participated in during 2022. Be involved. Be informed. With the ease of voting at Montebello, there is no excuse not to be a shareholder in deciding who makes the decisions that impact all of us.

An aside, and it is a plus, to date, we have not had a post-election denier. Yet.

This represents my opinions alone and has no connection to those who so admirably plan, manage, and run our elections.


Finally, I must give a tip of the hat to those who volunteer to serve on our Board. Past and present, they have collectively looked after all of us and our homes. Well done! 🏠

# What's wrong with endorsing candidates for board elections?


## The Election and the Candidates

*Three candidates share our views for the future of Montebello*


**Steve Clark** is just completing a year on the Board, during which he has served as Treasurer. Working with Management, he was instrumental in creating this year's Operating Budget that had a fee increase less than half of inflation. Prior to election to the Board, Steve served as Chair of the Finance & Budget Committee and Vice-Chair of the Activities Committee. He has a great affinity for numbers — he is a mathematical statistician for the Census Bureau, and also works on machine learning and artificial intelligence.



**Rob Maruca** is a past Chair and still serves on the Finance & Budget Committee. He also serves on the Neighborhood Improvement Committee and worked on census redistricting, helping keep Montebello in the Mount Vernon District. In addition, he serves on the Coronavirus Work Group, where his vast hospital experience has been invaluable. Rob also has extensive budgeting experience.



**Jane Anne Gleason** has a long record of service to Montebello. She has previously served two one-year terms on the Board and currently serves on the Finance & Budget and Quality Improvement Committees, and the Coronavirus Work Group. In the past, she has served on the Elections Committee and the various committees that helped plan the renovation of the Community Center.



**We have all worked together on various committees and on the Board. We share the same views: ensure conservative financial planning, ensure the safety and comfort of residents, emphasize transparent decision making, maintain the quality of life at Montebello, and keep condo fees under control.**

**WE URGE YOU TO VOTE FOR THESE CANDIDATES.**

*Endorsed by current and former Board Members and Committee Chairs:*  
**Heather Click, Ruth Hieneman, Jon Kandel, Doug Kleine, Bruce Shaw, and Guido Zanni**

Distributed on behalf of Steve Clark (3-511), Jane Anne Gleason (1-316), and Rob Maruca (1-818) by Heather Click (2-104), Ruth Hieneman (2-314), Jon Kandel (3-1608), Doug Kleine (4-614), Bruce Shaw (2-1118), and Guido Zanni (4-1604)

*This glossy flyer was distributed under residents' doors on February 26 and 27*

This type of campaign literature begs the question as to whether the board members who are promoting certain candidates over others, will be influencing, either directly or indirectly, that potential new board member's support on issues important to them. It gives the appearance as such even if denied.

This type of promotional material may be legal, however we at Montebello should set ourselves to a higher standard and ban all literature distributed by those other than the candidate.

What makes this promotional literature particularly egregious is the candidate left out (Nick Nickerson) is incredibly capable and has previous experience on the board. Why make such a bold statement against him, it just doesn't pass the smell test! ❖

*Susan Dexter*

I think the recent election flyers put under our doorways is very inappropriate. Board members (past and present) should not be able to use their elected offices to directly influence future elections as a group by asking people to vote for their endorsees. If Board members as individuals want to support other

individuals on merit, they should do so without using their elected official status. I'm against this move towards forming political parties at Montebello. Let candidates stand and run on their own merits as individuals, not part of a ruling clique. This is shameful. ❖

*Paul Bundick*

The take-away I got from the message is that there is no room for any other point of view outside of a core group of BOD members. My perception of the flyer message is that it promotes an 'us vs. them' paradigm. We should always be striving to achieve a healthy, well-balanced BOD with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise. ❖

*Amy Garcia*

The Board of Directors has a legal duty and should retain impartiality during an election process, as should the Chair of the Covenants Committee.

The flyer, hand delivered to my door on February 27, does not maintain impartiality during this election for the Board of Directors of Montebello. ❖

*Virginia Sagredo*

Early each year a letter goes out from Montebello asking civic-minded residents to stand for election to the Board of Directors. It does not mention that all candidates are not created equal.

When this year's election cycle ends, six or seven of the seven available Board positions contested over the past two years will have been won by candidates endorsed by members of the Board of Directors. One or none of these positions will have been won by the six candidates who were not endorsed by Board members.

From the viewpoint of democratic process, these results create bad optics. The message appears to be that potential candidates who are not established Friends of the Board need not apply. Why bother in the face of the very long odds?

The results could also inspire the cynical to view the Board as exclusive, close-knit, self-replicating, and not very transparent (Who paid for this year's Board endorsement flyer?).

If we wish to maintain functioning democratic norms in Montebello, I believe we could make a good start by



adopting as policy the philosophy of the Hatch Act. This law prohibits federal officeholders from using their official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the result of an election; for example, using their official titles or positions while engaged in political activity.

Board members should refrain from using their titles and positions to influence Montebello elections. In the spirit of Hatch, it would be even more healthy for the democratic process at Montebello if they stood clear of the elections altogether.

In the interest of transparency, I also believe we should adopt as Montebello policy the standards that apply to the campaign materials used in our state and local elections; *i.e.*, clear identification on the materials themselves of the people who paid for them. ❖

*Tom Ahern*

### *By Nick Nickerson, former board member and candidate*

At the Board Work Session on February 28th, the flyer was discussed in light of the numerous inquiries it has caused. The President of the Board read notes from his discussion with the Association Attorney. The President said that the flyer was entirely legal. The President also called on the Head of the Election Committee who stated that the flyer did not violate the current Election Regulations.

While this may be true, I think that the flyer creates significant problems for our Association. First and foremost, it introduces a discordant note into our Association. It damages our friendly social environment. And, it distracts us from our focus on what is best for our Community. Several Owners think it crosses the line into unethical behavior. That is not an unreasonable point of view.

To be clear, for a Board Member to say, “My friend, Tom, is running for the Board and I think he’d do a great job,” is not a problem. But saying, “I’m a Board Member and many of

us Board Members say we need Tom on the Board” probably is. What’s the difference? In one case you are stating your support for a Candidate. In the second, you are implying that you are acting on behalf of the Association. To my way of thinking, this is using the authority of your position in an inappropriate way. Obviously, opinions vary. It is for the Voters to decide if they wish to encourage this kind of behavior.

In addition, during the Candidates’ Night discussions, the Candidates were asked if they would be Independent. I stated that I would be Independent. I feel strongly that I have a fiduciary responsibility to be Independent, to represent all of the Owners. In the short time I was on the Board, that Independence saved the Association \$60,000 on the EV Charger effort, obtained Structural Inspections to ensure our Towers are safe, and saved a few thousand dollars on various other contracts. I will take a similar Independent approach should I be elected now. I will leave it to the Owners to consider this flyer and decide how Independent the various Candidates will be. ❖

### *By Mikhailina Karina, the Voice*

My favorite analogy to describe Montebello is that it’s like a high school. We have our sports teams, artsy types, cute couples, computer nerds, smart misfits, cool popular kids, dances and parties, a cafeteria, and the principal’s office. We also have a student council, the board of directors, that holds elections every year. Like all student councils, ours has candidates who are passionate about governance and keeping Montebello financially strong. All the candidates have decades of professional experience in the government and in the private sector. Unfortunately, because nine strong personalities serve on the board, the rest of the student body occasionally has ideological and personal conflicts, accusing the board of being “clique-y” and tone-deaf to the constituents’ concerns.

Our current board election is laying bare these us vs. them perceptions that the board is an exclusive society with

members invited to join other like-minded individuals. It became especially apparent when four current board members and two committee chairs publicly endorsed three out of four board candidates by slipping a flyer under the door. Although this endorsement is neither illegal nor against the rules, it sends a very clear message to the voters: these are our people, “we share the same views,” and voting for them will give us a seven-person majority to accomplish our agenda. Essentially, a voting bloc.

At the last board work session, two board directors, Rolf Dietrich and Tom Harrelson, spoke out against the endorsement flyer. “It’s very good that we’re giving our personal opinion. But if we say that we are board members, then that implies that the board is endorsing it,” Dietrich said. “Some people thought it was coming from the board. We need to set our standards a little higher, where our ethics are beyond reproach.”

Likewise, director Harrelson said a line had been crossed between board impartiality and election influence. “I agree that as an individual, you have a perfect right to endorse whoever you want and to vote for whoever you want. But to make it look like you’re using the wording ‘board endorses,’ that has an ethical value to it and I am concerned about it.”

In their statements on the subsequent pages, board members insist that endorsing board candidates is nothing new and has been going on in one form or another for decades. I’ve lived here since 1996 and cannot recall such blatant anointing of candidates that goes beyond old-fashioned cronyism. Whether it’s legal is not the point – the optics are terrible and it gives the impression (to use an overused term), that board elections are rigged in favor of hand-picked candidates.

Don’t get me wrong. I very much admire and respect the abilities of our board members who put in innumerable free hours into our governance. Before the pandemic, I diligently attended every board meeting and marveled at



the breadth of knowledge, professionalism, and attention to detail our board brought to their responsibilities. Because I hold our board in high esteem, it's very disappointing when some of them use under-handed tactics to get their cronies elected and then act as if we're the ones in the wrong – they didn't break any election rules because election rules don't mention endorsements. So theoretically, they're in the right. But the owners are smart people and can see through the gaslighting and manipulation of facts.

In future board elections, I respectfully ask that Montebello's owners be allowed to make their choices based on the available information and meetings with candidates without any patronage or influence from the board. Trust us to make our own decisions. ❖

*Top: screen shot of the Zoom candidates night on February 26. Close to 80 people tuned in. Joel Miller was the moderator. A recording of the event was emailed to the community on February 27. The endorsement flyer discussion takes place around the 1:40 mark.*

*Nick Nickerson's election campaign postcard was sent to the owners in the mail*

## In view of election impartiality and transparency, is it appropriate for board members and committee chairs to endorse and promote specific board candidates for the upcoming election?

*By Jon Kandel, board president*

The election flyer that was delivered to unit doors is perfectly acceptable under Election Committee guidelines, which are updated and approved every year by the Board of Directors.

For this year's election, a group of people who are involved in Montebello governance, collectively have more than 60 years' experience in the Board or on the governance committees, and who have worked with all of the candidates, decided to endorse some of them. This practice dates back to 2005 when two slates of candidates were running on opposing priorities. Also, last year owners received campaign materials representing two different groups and perspectives. Endorsements have always included sitting Board members.

As our attorney has advised, after reviewing the recent flyer, this is completely within their rights as Montebello owners:

*"You have asked for my opinion regarding whether Montebello Board and/or Committee members are permitted to endorse candidates for the Board. There is nothing in Virginia law or the Montebello governing documents that would prohibit the endorsement of candidates for the Board by existing Board or Committee members. However, there is an exception for members of a Committee that is in some way involved in managing the election, such as a Nominating or Elections Committee. They should remain neutral so that the integrity of the election is maintained. Also, the endorsement cannot come in any document that purports to be an official Board or Association communication.*

*"As long as anyone having anything to do with managing the election stays neutral, I think that a Board member, as an individual, can feel free to give his/her opinion on any candidate or candidates."\**

Regarding transparency, at the bottom of the flyer were listed the names and unit numbers of the candidates and of the endorsers, as specified by the Election Committee guidelines. The flyer stated: "Endorsed by current or former Board Members and Committee Chairs." That's all it was, six people with Montebello governance experience exercising their individual opinions as owners.

No Montebello resources were used for these flyers, and funding was not an issue for past years' flyers nor should it be this year. All owners are entitled to privacy with regard to their personal finances, and knowing who paid how much has absolutely nothing to do with the election itself.

This year there are four candidates for three Board seats. It is unfortunate, but there has to be one loser. I have worked with all four people and – based on their contributions to Montebello, their work on committees and/or the Board, and their philosophies about fiscal policy – I ranked them. I have endorsed the top three. Many owners have sought my opinion at every election for the past four years. This year, as in all years, all owners are free to analyze, to evaluate, and to reach their own conclusions as to for whom to vote. ❖

\* *Ed. note:* The same opinion from Bob Segan, association attorney, appears in subsequent statements. Instead of quoting the counsel each time, "association attorney statement" will denote this text.

***The Voice asked four board members, three committee chairs, and four candidates to comment on the appropriateness of the flyer. Their unaltered replies are on the following pages.***

*By Heather Click, board secretary*

The answer to your question is, yes, it is appropriate.

I resent the implication, or actual accusation, of impropriety in supporting the candidates of my choice. Since being elected to the Board in 2018, I have often been asked by Montebello owners which of the candidates do I think would best contribute to the effective functioning of the Board and governance of the Association. The answer depends on a variety of factors and may change from year to year. Not everyone will agree with my assessment and I respect that. I would appreciate the same respect in return.

My position is supported by Montebello's legal counsel and confirmed by our Election Committee Chair.

As counsel has advised, after reviewing the recent flyer, this is completely within the rights of all owners (who are not members of the Election Committee). From Bob Segan, legal counsel for Montebello:

*\*"association attorney statement" ❖*

*By Bruce Shaw, board member*

I have served on the Board for five consecutive terms and in each election cycle since my initial term I have been asked by many for my thoughts on the candidates. I have always given them an answer with an explanation as to why I think my choices are best suited to serve the community. All owners, including board members, have an absolute right to express their opinions on this matter. In fact, I see it as an obligation as a board member to meet my fiduciary responsibility in helping to ensure the board is the best it can possibly be. ❖

*By Robert (Rob) Maruca, board candidate*

As an owner, I would never expect that my rights, or those of any other owner, would be denied because of service to the Montebello community. In my campaign statement and in my responses to questions asked at Candidates' Night, I responded that my primary goal is to increase information and communication between the Board and owners and I pledged that I would make myself available at least twice a month. My point in saying that was to hear owners' pros and cons on issues, and act as I see best for our community based on owner input.

I fully support the statement below. –

As our attorney has advised, after reviewing the recent flyer, this is completely within their rights as Montebello owners:

*\*“association attorney statement”*

Regarding transparency, at the bottom of the flyer were listed the names and unit numbers of the candidates and of the endorsers, as specified by the Election Committee guidelines. The flyer stated: “Endorsed by current or former Board Members and Committee Chairs.” That’s all it was, six people with Montebello governance experience exercising their individual opinions as owners.

No Montebello resources were used for these flyers, and funding was not an issue for past years’ flyers nor should it be this year. All owners are entitled to privacy with regard to their personal finances, and knowing who paid how much has absolutely nothing to do with the election itself.

In addition to having first-hand knowledge of the candidates’ participation on a variety of committees, I also reviewed their past experience and involvement in Montebello governance. Upon choosing the candidates I thought were most invested in Montebello, I was pleased to endorse their candidacies. ❖

*By Jane Anne Gleason, board candidate*

The election flyer that was delivered to unit doors is perfectly acceptable under Election Committee guidelines, which are updated and approved every year by the Board of Directors.

For this year’s election, a group of people who are involved in Montebello governance, collectively have more than 60 years’ experience in the Board or on the governance committees, and who have worked with all of the candidates, decided to endorse some of them. This practice dates back to 2005 when two slates of candidates were running on opposing priorities. Also, last year owners received campaign materials representing two different groups and perspectives. Endorsements have always included sitting Board members.

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I am pleased to have the endorsement of six of the long-time leaders of Montebello governance. I have worked with all of them in the past and look forward to having the opportunity to continue to do so. ❖

*By Steve Clark, board treasurer and candidate*

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Montebello is the place we all call home. Why wouldn’t we want to get the opinions of those who are involved in its governance when choosing Board members? Furthermore, we need to listen to and respect what each person

has to say: why cause unnecessary dissonance and discord to the community at large?

The current rules set by the Election Committee on the topic of election of Board candidates have been consistently followed across time and no Virginia state law has been broken. However, if any owner has an issue regarding these rules, they are welcome to raise the issue at the time the rules are set so it can be properly addressed at that point in time. Let's work together for the greater good of Montebello! ❖

*By Elaine Miller, chair of the Elections Committee*

I have attached a copy of the Guidelines for Candidates document [page 15, *ed.*] which the Elections Committee distributes to each candidate as soon as his/her candidacy is official. This document has remained basically the same for at least the last eight years. Each year the Election Committee does minor updating and submits the document for approval by the Board which discusses the document at a public work session and then votes on it at a regular Board meeting. This document states that campaign material must be “non-defamatory” and “must include the name(s) and unit number(s) of the person(s) responsible for the material.” The piece of campaign material distributed on Candidates Night does not violate any of these clearly defined campaign guidelines.

In the Fall (well before the next election) the Election Committee will be submitting all official documents for the 2024 election to the Board of Directors. The agenda containing a list of these documents will be sent to everyone in the MML announcing the date of the appropriate Work Session and regular Board meeting. I encourage anyone interested to attend these meetings at which the Guidelines for Candidates will be discussed.

The Elections Committee has not yet had time to discuss this issue, so what follows is my personal opinion and not that of the elections committee.

I feel that people who volunteer to be on the BOD or on committees should not have to give up their rights as owners to publicly voice their opinions. As an informed voter I find endorsements useful because they often provide more information on a candidate's policies and vision. This is especially useful when the person(s) who is doing the endorsing has worked with the candidate, or when the candidate is someone unknown to me. The Election Committee is, of course, an exception. The integrity of the election requires that, both individually and collectively, the members of this committee remain neutral. The Election Committee has not, will not, and should not endorse any candidate. ❖

*By Guido Zanni, former board member and chair of the Covenants Committee*

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Finally, it should be noted that in 2002, it was common for Committees (other than the Elections Committee) to invite candidates to their committee meetings so members could hear the candidate's statements and engage in conversation with the candidates. This event was a formal committee agenda item and the ensuring discussion took place during the formal committee meeting. The Board and the Elections Committee agreed that this practice needed to be discontinued as it exceeded the terms of reference for committees. Additionally, it forced some members to hear campaign speeches that they would prefer not to hear. This policy was changed to one where committees could invite candidates, but they only could speak after the committee adjourned thus making attendance a voluntary activity.

As a former Board member for 15 years, I have never given up my right to express my recommendations for individuals who I believe have the necessary experience and skills to work tirelessly for owners to make Montebello's vision, mission and values a reality. I review all candidates' skills, expertise, professional experience, and experience with Montebello's governance in making my selections and never judge a candidate on a single criterion. I seek to have a board with a diversity of skills. For example, there was a time when the Board had three professional engineers; it's unlikely I would have endorsed a fourth engineer.

I have always endorsed candidates and will continue to do so in the future. ❖

*By Ruth Heineman, chair of the Activities Committee*

The election flyer that was delivered to unit doors is perfectly acceptable under Election Committee guidelines, which are updated and approved every year by the Board of Directors.

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*By Doug Kleine, board member*

Okay, the timing of the flyer’s distribution was unfortunate. It distracted from what should have been the robust discussion of condo-wide issues that has characterized previous “Meet the Candidates” sessions in the past. I would guess that the challenges of organizing a volunteer team of the size needed to deliver the flyer to all units on all floors of all buildings had something to do with that timing.

However, as someone who has been a volunteer in many campaigns — from national elections to association boards — I am confident that the endorsements of past and incumbent officeholders is not only appropriate, but

a time-honored and much sought after tradition. That goes for Montebello Board elections as well.

Endorsement by past and incumbent office holders is also legal under Virginia statutes. As Montebello’s attorney Bob Segan has written:

*\*“association attorney statement”*

We are fortunate here at Montebello that our board elections as well as other areas of governance are generally conducted with integrity and neighborly respect, supporting our reputation as a fiscally responsible and well-managed community. I hope and believe that this election will give us the same result. ❖



*Photo by Dian McDonald*

## Montebello Elections Committee

# Guidelines for Candidates

1. Nominating petitions for the candidates addressed above have been received and validated. This memorandum constitutes acknowledgment of your petition and provides guidelines and information for your use during the period prior to the Annual Meeting and Election.

2. The Board of Directors (BOD) has adopted a Code of Conduct, and has directed all candidates to sign a statement that they have read and understood the code of conduct and agree, if elected, to honor and be bound by the terms stated therein. A copy of the Code of Conduct (AR 95) was included in your Call for Candidates packet.

3. The Election Committee has recommended, and the BOD has approved, the following guidelines:

### A. Campaigning

Election material is expected to be dignified, non-defamatory, factual and in keeping with the community standards. All election material must include the name(s) and unit number(s) of the person(s) responsible for the material. Candidates who wish to distribute election materials to individual units are required to check at the Association Office for the list of residents who do not desire to receive such materials.

Items placed on the B3 bulletin boards may not exceed 3" x 5" .

Solicitation by door-to-door in-person campaigning or by placing flyers in the lobbies or in other common elements is prohibited. However, the Election Committee will provide an easel in each lobby displaying a copy of each candidate's biography.

On the day before the Annual Meet-

ing Election Committee volunteers will provide voter assistance in the lobby of each building. During this time, all campaign activities will be restricted to the lower level of the lobby in each building.

On Election Day no candidate will be allowed in the room where the voting is taking place, except to vote.

Candidates may attend Committee meetings as unit owners. No campaigning is allowed during committee meetings. At the conclusion of the meetings, candidates can have Q&A sessions with Committee members.

Clubs will establish their own criteria and procedures for meeting with candidates. All candidates must be given the same treatment.

A list of committees and clubs is available in the Association Office.

### B. Election Procedures

The order of listing of the candidates on the ballot will be alphabetical.

Candidates will be listed on the ballot by name only (no degrees, ranks, etc.)

An asterisk (\*) will be added next to the name of any candidate who has not agreed to sign the Code of Conduct, and it will be marked the same way on the ballot.

The three candidates receiving the highest vote totals will win 3-year terms.

### C. Meet The Candidates Night

The Election Committee and the Board of Directors will sponsor a "Meet the Candidates Night" via ZOOM on Sunday, February 26, 2023, starting at 7:00 p.m. Candidates will be provided an opportunity to express their views orally on any issue. The Chair of the Election Committee (or designee) will

moderate this forum. Candidates will be allowed two (2) minutes to address the meeting with prepared remarks if they wish to speak. Following the prepared talks, there will be a question and answer period. Closing statements are optional and should be no more than 2 minutes in length.

Personal attacks directed toward other candidates, the Board of Directors, the Management, or members of the community, whether originating from the candidates or the audience, will not be tolerated.

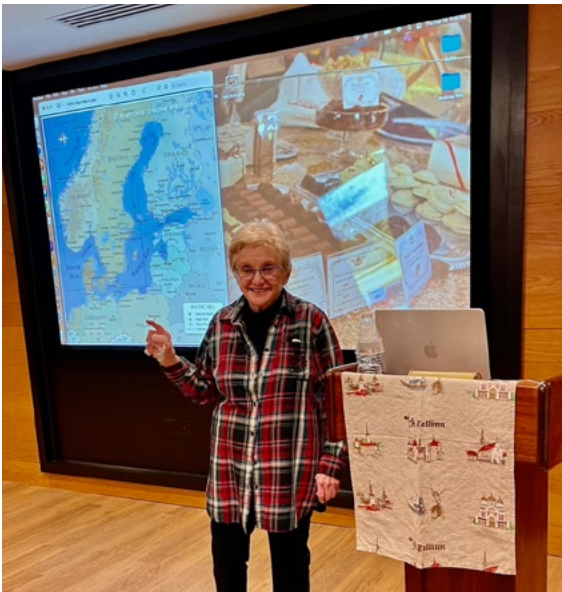
Candidates' remarks shall be forward-thinking and not focused on historical projects or decisions.

### D. Briefing By Counsel

On or about Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. or prior to the next Work Session, the Association Counsel will meet with the newly elected Board members and current Board members to discuss the responsibilities and duties directors have to the Association and to elect Board officers.

All members of the Board of Directors will be requested to sign the Code of Conduct.

4. Please forward any questions regarding the election process to the Chair of the Election Committee, Elaine Miller ([emiller444@aol.com](mailto:emiller444@aol.com) or 617-435-1284). ❖



*Angela Anderson shared images and music from her trip to the Baltics with the Friends of the Washington Metropolitan Philharmonic*



*Museum educator Kristy Huettner discussed the historical collection at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum*



*Valentine's Day celebration*

*Photos by Dian McDonald*





*Women's Club High Tea featured lunch and a movie*



*Mardi Gras celebration*  
**The Montebello Voice**

*Photos by Dian McDonald*



**“Ukrajina eto ne Rossia” (Ukraine is not Russia)**

*Leonid Kuchma, president of Ukraine 1994-2002*

Russian propaganda that Ukraine is not a separate and independent country but part of Russia is no longer working, neither inside Ukraine nor outside. Russia has responded by bombing residential parts of Ukrainian cities, killing residents, including children. But fighting for your identity is a powerful motivator and does not lend itself to simple calculations of military strengths. President Volodymyr Zelensky is pointing to Ukrainians’ ability to fight as he is asking the West for support – it will not be wasted.

*Andrew Masiuk*