

**WORMAN'S MILL CIVIC ASSOCIATION (WMCA)**

**WORMAN'S MILL CONSERVANCY CANDIDATES' FORUM**

**Approved Minutes for Tuesday – April 13, 2010**

**Worman's Mill Clubhouse (7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.)**

**WMCA Board of Directors Present:** Carol Goldstein, President; Allan Carlson, Vice-President; Judy Haines, Treasurer; Vicki Myers, Director – At – Large; Dick Menzer, Director – At – Large; and Noel Farmer, Secretary

**I. Introduction**

President Carol Goldstein reviewed the format procedures for the forum and introduced Dick Menzer as the moderator for the forum. An introductory statement consisting of background, experience, and qualifications was made by each of the following candidates: Ms. Lois Benjamin, Mr. Nick Falcone (incumbent resident Board member), Mrs. Arlene Perkins, and Mr. Joe Pinto (incumbent resident Board member).

**II. Candidates Responses to three Questions**

**Question 1: There is a perception within the community, right or wrong, that Board decisions are fraught with back room deals and secrets. What, if anything, can you as a Board member, do to alleviate this perception and create a more open decision-making process?**

**Nick Falcone's Response:** The key word is perception. We have meetings every other month. In order to correct this perception, I believe that we should have monthly meetings and make the meetings shorter. We should also increase our communications with the community via an expanded use of the Worman's Mill Conservancy's web-site. Hopefully, these approaches will change this perception.

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** I don't believe back room deals are going on. The distance between meetings is a big problem. There is a need for more time for participation from the citizens in the audience of the meetings.

**Joe Pinto's Response:** My style is open and direct. There have been no back room deals. However, I realize that the perception is there. We need more communication with the community and more feedback from the community. We need to listen more to the community. The Board should be strategic-oriented and not tactical-oriented in its dealings and administration. I would find it difficult to make monthly meetings due to my business involvement

and responsibilities. We need to be more effective; more meetings will not necessarily make the board more effective.

**Lois Benjamin's Response:** I believe the concept of back room deals is a perception and not a reality. We need to publish the agendas and minutes. We need to use the web-site and Mill Monitor more extensively. Expanded communication is critical to resolve and correct this perception.

**Question 2: How would you plan to ensure solvency of the budget given the state of the economy? How would you sustain sufficient contingency funds and yet maintain reasonable fees? What would you, as a Board member, do to make the budgetary process a more open and understandable one for the community from the first to the last step?**

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** Solvency should be based on a balance of the minimum requirements of the clusters and the clusters as a whole. It should be based on the needs and not just the wants of the clusters. The contingency funds should be established and used for the absolute needs first. A proposed budget should be published and distributed ahead of time. I have recommended to Delegate Hecht that she propose a law that would require budgets for Home Owner Associations (HOA) be published and distributed thirty days before approval.

**Joe Pinto's Response:** I am a conservative by practice. I give credit to Cora Alter (when she was a Board member) for her insistence on a rigorous review of the budget. Our recent budgets are very conservative. I believe that this community association runs very well on a fiscal basis. We may have to tolerate a budget increase with future growth in this community. The recent snow problem has been a contributing issue for the current budget. We need to have more cooperation with the budget process. More publication of the budget is needed. Our HOA budget has been very effectively managed by the current and previous boards.

**Lois Benjamin's Response:** We must enact more competitive bidding and insist on more line items in the budget. The community needs to know all about the proposed budget with good communication. We need to initiate a study on what adequate reserves should be for emergencies such as the recent snow problem. We need to keep the budget process open and transparent.

**Nick Falcone's Response:** The revenue stream is not a problem in terms of payments from home owners. The amount of the contingency fund was built on an analysis of the Worman's Mill experiences over a period of time. Residents will have to let us know about a larger contingency fund allocation. Reasonable fees should be established via more participation from the community. There is a need for more review of the budget by the public on a thirty day basis.

**Question 3: Each of the clusters and condominiums in the community possesses its own personality and distinct set of problems, yet it is the Board's role to work as a unifying force in the community. How would you go about becoming aware of those problems and then work toward a resolution? What process, if any, would you put in place to ensure solutions which are compatible with maintaining those differences and yet ensure that a fair and just solution is reached for the entire community?**

**Joe Pinto's Response:** We have many committees who do a great job. All clusters are represented. We must make sure that all representation is heard by the Board. Short term and long term needs of each cluster should be heard by the Board.

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** We need to have monthly reports from each cluster be presented to the Board. The web-site of the Conservancy could be used by the Board to address questions and needs of each cluster. This is critical since each cluster is unique in terms of needs.

**Lois Benjamin's Response:** We need to survey the community via the Mill Monitor for concerns for the Board and management. We then need to publish the results in the Mill Monitor. A careful study of issues is needed in order for solutions to come from the Board. We should also manage by "walking around." Representatives from the Board and clusters could perform this activity of "walking around."

**Nick Falcone's Response:** Some of the issues are not only problems, but many are concerns. We need to have councils for each cluster. These cluster councils could represent their concerns to the Board members on a periodic basis. This process will promote neighbors talking to each other about concerns. Town meetings should also be tried on a quarterly basis.

### **III. Questions from the Floor**

**Question: As a minority voter on the Board, how will you deal with the Wormald majority in this transition year?"**

**Nick Falcone's Response:** There have only been two or three occasions where Wormald did not acquiesce to community needs. We have to appeal to Wormald to be reasonable in perspective to our needs. We need to impress upon Wormald the best interests of the community. Even though Wormald has an overall financial interest in this development, they have responded in most cases to the best interests of the community.

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** As the community grows, we need to make sure that Wormald understands what the community wants. I believe that Wormald is sensitive to the best interests of the community.

**Joe Pinto's Response:** While governance is important, operational management is the key issue. We must improve the operational management of this enterprise. We must be forward looking with our budget. We have to go beyond a one year budget. We must analyze the budget on a three year future-oriented basis. Our bid process has been open. In my opinion, it is as good any process the Federal government uses.

**Lois Benjamin's Response:** I believe the developer is operating in our best interest. Wormald must finish the build out with our constant vigilant review. It is in Wormald's best financial interest for positive public relations to emanate from this community to the outside in order to sell this community to potential homeowners.

**Question: What happens if there is a negative vote on the IRS issue on the ballot? We know what a positive vote for the IRS ballot issue will be.**

After differing opinions were given by Joe Pinto, Nick Falcone, and Allan Joseph (a member in the audience), Harvey Alter suggested that the Board needed to revisit this ballot question and communicate to the citizens about the pluses and minuses on a no vote. All members seemed to agree to this suggestion.

**Question: There seems to be money hidden in the budget for projects by the Board. Is this the case?**

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** The Maryland HOA law allows all citizens to review all budgets and documents of the Worman's Mill Conservancy.

**Joe Pinto's Response:** People who serve on this Board volunteer. We do not squirrel away money for pet projects. The Wormalds and residents on the Board have operated with integrity.

**Question: Why are homeowners stalled when questions are asked?**

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** The law enacted on October 1, 2009 is very specific. Homeowners must have access to documents and budgets of the Worman's Mill Conservancy. Complaints can be made to the Attorney General. This new law will protect the homeowner.

**The presenter of the question** stated that the real frustration is with the initial contact in the Clubhouse and not the Board. The Board needs to supervise the General Manager more closely.

**Question: Thanks are given to the four of the candidates for volunteering. What organizations have you volunteered for in the Worman's Mill community?**

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** Arlene responded that she served on the Worman's Mill Conservancy Security Committee and the Design Review Board. She also co-chaired the Montrachet Social Committee and the By-Laws Revision Committee.

**Nick Falcone's Response:** Nick stated that he served on the landscape community, the capital projects committee, the security committee, and the Conservancy Board. He also was the President of the Social Committee and chaired the FAC committee.

**Joe Pinto's Response:** Joe said that he served on the Neighborhood Watch Committee, the Security Committee, and the Worman's Mill Conservancy Board.

**Lois Benjamin's Response:** Lois stated that she had not served on any committee in Worman's Mill but had served on many committees outside of Worman's Mill that were very relevant to similar committees in Worman's Mill.

**Question: Our Property Manager needs to be aware of the new HOA laws. It is a perception that our Property Manager is not managing. What is your response to this concern?**

**Lois Benjamin's Response:** The job may be too big for the Property Manager as a result of the growth in the community. We may need to take a strong look at this situation and consider looking at a management company.

**Nick Falcone's Response:** The Property Manager's performance is evaluated each year. The President of the Board should move from a care taking President to a strong manager and supervisor of the Property Manager's performance. Traditionally the President of Wormald has been President of the Conservancy. Nick stated that in Executive Session, Wormald was asked to consider relinquishing his role as supervisor of the Property Manager. The Wormald President stated that he would give it strong consideration.

**Joe Pinto's Response:** Joe stated that the Property Manager should be given goals and objectives to pursue. The accomplishment of these goals and objectives should be evaluated. In his opinion, the Board should not manage the Property Manager; someone else should perform this task.

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** Arlene stated that the Property Manager should be given more direction with specific goals and objectives. The evaluation

should be based on the accomplishment of these directives. Changes can be made for the By Laws in order to clarify some of these concerns over who should supervise the Property Manager.

**Comment from a member in the Audience:** The Town Square has become an eye sore and a mess. Sixteen years ago it was beautiful, but that is not the case now.

**Lois Benjamin's Response:** The Town Square must be kept up to standard. Wormald should be encouraged to correct this matter.

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** The Board should be vigilant to correcting this situation by strongly discussing this concern with Wormald.

**Joe Pinto's Response:** This situation has been addressed with Wormald. It will be their expense. With the expansion of the Town Center on the horizon, they are probably not too interested in this investment.

**Nick Falcone's Response:** This is one of several complaints. We must impress on Wormald about the marketability of esthetics such as the Town Square.

**Comment from a member in the Audience:** We have a concern about security relating to outsiders damaging properties.

**Nick Falcone's Response:** This is matter of working with the Police and fencing some areas.

**Question: Who Sets the Board Agenda and is responsible for managing the Conservancy Web-Site?**

**Joe Pinto's Response:** The Property Manager sets the agenda with any input from Board members. The web-site, the Mill Monitor, and surveys are good tools of communication, but we need to hire someone to take care of communications and public relations.

**Nick Falcone's Response:** A Web-Master has been hired to set up the web-site and to manage its contents. We have established the web-site and we are now in the process of expanding the implementation of the web-site.

**Arlene Perkins' Response:** One person on the Board needs to be in charge of working with the web-master.

**Lois Benjamin's Response:** The Board needs to establish a committee to work with the web-master.

#### **IV. Adjournment**

Carol Goldstein thanked everyone for attending the Forum and also extended her appreciation to the candidates for their participation in the Forum. Before closing the Forum, she encouraged everyone to vote in the election process of the Board members for the two resident vacancies on the Conservancy.