

# The Venetia Voice

Special ANNUAL MEETING Edition - February 2011

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**ELECTION RESULTS AND ANNUAL MEETING.** This year's Annual Meeting was held on January 20<sup>th</sup>. The first order of business for the evening was the conclusion of voting and the tally of results to determine the Board of Directors for 2011. Sharon Dodge and Candace Vassillion were both re-elected by a strong majority with Sharon receiving 120 votes, Candace receiving 97 votes and Steven Baginski receiving 41 votes.

Both Sharon Dodge and Candace Vasillion want to thank the Venetia owners for their confidence and support.

At the start of the meeting, the BOD accepted the resignation of commercial director, Dr. Jay Hess, for personal reasons. The BOD and the membership, thanked Dr. Hess for his years of service. Jay reminded us that he served on the BOD on and off for many more years than most of us knew. Sharon pointed out that much of the progress of the last three years would not have been possible without his cooperation and willingness to serve, and that we are all indebted to him for his recognition of the importance of caring for the residential interests as well as commercial in his role as the only Commercial Director.

Dr. Hess continues to serve as our role model for seeing the "Big Picture", seeing beyond particular or "special" interests in Board service. Thank you again, Dr. Hess!

Association Attorney Michael Gongora explained that a Commercial Director vacancy couldn't be filled by an appointment, and announced that a special election will be held to elect a replacement Commercial Director.

Important questions and concerns were offered at the meeting by some of the owners, and valuable feedback was provided, which will positively affect the way things are done. By request, all meetings will now be preceded by a unit owner "comment and discussion" period, to allow more unit owner participation before any business is conducted.

## **COMMITTEES ARE FORMING AGAIN!**

After three years of frequent BOD requests for unit owners to serve on committees at Venetia, several committees are at last being re-formed and re-energized by emerging volunteers.

The existing Security Committee, and Rules and Grievance Committee, are welcoming new volunteers. If you are more interested in the reconvened Design Committee, the reconvened Finance Committee, or the newly formed Eco-Greening Committee (or if you have an idea for a new committee) please come forward, also. Descriptions of the general committee responsibilities can be obtained in the Management Office, and you may email or drop off your resume or letter of intent (a simple statement about your interest, and what you believe you can offer on committee) or contact BOD members directly, if you'd like to volunteer.

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**VENETIA IS NO PLACE FOR VIOLENCE:** Group discussion at the Annual Meeting on Jan. 20<sup>th</sup> was disrupted by a unit owner who "went after" another unit owner, whose expressed opinion he appeared to have disagreed with. This is an old, all too common practice at Venetia, which must end.

The use of physical violence, such as scratching, hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing, or spitting to make a point of any kind to a neighbor, will not be tolerated any longer. We have come a long way from being the out of control building where people got away with that. **Security will call Police in all cases of aggression, and the Association will actively seek prosecution for all batteries that occur here.**

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**UPCOMING VOTE FOR RESERVES AND CORRECTION OF LANGUAGE IN OUR DOCUMENTS.** Two important issues need your **YES vote**:

The first item is the approval of the language our attorneys drafted for our condo documents to reflect the changes that you actually already voted on and passed last year and which are now incontestable changes.

**Vote YES on the approval of the new language in our docs reflecting the change to two residential Directors on the BOD.**

The Association also needs your **YES vote in the passing of 3% reserves** this year. We haven't had reserves in a very long time, but now we have an important reason to do so – **Approving even this small reserve amount (about \$20 per unit) will eventually allow us to apply for FHA (Federal Housing Administration) certification for the Venetia Condominium.** We can apply for certification as soon as we deposit the first payment into a reserve account.

Mortgages guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration represent an important aspect of the housing market and will be a key to recovery in this sector. FHA-insured mortgages enable a buyer to obtain loans with as low as a 3.5 % down payment and will cover loans up to \$400,000 in most areas.

While an association is not required to become FHA certified, this certification should facilitate the approval of potential buyers. Since mortgages are difficult for condo buyers to get these days, *this would help increase the size of the pool of potential buyers for our units.*

For the last two years, most sales at Venetia have had to be "all cash" deals, limiting the number of transactions.

FHA approval or certification of the Venetia Condo could result in a significant rise in our property values within a short period of time, and help our recovery. More buyers able to buy the same properties mean higher prices and hopefully, a steady climb in our values.

The date of the vote on reserves and document changes or the return of Proxy forms has been extended to Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

**Vote YES on the passing of 3% reserves and doc language changes, or sign your proxy form and return it to the Management office.**

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**LEGAL NEWS:**

**Mike's Restaurant ends Lawsuit against Venetia.** Mike's and the Association were able to resolve differences in a mediation session held on January 24th. As a result of the agreement, there is now no longer any challenge to the present configuration of the Board of Directors. ***Venetia will always have two residential Board seats and one commercial Board seat, as the statute of limitations has passed for any other opposition.***

A trial would have been a great expense to both parties. Mike's and Venetia saved big by amicably resolving and settling this matter, and the settlement set the stage to restore good relations. Sharon Dodge pledged the BOD's support for Mike's business and BOD attention to all the commercial concerns and interests in the building.

An important concession to Mike's was the Association installing a gate to open to the small round pool, which is legally, incontestably, a limited common element to Mike's property in the Venetia documents, and his deed. Mike Shelow agreed to keep the pool gate locked except in the case of parties or weddings at the poolside. He further agreed to voluntarily limit noise that might disturb residents.

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**WATER NEWS:**

**2011 is officially the "Year of Water Challenges" at Venetia.**

Over a year ago we were served with a notice that the County had "audited" our water bills for the preceding three years, and changed our rate

retroactively resulting in a huge up charge. **We were suddenly billed for a half million dollars in past fees at the commercial water rate level being applied, leaving a huge unpaid balance.** Not only that, but our rate increased *going forward*, to over four times the old residential rate! The outstanding unpaid amount, during a long appeal process now stands at \$700,000. If we are unable to successfully oppose the billing and the adjustment to our rates, this will have to be paid by a special assessment of over \$2000 per unit to pay for past water use.

And, if we are unable to meter separately for commercial water use going forward, we will have to pay about \$130 more per unit, per month, for water in the future. Maintenance would have to be raised to cover that increase, instead of lowered, as we have planned and worked for. We strongly disagree with the County in this action and consider it grossly unfair.

The BOD, management and attorneys are all engaged in fighting the rebilling, and the commercial rating for all our water use. We will keep you all advised of any progress or changes in this water matter that is so critical to our future.

We also recently learned that **the Miramar Marina has been using Venetia water without payment for at least five years, for their entire operation.** We will not know how much this has cost us all until an auditor is brought in to assess their use, and our loss. They do not seem to know it yet, though they are "on notice" about the problem, and they will need to reimburse the Venetia for their past water use.

The annual meeting was attended by some owners who were upset at not receiving authorization from the Management Office to replace washers and dryers that are presently installed in some units.

For several years now, Venetia management has been grappling with problems caused by water damage from washer-dryers installed in individual units. Many "soaking" events have occurred for neighbors located downstairs or "downstream" from these washing machines. Unfortunately the original building plumbing at Venetia does not seem to allow a retrofit for the installation of regular washer/dryers in units. Venetia plumbing was not designed for them to be installed so they are considered "non-compliant construction" by the state of Florida. Our building plumbing it appears is inadequate for the drainage. In addition, damage is being caused by the current dryers, since they are un-vented. There is no venting for them in our unit walls, so highly flammable lint has been pouring into our walls.

Our engineers at **UCI Engineering** have prepared a statement, which explains the situation and references the specific Florida state building code we need to adhere to. Copies of this document are available for you to pick up at the Venetia Management office. (If you prefer, we will email or fax a

copy to you upon request.) And, for those of you reading this issue of the Venetia Voice on-line, you may click thru on this link to our [venetiacondo.org](http://www.venetiacondo.org) website to review the document, titled "UCI Engineering Report re. Requirements for the installation of Automatic Clothes Washers at Venetia."  
<http://www.venetiacondo.org/documents>

**THE GOOD NEWS:** We have located a new, highly rated, low water and low energy use washer/dryer manufactured by LG, which appears to be designed for apartments and condos plumbed like the Venetia. This LG washer/dryer uses an ordinary drain, and the dryer does not require venting. Consumers report strong customer satisfaction after several years' use. We are following up our review of this appliance with our engineers for possible use in our building and hope to be able to offer more information to you soon about this option.

**WATER CONSERVATION:** Water is one of the most expensive things we deal with at Venetia. Costs are higher than ever before. Along with many other efforts to reduce costs and protect from losses due to poor or old plumbing, we want to begin to **Conserve, Conserve, Conserve!**

We can save thousands of dollars while learning to conserve a precious, costly resource. **All water savings will result in lower monthly maintenance.**

Unit owners and renters who report running toilets, leaks and drips, will receive assistance in arranging repairs at little to no cost from our Maintenance staff. Please contact the Management Office for assistance.

Also a "Greening of Venetia" Committee has been formed that will attempt to access various Green Initiatives programs, in order to obtain assistance in our becoming a "Green certified" building, with savings in energy costs, it's primary goal.

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#### **EXPRESS YOUR POINT OF VIEW**

**\*\*\* My Turn Seeks Submissions.** *My turn is a short, occasional, column in the Venetia Voice, written and submitted by a Venetia renter or owner with a unique viewpoint, which is then selected for inclusion by the editors because it might be of interest to all. Please submit articles by email to [sharondodge49@gmail.com](mailto:sharondodge49@gmail.com) or by print at the Venetia Management Office.*