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Opinion: Importance of Columbia Association board elections

by **Lisa Markovitz** February 2, 2023

Editor's Note: This item was written before the CA board accepted the resignation of President and CEO Lakey Boyd.

Consternation between the Columbia Association (CA) Board and its President, Lakey Boyd, has made local news again. CA Board Member, Brian England has expressed frustration that communications with Boyd and her staff have been challenging. Recent meetings have been largely taken up with public speak-outs on Boyd's performance, limiting the time spent on other agenda items. Community members and groups supporting Boyd have criticized the CA Board for what they feel are too many closed meetings and have publicized Boyd's qualifications and diversity goals. Public relations engagement via a rally, and press releases were purportedly in response to a concern that Boyd might be fired. A public statement by the CA Board recently noted a plan to work with Boyd on improved relations and communication. Boyd responded that the plan would make her unable to carry out her duties, asking to be transitioned out of her position.

This April, seven out of ten CA Board positions will be up for re-election. These Columbia Village CA representative elections have often seen low turnout. Village center redevelopment projects, such as for Hickory Ridge, create interest and a higher

turnout, but there clearly is a need to get more involvement and attention on these elections.

In recent election cycles, an entity known as “The Rouse Project” put together a slate of its preferred CA Board candidates. Many civic advocates were concerned about the professional advertising, expenditures and funding on behalf of CA Board candidates endorsed by The Rouse Project, as being those that are the most developer friendly. Expenditures for the slate’s candidates without transparency of the source of the monied interests involved became a heated issue. The Howard County civic community likes to note and comment on the source of election funding in political elections. Many didn’t like having such a lack of information, even when asked, in elections of CA Board Members. The CA is one of the largest community associations in the country. The CA Board holds power in areas of great importance, such as open space, environmental setbacks, and other development issues. Voters would appreciate knowing if candidates are being supported by interests on whose behalf they could be making important decisions.

Howard County Maryland Delegate Jen Terrasa, sponsored a local Bill for this year, 7-23, that would require transparency in funding Columbia Village board elections. Requiring reports of donations and disbursement would benefit voters wanting to make informed decisions. In the meantime, the next annual CA Board elections are coming soon. Voters need to participate and pay attention to candidates’ plans, ask questions about funding, and support those who agree with their goals. Pay special attention to positions on open space preservation, development regulations and financial issues, and be sure to vote for those

who place community interests over special interests. To support Bill 7-23 email the Howard County State Delegation at hoc1@mlis.state.md.us

Current CA Board Members are: President Lakey Boyd, Dick Boulton for Dorsey Search, Eric Greenberg (Chair) for River Hill, Lin Eagan for Town Center, Brian England for Hickory Ridge, Janet Evans for Long Reach, Alan Klein for Harper's Choice, Bill Santos for Wilde Lake, Andrew Stack for Owen Brown, Virginia Thomas for Oakland Mills, and Kings Contrivance is currently vacant.