

COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Committee reports shall be submitted in the format below.

Section I. COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND STATUS OF TERMS. (Include any membership needs of the committee.)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date appointed</u>	<u>Term</u>
Cheryl Jacobs, Chair	12-1-2018	1st
Jennifer Cropper-Rines	04-23-2014	1 year extension
Elaine Brady	03-19-2014	1 year extension
Debbie Bennington	09-25-2015	1 year extension
Marlene Ott	03-20-2021	1 st
Patty Seidl	07-06-2019	1 st
Diana Snyder	07-06-2019	1st

Section II. SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTIVITIES DURING REPORTING PERIOD.

1. Town Hall Meetings, Moderate
2. Virtual Resident's Academy/History section
3. Election video encouraging voting
4. Election signs community wide advertising election vote and annual meeting
5. Social media, newsprint, radio interviews and electronic signage advertising vote
6. History Panel presentation
7. Resolution C-06 update

Section III. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND ASSISTANCE REQUIRED.

1. Electronic signage/County
2. General Manager

Section IV. REQUEST FOR ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR INCLUSION IN THE NEXT OPA BUDGET. CHAIRPERSONS SHOULD CONSIDER IMPACTS ON THEIR COMMITTEES RELATING TO THE OPA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

1. \$2,500 for advertisement, etc. for annual meeting to generate attendance
2. \$2,500 for furtherance of electronic signage particulars

Section V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD ACTION.

1. That the Board continue periodic Town Hall meetings for community involvement
2. That the Board budget funds to begin electronic signage

Attachments: (4)

**YOUR
VOTE
COUNTS!**



**BALLOTS DUE
AUG 11**

**ANNUAL MEETING
AUG 14**

OP comm. cmte. election outreach

By Greg Ellison
Staff Writer

(June 24, 2021) New means to publicize the upcoming Board of Directors election and increase attendance at the annual Homeowners' Meeting were discussed about during the Ocean Pines Communication Committee meeting last Thursday.

Committee Chairwoman Cheryl Jacobs asked how the group could help promote both the election ballot due date on Aug. 11 and the annual meeting on Aug. 14.

"How can we play a role in the community, making them understand the importance of voting for board director candidates?" she asked.

Committee member Marlene Ott inquired about mailing postcards to highlight the need for residents to cast votes for two of four board candidates running this year.

Board liaison Dr. Colette Horn asked what wording Ott envisioned for a voting mailer.

"Vote, vote, vote," Ott said.

Horn countered that lot owners in good standing already receive an election packet, which in addition to a ballot, also includes candidate profiles.

"People just throw it in the trash," Ott said.

Ott said the committee bolstering its efforts to raise awareness could lead to increased involvement in the

election process.

Ott suggested the association could produce road signs reminding the community about the board election or even plug the contest on local television news programs.



Cheryl Jacobs

"It's all a matter of getting out there and talking," she said.

Committee member Elaine Brady suggested that incorporating community message boards, which could be done in time for the Aug. 11 ballot due date, would also help reach part-time residents converging on the shore for the summer.

"At this juncture it may be the best way to reach them," she said. (Brady is the publisher of Bayside Gazette).

Ott said election promotional efforts would only require a small section of marquee signs and would not prohibit advertising upcoming events simultaneously.

"Just put down there, 'your vote matters,'" she said.

Jacobs asked Horn to confer with General Manager John Viola about placing less than a dozen yard signs in high traffic areas.

Horn proposed placing advertisements at various association amenities.

"Somewhere where people are going to be stopping and actually reading what you put on your poster," she said.

Regardless of venue, Ott said the outreach has a clear goal.

"The message that we want to get out is we care and we want you to care," she said.

Marketing and Public Relations Director Josh Davis said social media could also be deployed.

"Once ballots go out, we could add a banner to our weekly E-blast ... which is sent to 7,000 people on Mondays," he said. "Just saturate it."

Committee member Josette Wheatley endorsed the use of marquee signs.

"I always feel compelled to read them as I go," she said. "I don't drive that fast but I catch half coming in and half going out."

Wheatley said the other signs located throughout the community would remind homeowners to vote.

"They should be heard," she said. "It's their tax dollars at work so make it work."

Jacobs also stressed the need to drum up attendance at the annual homeowners meeting.

Davis said 2018 was the last time that a required forum of 100 lot owners attended the annual meeting in August.

OPA pushing for increased election interest

By Victor Fernandes

Steve Habeger refuses to predict the weather. The same personal rule applies to elections in Ocean Pines.



Steve Habeger

"I have a terrible track record," said Habeger, Ocean Pines Association's Election Committee Chairman, because the response from eligible voters in the approximately 12,000-person community every year is as wildly unpredictable as the Lower Shore's weather.



Cheryl Jacobs

Just when you think voters have a vested interest in elections that impact their lives, fewer than anticipated voters cast their ballots.

Ocean Pines Association officials head into the 2021 Board of Directors election hoping to surpass the roughly

40 percent voter turnout in recent elections, as well as manage a quorum at the association's annual meeting in August for the first time since 2017.

One percent of lot owners - 100 of the 8,450 lots in Ocean Pines - are needed to achieve a quorum at the meeting, which is set for August 14. That's the day the winners are announced for two open seats on the association's seven-member board.

Incumbent Frank Daly and challengers Stuart Lakernick, David C. Hardy and Richard Farr are on the ballot, which became official on May 10. Lakernick, a chiropractor and functional neurologist for 30 years, had an unsuccessful run for a board seat last year.

The winners will serve 3-year terms on the board through 2024.

Residents, both those who reside year-round in Ocean Pines and live at least part time outside of the area, are eligible to vote. Ballots begin being mailed out during the week of July 12. Ballots must be received by 5 p.m. on August 11 to be counted.

"Your community cannot continue

to be the great community that it is," said OPA Communications Committee Chairwoman Cheryl Jacobs, as if she was speaking to lot owners, "if you're not involved and care enough to vote to make sure we stay the way you want it to be." Still, the Jacobs-led committee again faces a challenge, she said, "to get people out there and voting."

Jacobs pointed to a few potential inroads - free advertising on electronic signs owned by local real estate agents on the committee, printed signs placed throughout Ocean Pines, and messages at permanent kiosks around the community. "We're doing everything we can," Habeger said. "She and her committee are doing a wonderful job taking some initiatives to do some different things."

But once ballots are out of their hands, and in the hands of postal workers and eligible voters, what happens next is beyond their control. "We're doing everything we can to do a complete accurate mailing out to the community so that people have about a month to vote," Habeger said. "But I

would note that the postal service is not our friend here."

Habeger pointed to voting challenges the association faced in a referendum in May that reduced the limit on the Board of Directors' financial authority, from \$1.4 million to \$1 million. Last week, he received 10 mailings that indicated some voters didn't receive their ballots until after the voting deadline on May 13 at 4 p.m. Some envelopes were postmarked from Pennsylvania and Florida.

Others arrived from Baltimore, Habeger said, "which means they are close by. It was unexpected and nothing we've seen before."

Habeger said lot owners living in central Pennsylvania and central New York said it took 2 weeks for ballots to arrive at their homes.

"Maybe it took two weeks to get back. That's a full month," he said. "That's all that we have generally allowed under [OPA] bylaws."

Jacobs said the chairman of last

please see election on page 8

*election
from page 3*

year's elections committee showed members 100 uncounted ballots that failed to arrive in time.

The OPA's print and mail contractor already has begun printing envelopes for the upcoming ballot mailings. But OPA officials can't officially provide the contractor with the mailing list to 8,000-plus eligible voters until July 9. "We must adhere to the bylaws," he said.

Then there's the association's annual meeting, which has been poorly attended by lot owners in recent years. "Last year was not a typical year because of [the] COVID [pandemic]," Jacobs said. "But we've had trouble getting enough people to show up."

A candidate forum has been held, with video of the forum available to those unable to attend. A second forum could also be held.

"My experience in elections is the passion, enthusiasm and energy the candidates put in that really drives voter turnout," Habeger said. Still, Jacobs said, the future well-being of the Ocean Pines community relies on support from residents and lot owners.

"We have so much to offer in this community," she said. "We want people to be involved and to vote. Because everything is so nice here, it's easy to say everyone is taking care of everything so we don't have to do anything. We still want people to be involved."

Habeger said potential hot-button topics such as the currently unregulated market of short-term vacation rentals by owners could spark added interest in the election. Still, Jacobs said, only about 25 people showed up to a town hall meeting on the topic. Other possible issues include open fire burning in Ocean Pines and replacing old and rusty mailbox clusters in the community.

Either way, lot owners should take a real interest in the people elected to govern Ocean Pines.

"Those seven people set the long-range policy and the budget, which is a significant thing," Habeger said. "It's over \$14 million a year here, and there's lots of moving parts. All these swimming pools and tennis courts, yacht club and beach club, golf clubhouse. The board has tried a number of things [to spark interest]. I'm sure they will work on some things this year."

OPA Seeks Community Input With Upcoming Election

BY BETHANY HOOPER
STAFF WRITER

OCEAN PINES – The Ocean Pines Association is seeking the community's participation in this year's election and annual meeting.

As the Ocean Pines Association (OPA) prepares for its annual board election, officials are encouraging members to return their ballots and attend the annual meeting.

Elections Committee Chair Steve Habeger said ballots for the 2021 board election will be mailed to eligible voters the week of July 12. This year, candidates Frank Daly, Stuart Lakernick, David Hardy and Richard Farr will vie for two board seats currently held by Daly and Frank Brown. The seven-member volunteer board is the governing body of Ocean Pines.

"Ocean Pines is a big, complicated place with an annual budget in excess of \$14 million ... and the board of directors has the responsibility and authority for what goes on in Ocean Pines," Habeger said. "Those seven people have a lot of say in what is done and how it gets done, so we need the best people in there that we can possibly get."

In an effort to learn more about the candidates and their views on association matters, OPA held a candidate forum on June 9. A second forum will be held on Tuesday, July 13, at 7 p.m. at the Ocean Pines Golf Club on 100 Clubhouse Drive.

To submit questions for the forum, email elections@oceanpines.org. Videos of both forums will be posted on the association's YouTube channel.

"If a person can't attend, it will be recorded, and they can watch it on YouTube after the fact," said Communications Committee Chair Cheryl Jacobs.

Habeger said officials are trying to increase awareness of this year's election by placing signs and mailing information on this year's candidates. He said in recent years, voter participation has averaged roughly 40%.

"The passion, enthusiasm and energy of the candidates really gets people out to vote, either by person or by mail ...," he said. "What we are trying to do is buttress that with increased awareness of the upcoming election. You are determining who is going to be making decisions through 2024. There are a lot of issues coming up, and we need to have people that we want to support in those leadership roles."

Ballots for this year's election are due back by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 11 and can be returned by mail or through the drop box located in the lobby of the Ocean Pines Police Department.

Habeger said the association had more than 100 ballots from the recent referendum vote that were received late, and not counted. As the postal service continues to move slowly, he encouraged members to use the drop box.

"The box is under the view of the police dispatcher, who's on duty 24 hours

a day, seven days a week," he said.

The association's Elections Committee will count ballots and announce the totals on Friday, Aug. 13. However, election results will be a validated and a winner will be announced at the association's annual meeting on Saturday, Aug. 14.

Jacobs noted the annual meeting includes the validation of the board election, as well as annual presentations from the association's departments. In recent years, however, the association has not managed a quorum, which is at least 100 members.

"We haven't had a quorum since 2018 ...," she said. "We want people to under-

stand where the money is going, how it's used and what's going on. It's also an opportunity for members to be heard and to learn about the community in which they live."

Jacobs encouraged members to attend this year's annual meeting, which will begin at 9 a.m. in the Assateague Room of the Ocean Pines Community Center. She also encouraged members to vote in this year's election and return their ballots by Aug. 11.

"This could possibly be a tied election, and 100 ballots can make the difference for somebody getting on the board," she said.