

I’d like to call to order the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Sea Pines Plantation Property Owners and The Advisory Board.

Establish quorum.

Approval - 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes

First order of business is to share with you the 2021 nominating committee is. They are:

* Barry Barth
* Dave Ellis
* me

And second, in a total 2020 moment, even though it has been on our web site, we announce that the date of record for this year’s election was October 1, 2020. Ballots are mailing Sat, Oct 31. I hope you will join us via video stream this Thursday to “Meet the Candidates”.

Financial Review.

President’s Remarks

I like to recognize our outgoing board members from 2019: Dick Matthews, Mark Griffith and, in particular, Charlie Miner. Charlie was on the ASPPPO board for six years and president for five of those years. Thank you all for the time and energies that you generously donated to us in making Sea Pines a better place.

New to our board this year are: Dave Ellis, Dana Guazzo and Grover Todd. They serve in addition to: Barry Barth, Paul Crunkleton, Bill Johnson, JR Richardson, Rich Speer and me.

I wanted to take a quick look back at this year and some of the things that your board has done in order to increase communications with our membership.

* Launched our website, aspppo.net in late July. The website includes
	+ our history
	+ governance
	+ archives of historical documents from our 49 year history.
	+ important links
	+ our first membership directory
	+ Board affairs including meeting dates.
	+ Posted one week ahead of our meetings are Board packages with our agendas and business documents.
* Began collecting email addresses for our membership, including asking for them on your proxy for today’s meeting.
* Began electronic communications with our members in August.
* If you have not received any emails from us it simply means that we do not have your email address. Feel free to send it to us at info@aspppo.net
* And, we increased our membership by 3%.

Last year, included in your dues bill, we published for the first time, our upcoming annual budget. Even though this is an all-volunteer organization, and the administrative need is great, it was clear from the start that some belt tightening was in order.

* First, we reviewed our administrative contract with CSA to analyze what services we are and are not using and have reduced the presence of CSA staff at our meetings. We also eliminated the use of the CSA Weekly Newsletter and CSA’s website for our communications.
* Second, we have reached out to professional association management companies to better understand their costs.
* Third, we re-negotiated our 2021 dues billing costs with BB&T and reduced them by half.
* Lastly, we are updating the website to include credit card transactions so that you may pay your dues online and auto renew if you choose.

Joint CSA/ASPPPO Land Use Management Committee under the leadership of co-chairs Dana Guazzo and Rich Speer have updated the 2010 Land Use Rules and Regulations. This will come to our November board meeting for a vote. If favorable, we will then forward it to the CSA board for consideration and execution.

On behalf of our homeowners, ASPPPO is funding 40% of the Land Use Monitor headcount as well as the dedicated software program that is used for tracking land use violations.

We felt that this increased expense was a worthy investment to help maintain our quality of life and home values. But it does add pressure to our budget.

Another proactive expense we are incurring is litigation against a residential property owner for their long-term failure in property upkeep and maintenance.

Over the summer our country experienced considerable social upheaval and some of our island social mores came under scrutiny. Of note is the use of the word “plantation”, and your board agrees that it should not be in our name. Also, on that continuum, it begs the question, what the heck does ASPPPO mean? We felt that it was time to move to a name that more clearly reflects what your organization is about. We are looking at something as simple and straightforward as:

* Sea Pines Homeowners Owners Assn. or Sea Pines HOA, or
* Sea Pines Property Owners Assn. or Sea Pines POA.

On another note, technology has taken a quantum leap in the past few years and very affordable low decibel leaf blowers are available market-wide. The industry will achieve 100% low decibel leaf blowers in the market in less than 10 years.

Our leaf blower task force researched and recommended a policy for the board to consider. After considerable conversation it was tabled. I hope that when people sufficiently understand the facts that it will be brought up again for consideration.

Let me share an example of what I mean by, “when people sufficiently understand the facts”. I sense a gap between the facts that are posted on aspppo.net and what some people come to understand.

* I read an email that begged us not to ban leaf blowers in Sea Pines – because we needed them to clear the driveways. Of course, this wasn’t the case.
* On our website, leaf blower prices, including less than $200 for consumer products, were posted yet we received emails that said we cannot afford $1,000 for a new leaf blower. Of course, this wasn’t the case.

It’s this kind of misinformation or lack of facts that distort the truth and hampers the efforts of many to move forward.

So, please, I encourage everyone to engage with aspppo.net. The information is there and it is easy to find. I promise you.

So, the bottom line is, get the facts.

The information that is NOT on our website is the CSA communications regarding their Revenue Task Force. Please know that ASPPPO has been quite vocal with CSA regarding updates on their progress and it appears as though transparency has increased.

ASPPPO was asked on several occasions to take a stand against the Special Tax District. We went on “pause” as there is still an enormous amount of missing information – such as what the millage rate would be.

It is clear, however, that out of state homeowners are taxed differently than state residents.

So, while we all understand the obvious, I have to be honest and say, I don’t see how out of state homeowners could have ever seen a special tax district coming.

And that brings us to today.

We are bumping up against what I consider to be a what is legal vs. what is fair conundrum. And no matter how the revenue situation is resolved, there will be a group of neighbors that will consider it unfair.

Finally, we can quantify CSA’s deficit. They will experience a deficit of $35M over the next 10 years.

And how that $35 million is spread will impact each us differently.

With a referendum, it’s $600 a year. When property values range from $400,000 to multi-millions, is that flat fee really fair? Was the way the flat fee was set up in the original covenants really fair?

With a special tax district, as I said, we don’t know the millage rate yet. But we do know that the tax would be applied on an ad valorem basis so there is some relationship between property values and tax liability. And we know that a significant assessment would be placed on the Resort and commercial partners based on property values. And at the same time, out-of-state residents are taxed differently than in-state residents. Is that fair?

All of this is quite legal, but the answer to “is this fair” is not so obvious or easy.

And, before ASPPPO takes a position on CSA revenue efforts, we need to know all the facts. And, before ASPPPO would even consider supporting a special tax district, all other options would have to be ruled out. And we are nowhere near that.

That is why we haven’t taken a position at this time. We need answers.

Looking ahead to next year -- the board will have a workshop early on to set our annual agenda and prioritize projects. So look for a survey in your email on this topic. We need your suggestions. We listen. We are here for you.

The Residential Property Owners, as a combined unit, have the largest financial investment in Sea Pines by far. This is our community.

 So please give us your opinions, thoughts, ideas, etc. Send us an email to info@aspppo.net. Or please join us at our next board meeting which is November 12.

We can’t please everyone but we can listen to everyone and can consider your thoughts.  Together, we are Sea Pines.

In closing, I’d like to urge all of us to simply take a deep breath – these are stressful times. I spoke with a former colleague the other day. She is one of the best employees I ever had, and she is now ready to quit her job. She is working from home and on the “brink” with her two school aged kids.

So let’s take a breath, back away from our personal “brinks”, and take it one step at a time.

Thank you.