

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of  
The Venetian Golf & River Club Community Association, Inc.  
Held at the River Club and *via Zoom* on November 13, 2023**

**Board Members in attendance:**

Roger Effron - President  
Fred Baughman - Exec. VP & Treasurer  
Tom Jones - secretary  
Mark Faford - VP  
Dr. Steve Hefler – VP  
Michelle Trent  
Sharon George  
John Manoush  
Joe Browne  
Taras Kowalczyz (via Zoom)

**Guests present:** There was 1 resident attending in person and 3 joining via Zoom.

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**Call to Order:** Roger Effron called the meeting to order at 3:45pm.

**Secretary's report:** The minutes from the October 9, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved.

**Public Comment:** None

**Treasurer's report:** Fred Baughman reported that our total operating cash is \$113,811 and expenses year to date are \$21,491. Fred said an explanation of how Paypal works can be included on the website for those members who are uncomfortable doing online transactions or don't have a Paypal account. Roger Effron said that because Fred will be leaving the board and VG&RC next spring, there's a need for a new treasurer and hopefully someone who's full time here.

**Membership:** Sharon George said she has records for 1,365 residences out of 1,377, and 66% are members. This is down from 70% in 2022. She will circulate a list of outstanding renewals every 2 weeks, as it was agreed that personal contact is the best way to get members to renew. There's a new resident (those who moved here since 2022) event planned for January, and the VGRCCA brochure has been updated.

**Laurel Road widening:** **Taras Kowalczyn** reported on the meeting he and John Manoush had with the senior manager of the Sarasota County transportation and public works department on Nov. 9. (This meeting was arranged through the assistance of County Commissioner Joe Neunder.) They had a good meeting and set the basis for future contact. It was learned that Sarasota County is in charge of the road design and is concerned about the safety of all intersections, with our entrance included. Final decisions on the design have not been made, and the design will be released when it's ready, with no set time frame. They realize that politics and public hearings could change the final design. They said that under no circumstances would a private entity be allowed to pay for any changes or enhancements to a public thoroughfare such as Laurel Road.

**Seminar debrief:** **Steve Hefler** lead a discussion on the results of our recent seminars. "A Chance to Live" was well-attended and attendees said they got a lot out of this important topic. Problems with hearing the speaker in the back of the room were reported, and it was agreed that better setup of the sound system and instruction on use of the microphone were needed, or use of a lapel mike. A team of Mark Faford, John Manoush and Tom Jones was established to meet with the River Club maintenance manager on this. Also, moving the start time up to 4:30pm would be preferred by many attendees, plus River Club staff is still here for pre-meeting assistance. Recording the meeting for a YouTube broadcast is about \$600 each time, plus it can reduce the "live" audience and effect it has on the presentation.

**Mark Faford** said "Mug Shot" was a big success with very positive feedback. All reservation slots were filled quickly by members and the wait-list was accommodated. Donations of \$210 were collected, and consensus was to split this equally between the local Humane Society and Southeast Guide Dogs.

**Michelle Trent** reviewed the upcoming schedule of two seminars in December. She'll look at starting them at 4:30pm.

**Website:** **Michelle Trent** said that she and others, including Joe Browne and Joe Santucci, are keeping the site up to date, particularly with additions to "Upcoming Events." There have been changes in appearance to headlines and functionality, with updated/improved photos. She said the "Wall of Something" activity is up significantly in the past 4 weeks with increased numbers of items for sale.

**Joe Browne** feels the site is taking off, with analytics showing logins are up 75% and many more visits to pages. It's become a valued information source with easily accessible links to other key websites for VG&RC residents.

**Fill the Barrels:** **Roger Effron** said the count is now 10 barrels filled with 2 more coming today from Ajax. The end of the program pickup is this Thursday.

**External Affairs:** **Tom Jones** reported that the City Council approved the enhanced design of the NE Venice park with 8 pickleball courts on Oct. 24. The Council also voted to dissolve the Environmental Advisory Board, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and Public Art Advisory Board and establish a new Citizen Advisory Board. Also, the Council asked the City Attorney to draft an ordinance approving the revised procedures of quasi-judicial meetings in an effort to reduce the amount of time spent. Development plans are moving along for a large single family and apartment complex across from the Publix at Laurel Road and Pinebrook Ave.

**Transition team:** **Roger Effron** lead a discussion on how some VGRCCA functions such as HRT, flag placement, and Laurel Road cleanup are or could be led by non-board members, with a board member liaison.

**Town Hall meeting:** **Roger Effron** had some suggestions for the planning of this meeting to be held on Monday, March 18. Questions: who to invite to speak – Mayor, County commissioner, school superintendent? Should awards be given for special work? Is a community survey of topics warranted? A committee of Roger Effron, Steve Hefler, Mark Faford and John Manoush will work on these ideas.

**New Business:** None

**Board member comments:** **Fred Baughman** noted that the VGRCCA has a Drop Box account where we keep backup records and it can be used to store photos from our events as well.

**Joe Browne** gave an update on the City water booster station being built north of VGRC.

**John Manoush** pushed for reconsideration of asking members for voluntary contributions on the membership form. He also said the Owl device will be given another test at an upcoming meeting.

**Michelle Trent** said she will be leaving the board at the end of this year to go back to full time work.

**Joe Browne** and **Sharon George** volunteered to serve on a nominating committee to evaluate potential new board members.

**Next Meeting:** The next board meeting will be held on Monday, December 11, 2023 @ 12:30pm at the River Club.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tom Jones, Secretary