

**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 Oct. 21, 2024**

Board Members attending:

Tom Jones - Co-president
Chip Melvin - Treasurer (present via Zoom)
John Manoush – Secretary
Sharon George – Membership Chair
Joe Browne
Roger Effron
Terry Leary (arr. at 10:30)
Dr. Steve Hefler

Co-president Mark Faford and board member Taras Kowalczyk were unable to attend

Guests present: There were 9 residents attending in person and 2 on Zoom (Zoom was delayed for 10 mins).

Call to Order: Tom Jones called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. We are experimenting with 10:00 as opposed to our former time of 3:30 p.m.

Secretary's report: The minutes from the September 16, 2024 meeting, previously distributed on October 14, were unanimously approved.

Public Comment: One resident thanked the CA for organizing the candidate forum and also praised the HRT for its performance during Hurricane Milton. A new resident also thanked the HRT for its extremely helpful communication and advice during the storm.

HRT Report and Recap – Mary Rau Foster and Team: Approximately 2/3 of this meeting was devoted to a discussion of the HRT's activities during Milton and its plans for self-assessment. Mary Rau Foster and other members of the HRT reported on what went well and what needed improvement or attention. Members of the CA board and public also offered their comments and observations (at least three CA board members are HRT members). Joe DeVirgilio of the HRT reported on the community assessment aspect that he manages. He noted that many of the rooftop pool solar heaters were badly damaged in this storm. A lot of storm debris required cleanup. An assessment was done by two members of the HRT with a report shared with the entire community. Opportunities for improvement include communication, and in particular more stable cell service from Verizon. He observed that one of the two Venetian condo HOA's had formed its own hurricane response group and there is a need for better coordination so that all residents know who is doing what. The team was pleased that few if any residents asked about who could put up hurricane shutters, indicating that advance warnings from the HRT (and POA) were effective. Mary received a lot of calls, including some that asked about conditions at their home. We need to help residents realize that the HRT is not a personal service with the resources to take on this kind of responsibility.

There was discussion of other means of emergency communication for use when cell service failed. The walkie-talkies that the HRT had on hand did not perform satisfactorily. Other means of providing communication were suggested, including Starlink and satellite phones. The most recent versions of Apple phones may offer an ability to access satellite communication, but this is not yet widespread. Steve recommended that we consider collaborating with the CDD and POA on major expenditures for emergency equipment. Roger and others suggested that the HRT consider a dedicated phone # or other means of

reducing the burden on Mary while still maintaining prompt and effective responses (she fielded some 107 phone calls and 802 emails during Milton). Mary addressed the topic of improving communication and also discussed other ideas that she plans to pursue with the team. One thought would be to develop co-team leaders as backups if the primary leader was unavailable. She and the team have already met and will be meeting again to address what went well and what should be improved. Mary expressed appreciation for the excellent cooperation and coordination she experienced in working with POA and CDD Management in the persons of Ray and Keith. Improving front gate operations will certainly be addressed, since power was lost at the gate during Milton and no emergency lighting was available for a time. The “Reach Out” team experienced increased use compared to Ian, and Mary felt this was a service that could be extended still further. The service was greatly appreciated by residents living alone. Lastly, Mary made it clear that she uses every opportunity to acknowledge the sponsorship of the CA.

Dr. Steve Hefler, who heads the HRT security team, thanked the 16 volunteers who managed the entrance, with special thanks to Dick Foster for his valuable technical help. Some 1,380 vehicles were admitted during this period, and it is noteworthy that HRT gate volunteers all reported that several unidentified vehicles turned around and left when they saw that the gate was tended. Who knows what mischief was prevented?

Tom expanded on Roger’s recommendation that we look for ways to reduce the personal burden on Mary and Dick, and also stressed the need to have alternate means of communication in view of the loss of Verizon connectivity during Milton.

Mary plans to send out a communication to the entire community summarizing the response to Milton that will contain a “lessons learned” section. Finally, Tom emphasized on behalf of the CA and the entire community the appreciation we all feel for the efforts of the HRT and the Fosters in particular.

John re-introduced the topic of grants that might be used to pay for emergency equipment such as better walkie-talkies. He and Mary had discussed this a month ago and she did not then feel there were unmet needs that would justify the significant time and effort required to prepare grant applications. We agreed that it was not worth the trouble for less than around \$2,000 or more. However, given the recent experience, it would be worth taking another look and considering the best equipment available. Mary made it clear she will NOT be doing grant preparation, but John will handle this end as long as the HRT can provide a good “wish list”. Darlene Schimberg suggested the Flanzer Group as a possible source of matching funds.

Treasurer’s report: **Chip Melvin** reminded us that he is now using a modified cash basis such that dues are credited in the month they are actually received. Dues payments were good for September and should be even better for October due to appreciation for the recent HRT work. This should take a bite out of our Sept. 30 YTD loss of \$3,000. He has modified the P&L statement to improve readability by spreading it to 2 pages. Roger asked about the process for evaluating new insurance bids. Chip expects to have these ready to evaluate at our December meeting. Steve will remind agent Jim Jester to get in touch with Chip with a bid.

Membership: **Sharon George** reviewed the status of membership and renewals through October 10. There is good news, with 65.9% of residents as members, the highest percentage since December of 2023 and a bit higher than same month of 2023. Sharon also credited the good work of the HRT with helping inspire more residents to join. She has contacted both new residents and “lapsed” members and has received a good response. She even contacted residents who have unsubscribed from our emails to make sure they really meant to, and found that around 10 did not mean to and thus resubscribed. All of these efforts have evidently paid off as shown by the higher membership numbers. She will be working with Mark to find a date for another new resident orientation meeting – early December is likely.

Seminar planning: **Terry Leary** reported on this in Mark’s Faford’s absence. The Oct. 7 candidate forums for City Council and CDD were very successful, although in-person attendance was adversely

affected by the coming hurricane. The forums were recorded and are posted on YouTube. There are 19 “Knock Your Socks Off” events planned for this season, with flyers ready for distribution *via* email early next week). Two events cancelled due to the storm will be rescheduled. Upcoming November events include the canine mug shots on the 9th, book and publishing advice on the 12th and “Keep Pain in the Past” on the 19th.

External Affairs: **Tom Jones** stated there was no new information on the Laurel Rd. widening. Tom is part of an advisory group for the Mirasol Shopping Center near Knights Trail and Laurel, and informed us that a dermatology facility is planned for the lot just to the right of the Treviso main entrance, with two additional commercial buildings beside it. The types of businesses are not yet known but the architecture will match the Northern Italian motif. To the left of the Treviso entrance, a 5-story Echo Suites hotel has been approved. Tom did not feel any of these buildings would be incompatible with the area. The Northeast Park would be roughly across Laurel from Treviso. John mentioned that the upcoming *Parcels* would provide some information on the hotel. He plans to attend the City Council meeting tomorrow to voice support for the planned increase in funding for the Northeast Park (a \$3.6M increase to a total of \$6.35M).

Website: **Joe Browne** reported that there was a drop in web views compared to September of 2023, most likely due to high reader interest during the months following the NVNA appeal (of nearby commercial development) and the inevitable decline in reader's interest following its rejection by the courts. Although his written report did not include the current month, he can already see that it will be one of the highest months of all time due to Hurricane Milton. There seems to be a “core” user group of approximately 400 users. Attractive photos and graphics are expected to increase user interest and Joe will continue to emphasize these elements. He requested that articles submitted include photos and/or graphics. All agreed that Joe’s work at maintaining and improving our website has been of great benefit.

Old Business: **John Manoush** reported on work of the Outreach Team that grew out of our July retreat. To fulfil the objective of presenting the CA in a more visible and positive view at outside meetings or events, he has recently distributed to our board a “CA Outreach Chart” that lists upcoming events with a brief summary of key details, names of CA board members expected to attend and whether they intend to speak. He expressed the hope that other board members would offer ideas for improvement and, in particular, would make this a collaborative tool. We considered placing this on some sort of online portal, but decided it would be simpler for John to act as the “hub” right now. Once we are agreed on a workable format, we can look into making it an online tool. John stressed that it was essential for other board members to contribute to this tool and alert him if additions or corrections were needed, as he might not be aware of all relevant events.

New Business: **Terry** inquired about the Veterans’ Day Flag program. Roger will announce this in *Parcels* and Terry will coordinate volunteers for placement and retrieval of the flags.

Board Member Comments: None

Next Meeting: Our next meeting is on **Monday, November 18** at the River Club at 10:00 a.m.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by John Manoush, Secretary