

**President’s Message** Rick Treviño

Fall is a beautiful time of year in the Alexandria area, and I hope all of you have been out and about to look at the changing leaves. The colors seem to be particularly vibrant this year.

We have a lot going on at AKW and if you missed the October Board meeting, you missed a lot of important information. A couple of noteworthy items are the results of the structural building assessment and the 2023 budget. If you recall, the Board commissioned an assessment of the building structure in the wake of the Champlain Towers collapse in Miami. At nearly half a century old, our building had not been inspected for structural integrity, though much work has been done throughout the years. I’m happy to report that the engineering company’s report states that our building is in good structural condition with no underlying systemic damage. The report, however, does list a number of things we need to do for maintenance and repair. As the plans for that work progress, we will let everyone know.

The other item we discussed at the Board meeting was the proposed 2023 budget which was approved. A huge thanks goes out to the members of the Budget and Finance Committee for the work they did to prepare the budget. A line-by-line review of each item which included studying historical income and spending, looking at future costs of doing business, and perfecting the many categories to not only track the budget more accurately, but also to simplify future planning. I believe this is the most realistic budget AKW has produced. Just like everyone else, AKW must contend with rising costs of goods and services. It is inevitable then that we are looking at a 7.7% increase in the budget, and therefore, to our condominium assessments. Inflation, plus the increasing need to upgrade our infrastructure due to age, makes this necessary. I, along with the rest of the Board of Directors, take our fiduciary responsibilities seriously and commit to managing AKW’s finances intelligently.

I encourage you to attend Board meetings and observe for yourself the challenges facing the Association.

All of us on the Board wish you a very Happy Thanksgiving!



**BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS**

**Reported Financials**

The Association is fully funded. Delinquent residential accounts totaled \$58,924 or 3.4%

	August	September
Total Cash and Investments	\$1,737,153	\$1,684,276
Year-to-Date (YTD) Income	1,466,660	1,643,916
YTD Expenses	1,328,706	1,495,768
YTD Net Income	137,954	148,148
YTD Reserve Contributions	323,720	364,185
YTD Reserve Expenditures	(591,795)	(160,089)
Total Reserves	\$995,079	\$977,498

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## BOARD ACTIONS

- **APPROVED** the proposed 2023 Budget for the Association's next year, with a 7.7% increase in our individual dues. Finance Officer Larz Pearson explained how the budget was determined; his presentation is published later in this issue of *Knolls News*.
- **APPROVED** the proposal of Densel to replace two power wires for the 1M Contactor for the Carrier 30HXC Chiller #1, for \$1,170.87.
- **APPROVED** the proposal of Professional Abatement Services for insulation for the piping and pump house of the 6" chilled water circulation pump and insulation repairs of the two chiller heads in the mechanical room, for \$1,100.00.
- **APPROVED** the proposed Renewal Management Agreement (currently at \$4,651 monthly) for the next three years, at an increase of zero, 2.5% and 2.5% respectively, beginning January 1, 2023.
- **APPROVED** the High Sierra Pool Company's proposal for next Summer, at a total cost of \$31,000.00. [The pool will be open May 27 through September 4, 2023.]
- **APPROVED** the proposal of VGS Contracting for dryer vent cleaning, for \$81,900.00, using the option to clean and remove the stones from all units on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> floors, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor hallway access panels.
- **APPROVED** Densel Company's proposal to replace the display screen on the #2 domestic P/K Boiler, for \$2,305.00
- **APPROVED** contract renewal of Best Technical Services, Inc., for annual maintenance/repairs, including four scheduled visits, for \$1,575.00, for our gym equipment for the next year.
- **APPROVED** Freestate Electrical Service Company's proposal for electrical work to repair and replace lights, installing wall packs (and other materials) in the A and C garages.
- **APPROVED** the proposal of FLSA for Fire Sprinkler Deficiency Service in the storage area, for \$2,120.00.
- **APPROVED** TrashMaster's proposals for cleaning the trash chutes (\$3,140.00) and cleaning the compactor (\$940.00) -- total \$4,080.00.
- **CONFIRMED** dates of November 15<sup>th</sup> (week before Thanksgiving), and December 20<sup>th</sup> (prior to the Christmas and other holidays), for the next Board of Directors meetings.
- **APPROVED** reinstating the Party Room Rental amenity, beginning November 1<sup>st</sup>. There are expanded/clarifying 'rules', as well as application and deposit requirements. The Office will have details for those who are interested.

## 2023 AKW Budget

Larz Pearson

The 2023 AKW budget, with a 7.7% increase on condo fees, that the Board approved at its October meeting, is the result of a months-long process by the Budget & Finance Committee over the course of eight public meetings.

Developing the budget required that the Committee face some unusual challenges and make some tough choices.

First, among the challenges was that the budget had to be balanced, with income equal to spending.

A second challenge is that although the Association gets its income from several sources, 95% of it comes from a single source – i.e., condo fees which are the only completely shared and reliable income stream. Almost all other income comes from contingent activity by particular individuals and is more like user fees.

Another challenge – one that AKW shares with every business and individual – is the historically high rate of price inflation, 8+%. AKW is not a desert island in the middle of a sea of general economic realities. Every product, service, or employee that it takes to operate and maintain our common home just costs a lot more than last year – with no abatement in clear sight.

- Some expense categories in next year's budget present needs for significant increases. For example, our computer/IT technology spending. We are operating an antiquated IT infrastructure, jury-rigged from a hodge-podge of equipment and software, with no effective professional maintenance service. It will take a significant increase (but mostly one-time) to address this critical need.

Likewise, it is time to conduct another professional Reserve Study (typically undertaken every 5 years) that includes all the necessary durable capital items, updates replacement costs from a base year (most recently, 2019), and provides estimates of funding needed throughout the life cycle of each item. Having a current Reserve Study is normally a requirement from mortgage lenders.

But the biggest budget challenge that the Committee and then the Board faced --and the toughest decision because of its impact on everyone's condo fees -- was an appropriate amount for the 2023 Reserve contribution. This is the portion of every owner's monthly condo fee that is set aside to fund the major repairs and replacements scheduled in the Reserve Study. AKW has an admirable history of maintaining a healthy (\$1+ million) Reserve balance that has shielded us from special assessments. But the high cost of the extensive structural repairs to the garages consumed a large amount of our Reserves and led to postponing other necessary planned Reserve projects. If anything that the 2021 Miami condo collapse should have taught us it is the importance of adequately funded Reserves and timely execution of Reserve replacement and repairs – even though the recently completed Structural Assessment Report gives us confidence in the overall integrity and safety of our building. The 5% boost in the Reserve contribution will help ensure we have adequate funds to undertake timely Reserve projects.

No one welcomes substantial increases in their monthly condo fees. But prudent stewardship of the common elements of the home we share has made such an increase unavoidable in 2023.



## **AKW STRUCTURAL BUILDING ASSESSMENT COMPLETED** *Rick Treviño*

At the December 14, 2021 Board meeting, the Alexandria Knolls West (AKW) Board of Directors approved a proposal from Falcon Engineering LLC to conduct a preliminary structural building assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to:

- Perform a review of the structural building components to identify visible signs of distress or deterioration, and
- Assess and report on the structural integrity and condition of the building structural components evaluated.

The assessment was intended to focus on the structural integrity of the building. This assessment was different from the reserve studies conducted every four to five years. These try to predict if and when major common element components (such as the roof, pavement and elevators) will deteriorate due to ordinary wear-and-tear. This then provides a current estimate of the costs of repairing and replacing major common element components over the long term. The main purpose of reserve studies is to assist associations in future budgeting for the cost to repair or replace these items.

### Why we did this

AKW is nearing the half century mark, Given the age of our building, it made sense to have a thorough structural inspection and evaluation of the building conducted. The Champlain Towers tragedy in Surfside, FL last year raised awareness of the need for this type of evaluation for older buildings. In addition, new Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac temporary lending guidelines for condominiums and housing cooperatives, which focus on structural integrity and safety, took effect in January 2022. As you may have seen in the news, these temporary guidelines impact lending opportunities and create challenges for condominium associations (see e.g., <https://advocacy.caionline.org/cai-urges-suspension-of-fannie-mae-and-freddie-mac-temporary-lending-guidelines-for-condominiums-and-cooperatives/>), This assessment should help AKW address any structural issues as well as respond to questions from lenders in light of these guidelines.

### How it was done

Falcon Engineering reviewed historical material such as records of previous studies and repairs, and architectural drawings. They supplemented this historical information with several onsite inspection visits. They also sent out a questionnaire to all residents looking for information about any abnormalities people were seeing in their units. Based on the results of the questionnaire, they inspected a sampling of units to see first-hand some of what was reported. Falcon Engineering analyzed all the data and developed a final report.





## The Results

The Board of Directors received the report and a briefing from the engineers in late September. At the October Board Meeting, we published a copy of the report and gave a brief overview of the findings. You can see the report by going to BuildingLink: *Building Library à Building Library à Reference à Structural Building Assessment Report*.

I'm happy to say that Falcon reports that our building is in good structural condition with no underlying systemic deterioration. That's really good news; however, they also pointed out a number of things we need to do for maintenance and repair. The report prioritized the work that needs to be done in two categories: within 1 year and within 2 years – Page 9 of the report lists all that must be done

## Next Steps

The Board engaged Falcon to write a Request for Proposal (RFP) that outlines the repair work that needs to be done. That RFP will be used to solicit bids from contractors. Falcon will then oversee/inspect the work. This is very much the model used where ETC oversaw the work of Ev-Air-Tight on the garages.

I want to point out that not all of the items mentioned by Falcon are things the Association can do. The report discusses balcony problems, mostly issues of failures in joint sealant, cracks on the concrete deck, and paint coating deteriorating. None of these are part of the common element and therefore owner responsibilities. The report includes information for the balconies they saw, but these problems likely exist on other balconies. How we deal with that is an open item the Board needs to discuss further, especially in light of the major balcony project about 6-7 years ago. Another inspection could be costly.

These are important items that need to be addressed. Water is not our friend when it comes into contact with concrete in the wrong places. Water infiltration causes the concrete to degrade, so if the proper maintenance isn't done on the balconies, it CAN lead to structural problems. We saw that very thing with the garages – water infiltration over many years caused the corrosion in the steel reinforcements.

All in all, I believe we got a good report card. We now know the building is structurally sound, but we still have some work to do. We will know more about the scope of repairs, costs, and timelines after an RFP is prepared and we find a contractor who can do the work.

As the project progresses, we will keep you informed.







***For You or Someone You Know .....***

**36th Annual Caregiver's Conference: Caregiving with Hope and Inspiration Virtual Caregivers Conference**

Are you caring for or care about someone with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia? Join us for 36th Annual Caregiver's Conference: Caregiving with Inspiration and Hope by [Northern Virginia Dementia Care Consortium](#). Virtual sessions will be held on three consecutive days, November 9 – 11, from 10am until 12:30pm. Sessions include a presentation by Dr. Peter Rabins, MD, MPH author of "The 36-hour Day"; Let's Improvise! Navigating Dementia with

Creativity, Humanity and Joy; and other topics. There will also be a virtual vendor fair with representatives providing information on a vast array of services for older adults. The cost to attend is only \$15. For more information and to register, please go to [WWW.NVDCC.COM](http://WWW.NVDCC.COM).

***Groceries to Go***

In partnership with Giant Foods and Safeway, **Senior Services of Alexandria** provides a grocery shopping and delivery program to seniors who are 60+ living in the City of Alexandria. Through the *Groceries to Go Program*, volunteers deliver groceries to the client's front door OR directly to your kitchen to put away. There are no delivery fees, and no minimum order requirements.

Currently (during the pandemic), volunteers deliver groceries to the client's front door. Through this program, SSA volunteers provide a vital link to the community and outside world for seniors who otherwise have limited mobility. This program is an important addition to SSA's larger Senior Nutrition Program, with the intent of increasing senior safety, health, and nutrition. *To say the least, Volunteers are always needed and welcome (phone number below).*

**To be eligible**, you must be a resident of the City of Alexandria, be at least 60 years old, and have a debit, credit, or EBT card. If you or someone you know is interested in the *Groceries to Go Program*, call **(703) 836-4414, ext. 119**.

**ALIVE!** is the **oldest and largest private safety net in the City of Alexandria, VA** dedicated to fighting poverty and hunger. An inter-faith nonprofit organization founded in 1969, ALIVE! has 50 member congregations. It is also supported by the City of Alexandria, local organizations and businesses, and volunteers. To learn more click on <https://www.alive-inc.org/>.



**“Senior Living in Alexandria” - Tracing Your Roots Through Genealogy - Thursday, November 17 at 10 am at Beatley Central Library**

Senior Service of Alexandria (SSA) is hosting a “Senior Living in Alexandria” workshop on “Tracing Your Roots Through Genealogy” on Thursday, November 17 at 10am at Beatley Central Library, 5005 Duke Street. SSA is fortunate to have as its speaker Stephen Hammond, a family historian in the Northern Virginia area. This promises to be an enlightening and interesting session on how you can start or enrich your family history research. It is a free event with light refreshments, and is open to the public. To register, go to SSA’s website at [www.seniorservicesalex.org](http://www.seniorservicesalex.org) or call (703) 836-4114, ext. 110.

***Standard Time on Sunday November 6<sup>th</sup> !***

On Saturday, November 5<sup>th</sup> before you go to bed, reset your clock **back** one hour so you’ll have the correct time when you get up on Sunday morning!



**“I’ve fallen and I can’t get up!”**

**... a look-back at your Handbook for “Knox Box”**



The Knox Box is that strange container on the wall to the right as you enter at the canopy. It is from the Fire Department and **only** the Fire Department can access keys in that container, [See pg. 31] for them to have a way to get to a person who would (or might have) trouble leaving the building in an emergency, such as those who can’t walk the stairs to exit.

The keys allow the Fire Department to enter your unit (1) if you are not at home during a unit emergency (water leak, e.g.), or (2) they can’t get a response from you if you have called them for assistance (or a friend wonders about your safety). If they don’t have a key they may have to knock the door down --- these are steel doors and replacements run north of \$1,300 (plus fire-rated hardware starting at \$400)! If you will need assistance, or have surgery coming up, or an injury that renders you temporarily handicapped, or it’s an ongoing medical condition, please contact the Office to fill out a form and provide a key for the Knox Box. ***This MAY save your life!***



## Thinking ahead to that dreaded word ----- SNOW

As dreaded as it is, the weather is turning colder and we are likely to have a snow storm in the coming months (or maybe just *weeks!*). We are fortunate to have terrific staff to dig us out, as well as some generous AKW residents who come to the assistance of their neighbors.

A note to some of our new (and long-term) residents: **Empty parking spaces are privately owned property.** Do not shovel snow from your space onto someone else's. You are ungenerously gifting them the task of shoveling twice as much. We know it's difficult to find space for all of it. Keep in mind we are all in the same boat! It's aggravating and an inconvenience, but please don't "pile on" to your neighbor's parking spot!!

## In this Holiday Season, B-E-W-A-R-E !!

Every day you're getting more and more "Potential Scam" and "Unknown Name" calls – which we hope you're not picking up! If it's a real call from a real person, they'll leave a message and you can call back. In the meantime, for **Customer Service Searches**, (1) go directly to the company website to find the Customer Service phone number. (2) DO NOT ask devices such as Siri and Alexa to find that information. (3) Check the URL on the email for misspellings, mis-use of words in a sentence, slightly different company logo, and email that has an international address, etc. (4) NEVER agree to pay for a service that should be free. (5) Don't give *anyone* remote access to your computer.



## Report SUSPICIOUS Activity

Sometimes it's just a matter of looking out your window. See something or someone that looks suspicious? In a place that looks different? Go ahead and call the non-emergency for the police (703-746-4444) and ask them to do a drive-around of the property. (If you see something that looks like an emergency, dial 911 and then report to the Office or Guard for their follow-up.)

We are all reminded again how important it is for each of us to BE AWARE so that our Community stays as safe as possible. And add our emergency numbers (from the back page) on your speed-dial (landline) or Contacts (mobile phone) – so you'll know where to find them when you need them!



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***After you've finished, it's still your responsibility ....***

**Electronics & hazardous waste:** (paints, solvents, old tv and computer) – take to the City of Alexandria facility on Colvin Ave (7:30-3:30 **only on Monday AND Saturday**). Further Info from the City operator at 703-838-4000. Go east (toward Old Town) on Duke to right on So. Quaker Lane (opposite the fire station) and one block to left onto Colvin. (Alternate: right onto Sweeley St. (next to CVS), right onto Colvin; up a few blocks on the left.) Easy to find; easy to drop off.

- And BTW, check in the next weeks when you're setting up holiday displays or when you're cleaning up from those holidays -- if those holiday lights have seen better days (i.e., they aren't useful anymore), these should be taken to this hazardous waste depot.

Since we use a *private hauler* for our trash, we must use a **private hauler for METAL collection**. This would include appliances that for some reason haven't been taken by those who delivered your new ones. **TrashAway** is able to do this, *for a fee*. Phone them at **703-339-4560** and speak to **Neena** to make your own arrangements and payment. BTW, all of this stuff has to go to Lorton.

**Wood, drywall, sinks, porcelain, ceramics** (all used in construction) goes to 625 Burnside Road. This is NOT a City collection point and they WILL ask for proof of residency in the City (*this is where you are, in the "West End"*). 703-823-5009. There will be a small fee to use cuz this isn't a City affiliate. Come to think of it, your contractor should be taking this stuff with him!



**WANTED: Holiday Decorating Elves**

We are looking for residents interested in helping decorate the lobby for the holidays. If you are interested, please join us on Saturday, December 3rd at 9am.

Hope to see you there!



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## ***Cleaning up will be a lot easier ....***

The Office supplies “**Christmas tree bags**” that will make your life a lot easier at the end of your holiday time! Pick one up and position it over the trunk of the tree *before* you put the tree in its stand. When you’re done with it, just pull the bag up around the tree and tie it off so the needles stay in the bag! Yes, there will be some needles falling on your floor or carpet, but those are easy to vacuum up. With the tree in the bag, you won’t leave a trail from your unit to the trash room of the rest of the needles. *And pay attention to a notice from the Office of when the tree collection is scheduled by TrashAway; trees can’t be left in the trash room for days at a time and we want to make it as convenient as possible to get it out of your unit!*



## **The Office has been reminding you about Trash Disposal**



Please be aware that all trash must be disposed of properly. Doing so will not only keep the trash room from smelling bad, it will also keep the compactor from breaking down – the repairs are costly and come from your condo fees!

We’ve recently noticed refuse not being disposed of in secure trash bags causing it to spill in the bins. When this happens food rots, diapers get putrid, liquids get rancid, and the odor just gets worse. Please use proper plastic trash bags and ensure they are secured tightly.

We’re also seen IV and syringe needles being disposed of in the trash bins and down the trash chute. By now, you should have seen Gabriel’s messages. This is a health and safety hazard for Staff and anyone else who might be come in contact with the needles. Never dispose of needles in the trash. Always place used needles in a Sharps disposal container. Your medical professional office or pharmacy can provide information on obtaining one.

A number of residents have complained about the hallway trash rooms getting blocked by boxes. Small boxes can be placed in the trash rooms but we ask that you please break them down to take up less space. Larger boxes should always be broken down and taken to the trash room. Also, if you have a large amount of recyclables, please taken them downstairs to the main trash room rather than leaving them to block the hallway chutes.

Finally, please don’t leave oversized furniture items or appliances in the trash room. These require special handling for pickup. If we see you (there are cameras around and we will see you) leave such an item, you will be charged for the pickup.

The Resident Handbook section on Trash Disposal provides more complete information. See, Trash Removal, page 28 in our Handbook.

In the meantime, staff will continue to monitor the trash room and do their best to keep it clean. With your help, we can keep trash room odors down and we can keep easy access to the chutes on each floor.

## NOVEMBER 8th ELECTION KEY DATES

Last day of Early Voting      Saturday, November 5

Same day Registration      Tuesday, November 8

### ELECTION DAY 6AM TO 7PM

Early Voting is at the Elections Office,  
138 No. Royal St., in Old Town Alexandria

Our polling station is at the Olympus Condominium  
on Stevenson at Yoakum Parkway.

Ballot boxes are available at this location.

Further information: [alexandriava.gov/elections](http://alexandriava.gov/elections)

Or call 703-746-4050



### ***YES, we're recruiting again!***

By now you have seen the BL notice from Gabriel about recruiting Residents to become “temporary Office help” (sometimes on pretty-short notice!) that help is needed to cover when some emergency keep Gabriel and Judy from coming in. The duty is certainly not onerous, but super-helpful for all the rest of us! If you're interested, please talk with Gabriel and get an application (so we can put you on the payroll!). To best accommodate your schedule, we're looking to get “several” folks who would like to help out this way. It's a great way to meet other Residents, and you'd be doing a great service to the Association!

***Thanks for your consideration!***

**PLEASE BE AWARE** that the City of Alexandria is implementing new lower speed limits on select corridors this fall. If you drive on these streets, be aware of *sharply reduced speed limits in school zones*:

- **North Beauregard Street (Entire Length).** Reduce the posted speed limit from 35 to 25 miles per hour and reduce the *school zone* speed limits from 25 to 15 miles per hour.
- **West Braddock Road (North Beauregard Street to Quaker Lane).** Reduce the posted speed limit from 35 to 25 miles per hour and reduce the *school zone* speed limits from 25 to 15 miles per hour.
- **North Howard Street (Lynn House Driveway to Braddock Road).** Reduce the *school zone* speed limit on North Howard Street from 25 to 15 miles per hour.
- **Seminary Road (Kenmore Avenue to North Pickett Street).** Reduce the *school zone* speed limit from 25 to 15 miles per hour.
- **King Street (Radford Street to Quincy Street).** Install a new 15 mile per hour *school zone* speed limit.

Slower speed limits can save lives and support the City's adopted Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries. Reducing vehicle speeds near schools can improve safety for students and encourage more families to walk or bike to school --- which means there are more pedestrians out there that you should be aware of!

## Important Dates in November

- Budget & Finance Committee \* No meeting in November
- Board Meeting \* Tuesday, November 15, 7 pm (virtual)

The Board Book with agenda is available in the Office the Friday before the meeting.

\* Information on accessing the electronic meetings will be provided in advance.

### 2022 Board Meeting Dates

December 20



When someone calls you from the Security Door downstairs and you need to buzz them in, **press 9** on your phone.



### Important Phone Numbers

Guard Mobile	410-842-3851
AKW Office Phone	703-751-7541
AKW Office email	<a href="mailto:office@akwcondo.com">office@akwcondo.com</a>
AKW Fax	703-751-2136
A-1 Towing	703-971-2600
CMC Emergency	301-446-2635
Police Non-Emergency	703-746-4444
Police Emergency	911
City of Alexandria Info	311 or 703-746-4311



### Board of Directors

Rick Treviño, President	<a href="mailto:rick@akwcondo.com">rick@akwcondo.com</a>
Michael Sullivan, Vice President	<a href="mailto:michael@akwcondo.com">michael@akwcondo.com</a>
Brian Block, Secretary	<a href="mailto:brian@akwcondo.com">brian@akwcondo.com</a>
Laura Rodriguez, Treasurer	<a href="mailto:laura@akwcondo.com">laura@akwcondo.com</a>
Stephen Colodner	<a href="mailto:stephen@akwcondo.com">stephen@akwcondo.com</a>
Wendy Shelley	<a href="mailto:wendy@akwcondo.com">wendy@akwcondo.com</a>
Charles Wilson	<a href="mailto:charles@akwcondo.com">charles@akwcondo.com</a>



Notary services available, at no charge, by appointment.  
[brian@akwcondo.com](mailto:brian@akwcondo.com) and [charles@akwcondo.com](mailto:charles@akwcondo.com)

