

President's Message

We recently lost two long-time AKW residents -- Ric Rios and Becky Martin who passed away a few weeks ago. Both Ric and Becky were active members of our community. Becky also served on the Board of Directors as a director, Vice President, and as chair of the By Laws Committee. We will remember them for their love of and dedication to AKW.

The By Laws Committee has been working on amendments to our current by laws for over three years and they are now in the final stages, making final adjustments. These amendments are the second tranche of changes, with the first batch having been approved in 2016. Once finalized, we will begin to share those changes and reasons for the changes with all co-owners before taking it to a vote. Stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks about this important matter.

Finally, Laura Rodriguez who has been on the Board for two years and served as Treasurer and Chair of the By Laws Committee, resigned this week due to conflicting work and personal demands on her time. On behalf of the Board of Directors I thank Laura for her two years of service to AKW. In the interim, I will be taking on the role of Treasurer in addition to the President duties. In case anyone is concerned about a conflict, the Treasurer cannot take any action on financial matters or transactions without the Board's approval.

Happy February!

Rick Treviño



BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Reported Financials

CMC did not present our normal December 2022 financial reports; they will be reported later. The Finance Officer was able to report **Total Financial Assets** at \$1,582,375.93; **Total Reserve Assets** at \$1,060,740.33, with **Total Reserve Funds** at \$760,527.41.

	November	December **
Total Cash and Investments	\$1,609,526	
Year-to-Date (YTD) Income	2,013,853	
YTD Expenses	1,825,088	
YTD Net Income	188,765	
YTD Reserve Contributions	445,115	
YTD Reserve Expenditures	(863,043)	
Total Reserves	\$846,026	

** Not available at time of publication

BOARD ACTIONS

DECIDED to keep the gym reservation system as-is for three (3) months (considering ups and downs of Covid, etc.), and revisit the survey results. As presented by Bill Munson the survey indicated the majority of respondents wanted to return to “no reservations either room”. Most members of the Board indicated they’d rather keep the full reservation system. During this time we will explore if more/different electrical supply needs to be installed in the small gym in order to place a treadmill there.

APPROVED four (4) motions of funding actions for CDs to be placed with Morgan Stanley, at a higher rate of interest during both 6-mo and 12-mo maturities. Interest rates are expected to be over 4.5% for Primary Market CDs offered by different banking institutions. The total to be placed is to be \$210,000.00.

APPROVED the proposals of Environmental Enhancements for various work in the Dog Run area, and tree work in the lower garage and pool areas, for a total of \$7,144.86.

APPROVED another proposal of Environmental Enhancements for a solution to the drainage problem in area near our entrance and flooding into the patio of Unit 106, for a total of \$4,790.85.

APPROVED updating Procedures for Credit Card Use, from 2017, to permit the General Manager to use the Bank of America card; the Lead Maintenance Technician to use the card for Home Depot.

APPROVED updating the Spending Authority Delegation, from 2019, as appropriate spending for the President to \$3,500 per occurrence, for incidents requiring immediate attention, and to \$2,500 per occurrence to the General Manager. Contracts cannot be entered into with this Authority.

APPROVED the proposal of VGS Design & Build for three invoices repairing a hot water line and other unit repairs affecting Units 305 and 205, in the amount of \$4,580.00.

Budget & Finance Committee

Met on January 17th to review financial assets and reserve spending through December. Reviewed and finalized the RFP for the Reserve Study; proposals are due February 17 in time for that Board meeting. Reviewed policy documents on Spending Authority and Credit Card Usage Procedures, for action at the following Board meeting [see “Board Actions”]. Modeled several expense/investment/cash flow scenarios to determine how much profit and how long to invest Reserve funds in higher-paying CDs, with draft motions for Board action [see “Board Actions”].



By-Laws Committee

The committee met with Association Attorney Ed O’Connell and members of the Board in Executive Session on Wednesday the 18th for final review of updated By-Laws. Over the next couple of months next-steps will be to determine how to present these documents to our Owners – paper copies, emailed, sent to Absentees – for their approvals, following which they’ll be sent to the Lenders for their approval. Much more information will be forthcoming. *Please be aware and responsive when the time comes! Thank you!*

WHAT IS A RESERVE STUDY...AND WHY WE NEED ONE

Larz Pearson

The AKW Board will soon choose a professional company to conduct a Reserve Study. A Reserve Study is an inventory of all the existing major common element systems and critical components. For example, the boilers that supply us with hot water, the building's plumbing, our elevators.

Through examination of records and physical inspection a Reserve Study then estimates the useful life of every item in the inventory – with a particular focus on items that will be due for replacement within the five years that are the focus of the Study – in our case, 2023-2027.

The Study then estimates inflation adjusted costs for replacing all the elements in the list – again with a special focus on the period from 2023-2027.

So why does AKW need a new Reserve Study now?

Well, first of all, Virginia law requires condo associations to conduct such a study every five years – a practice to which AKW has adhered throughout its history. In addition, mortgage lenders and the government agencies that back them require such a study as well as financial reserves sufficient to execute its findings.

But the most important reason for conducting a quality Reserve Study is the role its findings – replacement life cycles combined with replacement cost estimates – play in the sound funding and financial planning of AKW. Specifically, it allows for disciplined, advance planning of the funds that have to be set aside in a Reserve Fund that can cover the scheduled replacements. A portion of each owner's monthly assessment ("condo fee") goes to this Reserve Fund. It is the adequacy of our Reserve Fund funded by regular monthly payments that have allowed AKW to pay for a new roof, renovated garage structures, and the new air handlers for our hallways and first floor that will be installed this Spring. And all without recourse to special assessments.

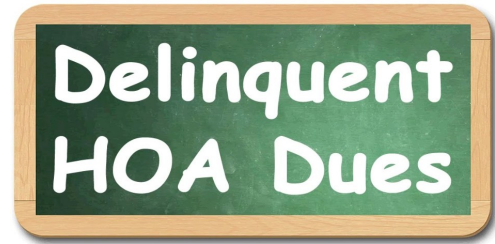
A reliable Reserve Study is only a tool. Using it effectively is the responsibility of the Board of Directors. When a Board postpones replacements scheduled in a Reserve Study, it is merely kicking the can down the road – to a time when replacement may be an emergency and definitely more costly. The 2021 Miami condo building collapse is only an extreme example of the dangers of not acting on the Reserve Study we pay for.



Knolls News Needs Your Help! It's been a few years since we went 'hybrid' with ***Knolls News*** being emailed to our Residents as well as having "door drops" to those who chose to keep paper copies. Our list is pretty outdated at this point, and we need your help in this updating. Yes, everyone in BuildingLink gets a copy just because they've registered an email with the Office. Those who would like to get a paper copy should please let the Office know of this choice. Emails will always be there; "door drops" need to let us know. Oh, the note today: we won't put copies in the Lobby or the Mailroom as we've been doing for the past few months. One more: only one copy of a paper version will be delivered per unit (you can always print out more copies from the emailed version if you need more!). ***Thanks, Everyone!***

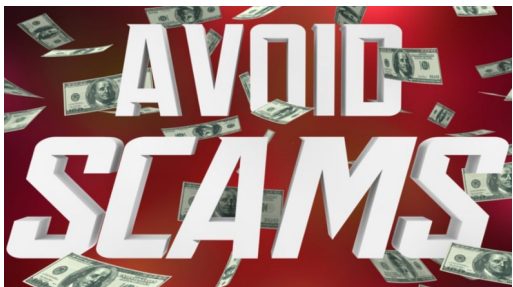
How the Association Addresses Delinquencies

The Association's collection efforts are meant to bring Co-Owners current. Delinquent Co-Owners can expect specific actions:



- On the 16th of the month a late fee of 10% is assessed on the delinquent amount.
- At 30 days late, CMC sends a letter advising of the delinquency and warns of future steps that could be taken.
- At 60 days late, the account is handed over to the Association's legal counsel. At this point the late owner is assessed fees associated with the effort to collect from them. Also at 60 days the Board will review the account and decide whether to accelerate the Owner's dues through the end of the calendar year and/or seek wage/account garnishment, conveying the seriousness of the matter.
- At 90 days late, the Board will ask the Delinquent Owner to attend a hearing to discuss revocation of privileges, including the pool, gym, in-unit-service program, and visitor parking. The Board may also direct legal counsel to pursue foreclosure on the Owner.

If you are delinquent, please bring your account current. If you are more than 60 days late, please reach out to the Association attorney as soon as possible to discuss a repayment plan. The Association wants to work with you and make your Co-Owners whole.



Avoid Scams While Shopping Online for Bargains

Protect yourself and know the signs

During our vacations, especially international, or any birthday/other holiday season, we tend to make a lot more purchases online for travel and gifts, so it's especially important to be vigilant about protecting your money. Here are some of the most common scams to watch for:

Fake websites and apps

Scammers often create fake websites that are so similar to the sites of popular retailers, it easily tricks consumers into providing payment information. The scammers take your information and your money, but you never receive the products. Scammers have also developed fake apps that contain malware. When you download the app, the malware steals personal information from your device or locks it, holding it for ransom until you pay the scammers. Other types of fraudulent apps ask you to login using your social media or email accounts that could expose your personal information for the scammers to steal.

Be careful of apps or websites that ask for suspicious permissions, such as granting access to your contacts, text messages, stored passwords, or credit card information. Also, poor grammar or misspelled words in an app's description or on a website is a red flag that it is not legitimate.

For You or Someone You Know



The Regional Older Adult Facility Mental Health Support Team (RAFT) Dementia Support Program

The RAFT Dementia Support Program is a new initiative in Northern Virginia that is part of the RAFT Program. The RAFT Dementia Support Program fulfills a vital community need for individuals with dementia and their caregivers to prevent psychiatric hospitalizations, and to provide comprehensive education and planning to improve caregiver resilience while improving safety and stability in community placement. Please contact 703-531-2144 for more information.

AARP Foundation 2023 Tax-Aide sites

This program provides free federal tax return preparation and e-filing beginning in the first week in February by volunteers certified by the IRS. The tax season closes on Tuesday, April 18. There are 37 offices within 20 miles of AKW! One site in Annandale is at the Mason Governmental Center (703-658-0216). Because I went there the first time, I go to the Sherwood Regional Library (Sherwood Hall Lane, 22309; 571-882-9374). Call for same-day appointments; otherwise, walk-ins are welcome. Preparers are all retired agents and are recertified by the IRS every year, so they know the score! The eleven centers in Northern Virginia also prepare Virginia returns. Some sites have counselors qualified to prepare Maryland and DC returns as well. Counselors handle almost all forms of income, and work with taxpayers to help them get all the deductions and credits for which they qualify. (Helpful tip: take your Kindle so you'll have something to read while you're waiting!)

Per an informative article in 2021 by Michelle Singletary in *The Washington Post*, other FREE organizations you can research: "United Way" nonprofit offers **MyFreeTaxes.com** in partnership with H&R Block; state & federal; no income limit. **Tax Counseling for the Elderly** is offered to low- and moderate-income taxpayers, specializing in addressing retirement and pension-related issues. For both of these: 800-906-9887. **MilTax**: DOD through MilitaryOneSource offers free e-filing software specific to military life (reporting deployment and combat pay, e.g.). MilitaryOneSource.mil or 800-342-9647. **IRS Free File** is a partnership between the agency and Free File Alliance for those whose adjusted gross income is \$72,000 or less. For each of these organizations, check to make sure you can also file state returns along with federal. Double-check any to make certain there really is no charge!



Senior Services of Alexandria's February 15, 11 am "Senior Living in Alexandria" Workshop – Morning with C. Thomas, Spoken Word Poet

This event will be in-person at the Beatley Central Library on Wednesday, February 15 at 11 am. C. Thomas is a spoken word poet and will explore the legacies of our elders and the wisdom, passion and love they passed down to their children and grandchildren. Participants will learn how transform their words into poetry while celebrating the matriarchs and patriarchs they are! Click on [Morning with C. Thomas, Spoken Word Poet Tickets, Tue, Feb 21, 2023 at 11:00 AM | Eventbrite](#) to learn more and register.



DID YOU KNOW?

Homeowner Insurance

From articles in previous issues of *Knolls News*, you know about leaks from a toilet and possible deterioration of the wax ring. The main point is *"If a leak originates in your unit, any resulting damages to other units – and the building – are fully and completely your responsibility."*

Our Master Deed provides that the Council will maintain insurance on the building (Handbook pg 46), BUT,

"Owners of individual units shall obtain additional insurance (HO-6)" that will cover repairs and renovations from water leaks or fires or other calamities. The Board can also ask for proof that you have this insurance, including Renter's Insurance (usually less than \$200 per year!) for those Units leased by an Owner. Absentee Owners need to carry their own insurance for things not covered by a Renter. ***If you do not have this required insurance, any kind of damage assessment can bankrupt you and could certainly lead to losing your home!***



Valentine's Day

A few ways to save money on your homeowner insurance



And we're repeating from a 2020 issue of *Washington Consumers' Checkbook*, in an article in a "Real Estate" section of the *Washington Post*, some interesting tidbits, saying that they looked at major insurers for seven local [various Zip codes] and "found that each could save more than \$1,000 per year by choosing a low-price company over a high-priced one." Here are some tips on minimizing premiums:

- **Take a high deductible.** You'll get a big discount and make it less likely to file small claims that may generate future premium increases.
- **Maintain a good credit record in Virginia.** With many companies, your credit score will influence the rates you're offered more than anything else.
- **Consider buying your homeowners and auto policies from the same company.** Many companies offer dual-policy discounts; however such discounts are small and won't make a high-cost company a good deal.
- **When shopping for insurance, speak with several companies and agents** – and question price quotes that seem excessive or include unrequested coverage.

LANDMARK NEWS AND WHAT TO EXPECT

It's been a really long time since we've had anything in **Knolls News** about the gigantic overhaul of the Landmark shopping mall and surrounding areas, but maybe now's the time to bring everyone up-to-date with what's been happening recently. The whole idea was to advance the development of the 4-million SF community to include a new hospital campus at the site of this sprawling area. This would revitalize our West End by transforming the unoccupied enclosed mall site into mixed-use with a walkable urban village. *(Looking back, we started mentioning this development possibility in 2017!)*

Inova, the leading nonprofit health care provider in Northern Virginia is investing \$1 billion to create a new medical campus, anchored by the relocation and expansion of its Alexandria Hospital and more than 2,000 health care workers. The balance of the site will include residential, retail, commercial and entertainment offerings, with plenty of open, grassy spaces. A transit hub serving DASH and Metrobus is included, as well as a community facility of a new fire and EMS station. The first buildings are expected to be delivered in 2025. *(That seems like a pipe-dream to me, since this is already 2023 and they're still relocating all of the dirt and rubble from destruction of that space!)*

Another part of this huge development will be called "Landmark Overlook" and will comprise 58 acres of the area along Stevenson and between So. Whiting *(saving the Alley Cat restaurant)* and So. Walker, where the Big Lots, the Afghan restaurant and the medical building were. That will be mostly residential, feeding employees to the many new facilities in the surrounding area.

The following link will take you to all of the plans and pictures of what's contemplated – about 50 pages worth – but certainly well worth reviewing if only to see how much impact this is going to have on our neighborhood! I think, be prepared for road closures and detours and general inconvenience, once this *really* gets started!! *Keep your eyes open for everything!*

<https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/planning/info/ewlvdptcombined01182022.pdf>

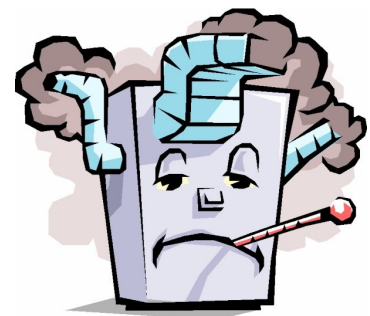
Do you hear thumping in the night? Check your HVAC units!

We've received reports from several people about unusual sounds they are hearing. The descriptions vary and include loud thumping, banging, and balcony doors slamming. What are these sounds?

We believe there are some HVAC units in the building that are in need of repair or adjustment. In the past, particularly with the newer units in the winter, the valves in the HVAC unit will not function properly and cause these loud bangs or thumps. Because sound travels in an unusual way in our high-rise, it's hard to tell where the noise is coming from.

If your HVAC unit is making these sounds, it is important you contact a reputable company to make the necessary repairs or adjustments. And it's not just about the noise which is quite annoying to your neighbors. If this problem with your HVAC unit persists, it could cause damage to your unit and the pipes in the building for which you could be liable.

Please! If you are having these problems with your HVAC unit, call a professional to have it fixed as soon as possible.



Important Dates in February

- Building & Finance Committee Meeting Tuesday, February 21, 7pm (community room)
- Board Meeting * Tuesday, February 28, 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.

2023 Board Meeting Dates

February 28	March 28
April 25	May 23
June 27	July 25
August 22	September 26
October 24	November 14 *
December 19 *	

* earlier date to accommodate Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays



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	office@akwcondo.com
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



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Brian Block, Secretary	brian@akwcondo.com
[Vacant], Treasurer	
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Notary services available, at no charge, by appointment.
brian@akwcondo.com and charles@akwcondo.com

