



# FOREST HILL HOME OWNERS INC.

October 14, 2020

Zoom

**Attendance:** Officers: Gretchen Mettler, President, Sam Kohn, Secretary, Tom Winston, Chair of Standards, Tony Rucic, Treasurer, Beryl Tishkoff, Chair of the Board.

Members: Chris Hubbert, Mark Madland, Bob Charlick, Chris Hubbert.

Absent: Tess Givens (excused)

## **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 by Gretchen. No one offered corrections to the minutes. The board noted the phenomenal skills of the secretary. The minutes were adopted as submitted.

## **Treasurer's Report**

Tony reported that the targeted email campaign had successfully generated \$1,100 in additional donations. 264 unique emails were sent to previous donors who hadn't donated yet in 2020. Tony cautioned having only 100 reliable donors is less than ideal for the long term sustainability of FHHO. He added that with fewer donors, total donation amounts would have to increase to maintain all current expenses of FHHO. Many of legacy donors who often gave more than the \$75 per year have passed away or moved away.

Chris suggested this year may be an anomaly because of the unforeseen global pandemic. Tony responded that the 2020 donation rates align with the downward trend for some years now. Chris offered a different analysis that donation is more closely correlated to effective leadership and events coordinated by FHHO. Tony pointed out that certain Trustees might have been the root cause of the decline in credibility and therefore donations over the past few years. Bob added that FHHO should focus on what FHHO can do to add value to the community and residents.

Other trustees noted discussions of how to increase contributions, particularly re-solicitation of supporting members during a global pandemic, might feel hollow right now when we do have cash reserves that can be accessed to make ends meet for this year.

## **Comments On Racism Statement**

Bob offered his thoughts on the mixed responses to the draft comment on FHHO's statement on race. He suggested that the board should not vote at this time to include the statement in the upcoming AGM or newsletter because it has become too divisive. Beryl explained that it was important for FHHO to have a plan on what action steps should be taken in addition to

issuing the statement. Chris expressed some concern about the appropriateness of a statement on race from The Board that does not reflect racial make up of the neighborhood. Sam suggested the success of the statement shouldn't be measured on how it is received. He emphasized that if we value the words in the statement, and think that it should be communicated to the residents, then we should move forward with but the value we put in what the statement says and how

Sam moved to present the statement on race in the newsletter and AGM. Seconded by Tony and Tom. The Board unanimously approved the motion.

### **Bylaws**

Chris reported that the Bylaws Committee created working draft and we intends to solicit input from community members who are not Trustees before presenting a draft to all of you for review. The drafting process has taken longer than we hoped (solely due to my delays, Mark and Gretchen have been very timely with thoughtful feedback). The committee agreed that it made sense to push this project to next year instead of trying to rush it to seeking member approval.

### **Survey**

Sam Presented trends and responses from residents of the survey. The key findings are that most residents believe that FHHO should work towards legally enforcing the covenants, assisting homeowner home maintenance, and preserving the Blue Cottage. Gretchen noted that full support from residents will be needed to pursue any major restoration of the Blue Cottage. That discussion will begin at the upcoming AGM.

### **Trash Collection**

Mark reported 20 volunteers signed up and will meet Saturday October 17 at 1:00 p.m. at the triangle on Northvale for the final trash clean-up of 2020.

**Signage:** Chris reported that Cleveland Heights approved the application for a sign at The Blue Cottage. Initially, they experienced pushback because the cottage is zoned residential (city zoning, not county), but we cleared that hurdle on 10/12. Next step is to finalize the design and then apply for approval of the design. Chris does not expect that process to be problematic, although it is possible the city would request revisions to the design. Other locations will be a heavier lift with the city. Gretchen encouraged the committee to coordinate with East Cleveland Forest Hill Neighborhood Group so that the aesthetic matches on both sides of Forest Hill. Mark reported that 6 signs cost \$3500, another \$3300 to dig all the holes. 6 locations have been identified for signs and that The Board Should decide whether it is a big initiative or not. Mark also reported that the signs are made of plastic.

### **Fund Raising**

Beryl reported no movement on sale of FHHO merchandise. However, there was an article published in the October Heights Observer, with accompanying picture of the Blue Cottage to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **Nominating Committee**

Karen Slavin resigned as Chair of the Nominating Committee to work on the presidential election. Gretchen approached Jan Briggs a long-time resident on Newbury to be the chair and she agreed. Tess volunteered tonight to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> board member on the nominating committee, she will join Mark as the other board member. The other committee members are residents Latrelle Winston and Marlene Perez. Marlene is a former Executive Committee member, which satisfies the requirements laid out in the bylaws. The Board approved this nominating committee.

Gretchen encouraged Trustees to find more residents to serve on The Board.

## **AGM Meeting Prep**

The Board discussed how to organize voting for the virtual AGM. Trustees thought paper and online options should be available. Sam suggested google forms as a safe and effective method for collecting ballots.

Mark motioned for dual delivery of google forms and downloadable printable ballots and to allow for up to one week after the meeting for virtual and paper ballots to be returned. Seconded by Chris. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Volunteer of the year award:**

Pat Rolf for her work on the gardens and landscaping on BC.

## **House improvement award:**

Tony thought of a handful of properties that could be nominated. He will send those names and addresses to Gretchen to make certificates. Gretchen will ask Sharon Leary to photograph the addresses.

Restoration award for work on Hereford will also be awarded a certificate and framed photo.

Gretchen notified committee leaders that they should prepare a very brief report for the AGM.

Survey results committee will also present. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of people to be voted on by Forest Hill residents.

## **Preservation Committee**

Tom reported that he received an email from an investor, that he was notified by an attorney that they don't have to follow restrictive covenants. Tom continued by explaining that 2 homes are currently flouting the covenants. One home has a newly poured and expanded driveway in East Cleveland. East Cleveland has been notified but has only put together a limited response. Investors are doing work on a back porch and may be replacing windows on a Rumson home currently without permission.

After some discussion, The Board agreed that the Preservation Committee should move forward with finding counsel to respond to these investors ignoring the covenants.

Additionally, The Board discussed general issues about how to approach, in particular, investors to respect the covenants and apply for FHHO permits.

Mark moved to approve the Preservation Committee to spend no more than \$1000 on counsel and letters from an attorney. Seconded by Gretchen. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:08

---

Sam Kohn, Secretary