

Harper's Choice CA Representative News
Cynthia A. S. H. Coyle
CASHCOYLE2@aol.com

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CA's Proposed Amendment to the HOA:

The Board Chair removed the item from the agenda due to the complexity of the issue and deadline that would need to be met to get a State Delegate to introduce the proposed amendment in the upcoming legislative session. The Board will most likely continue to work on refining the proposal in committee and will ensure that the Villages and residents of Columbia have input in the discussion.

- **THE ISSUE:** *For purposes of state law, CA falls within the definition of a homeowners association ("HOA") under the Maryland Homeowners Association Act ("HOA Act"), although CA is actually a non-profit public benefit corporation and in many respects is more like a local government than an HOA. In recent years, the number of bills filed during each session of the General Assembly proposing amendments to the HOA Act has risen dramatically. Those bills typically are "one size fits all" in their application to HOAs regardless of size, structure, functions or complexity of the organization. CA is compelled to expend substantial amounts of money and effort each year seeking amendments to bills that do not contemplate or appropriately apply to CA and the villages. There also is always a risk that CA will not succeed in obtaining requested amendments, with the result that new bills may have unintended negative consequences for CA.*

Transparency Policy

In 2010, CA hired Management Partners, a consultant to analyze and prepare a report with recommendations regarding the Columbia Association (CA) application of transparency in governance and operations. The information detailed in the report is based on the input and ideas of Columbia Association staff, Management Partners' independent research and our knowledge of industry best practices.

There were five recommendations to organizational improvements and policies, that, when implemented, would position the Columbia Association to provide even greater transparency and accountability to its residents and property owners. These include:

Recommendation 1: *Publish property owners' and board members' questions and CA's responses on the website (except where the Board request and response are confidential and protected from disclosure under the law).*

Recommendation 2: *Provide copies of property owners' comments related to agenda items as part of the agenda packet.*

Recommendation 3: *Identify ways to connect information about a single topic that is in multiple places on the website to make it easier for residents to see the data together in a meaningful way.*

Recommendation 4: *Evaluate available financial information that could be placed on the website as well as ways to highlight existing budget document data already on the web.*

Recommendation 5: *Post brief biographies on the CA website that highlight the background and expertise of Board of Directors and key staff*

Additionally, the consultant's drafted a **Transparency Policy** that they recommended be adopted by the CA Board.

On November 10, 2011, the Board approved the Transparency Policy as presented by the consultants in 2010 and additionally requested that the staff develop an implementation plan for the five recommendations. Consultant's report is attached.

CA Budget: Discussion of CA Rates & Fees

1. **Senior discount** – To thank seniors for continuing to live in Columbia and to encourage "aging in place," establish a standard 10% senior discount for all CA services, to be applied on top of any other CA discounts that may be available (such as the early renewal discount), for Columbia residents age 65 and over. **CURRENTLY DISAGREE.**
2. **5-pool discounted memberships and daily admissions for Columbia residents** – Implement a \$175 annual family outdoor pool membership for Columbia residents using the 5 least utilized pools (with corresponding reduced rates for renewals and Two-Member and Individual pool memberships). Implement daily admission charges of \$4/adult and \$2/child at the 5 least utilized pools. **CURRENTLY DISAGREE**
3. **5-pool memberships and daily admissions for non-residents** - Allow non-residents to purchase plan for using only the 5 least utilized outdoor pools at a rate of \$350 for an annual family outdoor pool membership (with corresponding reduced rates for renewals and Two-Member and Individual pool memberships). Implement daily admission charges of \$8/adult and \$4/child at the 5 least utilized pools. **CURRENTLY DISAGREE**
4. **Loyalty Program** – Reward Columbia residents who have long-standing Package Plan or individual facility

memberships by progressively lowering their renewal rate in 2% increments each successive year that they remain members, after the 5th consecutive year. CURRENTLY AGREE WITH SOME VERSION OF THIS

5. **Off-peak discounts** - Offer Columbia residents discounts of 25% for Sport & Fitness memberships and daily admissions that are restricted to usage in off-peak periods of the facilities. BELIEVE THAT THE STAFF SHOULD CONTROL THIS WHEN APPROPRIATE.
6. **Rate and fee differentials** – In each of the next 5 fiscal years, gradually adjust rates and fees to achieve by FY 2017 the goal of equitable and reasonable differentials between the following categories of CA services:
 - a. Rate/fee for Columbia resident = (45%, 50%, or 55%) of Non-resident rate, for all Sport & Fitness and Community Services facilities and programs.
 - b. Rate for Two-Member membership = (60%, 65%, or 70%) of Family membership, for all Sport & Fitness facilities and programs.
 - c. Rate for Individual membership = (30%, 35%, or 40%) of Family membership, for all Sport & Fitness facilities and programs.
 - d. Rate for Renewed membership = (75%, 80%, or 85%) of New membership, for all Sport & Fitness facilities and programs.

CURRENTLY DISAGREE WITH THIS PROPOSAL. AGREE THAT THERE NEEDS TO BE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENTIALS BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND NON-RESIDENTS

7. **Changes in basic rates and fees** - The maximum increase (or decrease) in the rates and fees for users of CA services between FY 2012 and FY 2013 and between FY 2013 and FY 2014 will be (-2.5%, -1.5%, 0, +1.5%, or +2.5%). The maximum may only be exceeded if needed to achieve Board-approved rate and fee differentials goals. NOT SURE WHAT THIS IS YET. NO DISCUSSION HAS TAKEN PLACE YET
8. **“Dividend” applied to CA’s Annual Charge** - If the actual year-end amount of the organization wide increase in net assets is in excess of the amount predicted in the approved budget, 50% of that excess shall be used as a “dividend” toward reducing the annual charge. DISAGREE COMPLETELY. REDUCES THE FUNDING AVAILABLE TO MAKE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Hobbit’s Glen Clubhouse- Contractor: H. Chambers Company Selected

CA awarded a contract to The H. Chambers Company to provide architectural and engineering services for the renovation or replacement of the Hobbit’s Glen Golf Club Clubhouse. Chambers is a full service architecture and interior design firm that specializes in planning and design of golf and country clubs. Founded in 1899 and headquartered in Baltimore, Chambers designed its first Club, the Baltimore Country Club, in 1945. Today it has worked on hundreds of clubs nationwide and was the recent recipient of top honors for New Clubhouse (Inverness Country Club in Birmingham, Alabama) and Best

Remodel /Renovation (Charlotte Country Club in Charlotte, North Carolina) from Golf Inc. Magazine. More information on Chambers can be found at ChambersUSA.com.

The Request For Proposal (RFP) for architectural/engineering services for the new or renovated Hobbits Glen Golf Course Club Clubhouse project was widely distributed in July. Ten proposals were received by the deadline. A CA selection team studied and scored the proposals received and four finalist firms were selected. Those four firms were invited to make public presentations and engage in interviews regarding their experience and suitability for this project. From the four finalists, the evaluation committee selected Chambers. Once the contract has been finalized, a schedule of work team meetings open to the general public will be established. CA staff and the work team will begin working with Chambers to develop three design options to present to the CA Board of Directors: one renovation, one new building and one at the discretion of the architect. It is currently projected that the presentation of the three options will be made to the CA Board of Directors in Spring 2012. The CA Board of Directors has approved up to \$6 million to either renovate or replace the clubhouse at Hobbit’s Glen Golf Club.

Aquatics Master Plan Drop-In Open House for Young Families

The Columbia Association (CA) will host an Aquatics Master Plan Drop-In Open House for Young Families on Saturday, November 19 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Columbia Swim Center. The Aquatics Master Plan process has included extensive public engagement, including public meetings, a community task force, focus groups and interactive online tools. This informal session, focused on young families’ interests, will continue these efforts. Families are encouraged to come any time during the event to share their thoughts and feelings on the future of CA pools. Members of the Aquatics Master Plan team will be on hand to answer questions and listen to ideas. For assistance, please call 410-715-3166 or e-mail Scott.Templin@ColumbiaAssociation.com. For more information on the Aquatics Master Plan process, visit ColumbiaAssociation.org/AquaticsMasterPlan.

CA offering pilot program for women’s-only swimming time

Women's Only Swim Time pilot program initiated as part of our ongoing commitment to increasing access to our aquatics facilities and programs. The community desire for women's-only swim time came out of a meeting between CA staff and People Acting Together in Howard (PATH), a multi-racial, multi-faith, non-partisan, County-wide citizens' organization rooted in local congregations and associations. "We're responding to a community need for a women's only swim environment by providing a setting where women can feel comfortable to exercise, recreate and take full advantage of our aquatics programs and facilities," says Bob Bellamy, director of CA's Sport & Fitness Division. The program will be offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 to 2 p.m. at the Columbia Swim Center's Program Pool. This pool is a shallow water pool warmed to 80 to 82 degrees. During this time, the pool will be guarded by female lifeguards and the windows will be covered. The program will be free to CA members. Resident non-members (with a CA resident card) will pay \$16 per visit and general admission is \$25. Non-members are welcome to a free trial of two admissions. This past summer, as part of CA's commitment to increase access to aquatics facilities and programs, CA initiated three new efforts, including \$10 family outdoor pool vouchers for active resident card holders; low-cost Intro to Aquatics swim lessons; and free transportation to CA's Membership Service Center (MSC). These new initiatives were the result of input received from the CA Board of Directors and the community during the previous budget process. For more information on CA's aquatics facilities and programs, visit ColumbiaPools.org. For more information on this initiative, please contact CA's Director of Aquatics John Herdson at 410-381-1096 or John.Herdson@ColumbiaAssociation.com.

CA Partnering with Wilde Lake High School to Create a Rain Garden Project

Wilde Lake High School students and volunteers will assist the Columbia Association (CA), along with the University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension Service, in constructing a rain garden behind Wilde Lake High School. The garden, which was designed by the Wilde Lake High School (WLHS) Environmental Club, will be built on Saturday, November 19 from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The club was interested in starting this project and Maryland State Delegate Liz Bobo put the club in touch with John McCoy, CA's watershed manager, and Amanda Rockler, the regional watershed restoration specialist for the University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension Service. At the beginning of the project, McCoy and Rockler worked with the students to develop a design plan for the rain garden. Once the design was finalized, Susheela Varma, WLHS science teacher and the leader of the environmental club, contacted the Board of Education for approval and arranged for the Dorsey Hall Garden Club to help with the maintenance of the garden during the summer when the students are out of school.

The project is being funded through a grant from the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays 2010 Trust Fund. The grant is also being used for a bio-retention facility at the Columbia Athletic Club, rain gardens in Wilde Lake and demonstration rain gardens at the Athletic Club and Kahler Hall.

A rain garden is a garden in a small, shallow land bowl that is designed to catch water runoff and infiltrate it into the ground. For more information on rain gardens and CA's Watershed Management Plan, please visit ColumbiaWatershed.org or contact John McCoy at John.McCoy@ColumbiaAssociation.com.

Columbia Community Exchange Time Bank

Howard County's Time Banking program, the Columbia Community Exchange (CCE), is a community-based Time Banking program offered by the Columbia Association to provide an opportunity for neighbors to help neighbors through the mutual exchange of everyday services. Membership is free and the concept is simple: spend an hour doing something for a fellow member and earn a Time Dollar. Then you have a Time Dollar to buy an hour of another member's time or service.

Everyone has skills that other may value. As a bartering network using the currency of time, Time Dollars value everyone's contribution equally, allowing each person to be actively engaged in his or her community. Time dollars are a type of community currency that anyone can earn by using their time, every, skills, and talents to help others. Members trade all types of every day services, including gardening, minor home repair, transportation, computer maintenance, tutoring, etc. Services may vary widely depending on the skills, talents, and abilities of the current members. Time Banking welcomes all to participate, including youth and the elderly. Our staff facilitates exchanges and strives to match members.

Membership is free. All members provide references, detail skills and offers, and attend an orientation. Members communicate with fellow members via our Time Bank website, email or telephone. We encourage people to attend our social gatherings since people tend to exchange services with those whom they know and trust. Friendships blossom as members forge personal connections and create "circles of giving." Time Bank staff facilitates exchanges and strives to match member's services and needs. Please note that the Community Exchange is not a service agency and cannot mandate members to provide services.

Join our network and strengthen our community. All new members must attend an orientation. Regular orientation sessions are held the third Monday of every month and by appointment. Arrangements for orientation/training can be made by contacting the Time Banking office at 410-884-6121 or CommunityExchange@ColumbiaAssociation.com.