

Dear Wilde Lake Friends and Neighbors,

For the CA Board of Directors and the CA President, the first two weeks of 2023 have been very intense. The CA Board of Directors began the New Year with a closed meeting on January 4, 2023. Two days later, the CA Board Chair and Vice Chair presented a plan to the CA President. Coincident with the delivery of this plan, the CA Board issued the following press release:

“The Board of Directors of the Columbia Association is aware of numerous false rumors and speculations surrounding the employment status of the Columbia Association President and CEO, Lakey Boyd. The truth is that the Board of Directors seeks to improve the relationship and the communications between Ms. Boyd and the Board, and has presented a plan to Ms. Boyd to accomplish that goal. The Board is hopeful this plan will foster a productive working relationship and positive changes. The volunteer members of the Board of Directors are dedicated to continuing to devote substantial time and energy to ensuring the success of Columbia Association.”

As a note to the people of Wilde Lake, I did not vote in favor of either the “plan” or the press statement.

On the evening of January 11, 2023, CA President Lakey Boyd sent the following message to the CA Board of Directors;

"I attended a meeting with the CA Board Chair and Vice Chair on January 6, 2023, along with CA's Director of Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion. I was told the meeting was to discuss actions taken at the January 4, 2023 closed Board meeting. I was provided a hard copy of the Board's plan in the January 6 meeting. After review and reflection of the discussion, and due to the terms of the plan and the timeline, I believe the Board's plan renders me ineffective in being able to carry out my duties as President/CEO as they are detailed in my contract. I have concluded that I have no other choice but to ask the CA Board to transition me out of the Columbia Association. "

This was less than 24-hours before the first CA Board Work Session of 2023.

Last Thursday, the CA Board of Directors took their seats in the CA Headquarters board room. The CA President was not in attendance. The Board was informed that she was not feeling well and could not attend. The visitors gallery was completely full with residents. As the CA Board Chair began the work session, a motion was made to have the CA Board Chair and Vice-Chair step down, and new leadership be elected. The CA Board Chair refused the motion and stated that votes cannot be taken during a work session.

The next item of business was to approve the agenda. A motion was made to change the order of the work session presentations, and a majority of the CA Board voted in favor of this change. I then made a motion to remove all presentations from the agenda so that the board could discuss the relationship between the CA Board of Directors and the CA President. A majority of the CA Board voted against placing this relationship of the CA Board and the CA President on the agenda.

What followed next was more than 90-minutes of resident speakout. I will note here that there were clearly many more residents in attendance at the meeting. Current CA Board resident speakout rules require signing up to speak out more than 24-hours in advance of the meeting. I am certain more residents would have taken a turn at the microphone if the rules had allowed.

Of those that spoke, 2/3 of the residents talked about the relationship between the CA Board and the CA President. Almost all encouraged the board to seek mediation with the CA President rather than allow the current condition to continue. Moreover, 1/3 of all residents speaking were former CA Board members, and all of these speakers chose to talk about the board and the president. I have been on the CA Board less than nine months, and if a half-dozen former CA Board members show up on a single night, and speak with one voice, it's probably a good idea to take their advice.

As a final note on resident speak out, Wilde Lake was well represented. The CA Board heard from the Village Manger and the Vice-Chair of the Wilde Lake Village Board. In addition, several prominent Wilde Lake residents spoke. Their remarks were powerful, on point, and all Wilde Lake residents should be proud of their contribution.

The remainder of the evening was dedicated to three important topics that the CA Board has tracked this fiscal year: stormwater management, code of ethics, and the Howard County General Plan.

Doug Myers, a Senior Scientist from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, provided a few comments on the Lake Elkhorn stream restoration project and provided an overview of green infrastructure and stormwater management. After the presentation, Mr. Myers engaged in a Q and A with the board regarding several topics.

The next item on the agenda was to discuss the Columbia Association Audit Committee recommendations to improve the CA Ethics Program. This presentation was provided by Jim Young, Chair of the Columbia Association Audit Committee. The recommendations are quite lengthy, so it would be difficult to include within this letter. Please contact me and I will provide a copy of the recommendations or arrange to chat about them with you.

The last topic of discussion was the upcoming Howard County General Plan. Howard County has been working on a General Plan revision for about two years, and it is currently in its final draft form. It will be debated and discussed over the next six months or so at the county. The Columbia Association wishes to participate in the review process to ensure character and zoning in Columbia remain.

I will also note that during the General Plan discussion, a CA Board member mentioned that he had recently participated in a discussion of Columbia Village Centers with his board. In his remarks to the CA Board, he indicated River Hill liked the supermarket and dry cleaner at their Village Center, and would never want to see them replaced with apartments, traffic, and overcrowded schools/hospitals. I might have jumped the gun on this, but I pushed back on this characterization and said the River Hill board should visit the Wilde Lake Village Center, a thriving center with apartments, but pretty reasonable traffic. I am proud of the Wilde Lake Village Center.

After more than four hours of discussion, the meeting was adjourned. Our next meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2023. If you wish to sign up for resident speakout, please visit the CA website and sign up before Wednesday, January 25, 2023.

Bill Santos