



Echoes from Our Lake

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
WALKER LAKESHORES LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION
MARCH 2022 VOLUME 155

There and Back-Again: Where We Were Five Years Ago, Where We Are Now

Five years ago, the Walker Lakeshores Landowners Association was reeling from the discovery that its former president, the late Art Politano, allegedly had embezzled more than a quarter of a million dollars from the Association's coffers, leaving it deeply in debt and with the badly needed capital improvements some of that money was earmarked for...unaddressed.

This loss could only have taken place in circumstances which utterly lacked transparency and accountability and where common sense and well-established organizational procedures and safeguards had been abandoned. Lulled by Mr. Politano's likability and his willingness to take on a fair amount of the Association's work, the community had taken its eyes off the ball.

The following is a summary of where we were when this alleged self-dealing was discovered, what has since been done to put the Association on solid ground and in what ways the Walker Lake community is in a better place now than it was five years ago.

This is based on an interview with Ron Lisciandrello, whose call for an independent audit following the death of Mr. Politano revealed the alleged embezzlement, reflections by Janice Hahn on the challenges she faced as interim president, information provided by Treasurer Carol Gillen, and reports from the Finance, Planning, Road, Dam, Beach & Grounds and Social Committees.



Ron Lisciandrello

Embezzlement

From June 2012 until his death in May 2017, Art Politano was both President and Treasurer of WLLA. As revealed by Mr. Lisciandrello's examination of Association records and practices and by the aforementioned audit, a great number of irregularities in financial practices took place during Mr. Politano's presidency:

- Art was both president and treasurer of WLLA;
- His personal attorney was also attorney for the Association;
- Dues could be paid in cash;
- There were unauthorized cash withdrawals aggregating more than \$80,000 from WLLA's bank account;
- The Association was found to have paid charges for products and services of a strictly personal nature; and
- Funds were borrowed from the Association's bank without Board authorization.

By the end of Mr. Politano's presidency, the Association owed \$46,000 more than it had in cash and was on the hook to its bank for more than \$220,000.

Recovery

After Art passed on and a majority of Board members resigned by year-end 2017, confidence in the Association was at an all-time low. Once sleepy Board meetings attended by few in the community became all-hands-on-deck affairs, with indignant residents suspicious that responsibility for the malfeasance lay not just with one individual. In the midst of that, on January 1, 2018, the presidency was passed to the intrepid Janice Hahn with Ron Lisciandrello as treasurer, and, essentially, a new Board of Trustees.

Flying blind in terms of its financial situation and unsure how much in the way of dues would be forthcoming from a suspicious community, the Board did what any of us would do in a comparable situation: cut all but the most essential expenses; accelerate the generation of invoices for annual dues; collect such revenue (as from delinquent dues) as it could; pay its bills slowly without damaging its creditworthiness; and be honest with the community.

According to Ms. Hahn:

Art not only stole the community's money; he also deprived the community of trust. My goal was one that would not only bring about lost financial stability but more importantly once again gain trust from the community. Trust is earned over time through hard work and dedication to a perceived end. It was hoped that would be achieved through honesty, fairness and above all transparency.

Working alongside a core group of community individuals who stepped-up and devoted countless hours and days of their time contributed substantially towards both goals. Had it not been for their support, transition to stability would surely have been farther in the future.

In short order, the Board:

- Hired a new accounting firm;
- Commenced an audit of the Association's finances;
- Adopted policies aimed at following time-honored financial management procedures, operating transparently, reining in expenses, conserving cash and collecting delinquent dues; and
- Got itself a new attorney, who insisted that it be meticulous in following provisions of the Association's Constitution and Bylaws (spelled out in the Appendices of the Association's Rules & Regulations ("Red Book")).

Getting the organization back on its feet was an enormous undertaking. As Janice put it:

Please understand there were so many interrelated and time-consuming issues associated with each and every challenge. For instance, determining our financial situation began by arranging access to the office computer files which was an absolute necessity; then, the Association's bank, accounting firm, audit firm, insurance company, etc., etc. needed to be contacted, informed of the change in leadership and provided with all requested paperwork. And, in the midst of the transition was the need to send out the next year's dues to many, understandably disillusioned, Association households.

In addition to the challenges of rebuilding an organization that was then suffering from so much community distrust, another herculean effort got underway: to recover some of the financial assets that had been lost, or to get restitution for same. This included:

- Filing insurance claims for employee theft (one of which, for \$30,000, was paid);
- Reaching a settlement with WLLA's bank for allowing sizeable cash withdrawals from the WLLA account and for having extended loans not properly authorized by the Association (restitution: \$16,000 net of legal fees); and
- Attempting to file a lien on Mr. Politano's estate (unsatisfied due to other creditors having filed claims that predated, and, in aggregate, were larger than, our own). **Resurrection**

Fast-forward five years, and here is where we are and what's been done to get us there:

Finances (Carol Gillen, Treasurer) (see https://www.walkerlake.com/_files/ugd/d70f9d_15a3af39034a4bc894a74a9ccfde33a3.pdf for full report)

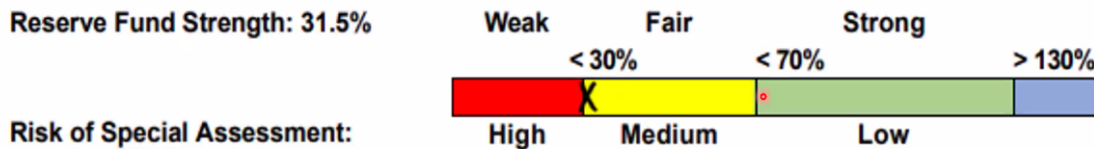
- Association debt has been reduced by \$141,158 (from \$163,158 on Dec. 31, 2016 to \$22,000 on Jan 31, 2022).
- Reserves have grown by \$138,189 (from 92,836 on Dec. 31, 2016 to \$231,025 on Dec. 31, 2021).
- Judgments awarded for non-payment of dues stand at \$99,867, of which \$18,762 has been collected as of Dec. 31, 2021.

- Improved oversight of all financial matters. Example: all bank accounts are reconciled every month by our office staff and reviewed by the Treasurer and Finance Committee.
- Association books have been subject to annual professional, external audits since 2016.

Planning (Carol Gillen) (See https://www.walkerlake.com/files/ugd/d70f9d_aae7e39047154e009d20d33441325ad9.pdf for full report)

- The Planning Committee was reconstituted. Our bylaws dictate that it is a standing committee, but it was not up and running until Janice Hahn reconstituted it in Oct. 2018.
- WLLA’s first-ever Reserve Study was recently completed (consistent with National Reserve Study Standards and as recommended by our auditors since 2016).
 - A Reserve Study projects future capital needs based on the remaining useful life of Association assets and the projected costs of replacing those assets when their useful life is expected to expire.
 - It’s a first step in the direction of creating a true capital reserve that’s funded on a regular basis out of Association income and that earmarks use of funds for upcoming capital projects.
- An accredited Building Inspection was done in preparation for the Reserve Study. Most of the deficiencies identified have already been remediated through coordinated efforts of volunteers and subcontractors.
- A page from the Reserve Study:

Interpreting Reserve Fund Strength



Your Reserve Fund is currently at 31.5 % Funded. Being between 30%-70% Funded represents a fair Reserve position. Associations in this range have a moderate risk of Reserve cash-flow problems (such as special assessments and/or deferred maintenance) in the near future.

Roads(Michael DeVita) (See https://www.walkerlake.com/files/ugd/d70f9d_76cb6b15e2b044d49bbf71c0b1db6fde.pdf for full report)

- Wrote a new contract after the 2017-2018 snow season to ensure at least two plows operate in the community and not one, as previously.
- Started directly purchasing winter materials (salt and anti-skid) and road stone from quarries to save money.
- Resurfaced:
 - Algonquin from Birch to Maple
 - Seminole from Maple to White Spruce
 - White Spruce from Cree to Seneca.
- Tar and chipped (T&C) Walker Lake Road from Lakeshore to Pear.



- Permanent patch pavement¹ repairs on
 - Onandaga between Lee and White Spruce
 - White Spruce between Seminole and Onandaga
 - Walker Lake Road between Birch and Pear
 - Algonquin between Maple and Lake Shore
 - Maple between Blackfoot and Neversink.
- Patched potholes 1-2x per year using the correct method to ensure they stay patched. New holes will form as the pavement wears out but previously patched holes stay fixed.
- For gravel roads:
 - Regraded after each winter, crowning them better with each passing year
 - Added close to 1,000 tons of stone to roads as needed
 - Continually repaired following storm damage erosion
 - Improved areas have experienced little or none of the erosion problems that plagued us for years.
- Signs:
 - Installed new signs entering Walker Lake on Maple Drive, Pear Road and Onandaga Road
 - Installed speed limit and curve signs on Walker Lake Road and Pear Road
 - Changed the Yield sign on Birch at Walker Lake Road to a Stop sign
 - Replaced two vandalized Stop signs at Maple and Walker Lake Roads.

Dam (Ed Zimmermann) (See https://www.walkerlake.com/_files/ugd/d70f9d_164d5968e16647fe918a1382b3fb625c.pdf for full report)

- Responsibility for the dam was split-off from the Lake Committee in 2020, enabling a more focused approach by managing these two assets independently.
- We were, at the time, non-compliant with PA Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) Division of Dam Safety regulations but became fully compliant by year-end 2021.
- In July 2020, an underwater inspection of the outlet works of the dam determined that inlet, sluice gate and tower are in satisfactory condition, but the outlet pipe is seriously corroded and needs major repair. The inspection and engineering reports totaled \$13,000 and have been paid.
- A new state requirement necessitates a hydrologic study and structural engineer report on the spillway to determine if our spillway meets current minimum standards.
- Our engineering firm, Kiley Associates, has done the initial survey of the dam area, and a completed report is tentatively scheduled to be submitted in early April at a cost of \$9,000.
- Once this report is reviewed by the state, we will then be able to determine what repairs are needed and work on a time frame. WLLA has a Lake Reserve fund that can be tapped for such expenses, according to Carol Gillen.
- If, or when, a lake drawdown is required, the community will be notified in advance so individuals can plan for any maintenance activities on their lakefront properties.



Beach & Grounds (Bill Boehme) (See https://www.walkerlake.com/_files/ugd/d70f9d_a413851eb3404cb39ae277ff95c0a352.pdf for full report)

Beaches

¹ Permanent patch projects repair larger areas than potholes but cover a significantly smaller area than resurfacing. They have eliminated numerous potholes.

- Major cleanup of West Shore Beach area.
- Per Pike County Health and Safety Guidelines, swimming safety lines, markers, lifesaving gear and portable toilets were installed. Water testing continues to be performed weekly to ensure it is safe for swimming.
- Sand was deposited and spread several times over the years.
- Spring/fall cleanup, lawn cutting and garbage removal continue throughout the summer.
- Gravel was put down for car turnaround and the boat access ramp.

Clubhouse Beach

- At Clubhouse Beach:
 - Part of the retaining wall was repaired and landscaping improvements were carried out to help with beach water drainage problems.
 - Picnic tables were purchased and installed.
 - Cattails were cut down to expand the shoreline area.

Clubhouse Area

- Expanded the drainage ditch along Lake Shore Road and installed culvert across Mohawk so water would no longer cross the road and damage beach property.
- Cleaned clubhouse drainage ditches along Walker Lake Road and tennis courts.
- A vacuum truck was hired to clean out Clubhouse culverts and the sediment filter container by the beach.
- General maintenance was performed on the Clubhouse in part as a result of the aforementioned Building Inspection carried out in connection with the Reserve Study.
- Repaired and resurfaced the tennis court.
- Raised salt shed flooring with asphalt so water would drain away from the shed; this summer, salt shed cover will be replaced.



Dam & South Beach Boat Yards

- Cleaned out old, damaged and unregistered boats.
- Installed new boat racks.

Social (Maryann Muschlitz)

Activities were, of necessity, severely curtailed over the last two-plus years, but here's a list of what we did do in recent years – and what we'd love to do again, as circumstances permit:

- Sip & Paint 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020
- Wine & Cheese 2020, 2021
- Christmas Tree Lighting; Caroling 2018
- Christmas Light Contest 2019, 2020, 2021
- Kids Halloween Party 2021, 2020
- Picnic 2019, 2020
- Fishing Contest 2018, 2019, 2020
- Duck Races 2018
- Hike in the Woods 2018
- Ping Pong 2020, 2021



Reflections



“We’re lucky to live in a community that’s as well-organized and well-informed as this one,” Mario Aieta said recently. “It’s an amazing group of people who participate in community activities, who serve on committees and on the Board. There’s a lot of talent—and that’s a great sign. These people are really thoughtful and work very hard. The community is very, very lucky to have them.”

Back in 2018, Directors pleaded with Association members to “step back and view what is being done currently, as compared to just months ago,” and to support and cooperate with the Board “as we venture into a new era of transparency, honesty, trust and accountability.”

Association members seem generally to have provided that support. But we were blessed with good leadership as well. As Mario said, “We owe an enormous debt to Janice Hahn and Ron Lisciandrello and the others who stepped up at the time and worked tirelessly.”

Referring to the abject loss of trust that characterized much of her time as the Association’s first president after Art died and Fran resigned, Janice said, “It is my hope that our community never experiences the loss of trust ever again. It goes without saying that the greatest defense against another such incident is active participation by WLLA members.”

In a March 2018 newsletter editorial, we said, “It may not have been a bad thing that we—all of us—were rudely awakened...provided that we seize this moment to restore our sense of community and our responsibility for it and one for another.” “This moment” remains what it was then: it is now. — Bob Fisher

Volunteering in our community:

Well, here we are getting closer to the end of winter. There is snow on the ground and it has been bitterly cold. We need to activate our community to its peak level of volunteering as spring approaches. Volunteering is important to our community; it provides assistance to our non-profit organization. Without volunteers our community cannot operate at its highest level. Our budgets would require an increase in funds to pay for hiring personnel to handle the work load. Presently we need volunteers to fill the following positions:

Treasurer, Secretary, and 4 board of director positions. We also need volunteers to help in the following areas:

1. Spring clean-up of Walker Lake common areas
2. Tennis court set-up
3. Clubhouse flowers and clean-up at the clubhouse
4. Set-up of beach and grounds items, swim rafts, beach rope and beach safety equipment
5. Membership, nominations, and elections
6. Programs
7. Road committee

The treasurer’s position requires a candidate who has good accounting skills. This person will be responsible for all Quick Books-related reporting, and should be part of the financial committee.

The secretary records all items at the board meetings, and submits these minutes for approval before the next board meeting.

Board members meet monthly and attend selected committees meetings.

Our community needs volunteers! You are very important to the success of Walker Lake. Please call or e-mail the office and someone will call you to discuss where you can help. Thanks, John Weber

Cleaning person needed:

We are looking for a cleaning person for the office and clubhouse every other week and prior to WLLA events or special occasions at the clubhouse. This would also require the cleaning person to put all trash in the outside garbage cans. The person would need to come in and clean sometime during our office hours of Wednesday or Saturday from 9am to 2pm. Please email the office if you would like to discuss the job in more detail.

Boat owners, check your boats:

Several boats have been blown off the racks at the boatyard due to the winter storms. Please check to ensure your boat hasn't blown over or off a rack and also make sure you tie your boats down to racks. To ensure the safety of your boat, a lock is suggested.

WLLA Board of Director Elections - 2022

Walker Lakeshores Landowners Association (WLLA) will hold an election at its Annual General Membership Meeting on Saturday, July 16, 2022, at 9am, in compliance with its Red Book Rules and Regulations. This year, the election will be to fill six (6) At-Large Director positions and two (2) Officer positions, those two being: Treasurer (2-year term), and Secretary (2-year term).

A nominee MUST be in good standing; be prepared to attend a minimum of nine (9) Board of Director Meetings during the year; serve on at least one (1) committee. Most importantly, all Directors and Officers have a fiduciary responsibility to act in the best interests of the WLLA community.

Any member of the WLLA community in good standing is eligible to submit a Consideration for Nomination Letter to include a short biography describing life experience, acquired skills and what can be offered for the betterment of the community. This information will assist voters in determining their best choices for the available positions. The letters and biographies can be e-mailed, dropped off or mailed to the WLLA office no later than Wednesday, May 25, 2022. Each submitted biography will be posted in the clubhouse and on the WLLA website and included in the June newsletter along with the slate of candidates. Nominations from the floor from members in good standing will be heard at the May 21, 2022, General Membership Meeting. If in attendance, the nominees from the floor should verbally confirm acceptance of the nomination. It would be helpful, as well as beneficial to all nominees, for those individuals to come prepared to speak briefly about themselves. If someone is nominated by another member, but unable to attend the meeting, she/he needs to confirm their interest in running by sending a Consideration for Nomination Letter to the WLLA office no later than the May 25, 2022, deadline. If that nominee would like a short biography to be posted on the website, bulletin board, and newsletter, she/he should include it with their letter.

The Nomination Committee encourages all members of WLLA in good standing to consider running for a Board of Director position so we can give the membership a choice of candidates and provide a wider range of people who are both involved and represented. The WLLA community is very fortunate to have a selection of diverse members with many talents and skills. These folks can greatly contribute to the important decisions currently being made by becoming directors. As important, they will affect our future as we move forward in making our community what we want and need it to be.

2022 WLLA Election Timeline

- Friday, April 1 – Letters of Consideration for Nomination accepted from any WLLA member in good standing.
- Saturday, May 21, 2022 (General Membership Meeting) – Nominating Committee presents candidates who submitted Letters of Consideration for Nomination. Nominations from the floor are heard and recorded.
- Wednesday, May 25, 2022 – Deadline for submitting hand-delivered and/or postmarked Letters of Consideration for Nomination and biographies.

- Wednesday, June 1, 2022 – Absentee ballots will be available in the WLLA office Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. You may request an absentee ballot, by coming to the office, or by email or letter sent to the office. The ballot will be sent to your address in our quick books database. Please note, if you request an absentee ballot, you will not be allowed to vote in person prior to the annual meeting. Voting is limited to one member in good standing per property owned. The slate of candidates will be posted on the website, bulletin board and in the June Newsletter with the submitted biographies.
- Saturday, July 9, 2022 – Deadline for sealed absentee ballots to be postmarked or received at the WLLA office by 2 p.m.
- Saturday, July 16, 2022 (Annual/General Membership Meeting/Election Day) – Polls open at the Clubhouse from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. for voting. Annual/General Membership Meeting at 9 a.m. followed by the July Board of Directors Meeting with announcements of election winners.

Meet K & K!

Bob Fisher started a nice thing several Newsletters ago by doing a short feature in each issue on various members of the WLLA community. As your new Newsletter editor I plan to continue that. This month we look at a couple of vibrant folks who have been here for some time and love the community very much: Keith LaPan and Kim Boriin. Keith is an actor, director and producer who has also worked as a manager on and off Broadway. Recent projects include acting in independent film and writing. Kim has had careers as a dancer/choreographer, a chef/consultant who opened multiple restaurants in New York City, and most recently an International Event Producer. The two split their time between New York City and Walker Lake. They were first introduced to Shohola by a friend who had a house in Shohola Township and quickly realized that Pike County was the most rural spot within two hours of NYC. After a few visits, enjoying the woodsy countryside and the waters of the area, they bought a small home where they spend weekends and free time. It has been 17 years and now they spend more time here. Favorite activities include hiking, kayaking and swimming in the lake, gardening in the rich Shohola-gold soil (“ha, rock dust!”), and landscaping (“especially adding native trees and plants”). Year-round walks are a shared pleasure and you can often see them out for a stroll on our community’s roads. The Cornelia & Florence Bridge Preserve at Twin Lakes Road and Route 6 is also a favorite walk. They are avid cooks who enjoy meeting new people, and often host locals and those who have come here from other places. They both agree that “it has been an unexpected pleasure to meet so many creative, artistic folks living in the community and nearby towns.”

Here are some links related to the area that they’d like to share:

[Delaware Watershed Project](#): Little Walker Lake, Walker Lake, Walker Lake Creek, Twin Lakes Creek, Delaware River, Atlantic Ocean

Local History – [Shohola Glen Falls](#), [Parkers Glen](#), [Milford \(Grey Towers & Silent Film History\)](#)

Volunteering: [Tamerlaine Sanctuary & Preserve](#), [Black Bear Film Festival](#)

Sip and Paint, Saturday, April 9, 2022 7pm



Paint. Sip. Repeat. Come on out and join us in this community favorite event. We'll supply the artist, canvas, and snacks. You supply the sipping's. \$20 for Members, \$25 for Non-Members. BYOB & Reservations required. RVSP early, this one fills up fast. To RSVP please email or call the office (wllassociation@gmail.com or 570-296-7788). You must pay in advance to ensure your seat is held. You can't attend if you have a past due balance on your account. FYI, the Sip and Paint on March 19th was cancelled.

Days of yore:

A very nice gentleman, Bruno Wendt, sent in some old photos from the 1970s. The old WLLA firehouse was located at 142 Iroquios. The old building was falling down has been torn down for many years. It's interesting to see how the clubhouse beach, and across the lake from it, has changed.





ONE COUNTY DISPATCH FEB. 1, 1979



Going, going . . .

Firemen from Walker Lake, Shohola, Milford and Westfall were called out early Wednesday morning, Jan. 24, for a structure fire on Woodtown Road [off Twin Lakes Road]. The owner of the structure, Gil Rosencrance, called the telephone operator to report the fire and the operator called Milford. Rosencrance told the dispatcher that the roof was on fire. When firemen arrived the building was engulfed in flames. Water was used from booster pumps and then the boosters were filled at a brook about a mile away. Trucks from all the fire departments were involved in hauling water but the building could not be saved. Rain helped to quench the fire but added ice to the road. Some of the firemen had to be used to sand portions of the road. The highway department was called a number of times in an effort to have the road sanded but no truck arrived. When the fire was out a wrecker was called to help get one fire truck up the icy hill. John Topel of Milford loaded his pick up truck with sand and sanded the hill by hand. The Shohola truck had to return to its fire house by going out to Rt. 6. A fire in a wood stove was blamed for the fire.

As Spring has sprung and snows have melted I (your newsletter editor) would like to share a tip that can help keep our neighborhood looking spiffy. As I take my daily walks I often carry a couple of trash bags, and gloves, and pick up roadside trash. It's great exercise and keeps our roadside areas free of papers, bottles, cans and other trash. And also helps keep me in shape! Something to consider.

Davis R.
Chant
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Walker Lakeshores Landowners Association Officers

President: John Weber

Vice President: Carol Reynolds

Treasurer: Carol Gillen

Secretary: Janice DiMaio

Office Hours: Wednesday & Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Office Administrator: Kathy Zimmermann

www.walkerlake.com
wllassociation@gmail.com
570-296-7788