

The Venetia Voice

Fall Newsletter, Volume 2008-3

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UPDATE ON VENETIA'S MONETARY CRISIS:

The situation is slightly better, thanks to the rigorous collection efforts being made by our Board members, our manager and a few volunteers who have been actively reaching out to unit owners and communicating the need to pay up and bring to date all monies owed to our Association. These efforts have contributed to an **abrupt turnaround** of the old practice of allowing months and sometimes years of non-payment of assessments or maintenance.

The lack of active, regular collection efforts in the past, over many years actually, has exacerbated the present financial crisis, and probably even caused it.

The new "zero tolerance" for chronic non-payers has already produced some good results, and is expected to continue to push "deadbeats" to pay up or to get out. Their units can then be sold to new, paying owners. Gradually, many unit owners who felt that there were few or no consequences for non-payment and that their debts were not "real", are coming to understand that NOW, if an owner does not pay, there will be immediate consequences: penalties, interest, attorney's fees, and/or even lien and foreclosure procedures will be facing them.

There are no exceptions, and no further delays of legal action for those with a poor payment history. This may seem harsh, and "hard line" to some, but the important thing to realize is that **we are all paying for those who do not pay**. If these folks do not pay, the rest of us will have to continue to make up the deficit.

Unless we can collect on these arrearages now, or force these delinquent unit owners into foreclosure so their units can eventually be sold to paying *new* owners, we will have to have yet another special assessment, and another after that, all to be paid by the 71% of unit owners who have *already* paid to cover the budget short fall created by the non-paying owners. THIS IS UNFAIR AND UNACCEPTABLE, as is the pattern of many years of letting unit owners who do not pay "slide."

There *are* however some acceptable accommodations in the collection plan for special individual needs and problems, and the rules for this are the same for everyone:

The Association presently grants a "one year, deferral only, payment plan" option to unit owners with financial constraints, who wish to arrest the lien and foreclosure process temporarily, until they can arrange to meet their

obligation in full. This option exists only for those who are "paid up" on their monthly maintenance fees to date.

****Please note that in this case, the debt itself is merely suspended during the year's "grace" period.** Interest continues to accrue during the time the Association agrees to wait for full payment of the obligation. If payments on this plan are late, or missed entirely, the opportunity to participate will be withdrawn and the unit file will be sent to the attorney. This is a deferral plan not an actual payment plan, and the obligation remains unmet, and outstanding during the grace period.

All persons on this deferral plan are reminded that the entire remaining obligation will become due in full, upon demand, in one year's time.

If you have been unable to pay in full, make plans now to pay in full when your grace period expires, or expect the lien and foreclosure process to continue.

What other steps has the Board taken to improve this situation?

To help our building go from "upside down" to "right side up again" financially...

- We added the obligation of 18% interest on unpaid balances and are passing the obligations for attorney's fees back to the delinquent unit owners.
- In an effort to recoup the monies owed the Association, we have created a program with the realtors at Bertrand Realty to offer foreclosed units to new, credit worthy, owners at fair market prices. We clean, paint and prep units that are at least temporarily "Venetia owned." This improves the likelihood of a quick, "short" sale and a return for the Association. Three of these units are currently being offered for sale. Call the Management office for more information about them if you are interested in them for purchase.
- We are requiring that owners in foreclosure assign their rents to the Association during the process.
- We are legally pursuing the banks that are taking ownership of foreclosed units, and then not paying maintenance assessments on the units.
- We will now be reporting bad debts to credit agencies.
- We now have the "payment by credit card option" available to the entire Association. This enables those in arrears to end the pain, and use a card with a lower interest payment than the 18% per annum now charged by the Association to clear their slate.
- Even with the many financial challenges we have faced this year, we managed to pay down \$653,000 on one of the old loans, from a

balance of \$837,000 down to only \$184,000 balance remaining now. If left unpaid, this debt would have added another \$60 to each unit's monthly maintenance payment.

We have continued to make HUGE improvements in maintenance, cleaning, painting, and the overall physical appearance of our building, using little to no operating money. This is primarily the result of the focused attention of Board President Sharon Dodge and building manager Fabie Verona, the efforts of a motivated cleaning and maintenance staff, and to the commitment of a few volunteer owners and renters. Attention to the many small, but important, things that can still be done without spending much money or none at all, to care for our Venetia and to move it forward, even in lean times, **will continue.**

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OTHER NEWS...

Financial Advisory Board member Candace Vasillion has assumed the role of Chairperson of the Finance Committee and will continue providing her oversight to the Board on all financial concerns, as she leads the Committee.

The Board of Directors and all the members of the Association welcome Dr. Jack Wolfsdorf as an Advisory Board Member appointed in July, when he accepted the request of the Board to join them in directing the Venetia Association.

A Town Meeting was held on Wednesday, September 24, 2008 to introduce the **Management Review Committee** headed by Board VP Loretta Alkalay to answer questions and get feedback on what direction the Association should take to assure the highest and best management we can have.

An active, interested volunteer, renter Lonny Paul (who often provides his technology skills behind the scenes for the Board and Management) presented a professional quality Power Point RFP created with the Committee, to be shared with management companies under consideration. The committee talked about their intended process and upcoming interviews, and listened to unit owners' opinions and concerns. A nice turnout for the one and half hour meeting included a small group of interested unit owners, the Board of Directors, including Jack Wolfsdorf who is also on the Committee, and the other committee members Joe Moniz and Stacey Stokes.

Thanks to this committee for their efforts, which have included evaluating the present management services, determining what we need for the future, and conducting exploratory discussions with Continental and other management companies, in two days of "back to back" interviews.

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NEW 2ND FLOOR TENANTS BRING INCOME FOR VENETIA AND NEW VITALITY TO THE MEZZANINE. Several commercial units, including the Venetia-owned commercial corner unit (that we have used in the past for our meetings) have been leased to **Miami International University** for at least the next nine months, and possibly even longer. This will be bringing in a top rental rate for the space and will be adding \$24,000+ per year in new income to the Venetia Association.

Special thanks to unit owner Marcia Cohen-Zakai who is rumored to have first suggested the lease to MIU personnel, and to manager Fabie Verona and Board member Dr. Jay Hess, who both helped further the relationship over many weeks of discussion and negotiation. We are very excited about having **MIU** there, and expect to welcome students and teachers in about two weeks to the offices and classrooms that are being prepared for them now.

The "Girrlz of Sandwich," the new coffee, sandwich, and salad shop on the Mezzanine is STILL expected to open shortly – We will be post announcements for opening day.

WE HAVE A NEW LIBRARY! Many thanks to unit owner Suzanne Bernstein for reminding us that we used to have a library at Venetia and for donating a lot of the first generation of books for our brand new library space. Sharon Dodge asked Dr. Jay Hess for permission to again use the Mezzanine corner that he made available in past years for use as a Venetia library/ shelf space. He was happy to return it to resident use.

It's a "Take one, Donate one (or more)" or "Just return one", honor system only, a source for books and magazines, and even videos, and is a place for Venetia residents to browse, or pass on the books they want to share with others. Please visit the attractive corner spot, drop off a book or two, or find something new to read yourself.

By the way, the beautiful prints on the walls of the new Library Corner are the gift of **Gisella Ortiz, our new Admin in the Venetia Management Office.** Although working here as our admin presently, Gisella is also a CAM trained management professional, and is very capable. We are lucky to have her, we realize, and her cheerful, helpful manner and strong skills are making a big difference in the office. Stop by the management office and introduce yourself, if you have not met her yet.

Dr. Jay Hess also generously offered to donate the entire cost of the beautiful new leather sofas and tables near the Library Corner, to create a comfortable Mezzanine seating area for book browsing, or just sitting with a coffee from our new coffee shop, if you like. Thank you, Jay!

We are also pleased to welcome our new **Chief Engineer Ariel Fernandez** who joins us from the hotel industry, where he spent 16 years as an engineer. Don't be fooled by his boyish looks, as he is a highly qualified and experienced building engineer. He stepped full stride into our building's complex daily demands, and has been doing an excellent job.

EARLY MORNING "STREET FEEDINGS" OF THE HOMELESS FINALLY ENDS. Many thanks to the Community Resource police officers of our precinct who heard our complaints at the Town meeting they attended in early summer, and to unit owner Lori Durham, who together with Fabie Verona, coordinated and contributed to the letter writing efforts to get Trinity Episcopal Church to cease the "three-mornings-a-week hand-outs" that drew and kept the chronically homeless (and many have recognized, often the "chronically criminal") at our doorstep. These visitors covered our sidewalks with trash, and even human excrement. The church did not ever before seem to consider the problems their program caused for us, their neighbors, nor the relatively little lasting assistance their program brought to the population they served by passing hot meals and surplus food through their gates. The Miami Herald also renewed their commitment to keep their grounds across the street free from litter after receiving a letter about the problem from manager Fabie Verona. We still have a ways to go, but so far, the area has not looked so good in years!

A new Water Aerobics Work-Out group will be meeting every Saturday at the pool deck 12:30 PM for Venetia Residents and their guests.

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PROJECT UPDATES:

SPRUCING UP: Lots of painting and cleaning, and small, low cost repairs are going on daily, almost continuously now. The decrepit service elevator cab received a "new" rubber floor, re-using the material from the old Gym floor, and a low cost Formica wall re-surface. Ace Elevator donated new Elevator pads for the cab as a gift of appreciation to the Venetia. Thanks to Todd Schwartz of Ace for caring about helping us to "take care of what we have got".

PARKING AND GARAGE: The garage was recently pressure washed by our staff for the first time in anyone's recollection. All parking entrances from the garage have received a fresh coat of paint, including the doors and surrounding areas. The plan is for all the parking garage walls to be 100% repainted by the end of the year. Parking rules are being followed in the garage and car drive area for the most part these days, as a matter of course. Thanks to everyone who has complied with requests that we return to some order in our community life.

GYM. The gym mat flooring was replaced and damaged upholstery on the fitness equipment was also finally replaced, as planned, using recently collected assessment funds earmarked for that purpose.

POOL. The pool lights are turned off while maintenance attempts to locate a small leak in the light niche of the small pool and correct it. The pool heaters were turned on October 1st. Water temperature will be kept lower than in the past year to provide some savings.

SECURITY: The Kent Security staff has continued doing a good job for us. They have been working closely with Board, Management and the Security Committee to reduce our exposure to risk. **Residents who walk their dogs at night are welcome to call the front desk and ask for the rover to accompany them.**

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MANAGEMENT MESSAGE By Fabie Verona: Just a friendly reminder to all unit owners that you may now schedule your payments on line — it's easy to use, and it's FREE! **DIRECT DEBIT** - To enroll, simply visit either www.thecontinentalgroupinc.com, or your community web site: www.continentalconnect.com/venetiacondominium and select "Pay Your Association Fees". All you need in order to register is your 14-digit homeowner account number located on your payment coupon (0018-0000-0+unit#_01) and the 'Last Name of Official Owner'. Payments are recorded to an owner's account within two (2) business days of receipt; Instant access over the internet; email confirmation of each payment.

PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD: VISA/MASTERCARD/DISCOVER/AMERICAN EXPRESS: Through Pay Lease, you will now be able to pay your association fees via credit card. You can make a one-time payment, schedule recurring payments, or pay for arrears due by visiting www.thecontinentalgroupinc.com and selecting pay with credit card.

www.continentalconnect.com/venetiacondominium

This website is a great tool to always have your account information accessible to you. All you need is your email address and a 4-digit pin number as your password. Contact the management office and provide them with a 4-digit code to be placed on your account. From the Venetia web-site you can access information and tools for your community such as: Account balance and history; update your phone number and contact information; forms and documents; financial reports, etc.

ASSOCIATION CONTRACTS. As we prepare to start another fiscal year, management has procured almost all new service contracts and vendors/suppliers at substantial savings over previous years.

EXPRESS YOUR POINT OF VIEW

***** My Turn Seeks Submissions.** *My turn is a short, occasional, column in the Venetia Voice, written and submitted by a Venetia renter or owner with a unique viewpoint, which is then selected for inclusion by the editors because it might be of interest to all. Please submit articles by email to sharondodge49@gmail.com or by print at the Venetia Management Office.*

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LECTORES HISPANOS – Se necesita ayuda con la traducción al español de "La voz de Venecia." Favor de contactar la oficina lo más pronto posible.