

The Grapevine Newsletter

I heard it through the Grapevine...

Notes from the May 15, 2023 Annual Shareholder's Meeting of Berkowners, Inc.

Walter Chadwick, President, called the meeting to order at 6:40.

Quorum was not met yet so the sign in was kept open.

We waved the reading of the minutes of last year's ASM due as the time it would take away from all the business we need to discuss tonight.

Walter introduced our panel:

- Attorneys Tara Snow and Seth Sahr of Novitt, Sahr and Snow
- Joe Doren, our managing agent of Metro Management and Development Inc.
- Our architect Douglas J. Lister
- Our accountant, Richard B. Montanye of Marin and Montanye

And the Board:

- Wanda Chin Treasurer
- Peggy Russell Vice President
- Cecilia Durbin Communications chair
- Elizabeth Hollander Garden liaison
- Ed Leahy Secretary
- Zach Rosenblatt. Vice President

Richard Montanye, of Marin & Montanye our accounting firm, gave a presentation of our 2022 financial report. He said costs have escalated for all Coops so our maintenance increase was necessary. He stated our reserves were strong, and we are on budget.

Wanda Chin gave the Treasurer's report:

Changing Management Companies

The Board interviewed four management companies during June 2022, all of whom had been referred by our attorney, Seth Sahr. After 14 years with Wavecrest

Management, the Board approved a change to the corporation's management company to Metro Management Development, which was effective October 1, 2022.

Treasury Units

Since December 2022, the corporation has sold three Treasury units, to raise funds for capital improvements.

- Dec 12, 2022: B61, 77th Street, \$785,000, net proceeds of \$727,054
- Feb 1, 2023: B23, 77th Street, \$445,000, net \$413,078
- Mar 29, 2023: A41, 77th Street, \$700,000, net \$647,106

There remain two vacant Treasury units:

- A53, 35th Avenue (1 BR) which has been listed for one year, and we expect to proceed to rent this unit given the weak sales market;
- A14, 35th Avenue (1 BR), needs renovation.

All net proceeds totalling \$1,787,238 have been invested in our reserve funds.

We retain 11 rental units, all but one are rent-regulated.

Reserve Funds

In December 2022, the corporation established a brokerage account with Raymond James Financial Services, a referral from our accountant. We have established an investment policy for capital preservation, investing in bank issued CDs with a maximum of \$250,000, the FDIC insurance limit, and in US Treasuries. Over time, we have consolidated excess reserve funds in this account. Fees range from 0.05 to 0.5%, dependent on amount and tenor.

The market value of the account as of April 28, 2023, was \$5,276,646, with investments comprising cash of \$232,049, 12 CDs of \$2.9 million, and six US Treasury notes and bills of \$2 million. Our average yield has been 4% and higher. Our investments to date have generally been 3 to 9 month maturities.

We maintain minimal liquidity at two other banks—Chase and HAB Bank, totalling \$385 thousand as of April 30, 2023.

At approximately 6:55 it was announced that we achieved quorum.

Walter Chadwick gave the Capital Improvements report.

The first topic I would like to discuss is **Local law 97** which passed into law in 2019. Buildings in NYC are the largest producers of greenhouse gasses. The goal of this law is to make NYC carbon neutral by 2050. Starting in 2024, the city will measure energy consumption as a proxy for emissions and begin fines in 2025. In 2030, emissions standards become more strict and the fines steeper. Our most recent LL87 filing shows 77th St and 78th St. are A's and 35th Ave is a C rating. Our manager Joe Doren brought the board proposals from several Engineering firms. We chose to hire Lawless and Mangione. They did an energy efficiency report and gave us ways we could further cut energy consumption and ultimately save money in addition.

Our upcoming windows replacement project will be a big step in lowering our fuel usage.

The engineer's additional recommendations for reducing our energy consumption are changing all our common space lighting to LED, putting thermostatic valves on the radiators, installing solar panels on our buildings and replacing our oil heaters with electric heat pumps.

We are already underway with **the lighting conversion**. We have hired the company LEDNext. They will be changing all our lighting in the basements, lobbies and hallways to LED. The cost of this would have been 74k but there is a Con Edison incentive of 30k bringing the cost down to 44k. Additionally, ConEd is currently working with a lender allowing us to pay this out over 2 years at 0% interest. So the payments will be about \$1860 a month but the electrical savings are \$2100 a month. The annual electric savings is projected at over 25k per year for our 3 buildings. This comes with the added bonus of new, better looking overhead lights and sconces in our hallways. The lobby and basement fixtures will look the same after the conversion.

Next to discuss is **Local Law 11**. LL11 covers facade inspection and repair of buildings taller than 6 stories to protect from possible falling debris. The city requires inspection and filing on a 5 year cycle. The current cycle is number 9 and was due in February of this year. Joe brought the Board proposals from several engineering companies, and we hired Zaskorski & Associates Architects. The first step was reviewing cycle 8. It was discovered that our 78th street building was not filed for cycle 8. The 77th and 35th Avenue buildings had fines for various late filings. The accumulated fines came to \$80k. It is not clear why Wavecrest management let this go but is yet another example of why we are grateful to have moved on. On advice from Metro Management and our lawyers was that our first priority was having the current filings done on time and paying

the outstanding fines. The 78th Street report was filed and the fine for that building was paid. The 77th Street filing was just accepted. The 35th Avenue building is expected to be approved shortly. All 3 buildings are designated as safe with repairs and maintenance needed over the next 4 years.

Now that this is accomplished, we have started talking to Tara and Seth about legal options in regards to the fines.

Next up are our **laundry rooms**. I, like you, I'm sure, am not pleased with the current state of our laundry rooms. We have been working with the engineering firm E4P to develop plans for redesigned and upgraded laundry rooms. Former board member and architect Pia Prevost, Board member Cecilia Durbin, an architectural lighting designer, and I have been meeting with them and refining the designs which are now done. The project is now ready to go out to laundry room vendors and contractors for bids.

Cost Saving Measures: Since our move over to Metro Management I have been able to look at our expenditures and try to clean up small things in order to save the co-op money wherever possible.

- I saw Wavecrest was using the phone company Granite for the 6 elevator lines, the Boardroom and the Community Room Internet. With the invaluable help of Joe's administrative assistant, Renee Colon, we canceled the board room phone and moved the elevator accounts to Verizon which will be a good savings.
- We also noticed that the bills for all the entire staff having cell phones was expensive and unnecessary. We have since returned all 7 of the phones and canceled the service. Renee Colon then set up a new account with Sprint with phones just for Carlos and Milton. To ensure that our staff can communicate as needed, we bought walkie-talkies for all 7 staff. This shift saves \$315 a month now, and the walkie-talkies pay for themselves in a year.
- I also saw we were paying about 1k a month for our carpet cleaning service. I discussed this with Carlos, and he said if we buy a machine the staff would do the carpet cleaning themselves. The machine cost \$3,250, and we will save 12k a year, meaning this machine pays for itself in less than 4 months and only saves us money going forward.

Exterior Improvements: In March of this year one of our Shareholders Daniel Lui reached out to the Board to say that our **exterior landscaping beds** were in need of help and asked what could be done. I reached out to the Berkeley community and now we have a committee of Daniel joined by Max Meadows, Katie Donovan-Goonan and Deanne Marbach. I found for them the landscape

architects plans from the last time major work was done and they are appraising the beds. We look forward to working on this project.

I am happy to report **the entrance restorations of the 3 buildings** are almost complete. We knew this was overdue and decided that we could fit this project into the budget if we used Beautification fund money. The cost of repairing and painting the 77th St. marquee, the 35th Ave. columns and the ornate 77th St. woodwork was \$16,850. We think they look beautiful again.

Doug Lister, the architect who is overseeing our windows replace project, gave a talk on the permit process. He explained that the New York Landmarks Commission has required many drawings of details and that we are close to getting a permit for 35th Avenue. He said then we will go before a hearing for the 77th and 78th Street buildings for their final approval.

Peggy Russell gave an admissions report and an update on the planned children's room.

Admissions Report

Total sales:

- Nine (9) apartments were sold from June, 2022 through March, 2023
- 5 apartments in 78th Street, 4 apartments in 77th Street
There were twelve (12) shares during the same period in 2021 - 22

Total price per share:

- The average price per share for the current period is \$1274
During the same period in 2021-22, the average price per share was \$1243

Summary

Although sales dropped by three, share values have increased by \$31 per share. Currently, it has been more difficult to sell one bedroom apartments in the area which is affecting similar co-ops in Jackson Heights.

Children's Room Report

For years, I have advocated for the creation of a children's room as an amenity at the Berkeley. It has been a joy and exciting to have Cecilia join in the effort as co-chair of the Children's Room Committee. Her expertise and determination has been invaluable in moving forward.

A huge thank-you to the Committee that has been so integral to this process: Tanja Dejeen, Prithi Kanakamedala, Matt Lee, Costanza Musumeci, and Jessica Rothenberg. This project could not have been possible without their efforts.

After considering various basement locations and evaluating the cost of renovation, the committee presented a proposal to the board for including the development of a children's room in the reconstruction of the room previously used as a board room, office and storage area. The board approved the proposal in July of 2022. Since then, we have hired and approved plans by the architect Julie Nyman. A professional inspection indicated there are neither lead nor asbestos issues in the room requiring abatement. Cecilia is working with the architect to determine appropriate lighting for both the children's room and the board room.

Costanza, an amazing visual artist, has designed a mural for one of the walls of the children's room. We were hoping to complete the construction of both the children's room and the board room over the summer, so Costanza can implement her mural in September. We hope to have the Children's Room up and functioning before it gets cold again to provide our neighbors some respite from the stomping elephants and the tumbling of blocks above their heads in colder weather, but this will get pushed back for city administrative reasons.

If there are any painters in the Berkeley community interested in volunteering to help Costanza with painting, please reach out to me or Cecilia. If you have any toys, books, or puzzles you would like to donate to the room, we will notify you when and how we will be accepting donations at that time.

As we get closer to the opening of the room, the committee will circulate a complete set of rules for the space, information about fees for the startup and upkeep and a waiver that all parents will be required to sign if they plan to use the space.

Cecilia Durbin gave the communications report.

We have had an active year with some exciting things accomplished and more in the works for the communications committee.

- Shortly after I joined the board, it became necessary to find a new volunteer editor for **the Grapevine**. A huge thank you to Belinda Conway for her great work on the Grapevine since August 2022. I could not do it without her. We stand on the shoulders of Fred Fishell, Julie Nguyen, and Rob Oppgard who worked on the Grapevine before us.
- I have been working to make sure the **Grapevine features** news and information about the co-op that residents can use. This means not only the notes from Board meeting minutes, but information on upcoming physical work being done at the Berkeley, disposal and recycling at the co-op, how our heating system works, pest extermination and anything else I can think of. If there's something you think we should include in the Grapevine, or better yet, something you'd like to write about for the Grapevine, please reach out and let me know!

- Also on our Grapevine team is Judy Whiting, who has been writing her wonderful **Artist Spotlights**. If you have an artist neighbor or are an artist neighbor (our definition is broad) who we should spotlight in the Grapevine, please reach out to me or to Judy directly. We would love to celebrate you in our community.
- On March 29, 2023, the board hosted an **E-Bikes Listening Session** to hear from E-Bike owners about their experience and knowledge of E-Bike ownership along with a resident who's also a New York Fire Fighter and the head of our Safety Committee. I can say I learned a lot about e-bikes at this session and I'm grateful for everyone's time who attended. I look forward to any proposal that e-bike owners submit to the Board as we look at the relationship between our early 20th century buildings in a 21st century world.
- Thanks to Walter Chadwick, we now have **clear announcement holders** by the elevators on the 1st floor and the basement by every elevator as another way to share information with residents as they enter the building, in almost every way you can enter. Hopefully, you all saw the Annual Shareholder meeting announcements!
- As Communications chair, I have also been working on improving **our website** with the patient assistance of Matt Lee. A huge thank you to him for all his great work keeping documents on the website updated as best we can.
- Speaking of updating the website, 2 residents who have website building experience have volunteered to **overhaul our website**. In February of this year, the Board approved their proposed site map and overall look for the new website. The goals of this upgrade are to make our website look better and be more user friendly both for residents and those looking into buying at the Berkeley. In the long term, we are hoping to create a password protected area of the website for residents which can hold information that we do not want available to the internet at large. If you'd be interested in helping make our website better, we'll be looking for people to write any text that needs to appear on the website and for people to test it out and offer feedback once it's built and before it goes live, to make the transition as smooth as possible.
- As we build the new website, I would also love to **offer our website text in Spanish**, so if you would be willing and able to translate our website text to Spanish, please let me know!
- Another way to present The Berkeley as best we can is through the visuals. I am looking for a photographer or **photographers to take pictures highlighting our lovely home** to put on the website. If you have photography experience either as a hobby or professionally and would be willing to volunteer your skills to showcase our home, please reach out to me! Now that our front facades are redone, and the leaves are green, let's get some great new photos of the fronts of our buildings!
- Is there someone out there interested in being **the Berkeley Historian**? Another thing I'd love to put on our website is more about the history of our home. If this sounds like fun to you, please reach out!

- Lastly for my communications report, on my to do list this year, is updating and consolidating **the Welcome Packet** we share with new residents. If anyone would like to volunteer to help me accomplish this, I would be most grateful. Ideally, I'm looking for at least 1 person who has lived in the building fewer than 5 years and at least one person who's lived in the co-op for well over 5 years. I have 2 older Welcome Packets to work from.

Elizabeth Hollander gave the garden report.

Elizabeth thanked the garden committee for all their work. She updated us on the tumbler composting. Liz let everyone know that the garden rules have been updated and are on the website. Liz reminded all that we are on the Jackson Heights garden tour on June 10th.

Walter let everyone know that William Walter was now a board member. Walter thanked Zach Rosenblatt for his time on the board. He thanked Joe Doren, Tara Snow, Seth Sahr and all the committee members.

Walter then called the meeting to a close at 9:15pm.

Notes from the Board Meeting following the Annual Shareholders Meeting on 5/15/2023

Directors attending: Walter Chadwick, Wanda Chin, Cecilia Durbin, Liz Hollander, Ed Leahy, Peggy Russell, and William Walter.

1. Meeting called to order in the Community Room by Walter Chadwick at 9:45 pm
2. The following officers were elected:
 1. Walter Chadwick, President
 2. Peggy Russell, Vice President
 3. Cecilia Durbin, Vice President
 4. Wanda Chin, Treasurer
 5. Ed Leahy, Secretary
3. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 pm

July Children's Circle

The July Children's Circle is scheduled for

Saturday, July 15

at 11 AM

in the central garden weather permitting. (We will move inside in case of rain.)

Join your Berkeley friends for stories, music making, crafts and snacks.

All Berkeley families are invited.

COMPOSTING REMINDER

As you may know there have been several questions raised about the City's composting program especially as it pertains to what constitutes a biodegradable bag. The information below is reprinted from the September 2022 edition of the Grapevine.

All food waste **MUST** be bagged either in a brown paper bag or a [BPI \(Biodegradable Products Institute\)](#) approved compostable bag. No plastic bags. Please NEVER leave a plastic bag with scraps on top of the compost bin or put food waste in the tall paper bags meant for yard waste. We do not want to attract pests.

Here are a couple links for where to find approved bags:

<https://naturbag.com/>

<https://www.goingzerowaste.com/blog/7-of-the-best-compostable-trash-bags/>

The bags are not required by the city. The Berkeley is asking you to use them as an extra precaution to prevent odors and pests.

Here is [a link to the city's website](#) about composting.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dsny/site/services/food-scraps-and-yard-waste-page/queens-composting>

The City accepts all BPI approved products. If you're not sure, [check here!](#)

<https://products.bpiworld.org/>

BERKELEY ARTIST PROFILE

Most Berkeley residents know Ed Leahy as Secretary of our Board of Directors, but not everyone knows that he is also a published author. Ed, who moved to the 35th Avenue building with his wife, Cindy, in 2017, has written three police procedural/detective novels and one historical detective novel, all published by Black Rose Publishing. *Enemies of All*, the first in the Dan Brady series, which joins *Past Grief*, *Deceived by Ornament* and *Proving a Villain* (the Kim Brady series), has just been published.

Espresso 77 is hosting Ed for a book signing event Monday evening, June 26th, at 7:00.

Ed invites you to come!

A tax accountant by trade (he worked for the IRS as an International Issues Specialist, among other positions) and almost-lifelong Queens resident, Ed has been a dedicated writer since the age of 11, when he first encountered a manual Remington typewriter his father bought as a present for his mother. Since that time the blank page (or now, blank screen) has fascinated and inspired Ed. While he incubated ideas for stories and novels for years, he did not have the time to dedicate himself to serious writing until he retired in 2015. Even after retiring, his board service at both the Berkeley and at AHRC NYC has at times limited his time for writing.

But Ed now writes for about three hours most mornings, and has two novels in the works. While it's enjoyable, writing is not a simple process. He has found support through the mentorship program run by Mystery Writers of America, in online writers' groups and at Writers' Digest conferences and the International Thriller Writers, where he meets other writers and attends sessions on various topics, including thriller-writing techniques. While he doesn't advocate for a rigid system for developing plot, characters and structure, Ed finds an outline system helps him immensely. He also relies on trusted readers for feedback. Cindy is his "alpha reader": she provides initial thoughts and suggestions on his first drafts, which he incorporates into a second draft he then sends to two trusted "beta readers" (one of whom he has known since kindergarten). After including their comments and suggestions, he will send Black Rose Writing a synopsis and sample chapter. The publisher has accepted each work he has sent them. Ed was connected to Black Rose Writing through an online "pitch fest."

Ed has always been an avid reader, and among other things has read almost everything James Michener has written. He is inspired by real-life events and history; in fact, his first finished piece was a historical novel about Cuba. He hopes to refine that novel in the future, but is currently completing a fourth novel in his Detective Kim Brady series and a second novel in his Dan Brady series (Dan is Kim's grandfather). Inspiration for these books came in part from his stepfather, who was a police sergeant in Nassau County, and stories he brought home about his work. Ed's suggestions for those of us interested in writing but finding it difficult to take first steps: read as much as you can in as many genres as you can. You will find inspiration! And learn as much about the craft as you can, through online and in-person courses and books. He particularly recommends *Story Trumps Structure* by Stephen James and *Foundation of Plot* by Elena Taylor.

Ed and Cindy love living in the Berkeley, and enjoying all that Jackson Heights has to offer. When not writing, Ed enjoys spending time with his grown children, one of whom lives in the neighborhood, and traveling with Cindy.

SCHEDULED BOARD MEETINGS

The next Board Meeting is scheduled for **July 11th, 2023**. The remaining Board meetings of 2023 are August 8th, September 12th, October 10th, November 14th and December 12th. If you have a topic you would like to discuss with the board, please email them at berkboard@gmail.com.

Contributors to this newsletter were Walter Chadwick, Cecilia Durbin, Judy Whiting, and Peggy Russell. If you'd like to contribute content to the Berkeley Grapevine, please email bconwayb34@gmail.com.

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