## President's Message

As you may know, there are two major infrastructure projects underway at AKW. I know they are not apparent yet as both are in their planning stages. Beginning in this edition of *Knolls News* we'll include the latest updates. Currently there's not much to tell but later in February, in March, and especially once the weather breaks, we'll have much more news for you. We'll be including impacts to you—and both of these projects will impact your comings and goings on The Knoll.

Also in this edition is an Off the Knoll piece about the upcoming I-395 traffic-pattern changes, as well as new restaurants and attractions coming to Old Town this spring. Thanks to the editors of *Knolls News* for another great edition. See you at the February Board Meeting on the 25th!

## **Board Meeting Highlights**

#### Reported Financials

	<u>December</u>	<u>November</u>
Total Cash and Investment	\$1,657,520	\$1,761,561
Year-to-Date Income	\$1,995,289	\$1,833,434
Year-to-Date Expenses	\$1,909,815	\$1,745,980
Year-to-Date Net Income	\$85,474	\$87,454
Delinquencies \$	\$51,145	\$56,721
Delinquencies %	2.68%	2.97%
YTD Reserve Expenditures	\$180,368	\$168,593



#### Board actions follow:

- Approved an HVAC Inspection Policy. Details regarding the new policy will soon be provided to the community.
- \$3,303.92 to Densel to replace a roof exhaust fan.
- \$5,900 for a 3-year renewal (2019-2021) to Daly, Hamad & Associates for audit services.
- The Board deemed a \$75,000 proposal to install a supplemental drainage system in the boiler room to be cost prohibitive and will abandon this approach.







## **Under Construction at AKW**

As our planned 2020 projects get underway, here is where we'll provide progress reports and related news.

Check each month for the latest. Of course, time-sensitive issues, if they arise, will be communicated via Office notices.

## Major Project Update: C/D Garage

The Board passed the contract for engineering services to oversee this project in December. The contract has been with Association's legal counsel for review. He continues negotiations with the selected vendor and hopes to have it returned to AKW for signature the first week in February.

Project Background: The C/D garage is in need of major, structural repair. This includes concrete, rebar, and tension repair and, in some cases, concrete replacement. The project is estimated by our Reserve Study firm to cost nearly a half million dollars. Because of the cost, size, and scope of this project, the Association is hiring an engineering firm to oversee the bidding process and the work.

## Major Project Update: Roof Installation

At the end of December the Association issued a Request for Proposal for oversight of the installation of the roof scheduled to be installed beginning in April. Bids are due mid-February with the expectation that the Board will make a selection at February's meeting.

Project Background: The roof needs to be replaced. The roof is being replaced at the cost of the previous installing vendor and through our warranty of the existing roof. In order to protect the Association's interests and to ensure that the coming installation is completed correctly and to code and in alignment with best industry practices, the Association will select an engineering firm to oversee the work. The engineering firm will report out regularly to the Association.

## We encourage your participation at Board meetings!

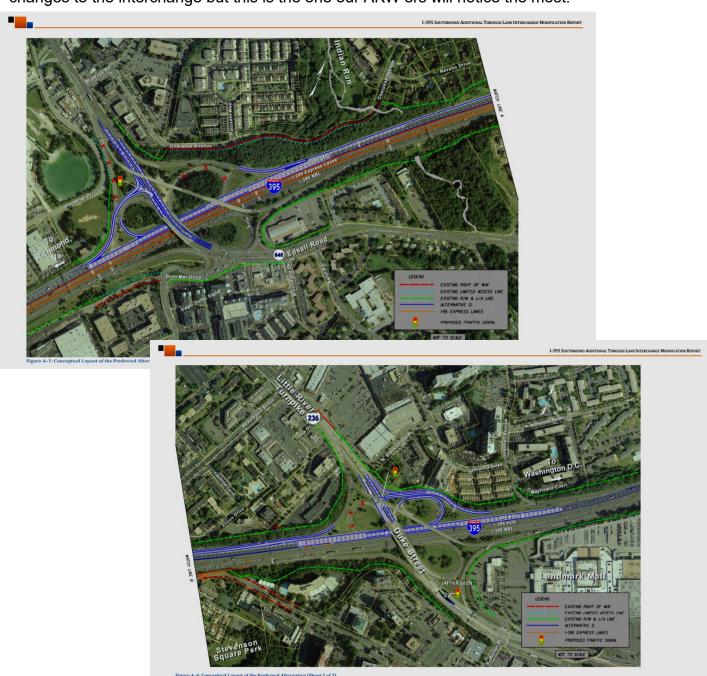
Our Community has always encouraged Volunteering by any and all of our Residents. One of the easiest ways is to come to a Board meeting and participate by asking questions and by bringing up comments and concerns during the Open Forum for Residents. Come on down *(next one is Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> at 7pm)*, and take part in our very own democratic process of running the building! It takes a *lot* more than just the seven directors. Your expertise can add a lot to our discussions. *Please join us!* 

MARK YOUR CALENDARS				
March 3	Presidential primary			
June 9	Virginia State primary			
November 3	General Election			

## Off the Knoll: A New 395 Dance

If you've driven on either Edsall Road or Duke Street past 395 lately you certainly have seen a lot of activity. In the near future, the traffic patterns at both intersections will introduce a new design. Here at *Knolls News* we're not highway experts but we noticed something was afoot and we've done some research to share with you.

<u>Duke Street</u>: If you're headed south on I-395 and heading home to AKW via Duke Street east, you'll no longer get off at the cloverleaf, tightly-wrapped exit ramp. Instead, all traffic for Duke and Little River Turnpike will exit where now the Little River Turnpike West exit is. At the top of the exit ramp will be a traffic light where you'll turn left onto Duke. There are other, more-minor changes to the interchange but this is the one our AKW'ers will notice the most.



Source: Virginia DOT Projects: 395 Southbound Additional Through Lane Interchange, Fig. 4.2 & 4.4

## Off the Knoll: A New 395 Dance (cont'd)

These are big changes to the traffic pattern and they'll take some time to get used to, so take it easy, be aware of adjacent vehicles and give a little extra space around you. There is good news though: you know the lane drop there at Duke on I-395 Southbound? The one where there's almost always a wreck? It's going away and we'll get a fourth lane Southbound through all the way past Edsall. This particular bottleneck will be gone!

**Edsall Road**: If you're headed from Edsall onto that short piece of 395 before it becomes 95 or you head onto the Beltway, the right exit that wraps you back around to the freeway will be closed. Thereafter you'll need to turn LEFT from Edsall Road onto the ramp that will take you to 395/95/495. Again, other changes will occur at this interchange but this is the one that'll get the attention of we AKW'ers.

## We want your feedback!!

Do you like to see general interest stories in *Knolls News* that are Off the Knoll? Or would you prefer that we limit our newsletter to items more specifically related to AKW? Share your thoughts and ideas via email to knollsnews@akwcondo.com. We want to bring you the most meaningful content.

## More To Do in Alexandria!

## Rated #3 in Condé Nast Traveler 2019 Reader's Choice Guide for Best Small Cities



Think you've seen it all in Alexandria? Well, check out these new (and coming) to-dos in our City!

- Expanded African American History Experiences New art installations and tours from Manumission Tour Company.
- Expanded Waterfront activities, including Barca Pier, part of a seasonal outdoor eatery inspired by Barcelona's beach bars, and the tall ship Providence will make Old Town its home with tours, river cruises and specialty theme cruises.
- Mount Purrnon Cat Café + Wine Bar Just what it sounds like! Sip a glass of vino and interact with the friendly cats (most are available for adoption.
- New restaurants Aslin Beer Co, Lost Boy Cider and Spice Kraft Indian Bistro in Del Ray to name a few.
- Lots of new sweet spots, too Goodies Frozen Custard & Treats, unique gelato flavors at Ya-Gút St., and Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams. And we cannot forget the cupcakes at Smallcakes NOVA in Del Ray.

See these and more at Must Try New Things to do In Alexandria. Enjoy!



#### **DID YOU KNOW.....?** Homeowner Insurance

From articles in previous issues of *Knolls News*, you know about leaks from a toilet and possible deterioration of the wax ring. The main point is "If a leak originates in your unit, any resulting damages to other units – and the building – are fully and completely your responsibility." Our Master Deed provides that the Council will maintain insurance on the building (Handbook pg 46), BUT, "Owners of individual units shall obtain

additional insurance (HO-6)" that will cover repairs and renovations from water leaks or fires or other calamities. The Board can also ask for proof that you have this insurance, and would include Renter's Insurance (usually less than \$200 per year!) for those Units leased by an Owner. And Absentee Owners need to carry their own insurance for things not covered by a Renter. If you don't have this required insurance, any kind of damage assessment can bankrupt you and could certainly lead to losing your home!

# Shh... Quiet, please!

We are fortunate to live in a community where unit-to-unit sounds are relatively minimum. That said, we should be mindful that music, conversations, and the sounds of children playing **do travel through the doors** – from your unit into the hall and from the hall into adjacent units. AKW's governing documents and Handbook (p. 27) address this issue and the expectation of quiet enjoyment of our units:

- Occupants shall exercise extreme care about making noises and in the use of musical instruments, radios, televisions and amplifier that may disturb other occupants.
- Residents are responsible for their own conduct as well as the conduct of their children and all guests and for any damages resulting from misuse or abuse, whether accidental or intentional.
- Roughhousing, running, jumping, shouting and throwing balls or other objects are prohibited in common areas including the lobby, billiard room community room and hallways.

The oversight of children is the responsibility of parent(s) or guardian(s). Children are not permitted to play in the lobby and corridors or use the elevator buttons as an arcade game. Your cooperation is appreciated.

## It's been so long, perhaps you've forgotten

For as long as we've been a community, the rule has been that no hazardous materials (especially paint) can be stored in the individual units in our Storage area. With the comings-and-goings of folks moving in and out, many units have stored cans of paint left over from a change in wall color.



The Board reaffirmed that paint (or other hazardous materials) cannot be permitted, and are asking that Residents get rid of those cans. As we've noted before, they cannot be dumped in the trash room, but must be taken to the Hazardous Collection site for the City of Alexandria on Colvin Street (headed toward Old Town). *One can in one space* may not seem dangerous, but consider if all 190 cages each had one can .... Thank you for your compliance!

## Tax time is around the corner!

(For informational purposes; no AKW endorsement inferred or implied.)

For those wishing to use the service from AARP (and I've seen people-younger-than-50 there!), please check out the possibilities from the AARP Foundation Tax Aide site for FREE preparation! There are 37 offices within 20 miles of AKW! One site in Annandale is at the Mason Governmental Center (703-658-0216). Because I went there the first time, I go to the Sherwood Regional Library (Sherwood Hall Lane, 22309; 571-882-9374). Preparers are all retired agents and are recertified by the IRS every year, so they know the score! All office are opened at about the first of February, Monday thru Saturday 10:15 to 2:00 pm, plus M-F from 5 to 8 pm. Use the AARP Foundation to get info on what documents they'll need. Call to check times. No appointment needed. (Take your Kindle so you'll have something to read while you're waiting.)

Per an informative January 17 article by Michelle Singletary in the *Washington Post*, other FREE organizations you can research:

- "United Way" nonprofit offers MyFreeTaxes.com in partnership with H&R Block; state and federal; no income limit.
- Tax Counseling for the Elderly is offered to low- and moderate-income taxpayers, specializing in addressing retirement and pension-related issues. For both of these, call 800-906-9887.
- MilTax: DOD through Military OneSource offers free e-filing software specific to military life (reporting deployment and combat pay, for example). Contact Military OneSource at 800-342-9647.
- IRS Free File is a partnership between the agency and Free File Alliance for those whose adjusted gross income is \$69,000 or less. For each of these organizations, check to make sure you can also file state returns along with federal. Double-check any to make certain there really is no charge!

## Amazon and FedEx users: another scam possibility!

An article in the January 23, *Washington Post* is another wakeup call, but was not prominently displayed. We want you to be aware and on the lookout for getting a text setting up delivery preferences for a package, specifically from FedEx, complete with a tracking code, asking you to set up the preference. "The link takes users to a phony Amazon listing and prompts them to complete a customer satisfaction survey to claim a 'reward'." Users are then told they must "cover shipping and handling costs," asking your address and [of course] credit card information. "The real scam resides in the fine print. By agreeing to pay the small shipping fee, you're also signing up for a 14-day trial to the company that sells the scammy products. After the trial period you will be billed \$98.95 every month and sent a new supply of whatever items you claimed as a reward." If you get one of these, you can report it by forwarding to FedEx Scam Tracking. The easiest way to avoid the problem is, of course, to not click on the link. The hardest part will be for those frequent Amazon and FedEx users to really pay attention to such messages!

#### HOME REHABILITATION LOAN PROGRAM

From the Alexandria Office of Housing, the "HRLP" helps owners make repairs or improvements which are required for the health or safety of the owners, or which are needed to preserve and extend the life of the property. A loan can be used to make home repairs and replacements.

Income limits are \$68,000 for one person; \$77,680 for two. The program provides both financial and technical assistance to eligible homeowners in the City of Alexandria. Maximum construction loan amount (for a condo) is \$75,000, with no interest, no monthly payments, and due when the property is sold/transferred.

To find out the "rules" for qualifying, call the HRLP office at 703-746-4990, Mon-Fri, 8 am to 5 pm. The Program Implementation Division of the Office of Housing is at 421 King Street, Suite 215. Their web site is alexandriava.gov/Housing. If you need it, take advantage!

\* \* \* \* \*

And you may already have heard about this one: ALWAYS write out "2020" when you're writing checks BUT ESPECIALLY when signing ANY kind of legal document! Apparently there are fraudsters out there who can alter what you thought you agreed to, by adding any number (like 22 or 25, etc.) to the initial "20" and therefore making your life miserable when you find out you are obligated to pay someone ... for instance ... or a check can be made 'stale' e.g., by inserting a much earlier year, like '18') and your [credit card company] won't honor your payment, thus adding interest and fees! *Please be aware!* 

\* \* \* \* \*

And for "seniors" of all ages, Virginia's General Assembly has on its agenda a "state tax credit for family caregiving" that would cover such things as adult diapers, home modifications, respite care, home health care aides, and transportation to medical appointments. As reported in the AARP "Bulletin," the proposal is for 50% of the cost of such expenses, up to \$1,000 per year. This would be for those with incomes under \$75,000 (\$150,000 for couples), and would not be for those who don't owe state income taxes. On average, caregivers spend about \$7,000 per year in out-of-pocket expenses. The "Family Caregiver Income Tax Credit" is to be introduced by Del. Luke Torian (D-Woodbridge). The legislature is also looking at prescription drug price reform, as well as budgeting for staffing the state's long-term-care ombudsman who helps advocate for residents of facilities such as nursing homes. Think about this for yourself and friends/neighbors/colleagues who may well benefit from this possible legislation. Aging affects all of us in one way or another, and sooner than any of us wants!!!





## **RECYCLING ALL WE CAN!**

By the numbers. Most plastic containers have a number stamped inside a recycling triangle. This indicates the class of plastic and lets you know how it should be recycled. Most municipalities will recycle #1 (soda bottles and peanut butter jars), and #2 milk jugs and shampoo bottles. Go to earth911 for the complete info on how to recycle each kind of plastic.

The most popular tips are shown here:

- ⇒ **Aluminum cans**. Leave the tabs on aluminum cans and don't crush them; intact cans are easier to sort.
- ⇒ **Plastic bottles.** Remove the caps from plastic bottles and jugs.
- ⇒ Plastic bags and wraps. Most grocery bags, plastic mailers, shrink wrap, plastic bags and plastic wrap can be bundled together and dropped off in supermarket grocery bag collection bins.
- ⇒ **Newspaper, books, magazine, catalogs, envelopes**. Donate books to Goodwill or see if the library would like them. If not, remove the covers and spines with a utility knife before discarding.
- ⇒ **Cardboard**. Boxes with food stains (like greasy pizza residue) or water damage are not recyclable. Cut away the stained sections, but feel free to leave tape. (Flatten the boxes before you take to the Trash Room.)
- ⇒ **Paper.** Rather than shredding, which makes paper less recyclable. Cover sensitive information with a black marker or special ink stamps that obscure private details.
- ⇒ Glass: On January 15, Alexandria halted curbside recycling of glass jars and bottles, citing breakage, recycling contamination, increasing recycling costs and lack of regional glass-sorting facilities. Either dispose of glass with regular trash, or be an stellar recycler by taking glass items to the purple receptacle bin at the end of S. Whiting Street near Key Towers, one of five locations in Alexandria The purple drop-off bins accept only glass bottles and jars of all colors. Items should be **emptied and rinsed**, and metal lids and caps can be kept on. Glass should not be placed in plastic bags and should not contain food or liquids. Items **not accepted** include *lamps*, *bulbs*, *glass ceramics*, *porcelain*, *mirrors*, *windows*, *Pyrex and glass sheets*.
- ⇒ Clothing. We all are familiar with Goodwill, Salvation Army and the curb-side collection boxes seen in our urban landscape. There are also some retailers that offer a discount on new purchases or a cash refund if you recycle their or similar products (Levi's and Patagonia take back all of their jeans products; Madewell offers to recycle all denim jeans plus a \$20 coupon.)

We also tend to think about donations as only items worthy of wear by another. Not true, a Refinery 29 article reminds us. All fabrics are "textiles" and virtually all textiles can be recycled into something else.

<u>Community recycling</u>. We are fortunate to live in a community where we can take advantage of "single stream" recycling. We simply have to identify items acceptable for recycling and place them in the proper bin in the trash room. In fact, it's preferable if your discards are not in a plastic bag, which can jam the processing machinery.

If you can't get enough about recycling (power cords, coffee pods, razors, water filters, etc.,) go to TerraCycle to learn about their successes.



### Buyers or Sellers, everyone should be aware of this

This scam showed up a couple of years ago, but apparently it's still one that can trip up even the most savvy consumer. This will show up at a time when a Buyer or Seller is just anxious to get to the settlement table and may not pay quite enough attention to the details in emails referring to closing costs and what should be brought to the table. For all of us owning at AKW, we've been lucky enough to have slid by without being

fleeced of a load of money. We're here, we're tucked into our homes, and feel safe. But what if you want to sell? Do you want to buy an investment property? Thinking of refinancing?

Attorney Harvey Jacobs exposed this scam in a January 6, *Washington Post* article, saying "consumers must now be aware of an increasingly insidious form of email-based real estate fraud," that involves the FBI in investigations, estimating that 11,300 consumers lost \$150 million to these crimes! It involved fake emails that (obviously) look real, talking about "settlement date" or "wire instructions" or "cashier's check." These emails almost always use words like "urgent" (there's a problem with your settlement), so "please click on this link" --- (and of course that leads to the scammers and possibly infecting your computer with a virus). What the scammer is trying to do is *redirect your to-be-wired funds* to his account, rather than to the account of the title company where the settlement is to take place. Result? Get to the settlement table and no funds are available to complete the transaction!

"To avoid being victimized, carefully examine the sender's email address as being legitimate. If in doubt, do not reply! Call your Realtor or Attorney to confirm any wire transfer instructions, using known phone numbers or accessing the title company's web site." . . . "DO NOT CALL the number in a suspicious email. Minimize the number of people who get copied on settlement related transactions," and make it "need to know." An interesting extra tidbit: "Start a new email thread each time you email anyone involved in the transaction, especially when communicating about the financial part of the transaction."

The American Land Title Association (ALTA) has consumer resources at StopWireFraud.org. Immediately call your bank and ask them to issue a recall notice for your wire (plus report to the FBI and the police department). If done within 24 hours, some recovery is possible.

Your Realtor (and possibly your mortgage representative) probably told you about this rotten possibility, but keep this story in the back of your mind, for when it might be what saves you at settlement!



This security message applies to AKW as well as elsewhere! If you see someone attempting to gain access to the building without authorization, or trying to "tag onto" your entry into the building, notify the Office (or Security) immediately. If neither is available and you have reason for concern, consider calling the police.

We want to keep our building safe and secure! Often we don't recognize new folks or others not seen regularly. **ASK** if they live here eir key fob out!!) and then ask them to use the vestibule phone for entry

(they should have their key fob out!!) and then ask them to use the vestibule phone for entry. (Yes, we know that's hard to do.)

Barbara Ríghter, Bill Munson Mary McClelland, Fay Menacker

## **Our Two Cents**

Every now and then, the AKW Library Committee adds its two cents to the *Knolls News*, to let you know we're still here. Thanks to you, the readers, the library stays in pretty good order. However, things do come up to challenge us. We are bibliophiles, but there's not an MLS degree among us, so we sometimes have to turn to Google, Alexa or a real living, breathing librarian to resolve a question. Here are a few things we have learned (or had confirmed) recently:

**Shelving.** Fiction is shelved alphabetically by author. As you would read a page in English, left to right and top to bottom, so each bookcase is filled left to right and top to bottom. For example, begin fiction books with author [last name] Alcott at the top left and go shelf by shelf until the bookcase is filled. Then go to the next bookcase to the right, top shelf, left [example Cussler], filling the entire bookcase. Continue through the alphabet. The rule is to fill each bookcase before going to the next (just like pages of text). Do not shelve straight across from Bookcase #1's top shelf to Bookcase #2's top shelf. Nonfiction is generally sorted by topic. The same shelving rule applies, only by topic instead of by author.

<u>Letter-by-letter vs. Word-by-word</u>. The American Library Association recognizes both types of alphabetization, for bibliographic records vs. catalog entries. In the case of author names, it gets a bit sticky in the "M" section, with M', Mc and Mac. We apply letter-by-letter usage, meaning names are filed alphabetically as spelled. "M" authors would be ordered as follows:

MacDonald, David

MacDonegan, Steven

Macomber, Debbie

McDonald, Ronald

McDonegan, Cecelia

(Word-by-word order would put Macomber last.)

<u>Alexander McCall Smith</u>. Although he does not prefer to hyphenate his last two names, he refers to himself as "McCall Smith", which seems to be his last name. (His nickname is "Sandy".) This has given us fits, so we thought we'd mention it. The AKW Library has several of his novels and they are quite good. But you will find him in the "M" section (<u>after Macomber</u>).

Despite all that, we'd still prefer you leave the books and let us do the shelving. Finally, the, AKW Library Committee motto: "Always make things more complicated than they need to be." Thanks so much. Keep reading!



If haven't been to Happy Hour in a while, or you're 'new' and haven't ventured downstairs to the Bar and Community Room areas on Thursday evenings at 6:30 pm, *come on down!* Monthly dues are \$15, which covers beverages and snacks. Last Thursday of the month is Pizza Night and a \$5 fee to cover the meal. You can also BYOB and snacks or simply attend and not imbibe. This is just another way you can get to know your neighbors and discover what a fabulous Community AKW really is!!! *Please join us, soon!* 

## **Year-End Financial Results**

The chart below shows that we finished the year with excess cash of \$85,474. I think this indicates we did a good job of conserving costs in a number of places, and focused our spending on critical items. Once again this year, we have effectively used the dues income stream to fund our ongoing needs.

## 2019 Income Statement Summary

	2019 Budget		2019 Actual
Assessment Income	\$ 1,906,660	\$	1,907,559
Other Income	\$ 69,400	\$	87,730
<b>Total Operating Income</b>	\$ 1,976,060	\$	1,995,289
Administrative	\$ 28,250	\$	39,660
Communications	\$ 7,000	\$	4,734
Payroll & Benefits	\$ 342,000	\$	306,109
Insurance	\$ 100,000	\$	49,041
Utilities	\$ 350,000	\$	312,720
Landscaping	\$ 30,500	\$	17,968
Operations	\$ 4,750	\$	4,915
Contracted Services	\$ 250,600	\$	226,631
Repair & Maintenance	\$ 228,100	\$	347,485
Professional Services	\$ 138,860	\$	163,575
Taxes	\$ 8,000	\$	7,247
Other Expenses	\$ 488,000	\$	429,999
Total Expenses	\$ 1,976,060	\$	1,909,815
Net Income		\$	85,474
Total Cash and Investments		\$	1,657,520
2010 Barrers Francisco		_	400.250
2019 Reserve Expenditures		\$	180,368

That said, 2020 will bring some significant projects into focus: the roof replacement and restoration of the C/D garage, in addition to ongoing maintenance and the always unanticipated costs. To keep you informed, *Knolls News* will provide monthly updates on those projects. In the meantime, reach out to <a href="mailto:sharon@akwcondo.com">sharon@akwcondo.com</a> with any questions.

## 2020 Board Meeting Dates

February 25 March 24
April 28 May 19
June 23 July 28
August 25 September 22
October 27 November 17
December 15

#### **IMPORTANT DATES IN FEBRUARY**

Knolls Knitters
 Second Sunday of the month, 2 PM

Board Meeting Tue, 2/25

♦ Happy Hour Club Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 PM in the Bar Area

Unless indicated otherwise, meetings begin at 7:00 PM in the Community Room

The "Board Book" (containing what's on the agenda) is available in the Office for Residents' perusal on the Friday before the Board meeting.



#### **NEED A NOTARY?**

Sharon Grant is a Virginia Notary and offers services to AKW residents by appointment at no charge. Email sharon@akwcondo.com

#### **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS**

Guard Mobile	571-565-5591
AKW Office Email: office@akwcondo.com	703-751-7541
AKW Fax	703-751-2136
A-1 Towing	703-971-2600
CMC Emergency	301-446-2635
Police non-emergency	703-746-4444
Police emergency	911

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