

November 6, 2023

Tolomato Owners Org. – Special Interest Group Elections Newsletter

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Clinging to the Covenants

The long-awaited list of candidates announced by the TIPOA Board has arrived (the Tolomato Owners announced candidates Anderson, Bagwell, Bigham, Brenton, and Rowe and made them available for questions, nearly a month ago). We are pleased that the recent candidates offered a bit more information and some sense of their credentials.

We were disappointed, that there is no self-reflection, no mention of things that could have been done better, or unfinished business, or problems ahead and their solutions, nor real aspirations for the future of Tolomato. While the resumes are positive, they ignore the present circumstances.

The candidates share a notion that the Covenants guide their every move. The Covenants and governing documents are not holy. Tolomato Island should be governed by sensible leadership that always acts in the best interests of the residents and owners. Nowhere in the covenants, nor in any on-line lecture is there:

- Support for disparaging people you don't like, or Committee Volunteers, or fellow Board members so they resign.
- Support that the Board can ignore one person, never mind dozens of people who ask for information or want to be heard.
- Support for excluding fellow elected Board members from important discussions, and votes.
- Support for hiding votes and omitting important discussion from the minutes.
- Support for threatening to deny a candidate an audience.
- Nor is their support for prohibiting little things, like helping to advertise community wide events, such as an End of Summer Barbeque or hayride on Halloween.

This probably sounds harsh, but the list goes on. The Covenants in the latest candidates' context are really a rock to hide behind, to thwart something or somebody they want to control. Tolomato Island needs a fresh thinking Board of Directors.

Vote For, Not Against

Smart political types, say that the American people are largely optimistic, compassionate, and forward thinking. They would rather vote for something than vote against something. We agree. We think that is also true here on Tolomato Island.

We would rather talk about the issues that are important going forward, for example:

Transparency & Communications – There are no secrets on Tolomato Island, it is too small a place. Major decisions should involve the owners, not exclude them. TIPOA leadership should not be insular, controlling, or abusive but open to real dialog, and new ideas. **The candidate who champions communications and transparency is Lynn Brenton.**

Volunteerism is the life blood of Tolomato Island, but volunteer leadership has been idled or driven away. Tolomato Island volunteers, whether part of a committee or part of a single event represent a very skilled talent pool. The Committee structure needs to be revitalized, energized, and given not only the responsibility to do things, but the authority to complete them within their budgets. We all live better with capable and enabled Committees. **The champion for rebuilding the Committee structure is George Bigham.**

Non-residents are not represented at all by this Board of Directors or ARB. They take non-residents' money, offer them nothing in return, not even some assurance they can build the home of their dreams when they decide to move here. If non-residents change their minds and wish to sell, they may be looking at a short return on their investments, as once again Tolomato Island seems to be a place where no builder will venture. That can and must change. **Steve Anderson is the champion of non-residents, who will listen, and bring forward actionable items.**

Young families are welcome on Tolomato Island. This is not an old folk's home, yet some think of life here as a land of retirees, and work to deny opportunities for young families. Young families need to be part of our Tolomato Island community. Some of us of a certain age, have young families that visit. They need to feel welcome too. This is home, all our homes. **The champion of young families is Heather Rowe, a mother, an engineer, a former HOA treasurer who sees all sides of opportunities.**

There is no long-range planning on Tolomato. Board actions revolve around when pine straw should be replaced, while critical infrastructure, drainage, shoreline erosion, even coordination of water resources goes untouched. The often referenced "Master Plan" appears to be a 20-year-old marketing brochure. The future success of Tolomato Island as a community is dependent upon recognizing what needs attention today, and in the future and making appropriate fiscal and practical plans. **The champion of infrastructure and planning requires someone with common sense, like candidate John Bagwell.**

There is a need for elimination of Board or ARB voting as the sole means of governance. We are small, we have an abundance of talent, and there are no real time constraints. Therefore, there is no reason why consensus cannot be reached by leadership. The days of party-line votes should be over. That action is divisive, potentially self-serving and the approach is not acceptable.

Our candidates, Steve Anderson, John Bagwell, George Bigham, Lynn Brenton, and Heather Rowe have pledged to work collaboratively and respectfully, to reach consensus in the best interests of ALL Tolomato owners.

We encourage everyone to ask our candidates questions. They will respond. Use this link and click on the Candidate's Blog Title. You will be directed to their exclusive blog where you can ask questions or comment.

<https://tolomatoowners.org/index.php/island-news/board-candidates>

Big Money SIG

In a rail apparently against Tolomato Owners, a career candidate Jeff Long, places blame for the "poisonous and toxic environment" on a raucous minority (you) and that Tolomato Island fiscal performance is under attack by the "SIG big spenders". We love it! Lots of people are reading the Newsletters and visiting the Web site. We haven't spent a dime, but we like the rant so much we may adopt the big money logo **\$\$\$ SIG**.

We're not dense. We understand that Mr. Long is trying to blame us for a budget item for an audit. Mr. Long who retired last year from the Board during a very raucous campaign, months before the Tolomato Owners Org and SIG were formed, is again missing the point. Tolomato Island HAS NEVER had an audit. Tolomato Owners didn't ask for last year to be audited, we asked for an operational audit and thorough financial audit which may go back several years.

This year, the TIPOA has 1) a Treasurer, Judy Flatt, 2) an Asst. Treasurer, Julia Vaughn, and 3) an independent CPA, and they cannot produce timely financial statements, that can be followed by the owners. The TIPOA President, its officers and Ms. Vaughn have argued against an audit. NO credentialed financial expert would ever suggest there is no need for an audit. Foot dragging while under pressure, the Board has pushed the audit to the next board. NO future Board should take office without a planned audit.

Further, since there have been no complete financial statements available since June 2023, why would we the Tolomato Owners accept the veracity of the need for an assessment hike. There is no mention of a hike in the October 17 minutes, as they haven't been published. The Tolomato Owners Org. published the unofficial minutes on its web site. That is the only mention of an assessment hike and there was no real discussion at that meeting. There is no transparency, no debate, no discussion. Just a statement, perhaps a political one, that we need a rate hike while **we are sitting on \$400,000 in cash.**

Importantly, why would an incoming Board or we the owners accept a budget that is apparently based on speculation, not cold hard financial reporting.

Directed Proxies: Really Participate in this Election.

We are pleased there is a spot on the election packet proxy for owners to designate who their agent (also called a proxy) must vote for. We are NOT happy that the President (who is also a candidate) is collecting proxies and is the default (blank) proxy agent. Without a statement indicating specifically who the President will vote for, it creates the perception of a direct conflict of interest, and an opportunity to fix the election.

We prefer owners specifically "direct" their agent by indicating which candidates they are specifically voting for and not leave any "blanks" in the proxy form. This is preferred for two reasons: 1) An informed owner will be casting their votes and will be a real participant in the process; and 2) when the majority directs their votes, the candidates know they represent the people not some ambiguous group that got them elected.

We hope you vote for the candidates we have endorsed; however, we of course respect your right to vote for whomever you please. Two trusted people have volunteered to accept proxies and will vote as you direct, or for the endorsed candidates (Anderson, Bagwell, Bigham, Brenton, Rowe) if you do not specify your 5 candidates of choice. Please appoint Doug or Ginny and send them your completed proxy.

Doug Burger, 1185 Old Cane Mill Drive SE., Darien, GA 31305

dougburger@icloud.com

Text: (575) 637-9588

Or

Ginny Luizer, 1123 Mission Drive, SE Darien, GA 31305

jimandginny@scentarticles.com

Text: (912) 324-0147

Note: an easy way to send your proxy would be to take a clear picture of your completed proxy form and text the picture to one of the above volunteers.

Doug and Ginny will confirm they have received your proxy(s), ensure it is complete, copy it, and will deliver it to the Secretary. It would be helpful if you are mailing the proxy to let us know via email you are sending the proxy, so it will not be lost. If you are uncertain whether you will be attending the December 2nd Annual Meeting, send Doug or Ginny your proxy anyway. If you attend the meeting your proxy will automatically be revoked.

It is worth mentioning, the packet proxy adds confusing and overly legalistic language. What you should know is:

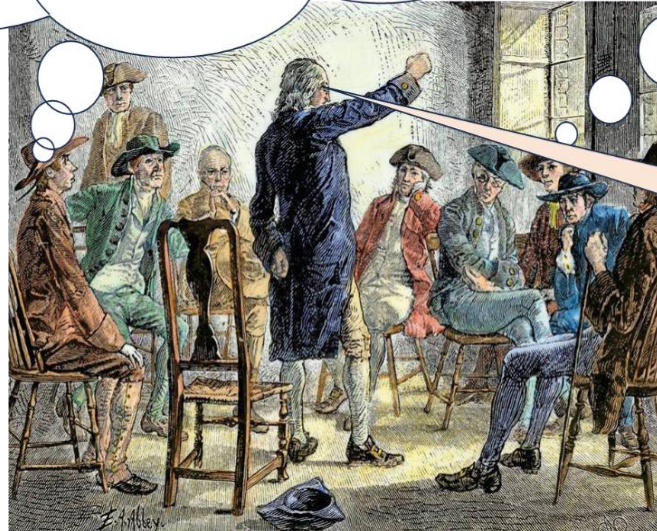
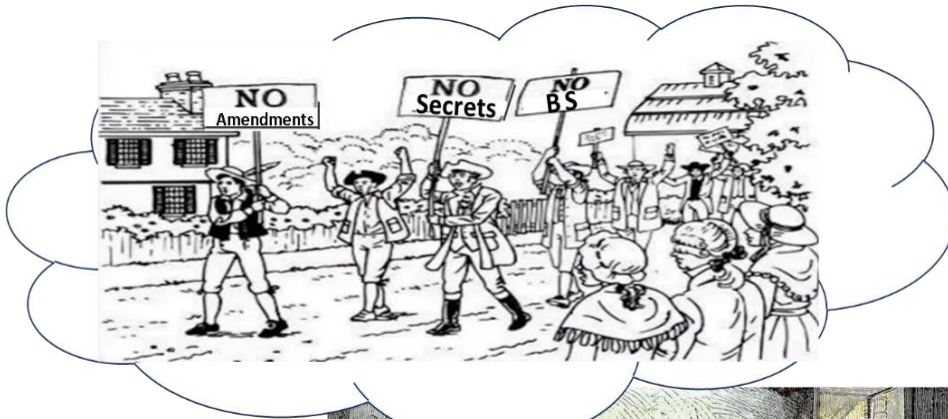
1. In the event of an adjournment or rescheduling your proxy will remain in effect.
2. New proxies always replace old proxies.
3. Your proxy gives the proxy holder authority to vote on your behalf, not just for the board election, but also to vote regarding any other business that may come before the membership.
4. The form requires two signatures, one should suffice, but please sign twice.

Doug and Ginny, given the opportunity, will vote conservatively including but not limited to voting against an assessment increase, voting against giving the Board more authority, and voting for extending owners' rights. They will report how they voted.

Was it Ben Franklin or Albert Einstein?

We don't know for sure whether Franklin or Einstein coined the phrase: "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." But we are certain, as evidence points out, it applies to voting!

We need a “clean sweep”, an idiom traced back to the sport of curling, where it referred to a shot in which all the stones of one team were removed from play.



No decisions without representation!!!

Comments Regarding the Newsletter?

If you have comments, you are invited to share them on www.tolomatoowners.org

We publish all comments regardless of point of view. A modicum of appropriateness is requested. Registration is a requirement for posting.