



Coosawattee Connection

The Newsletter of the CRRA Board of Directors

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Meet the New GM

Georgia Native Josh
Laskowski returned
to CRRA in January

With the resignation of former GM Regina Valladares last December, Josh Laskowski jumped at the chance to return to the North Georgia mountains, a place he calls his “absolute favorite”.

“I grew up in Marietta, but my family was always coming up to North Georgia. My grandparents owned a farm in Jasper, and I was fortunate to constantly come to this wonderful area,” he says. Not only is he familiar with the region, but he's very familiar with Coosawattee itself, having served as an AGM and Director of Operations here from August of 2017 to September 2019. As Director, his job was, “a little bit of everything and never the same day twice. Roads and grounds, equipment buildings, pools, you name it...”

In 2019, Laskowski left CRRA to take a position with First Service Residential, acting as the Community Association Manager for a seven-neighborhood, 1,300-home HOA in Cumming, Georgia. As a management team member for First Service, he worked in the same strategy group with Valladares and for the same regional manager, Gary Hulion. Last November, Laskowski was on-site helping Valladares and Hulion manage CRRA's Clean-Up Day. Some might say, “it's a small world.”

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Meet the New GM

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He says knowing First Service's platforms and operating systems made him a good candidate and able to hit the ground running. So how did Laskowski come to choose a career in property management?

"I started in hospitality working in golf courses and private dining rooms," he says. Most of that career was with Futren Corporation, an Atlanta Metro-based hospitality company. His last role for Futren was as General Manager with Indian Hills Country Club for three years. Indian Hills is a members-only facility in Marietta with 27 holes of golf, swimming tennis, and dining facilities.

A never-ending string of working nights, weekends, holidays, and birthdays began to clash with his responsibilities as dad for growing children and he began looking for a different way to exercise his management skills, choosing the realm of property management, a role that is more varied but less likely to see him being called to manage things and people on a holiday.

Laskowski calls Coosawattee a unique and intricate community. "It's a small city and we have to treat it as such," he says. That means developing and depending on our infrastructure where practical as well as leveraging those around us in Gilmer County. We are such a large part of the county community; we have a large footprint both physically as well as financially. I believe we need to develop new partnerships with the Sheriff's department and Emergency Services."



In addition to his years of daily management experience, Laskowski also has a Bachelor's degree in Managerial Sciences from Georgia State University and an MBA from Kennesaw State. That his MBA was earned while he was working full time says a lot about his capacity to burn the midnight oil.

That's a skill that has risen to the fore as his first major task at CRRA, besides learning a new team and a new Board of Directors, has been preparing next year's budget with the staff and Finance Committee. Bylaws require it to be adopted no later than April 15 each year. Rather than daunting, especially with the departure of several board members and the selection of a new executive committee, Laskowski called it a great opportunity to get his feet on the ground. "I'm a hands-on guy," he says.

"We have a phenomenal team here with the potential to be so much better. I am learning the issues that concern the community... we are already beginning to address the needs of staffing and patrol, for example. I am looking forward to being part of this community," he says. For now, his biggest task concerns working with staff and the Board to determine the "best use of Association funds for the next fiscal year and the future."

Josh Laskowski can be reached via email at GM@mycrra.com or through the CRRA switchboard at 706-640-4010.

Finance Committee Takes Big Step Toward FY23 Budget

"We're past the crisis," says CRRA Treasurer

For the first time that BOD President Dave Bennett can remember, the Finance Committee presented its proposed annual budget to the full Board in a meeting open to residents, albeit via zoom. Accompanied with screen images of past year comparisons and simple graphics of income and projected outgo, Finance Committee Chairman Mike Hill, who is also the CRRA Treasurer, laid out the scenario for an assessment increase for FY2023. The budget proposal is developed from a detailed needs and operations budget projection made by the administration.

The Committee sought to present a budget that accounted for some of the repeated requests from residents, such as more and better-paid staff, attention to roads and facilities, and solid financial footing to prevent future emergency assessments.

Beginning the presentation with a short statement of the previous year's \$1.1 million reserve account shortfall and misappropriation of prepaid dues to cover income deficits in FY 2020, Hill said that when the 2021 budget year started, Coosawattee River Resort was, "on life support". Rather than follow the recommendations of the 2019 Capital Reserve Study (an analysis of the condition of capital goods and properties and what it costs to maintain or replace them), previous CRRA management and the Board voted to lower the annual dues below the level needed to cover those costs as well as the Operating Budget, effectively meaning there was no money for capital projects in 2020-2021. Covid's impacts also reduced projected revenue.

Hill said, "We have figured out assessments backward. The Board has picked an assessment number it liked and then told management to make the budget fit that. This Committee took the approach of figuring out what was needed first and then determining the assessment."

Hill several times told the Board that the Committee had taken a conservative approach to both projected income and projected expenses. (The Finance Committee and management will have one more open meeting before the Board discuss the budget and votes on Feb. 26.) Here are the highlights of the original proposal:

- Total projected revenue is \$7.2M compared to \$6.4M in FY22. Owner assessments are proposed to be \$5M of this total. The remaining \$2.2M is from Association business enterprises, including Association villa and private cabin rentals, Association owned and private lot sales, Eagle Mountain Camp Ground water system revenue, lot-specific assessments [fines and fees], etc.

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CRRA FY23 budget, continued

•Total projected operating expenditures are \$6.7M compared to \$6.4M in FY22. The operating budget includes administration, insurance, gas and electric service, contract services, and projects, salaries and benefits, cost of Eagle Mountain Camp Ground water and repairs and maintenance.

• Employee salaries and benefits will increase. The proposed lowest wage will be \$13/hr. (increased from \$10/hr.) Pay for current staff should rise to a minimum of \$14/hr.

•Increasing the salary budget will allow 12 new positions: 4 in Public Works (to 18), and 8 in Security (to 22). Hill said it is up to the General Manager to figure out the details, but if the BOD approves the proposed budget, “that’s enough to cover all four gates from morning until midnight. After midnight, visitors would have to press the button for Patrol to grant access.” It would also allow hiring enough pool attendants to keep all the pools open on their traditional summer schedule, he said.

•As for roads, there is a small increase for dust control, filling potholes and spreading gravel. Residents will likely note more road improvement because some money earmarked for road maintenance in 2022 has not yet been spent. President Dave Bennett cautioned against promising all gravel roads would get paved soon. “We estimate that if we were to pave every gravel road, the annual assessment would be \$35,000 per homeowner,” Hill said.

For FY23 the budget proposes \$1M to mill and repave the existing asphalt road sections in most need of repair. Roads and Grounds has equipment requiring replacement to the tune of around \$198,000.

“We project our FY22 year-end capital reserve account balance to be \$2.1 million. However, we still have \$1.4million projected expense from this year, including \$1 million to rebuild our three road collapses, \$25,000 for bridge inspections, \$90,000 for playground repairs, \$125,000 for two replacement trucks, and \$160,000 to repair the Recreation Center and POA office building roofs. Most of these projects and expenses will carry over into FY23.”

“We are past the crisis. Fiscal year 2023 will be a year of action,” Hill told the Board.

Hill concluded by saying the spending plan should result in a balance of half a million dollars to carry over into FY24. “Our goal is to restore the \$1million threshold reserve balance in FY24.”

Ed. Note: The Finance Committee is a volunteer group made up of 8 CRRA property owners: Bob McCall, Frank Darrow, Gary Brown, Joel Taylor, Toni Barnett, Deb Sundberg, Susan Hazzard, and Chairman Mike Hill. The committee meets on the Tuesday before monthly BOD meetings

Assessment Schedule

FY 23 Proposed	FY 22 Actual
\$800 operating budget	\$673 operating budget
+ \$100 capital budget	+ \$36 capital budget
\$900 assessment (1 lot)	\$709 assessment (1 lot)
	(+\$250 special assessment)

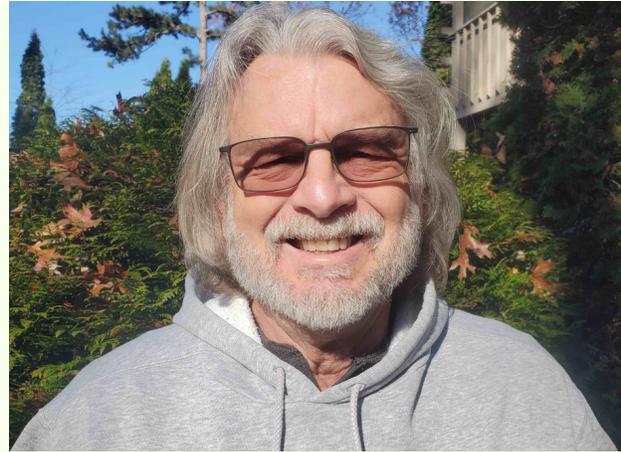
Meet your Beaver Lake BOD Rep

Bill Elliott has called Coosawattee home since 2016

A recent appointee to the Board of Directors, Bill Elliott is one of three representatives for the residents of Beaver Lake. This Tennessee native lived in several southern states before starting a business in Warner Robins, Georgia.

“We built computer software for equipment operating in harsh conditions, mostly in the meat and cheese industry,” he said. The job had him traveling from South America to Canada servicing customers and often inventing new systems or modifying installations of laser scanners and conveyors for counting and packaging food products. For Chiquita, the company’s equipment could detect weight anomalies in shipping crates down to the difference of half a banana. Eliminating overfilling the shipping crates saved Chiquita \$1,400 per day, per processing line. In the poultry breeding industry, it was all about quality control and by learning that an egg with an embryo weighing 55 grams had a much better chance of producing a chick viable for shipping, he developed an automated scanning system that could evaluate and mark 150 eggs per minute.

He shrugs off the idea that he is some kind of genius engineer and says, rather, “I’m just a problem solver. I was always fixing stuff as a kid, and as a salesman, I was the guy who read the technical manuals. There are a lot of people who think that if it’s not in a catalog, it can’t be done. I would listen to the customer and then figure out what I could invent to solve the problem,” he says.



But a traveling lifestyle and eating on the run takes a toll and at age 48, doctors discovered his coronary system was a time bomb. One quadruple bypass later, Elliott took up running and hasn’t stopped. “I still beat my 36-year-old daughter in half-marathons. She beat me at the little Apple Fest run this year and I still haven’t figured out how,” he said, laughing.

The Elliotts bought their home in Beaver Lake in 2015 and were part-timers until Nancy Elliott finished her teaching contract in Loganville the following year. He admits he wanted to get involved with the community for several years but his wife’s bout with cancer and Covid 19 kept the Elliotts homebound until recently.

“I met Dave Bennett on the river trail and we struck up an acquaintance. He told me that a spot had opened on the Board and asked if I would apply.” As far as his aims for his participation on the Board, Elliott said his interests are in improving property values and looking at ways to do things without spending a lot of money. “I want to find out how things work and how to get things done,” he said.



Here's a hot topic!

Fires can occur anywhere, but the fires that affect our homes are often the most tragic and the most preventable. While the loss of our possessions can be upsetting, the physical injuries and psychological impacts that fires can inflict on our lives are often far more devastating. It is a sad fact that each year, more than 70% of all civilian fire injuries occurred from fires in residential buildings — our homes. *(Our previous newsletter looked at outdoor fire safety.)*

Residential fires resulting in injuries occurred most frequently in the late afternoon and early evening hours, when many people can be expected to be cooking dinner. **The peak period from 5 – 8pm accounted for 17% of residential fires resulting in injuries.** Cooking was the primary cause (31%) for residential fires resulting in injuries. In general, residential fires are statistically lowest from 5 – 8am, and then steadily increase during the daytime hours until reaching the daily peak.

Everyone should know how to escape from a burning home. The USFA recommends leaving fighting a fire to trained firefighters. **Your efforts should focus on escaping.** Smoke is very dangerous. It blocks vision, and the poisonous gases can cause dizziness, disorientation and ultimately death. These conditions can result in becoming lost or trapped in a home. Everyone should practice a home escape plan. Working smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the home, as well as inside and outside sleeping areas. **Everyone should create a home escape plan,** know two safe ways out of each room, and establish a family meeting place outside the home. In addition, because young children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities may need help getting out of the home, the plan should include who will assist them in a fire. Everyone in the home should **practice the plan** at least twice a year. For more information on preparing and practicing a fire escape plan, visit <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/escape.html>.

Contents courtesy of U.S. Fire Administration



Does your home have working fire extinguishers?



Committees Post Meeting Schedule

Eight standing committees report to the Board of Directors. All of the meetings except those of the Compliance Committee are open to residents.

Architectural Review Committee meets at 9:30am the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of every month through October. Meetings are held in the Fireplace Room, POA.

Communications Committee and Government Relations Subcommittee meets at 3pm every 2nd Wednesday. Meetings are held in the POA, and alternate with virtual meetings via Zoom as announced on the Official Facebook Page.

Environmental Conservation Committee meets every 2nd Wednesday 3pm - 5pm. Meetings are held in the POA.

Finance Committee meets on Tuesdays, usually at 1pm, prior to monthly BOD meetings. Check Official Facebook page for time and location.

Governing Documents Committee meets every 2nd Wednesday at 1pm in the Fireplace Room, POA, unless otherwise announced.

Nominating Committee meets monthly as scheduled by the Committee Chair, primarily from January through the August BOD election cycle, and when needed. All meetings except volunteer training sessions are open to residents. Meetings will be posted on the Official Facebook Page (Coosawattee River Resort Association, Inc.) as well as noted by the weekly AGM email.

Would you like to join a committee?

Applications are posted on the mycrra.com web site. From the pull-down menu, select BOD and Committees. The application is a downloadable pdf.



Who you gonna call?

Save these contacts



Non-emergencies: call Central 7066404032
Sign up for text alerts: textalerts@mycrra.com
DellingLive issues: dwellingleve@mycrra.com,
or IT@mycrra.com

The main number at the POA Office is 706-640-4010

Villa & Amenities: reservations@mycrra.com
Roads & Grounds: facilities@mycrra.com
Billing: accounting@mycrra.com
Questions: customerservice@mycrra.com,
or 706-640-4010, press 1



Upcoming Events

Beaver Forest Town Hall 2/26
Board Meeting 2/26
EMC Town Hall 3/12
Board Meeting 3/26

On the horizon

Elections for Board seats will be held electronically. Make sure the POA has your current email address through portal.connectresident.com

Reminders

The 20 MPH speed limit is not just a suggestion...on many CRRA roads, especially when they are wet, extra speed = accidents

Still need help?

If all else fails,
email the boss:
GM@mycrra.com

