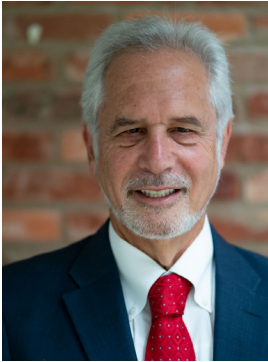


BHA Board Candidate for 2025

Joel Michaels



Profession and education: Health Care Attorney (retired) -40+ years in Washington, D.C. - Managed health law group for over 17 years at the law firm of McDermott, Will and Emery- Currently Adjunct Professor at University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University-B.A. George Washington University; J.D. American University.

What is your history with Bald Head Island that has brought you to ownership and now a candidate for BHA? My wife, Jennifer Russel and I have been visiting Bald Head Island ("BHI") with our children since 1991. We bought a home in Cape Fear Station in 2002 and since that time have acquired additional lots in the same area. I have served on BHA's Long Term Strategic Planning Committee for the past 4 years. The current personnel changes at BHA and the resulting delays in the review of applications prompted me to seek a Board position at this particular time.

What professional skills and life experiences do you feel would be most valued as a member of the BHA Board? I served for six years as a member of the HOA board for the condominium we own in Scottsdale Ariz. During this tenure, reserves for the building increased significantly to handle key renovations that were subsequently implemented without the need for special assessments. During my long tenure as a practicing attorney, I counseled my clients on corporate governance and re-structuring issues, giving me the experience in dealing with best practices with respect to corporate management. I also managed a health law group for my former firm consisting of approximately 30 attorneys. In that capacity I was responsible for overseeing individual attorney performance and productivity.

As a BHI property owner, what aspect of Island life is most important to you as a key to BHI's future and, if elected, how would you help craft that future? The most important aspect of island life would be to maintain the unique quality of life that exists on BHI, while allowing the island to grow without compromising its beauty and pristine environment. I would be inclined to conduct an assessment of how the ARC design guidelines could be modified to facilitate more efficient and consistent implementation, without abandoning their intended purpose.

Platform/Philosophy/Positions

1. The trend toward a "resort-like" island poses issues for the property owners who favor a culture of stewardship and conservancy. What are some of the mechanisms BHA might use to address these issues? The purpose and function of the BHA is set forth in the Covenants. The first duty the BHA has is to "act on such matters as the Board determines affects the welfare and recreation of its members and the beautification and conservation of the natural environment of the properties." Therefore, the direction the Board is given in the Covenants is to protect the natural environment of Bald Head Island as it promotes the welfare and recreation of its members. BHA is well suited to collaborate with the other Island organizations through effective communication, acting as a unifier whenever the natural beauty of the Island and its conservation are at issue. A strong Executive Director at BHA, a key next step as a hiring priority, should enhance BHA's visibility by maintaining effective relationships with these organizations. In addition, existing electronic communication tools must be updated and brought into the 21st century so that access is easy, welcomed and not subject to operational barriers that make open communication with all sectors of the community difficult. Finally, to act as a proper steward, the BHA needs to have the appropriate staffing resources to carry out its critical mission. A realistic evaluation of staffing needs should be a top priority for the Board this coming year.

2. What are some ideas to help strengthen our "community" as a whole for all BHA members, without regard to how much time members spend on the Island? I would support the opportunity for greater committee participation virtually as long as an enhanced and reliable communications system is established. More transparency regarding the existing committees that BHA sponsors should be made available, perhaps by opening up some of the meetings for prospective committee members to attend (on a trial basis) to get a flavor of the opportunities for participation. Transparency about the operation would undoubtedly encourage more volunteerism. It might even be useful to allow public attendance at the ARC meetings, if feasible, so everyone could witness how this process works, as ARC member volunteers work hard to preserve the beauty of our community. It would also de-mystify the process. Making BHA Board meeting agendas available in advance of the meetings and pushing out recaps of actions taken following the meetings would enhance general knowledge about the BHA and its inner workings.

3. If you are elected to the Board, what initiatives would you propose and lead to help ensure participation among property owners, especially among members who are on the Island part-time? Direct outreach to part-time residents must be a priority of the organization because this is a significant segment of our membership, yet they often seem to be disengaged from BHA affairs.

BHA should tap a group of these folks as a “focus group” to determine how to best get their input and attention. If the data is available, we could try a survey, an approach that has worked well in the past for the BHI Club as they plan the Club’s future. BHA should also use existing events to reach out to part-time residents who are here throughout the year during the various seasons. Events that should be a priority include those that facilitate direct interface with other members of the community. Many popular social and educational events sponsored by the BHA Education and Recreation Committee and BHA’s Resource Conservation and Beautification Committee throughout the year would be a good place to start. Additionally, as an example, PSA’s well-attended Chili Supper fund raiser would be another opportunity to connect with BHA members. Ongoing outreach to members should be a designated responsibility, specifically assigned to one of BHA’s staff members.

4. How could the BHA Board, the Village Council, BHI Limited, Old Baldy Foundation, the Conservancy, and the BHI Clubs collaborate to ensure an alignment of respective organizational goals while also implementing collaborative plans for the Island? Our island has had a long history of all groups working both independently to accomplish their own objectives and working together toward joint initiatives, while maintaining the “togetherness” that has been part of our little world. Each organization has developed strong individual goals and ideas, but the resultant actions and goals are often “siloed.” Vision 2025, formulated in 2017, was a thoughtful approach to this issue, but seems to have lost its initial momentum. Since that time, growing divisiveness has slowed this type of coordination due to some very tough and controversial issues related to the Island’s future. We must not let such differences be an impediment towards a coordinated approach with all island-wide organizations. The BHA leadership and its Board should actively advance such connective efforts.

5. What can BHA do to help the Village with preparations for hurricane/storm protocols to reduce recovery times we have recently experienced with coastal properties? On this issue it is the responsibility of the BHA to fully and completely support the Village. BHA’s function in such instances would be to act as a supplemental communications arm for the Village and be available for any assistance that the Village deems necessary.

Final Statement

My primary focus is for the Board of Directors to respect its role as a policymaking body and work within the established contours of the organization. This means the Board knows how to “stay in its lane.” There are at least two examples during this past year where this principle seems to be at issue.

The first is the resignation of 40% of BHA personnel plus a consulting architect in 2024 which incapacitated the organization and its ability to perform basic organizational functions. A Board of Directors “stays in its lane” when it sets policy for the BHA and its personnel with a structure that oversees the implementation of that policy and creates a safe and productive work environment for employees. When those boundaries become compromised, staff morale quickly deteriorates.

The second is recognition of the important role of BHA Committees prior to Board action. This means that the Board follows organization protocols regarding the duties and functions of BHA Committees. An example of this issue is the way in which the Board recently interacted with the ARC on design guidelines and potential changes thereto. When the Board fails to follow the documented protocols and begins offering its own solutions **before** the committee has completed its work, questions arise as to whether the Board decision-making process is fair and even-handed.

If elected to the Board, I would:

- Support Implementation of a personnel process where the Board oversees the performance of personnel as a unified policymaking body, without direct participation in day-to-day management of BHA staff.
- Ensure that BHA committees have the opportunity to fulfill their functions before the Board takes further action on recommendations.
- Insist on ongoing transparency with the BHA member community where members can have a meaningful opportunity to weigh in before Board action is taken.