

BHA Board Candidate for 2025

Victoria Lonker



Profession and education: 34 years in the telecommunications industry in engineering, sales, marketing, finance and product management, retiring from Verizon Business in 2021 as Vice President of Global Product Management. B.S. Mechanical Engineering, Master of Engineering Administration (MEA) Industrial Engineering, both from Virginia Tech.

What is your history with Bald Head Island that has brought you to ownership and now a candidate for BHA? As guests of dear friends for several years before we purchased in 2014, our family has come to love the community, unique weather, beauty and continuous change this island offers. I have served on the board and officer of HOAs in Virginia and North Carolina. On BHI, I was a member of the BHA Long Range Planning Committee and am an enthusiastic supporter of the Conservancy. Motivated to action, I believe in creating solutions vs chatter, ensuring Association transparency and a member-first approach to decision-making, and stepping up to the legacy of island service others have modeled so selflessly.

What professional skills and life experiences do you feel would be most valued as a member of the BHA board? I am an experienced leader, change agent and innovative visionary who is adept at solving problems quickly, creating consensus, community and commitment by demonstrating integrity and sound judgment.

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? Looking to contribute to the quality of island life with thoughtful intention to where my skills and talents can best be put to work, my interest in membership on the BHA Board comes from a desire to ensure we optimize our fiscal responsibilities while creating respectful environments where growth and change conversations happen constructively with all constituents. The BHA should operate in a lean and agile manner, with rapid turn-around on member architectural requests and an eye toward supporting changes required due to current building codes. Our members and their guests should feel that the BHA works FOR them in an expeditious manner toward productive solutions, without undo friction, to help maintain and grow property values.

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? I believe a culture of stewardship and conservancy can co-exist with the reality of a "resort-like" island. Our island offers the feel of a remote resort where people come to experience beautiful shelter, good food, kind and caring locals, calm and tranquil scenery, and outdoor adventures. The BHA can continue to support these experiences by ensuring we partner with other island entities such as the Conservancy, the Village, and SILT, among others, to further our common interests.

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? Key ingredients of strong and vibrant communities include knowing your neighbors by name, genuinely caring about others well-being, and trusting one another enough to confront differences with respect and concern. Community is personal! It is critical to spend time on the island together to build community whenever you can: whether you participate in potlucks, book clubs, physical activities, club events, private parties, and the like. I think the BHA does a good job utilizing Zoom, newsletters and social media to keep members up to date, but there is always room for improvement. I do believe it's a two-way street. It's hard to feel part of a community if you are a passive observer.

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? In talking to members over the past few months, I've heard people say they don't want to volunteer because some committees are contentious or they are too busy or meetings don't happen at convenient times for remote-participation by those with "day" jobs. We need to actively recruit new volunteers, plan committee meetings around timeframes that support member needs, and utilize social platforms more effectively to replace the need for meetings where possible. I would look into how other communities are addressing these challenges using technology to help make participation joyful and productive.

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?

I'm not sure if these entities already have an annual joint meeting, but that might be a good place to start to 1. share key priorities, 2. identify potential roadblocks, 3. align on common goals and 4. map out areas of mutual collaboration. We hear from most of these entities at our annual meeting, but it's mostly a "read-out," which is information and good to know, but we should create an opportunity for dialogue about how we can help each other achieve our respective goals and update the community regularly on such 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? The BHA can continue to educate members about storm preparedness so homeowners can do their best to be prepared and know what to do before, during and after a major event. Keeping our website up to date is key in terms of disseminating information. I was stranded in my home on the island for 4 days following PTC8. Recovery times could have been reduced if the water had receded faster, but Mother Nature and the Village stormwater team are in control of that. What I did observe was active social media engagement by our caring community to get diapers to desperate parents, helping stranded visitors get out, delivering food and medicine (via kayak where necessary!) to those in need. I'd like to explore ways to use social platforms more effectively to reach homeowners, builders, visitors, and property management companies to ensure people know what to do/not do and who to call depending on your need. Much like a "muster drill" on a cruise ship, people are less likely to panic and more likely to take direction if they know what to expect and how to respond in a worst-case scenario. If we could gamify this drill - even better!

Final Statement

As a member of the BHA Board of Directors, I will:

- Dig deep into the financial health of the organization and actively seek ways to reduce member costs, including those associated with the ARC process.
- Create a lasting framework for frequent member input and dialogue on Association priorities, long term needs and areas of focus.
- Actively seek to spread calm, not chaos and promote a culture of transparency, respect, urgency and inclusion such that resident and non-resident members feel they are part of a vibrant and uplifting community while recruiting the dedicated and capable volunteers vital to running a large association.
- Identify modern tools (i.e. software) used by similarly situated HOAs, measure and improve response times to member requests, and communicate via multiple media.
- Support the need to build new homes that are congruent in size and design with the neighborhoods where they are located while ensuring ARC guidelines are applied consistently and current building codes are considered. We should have a member-first approach and arm all parties with the knowledge and information needed to make optimal choices upfront that are fit for purpose and use on the specific property.