

Email to Board 3.7.2014

Dear Board Members,

There has been a great deal unfolding in the past couple of weeks, and I want to bring you up to date.

While Steve Owens and his colleagues have been hard at work making improvements around the Mound, I have devoted a good deal of time in search of a new Operations Manager. (In keeping with the Island Management Committee's recommendation, we are intent on hiring someone with more managerial skills for 24/7 operations and hopefully alleviating some of the burden on LCI officers.)

Working with the other two members of the search committee, Barbara Mapstone and Kevin Lang, the three of us have spent many hours since December formulating a recruitment process, reviewing applications, and interviewing promising candidates. We began by creating a webpage containing information about the job and directions on how to apply. Once the webpage was live, we placed advertisements in Jacksonville-to-Savannah newspapers, and online notices were posted on platforms like Craig's List. During January, we received over 60 applications, and sorted through them all. In February, we started interviewing the more promising candidates by phone – these were 4-way phone calls, with Barbara, Kevin, and me on the line talking to a prospective candidate. We spent weekends and evenings on the phone and had some wonderful conversations. By late February, we had narrowed the applicants to "three finalists," and arranged for each to visit the island on separate days. Steve Owens took them on a tour, answered their questions, and was able to form an opinion as to their suitability. Following their island visit, Barbara, Kevin, and I met with each of the three finalists (our first time meeting with them in person) at the Jekyll Island Hotel. As a result of those meetings we were able to narrow the choice down to two candidates, both of whom we liked equally. Further deliberations brought us to agreement on John LaNeve as our selection to serve as the new Operations Manager. I hope to complete the hiring process by the end of March.

One of the issues that arose with each of the finalists who toured the island was the condition of the Superintendent's cottage. All three commented on the poor condition of the cottage and that it would require improvements before they would live there. One of the candidates flat out said he would not move his family into a dwelling in such deplorable condition, and went on to say that anyone who would live in it would probably not have very high standards for maintaining the rest of LCI's property.

I knew there were problems in the Superintendent's cottage that needed attention – the upstairs bathroom is awful and the kitchen is not much better – and one of the conditions of employment will be a commitment by LCI to undertake some much needed renovations. As a consequence, dealing with the Superintendent's cottage has now risen to the top of my "to do" list.

With help from Panos Kanis and Lexie Parker, I have analyzed the budget to see if we have any funds to do the kitchen and bath remodeling. Sadly, we do not. In fact, we are currently borrowing on our line of credit just to pay bills and employee salaries.

Fixing the cottage up – not to be anything fancy – to make it decent will take money we do not have. The dilemma is this: if we don't refurbish the cottage we don't get anyone decent as our top employee. It seems to me, we have no choice but to make the place livable.

Many members have offered advice on how to proceed, and I appreciate their input.

Because there is some urgency, I have taken the following action. I have asked Steve Owens to analyze what needs to be done in the upstairs bathroom and the kitchen, to obtain quotes (from places like Home Depot) for the materials and appliances (if any) that are needed, and to report back to me on a budget to accomplish the work. If we can do this quickly enough we can use Steve and Joe (while they are still with us) to do the installation, saving many hundreds of dollars if we can avoid having to use an outside contractor. (That's because Steve's time is already paid for in his monthly compensation.)

I will let the Board know just as soon as I have a budget in hand.

Jim K.