HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026

CASA COASTER

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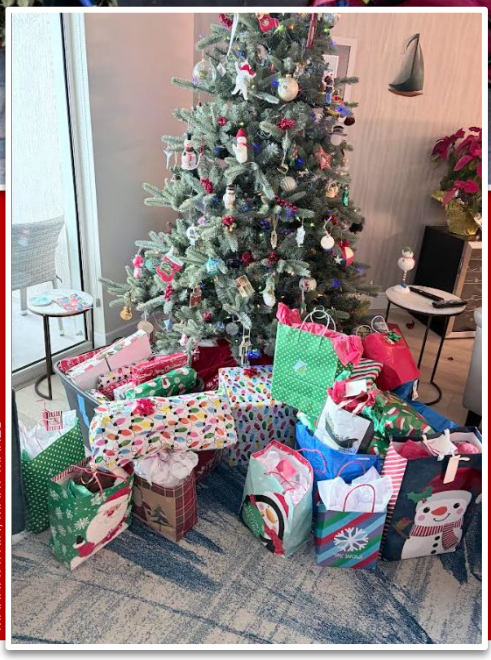

MARNA ATKIN, MARY MARES

SANTA'S LITTLE HELPERS: Several dozen residents donated gifts to two families in Lake Worth Beach with eight kids and nothing under the tree. Volunteers from the Social Committee wrapped up everything and a director from St. Mark Church delivered them on Christmas Eve. She wrote to Casa Costa: "In a time when many feel scared, unwanted and unloved, you have made them feel welcomed and wanted."

KW sends in pro to manage office

Following the abrupt November departure of its newly installed property manager, KW Property Management left the position unfilled for six weeks. Owners who attended the December budget meeting in person got a sneak preview of her replacement, who assisted with meeting logistics.

Three days before the new year, Melissa Arbelaez officially took the role.

A graduate of Florida International University, Ms. Arbelaez joined KW in 2022. She comes to Casa Costa from a similar two-tower, oceanfront resort-style condominium in Highland Beach. KW assumed management there last June and she juggled the replacement of plumbing, mechanical and electrical components.

"I toured her property during our search for a new management company," said Ron Hirsch, treasurer. "It's an older building and they had a lot of projects happening at once. But still, everything was kept clean and ran very smoothly. It is in great shape. I hope Melissa can work her magic here." *CC*

'KWIC' replaces BuildingLink

Bianca Monti, the transition manager at KW, advised residents to log in to a new online hub to confirm that their account information is up to date.

"We brought together financial ledgers, payments, parking space assignments, vehicles, storage locker rentals, registered pets, insurance, leases, guest access, violations, emergency contacts and communication preferences," she said. "These records were never under one roof before, but it's the best way to enforce Casa Costa's various rules."

Staffers continue to populate the KW Information Center with files and troubleshoot its functionality. *CC*

INSIDE

ELECTION SPECIAL
Mr. B profiles the board candidates in a contest among four familiar faces. **A6-A7**

OPINION

Unlocking our property values won't cost a penny

BY ANDRE APICELLA

Greetings, fellow owners. I've studied and sold waterfront homes for two decades. In the last few years, many owners and buyers ask why condo values at Marina Village – directly across the street – are consistently higher than Casa Costa. In many cases, units there sell for tens or even hundreds of thousands more, despite it being an older property with the misfortune of limited winter sun on its pool deck. This is true for every floor plan.

So why the gap?

I've heard suggestions like curb appeal, management and upkeep – all of which matter – but none of these ultimately drive the difference in value. There is one thing for which buyers will always pay more, and Casa Costa doesn't have it: income appeal. There's no sense in talking about increasing values here without discussing income-generating flexibility, or more specifically, fine-tuning our rental restrictions. Buyers in our market pay more for properties that allow flexible rental options. Condos that can generate seasonal or off-season income for owners consistently command higher prices in this area – even if owners never intend to become landlords.

This isn't speculation. It's a well-established reality in our area. When comparing similar resort-style properties, those with flexible rental rules sell for significantly more. That added optionality increases demand and resale value and is the reason Marina Village condos sell for more money. The rules at Marina Village permit up to twelve 30-day leases each year. This is overkill, but it does drive value. Let's change our playbook to better compete.

Recently, Casa Costa owners have borne the brunt of wave after wave of double-digit cost increases, a higher special assessment than Marina Village, ongoing noise, restricted access to amenities – and now declining property values. All but the newest owners likely will have seen a decrease to the values of their investment here despite all our money spent toward common areas and capital improvements. Here's a chance to change that narrative.

Of course some of this softness is due to the broader market. But even in strong markets, Casa Costa values still trail our neighbors'. In weaker markets, that gap widens. Continuing to spend on improvements without addressing what is most in demand only preserves our inferior value proposition.

An impactful solution for our 318 condominium units is to replace the current six-month minimum rental period with a 90-day minimum, while keeping the existing limit of two rentals per year. This approach aligns Casa Costa with market demand, strengthens buyer interest and enhances resale value – without turning our community into a more transient environment.

This tweak would not mean Casa Costa will turn into a 395-door hotel. Ninety days is not a "hotel stay," and if we keep the twice-annual lease limit, we won't have any more tenancies than are allowed now.

Seasonal rentals are not cheap. Many of our current owners rented here prior to purchasing. People renting seasonally at these prices are likely to be similar to the neighbors you already have. It won't be kids paying $5,000 to $10,000 per month plus tax to stay here. It's much more likely you will meet new friends than endure rowdy undesirables. We could enjoy the same option as other owners in South Florida: the potential to earn enough rental income in a quarter to pay for the whole year. And for those who could care less about the income, the adjustment is an opportunity to see new faces and meet new people – all the while increasing your property values without costing a penny.

This suggestion is about positioning our property competitively and protecting the long-term value of every owner's investment without negatively affecting quality of life.

A group of owners – including top real estate pros in the building – believes it's time for this change. We urge the board to propose a vote to cut in half the six-month rental minimum. We already have a lot of support but we need everyone in favor to raise your hand. The hurdle to change our governing documents is high, so the board needs to be convinced this is a popular idea.

If you're on board, text me at 561-503-8653. I will add your name to our growing list, keep you updated and remind you when it's time to vote. It's long past time to modernize our rules and unlock the full value of Casa Costa. I hope you'll join us.

Mr. Apicella is the broker at Waterfront Homes and Condos LLC.

CORRECTION

A printing error in our last edition labeled the front page "HAPPY HOLIDAYS 2006." You wish! The *Casa Coaster* regrets the error. *CC*

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Repair and paint job looks to end early, under budget

On paper, Valcourt Building Services is scheduled to hang from Casa Costa's walls till 2027, repairing the concrete and stucco ravaged by 16 years of South Florida weather. The reality on the ground paints a different picture.

"We're nearly done," said Jim Brousseau, an owner in the north tower. "The face of the property is beautiful."

In 2024, Mr. Brousseau was named chairman of a newly-formed construction committee to assist a board of directors juggling contractors, consultants and engineers hired to fix the property's elevators and waterproof its exterior.

"We're gonna hold all these guys accountable," Mr. Brousseau told the *Casa Coaster* at the time. The committee ended up being a one-man show. Chaotic construction schedules and committee coordination couldn't conform with the Florida Statutes' demand for meetings posted 48 hours beforehand.

Mr. Brousseau was undeterred and became an owner liaison between the contractors and the association. At least every two weeks, he's sat down with folks from Valcourt along with a parade of staffers from management.

His construction background gives him an edge. "We went into the project with a few unknowns," he said. He notes that while the board conducted an extensive bidding process in 2023, "contractors can really gouge you on changes to the plan if you're not careful." When balcony waterproofing was scraped from the plan due to cost, Mr. Brousseau routinely reminded Valcourt representatives why. They recently slashed their pricing proposal for the work, so it's back on the table.

"Problems in the pool equipment rooms were discovered midway," Mr. Brousseau said. "We'll end up getting more important work done than we thought we needed, but we should still end up ahead of schedule and under budget. That's unusually great news."

The board told owners in December that it intends to use an expected surplus from the project toward midyear reserve funding, lowering monthly dues. *CC*



THE FACE OF A SAFE FAÇADE: Jim Brousseau serves as owner liaison.

We look back at some of the folks who made 2025 a wild ride.

YEAR IN



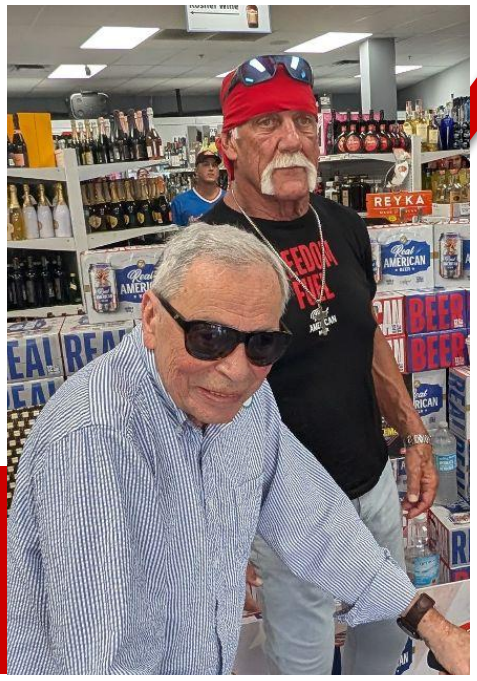
CR-YAY: We kicked off the year by hosting staffers from the city's Community Redevelopment Agency, who told us about the boulevard beautification project and how, when it comes to spending taxpayer money on real estate, they tend to "buy high and sell low."

DEBATE NIGHT: Then we invited all four candidates for Boynton beach mayor and grilled the three that showed up. Rebecca Shelton won the endorsement of the *Casa Coaster*. Three weeks later, voters agreed and sent her to city hall in a landslide victory.



CRUISIN' AT 25 MPH: In January, we paid $1 for a ride in a Coastal Cruiser. The city program is designed to make beach and shopping runs easy, but we picked up a carless Walmart employee who said the transportation option is a "gamechanger for my whole family."





BOYNTON-MANIA RAN WILD: Donnie Mann, the nonagenarian pro wrestling fan from the south tower, ventured to a liquor store in West Boynton Beach in February to meet Hulk Hogan and buy an autographed 12-pack of the retired athlete's new brand of beer. Five months later, the Hulkster died at age 71.

REVIEW

STARCH MADNESS: Residents Sharon Clark and Belinda Battista were among the gnocchi pupils of a professional chef at a cooking event in the club room.





KNOW YOUR COASTER: In 2025, we profiled at least seven Casa Costa characters. How many can you name? (Hint: two of them have first and last names that begin with the same letter. Answers on page A7.)

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE: Kathy Sahn and Gary Green joined Laurie and Rod Sarvis at the Taste of Boynton, a sold-out festival by city hall with food, wine, live music, trivia and arcade games.







FUR-RIGHT NIGHT FASHION: Brady Wilson, pictured with costume designer Elizabeth, won "cutest" in a Halloween pet parade.

IN 2026, RESOLVE NOT TO MISS AN ISSUE. WE DELIVER TO YOUR DOOR!

THEY SHOOK US ALL NIGHT LONG: Well, at least till 8 p.m., when holiday party sponsor Hotwire Communications took their band and left the pool deck. Owners Candace Harrington and Annie Blake served the drinks after a last-second policy change threatened to spoil holiday spirits.

MR. B'S NEIGHBORHOOD



VOTE EARLY, COMPLAIN OFTEN

Four owners are running for two open positions on the board. I wanted to find our why.

Volunteering for this position seems like such a thankless job. What motivates you to do it?

Dobrinski: Having served on the board for seven years, I was previously limited by our bylaws from running again. During that time, I was deeply involved in many of our construction projects. My engineering background gives me the experience needed to help see them through to completion. I am running this year to assist in bringing these important projects to fruition. I am passionate about keeping our building beautiful, safe and prosperous. I remain committed to supporting our community in every way possible.

Harrington: It began as a way to best protect my real estate investment here. But when I discovered the level of disrepair, it became more of a turnaround story. I've fixed failing businesses and improved non-profit charities before. There's a learning curve with certain procedures under the Florida Statutes, but fundamentally, managing a condo association is running a corporation. It takes discipline, collaboration, communication, long-term planning and attention to details.

Mann: Having served on previous boards, I understand that volunteering in this role can often feel thankless, as it's impossible to make everyone happy. My motivation comes from living here full time and being readily available to residents who have concerns or need help navigating issues as they arise. I also believe it's important to have someone who can regularly walk the property, observe conditions firsthand, and help address problems early rather than letting them linger.

St. John: I wanted to serve on the board to bring a heightened sense of fiduciary duty to the community, to preserve owners investment in their units and the community, to look for ways to contain costs when possible, to scrutinize material contracts received from vendors so these contracts are simply not just signed, but are reviewed for legal significance and re-drafted where appropriate.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Challenger George Dobrinski, incumbent Jake Harrington, challenger Roberta Mann and incumbent Susan St. John.

What do you see as the key priorities for the coming year?

Dobrinski: My primary focus will be to assist in every way possible to ensure our construction projects are completed successfully. Once construction is finished, I will concentrate on improving the building's cleanliness, aesthetics and landscaping. I believe it is essential to restore Casa Costa to the top-tier standard it once was.

Preventive maintenance is critical, particularly for elevators, HVAC and security systems. We must also address the hallway A/C units and controls to ensure they operate properly. Investing in cleanliness, landscaping and preventive maintenance will keep our building safe, attractive and well-maintained.

Harrington: I think the major themes for 2026 include plumbing, parking and beautification. We've discovered that the builder's piping design for portions of the property is a disaster, so it's no wonder we're having gross backups. Fortunately it's solvable and should not be as invasive as other recent repairs.

I did a parking audit and found a number of unassigned and unused spaces in the upper garage for which we should find a creative solution. And while the paint job has the property exterior

looking brand new, much of the grounds has been neglected. Curb appeal is less about money and more about focus and attention to detail.

Mann: One of the top priorities should be making the building noticeably cleaner, even if that means spending more to ensure it's done properly. A clean building sets the tone for the entire community. Another key priority is providing additional support to Mario by hiring an assistant with experience managing a building of this size.

Having knowledgeable help in place would improve efficiency and ensure that issues are addressed promptly and effectively. The club room is another top priority. I would like to see it finished and usable as soon as possible.

St. John: 1) Remediating the pool equipment rooms and damaged caused by many years of caustic water seeping through the concrete.

2) Remediating the plumbing issues.

3) Safety and rule enforcement. Rules that are enforced lead to a better community; unenforced rules are meaningless.

a. Access to the building needs to be more carefully monitored.

b. Being cognizant of residents that have threatened other residents or even assaulted them.

c. Making sure staff are properly trained when there is a situation that needs law enforcement intervention.

d. Educating residents to report aggressive or assaultive behavior by other residents.

How do you grade the performance of KW so far?

Dobrinski: From my experience on the board, we previously negotiated a more flexible contract with Castle Group to ensure better management options. This contract allowed the next board to look for another company that better fit our needs. My first impression of KW is excellent, particularly in the maintenance department. They're doing a great job maintaining our building. I've met with Mario, the head engineer, and found him and the team approachable and open to dialogue. I'm impressed with Mario's engineering background and the team's commitment to quality. I can see that more and more areas are being addressed that have been neglected in the past.

Harrington: A mixed bag. It's like they were handed the keys to a jumbo jet with no flight manual, no access to the former pilot and then the engine catches fire. That said, I expected a quicker changeover to their new systems instead of months in transition. I will say that the office staff shows up for us – that's a quality that you can't teach. A big part of why I'm running for the board again is for continuity to finish the job of settling in KW, holding their feet to the fire and creating an enduring infrastructure instead of the mess we had. My goal is to partner with KW to create better day-to-day systems and procedures so board members can focus on the bigger picture and not micro-management.

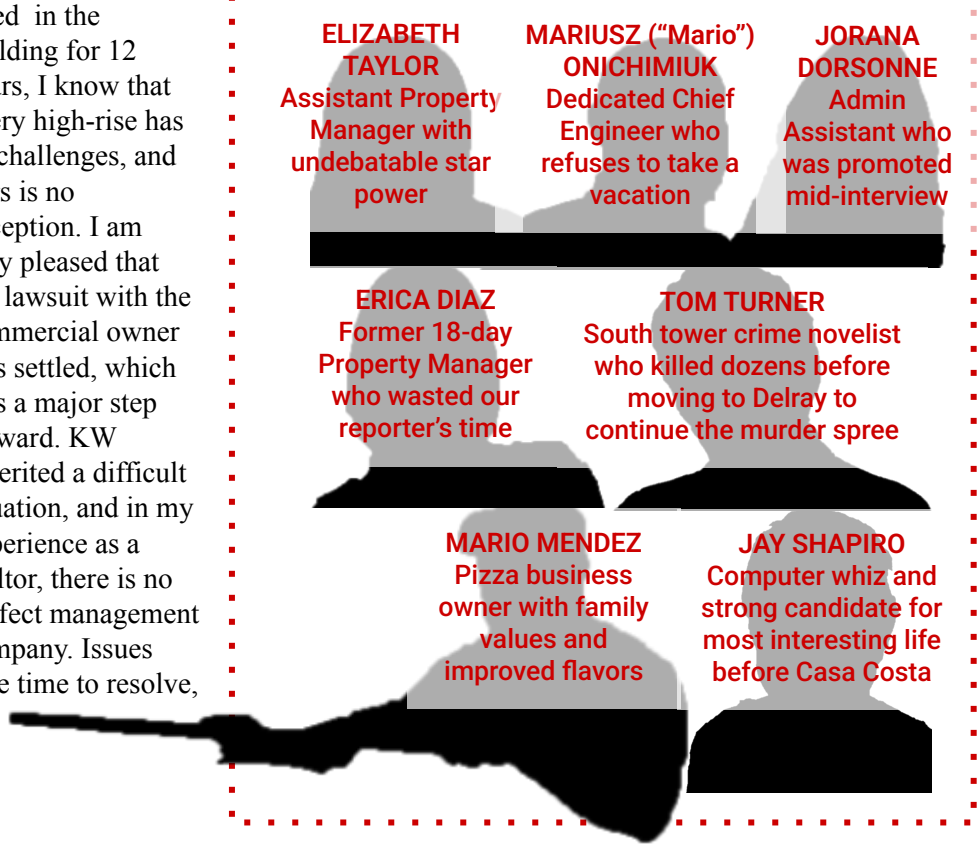
Mann: Having lived in the building for 12 years, I know that every high-rise has its challenges, and ours is no exception. I am very pleased that the lawsuit with the commercial owner was settled, which was a major step forward. KW inherited a difficult situation, and in my experience as a realtor, there is no perfect management company. Issues take time to resolve, and I believe KW will continue to work through them as stability improves.

St. John: KW had to hit the ground running. They walked into a mess in the trash rooms, fire alarms were problematic, maintenance such as changing air filters for A/Cs had not been performed timely, significant plumbing issues have been ongoing, the grounds had not been properly maintained with garbage in all the landscaping areas. KW immediately set about getting these problems assessed and corrected. KW conducts due diligence to make sure the corrections we need to make are appropriate and will be long term. KW shows up after hours when needed. *CC*

Candidate Night with questions from owners is January 22.

The Annual Meeting when the votes are counted is January 27.

KNOW YOUR COASTERS (FROM PAGE A5)





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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the undersigned, desiring to engage in business under the fictitious name CC BUILDING SERVICES at 350 N Federal Hwy, Boynton Beach, FL 33435, intends to register the name with the Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations.
Dated this 12th day of January, 2026.
Steven Mills

EST. 2022

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SOUTH FLORIDA'S #1 POOLSIDE AMUSEMENT

J.T. Harrington, Publisher
John Battista, Head Writer
Gayle Brousseau, Head of Advertising

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