2027 Board Candidate: Leanne Meyer



Biography

Please provide a brief biography of your background and experience that makes you an excellent candidate for the BHA board and how you would put those skills to work.

My professional life in the United States has been closely connected to Carnegie Mellon University. I previously served as Executive Director of the Accelerate Leadership Center at the Tepper School of Business (Tepper) and continue to teach in executive education at Tepper and in master's programs at the Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy. I am an executive educator, leadership advisor and the author of "*Climbing the Spiral Staircase*." In my private practice, I work with senior leaders and executive teams on decision making, change management and working through disagreements. I also serve on the board of Fe League, a professional community focused on connection, mentoring and leadership development.

I would put that experience to work at BHA by facilitating productive conversations, reaching considered decisions collaboratively, and then explaining them clearly to our membership. Adult education is a particular strength I could contribute to owner learning and participation.

South African by birth, I have lived in England and Ireland before coming to the United States. Chris and I divide our time between Durham and Bald Head Island. Away from work, I enjoy birding, photography, gardening and beekeeping. I'm also an avid reader and enthusiastic cook. I'm learning mahjong, more for the company than for any natural talent, and golf is still on the "one day" list.

Statement of Interest

Why are you interested in becoming a board member of the Bald Head Association? Please include your island history and past/relevant experience.)

I would like to give something back to the community we have chosen. I know I still have a great deal to learn, and I have real respect for the people who have looked after this place for decades. I hope fresh eyes can be useful when they come with that respect and a willingness to listen.

The timing also matters. BHI Limited is completing its exit after more than forty years, and responsibilities it once carried are passing to the Transportation Authority, the Village and others. Decisions made in the next few years will shape the island for a long time, and none of them belong to BHA alone. My professional life has been spent helping people with different responsibilities understand one another, and working through hard decisions. I have personally seen how much a community depends on trust, open communication and hearing more than the most familiar voices. I would bring that experience to the BHA Board.

Five years ago, Chris and I stepped off the ferry for the first time and, before the weekend was over, made an offer on a house. I would not normally recommend that as a decision-making process! This summer we completed our first season as turtle nest monitors, and our youngest son proposed to his fiancée on the island. When we left Pittsburgh, we chose Durham deliberately as it is close enough to an airport for my work travel and close enough to the island to be here often. As a family that has lived in four countries, home has always been a complicated idea for us. Bald Head has become one of the clearest answers we have found.

Platform/Philosophy/Position

1. What are your key priorities as a Board candidate, and how do you plan to utilize BHA's existing systems and processes to achieve these goals if elected?

My strongest contribution would be in education and member participation. I want owners to understand the Association they belong to and feel that there is a place for them in its work. The amount of time someone spends on the island tells us very little about how much they care about it.

My first priority would be to learn to understand what the Board, staff and committees already have underway and why, before proposing anything new. BHA has done a lot of work recently, including a new reserve study and 30-year capital model, a pipeline tracker and handbooks for architectural review, and a rebuilt Compass. I would want to build on that, not compete with it.

Within that, I would focus on three things.

- **Helping owners through the transition.** As BHI Limited sells its remaining assets, owners have reasonable questions about who now owns what, who to call and what is changing. BHA's communication channels are well suited to answering them.
- **Education and belonging for newer owners.** BHA sends welcome packages to new owners. Working with the Education and Recreation Committee, I would like to build on those with a short orientation, offered on the island and online, covering BHA's role, the covenants and design guidelines and the reasons behind them, and the ways people can get involved.
- **Making participation easier, especially for part-time owners.** The potluck dinners, Operation Re-Forest, litter sweeps and committee work are wonderful ways in. I would like to make it easier to find them, sign up through the existing volunteer application and contribute from a distance where the work allows. A short survey and a few listening sessions, timed across different seasons, would tell us what members want and where we are missing people.

All of this should go through the Board as a body and the committees designed for it, with honest attention to how much more we can ask of staff. Starting small and doing it well matters more to me than starting a lot.

2. How could the BHA Board, the Village Council and leadership at the BHI Clubs, the Conservancy, the Chapel and Old Baldy better work in tandem to ensure an alignment of respective organizational goals while also implementing collaborative plans for the Island, as BHI Limited sells their remaining assets in the community?

Much of my professional work involves helping people with different responsibilities agree on how they will work together. I have learned that it helps to discuss those responsibilities before a difficult decision puts the relationship under strain.

The Village has municipal responsibilities, while BHA represents property owners, upholds the covenants and looks after common areas. The clubs serve their members and are important employers. The Conservancy brings environmental science and education, and Old Baldy preserves and teaches the island's history. The Chapel contributes worship, pastoral support and community life. Each of these organizations has a different job. They will not agree on everything, and they should not have to. What they need is a clear understanding of each other's plans and of who is responsible for which decisions. Cooperation should respect each organization's purpose and the people it serves.

BHI Limited's exit makes this more urgent. For decades, many island questions had an obvious place to go. Now ferry operations are moving toward the Transportation Authority, the Village is taking on land, roads and parking, and decisions about remaining commercial parcels are being worked through. In that kind of handover, small gaps can turn into misunderstandings quickly.

In my work with leadership teams, the most useful conversation happens before any conflict: how will we share information, make decisions and handle disagreement? BHA's role is to advocate for owners and be a reliable partner, which is a role it can only play well if it is clear about the limits of its authority.

3. Ensuring the consistent application of established guidelines and covenants is an important role of BHA. What approaches do you feel would help how BHA conducts business, and how would you support staff in carrying out these responsibilities while balancing the needs of residents?

Owners should be able to understand what is expected of them and trust that comparable situations will receive comparable treatment. These are people's homes, often involving considerable expense and emotion. Clear standards and respectful treatment both matter.

The covenants and design guidelines protect the look and feel of Bald Head. Most owners will accept a rule they do not love if they believe it applies to everyone in the same way and they understand why it exists. So I would focus on consistency and on explanation.

Balancing the needs of residents does not mean bending the rules for some people. It means treating owners with courtesy, talking with them early, giving them a fair hearing and a reasonable time to put things right, and explaining decisions clearly.

4. What do you feel BHA's priorities should be today and in the near future?

A smooth transition from BHI Limited. For the next few years, this will touch almost everything. BHA should keep owners informed, represent their interests clearly to the Village and the Transportation Authority, and watch for anything that falls between the cracks as responsibilities change hands.

Belonging and future leadership. As property changes hands, we need to pass on the island's history, its conservation ethic and the reasons behind the covenants. That also means preparing people for committees and the Board, so leadership does not always rest on the same few shoulders.

Reliable, fairly priced access. Owners, guests and the people who work here depend on the ferry and tram. Whatever the final ownership arrangement, BHA should be an informed, constructive voice for members' experience and concerns.

Coastal resilience. Beach erosion, channel shoaling, beach nourishment, rising aquifer salinity and the effects of the Cape Fear River channel deepening all bear on our homes, our insurance costs and the island's future. The Village and the Conservancy lead much of this work. BHA can help owners understand the issues and make sure their concerns are heard.