

# Don Ce-Sar Property Owners Corporation (DCPOC)

## Quarterly Update

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### DCPOC NEWSLETTER

Due to the cost of printing and mailing the quarterly newsletter, the DCPOC Board has decided to print and mail newsletters two times per year in January and July and to provide a quarterly update via email each April and October. This is the April update which is being sent a bit early because there are a few important things that need to be communicated to members.

If you are interested in sponsoring or know of a business that would be interested in sponsoring the printed newsletter, please contact a member of the Board. Advertisement space can be provided in exchange for the sponsorship if a business is interested.

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### BLOCKS M AND N

In November 2020, DCPOC filed a Petition in Pinellas Circuit Court seeking title to beachfront Blocks M and N in order to give DCPOC greater ability to protect property owners' exclusive use of these blocks. The City of St Pete Beach intervened in December 2020. Within the months following, the parties agreed to stay proceedings to allow DCPOC and the City to work together to reach common ground and alleviate the City's concerns about the longevity and sustainability of DCPOC.

With the assistance of counsel, the DCPOC Board and the City of St Pete Beach agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") which was unanimously approved by St Pete Beach City Commissioners on December 14, 2021.

**On February 11, 2022 Title to Blocks M and N was conveyed to Don Ce-Sar Property Owners Corporation ("DCPOC")!** We have since obtained general liability insurance for the land and are forming a M&N Stewardship Committee to work on plans and ongoing issues related to Blocks M and N. Please read more below about volunteering for one of the neighborhood committees.

Special thanks to all residents who donated funds to the Raising the Sail Campaign which has allowed DCPOC to proceed with this important proceeding as well as members of the DCPOC Advisory Council who provided hours of support and guidance throughout this effort. This is a big win for our community!

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## **DON CESAR HOTEL EXPANSION**

The Don Cesar Hotel filed an Unnecessary and Undue Hardship Variance, initially requesting three property line setbacks, with the City of St Pete Beach. After strong objections by the DCPOC Board and residents, the Don Cesar revised their plans requesting two minimal property line setbacks. The final plan submitted to the Board of Adjustment was a scaled back version of an original proposed 10,000 square foot interior ballroom space to a now 7,252 square foot interior ballroom space on the North side of the hotel.

The request by The Don Cesar Hotel was the construction of a ballroom addition on the north side of the hotel. The addition will be elevated above ground-floor parking and is proposed 0 feet from part of the right-of-way of El Centro Street (25 feet required). An egress staircase is proposed on the back Southwest corner of the addition at 8.5 feet from the rear property line (20 feet required). The addition complies with the northern side setback line (48.7 feet provided).

Based upon information collected by the DCPOC Board of Directors through two separate surveys, informational meetings with residents and speaking with neighbors, residents of Don Cesar Place were generally opposed to the proposed expansion of the Don CeSar Hotel, but were also in favor of negotiating with the hotel and its owner, Host Hotels & Resorts (HHR), in order to maintain harmony within our neighborhood and to protect Blocks M and N. To that end, DCPOC and HHR entered into negotiations and we are happy to announce that we have reached an amicable agreement.

Residents' main concern about the expansion related to the safety, privacy, traffic and parking that could result from many added guests. Residents also noted a favorable opportunity of expansion is to clean up the area and make our neighborhood look more aesthetically pleasing. **DCPOC reached an agreement with HHR on January 26, 2022.** Highlights of the agreement include:

- The ballroom addition will never, now or in the future, be improved to add any rooftop amenities without the consent of DCPOC. Any rooftop utilities will be screened from adjacent properties and hidden from view, the rooftop will not be used for storage and employees will not be allowed access except for maintenance and operation of any mechanical equipment located thereon.
- The addition will be constructed in a way that will reduce noise including fixed (unopenable) windows and the Hotel will abide by the City's Noise Ordinance.

- The hotel has agreed to maintain landscaping substantially in its original, installed condition.
- The hotel has agreed to install fences, walls and gates along the northern and western boundaries of their property which will protect the security and privacy of residents and Block N.
- The hotel has agreed to an allowance of \$50,000 to be used for the design and construction of a pedestrian footpath through or over Block N to provide access to and from the beach by residents of Don Cesar Place. The location, form, nature and composition of the foot path or bridge are at the sole discretion of DCPOC.
- The hotel will install, at the discretion of DCPOC and subject to City approval, signage on El Centro Street declaring the street as one way and that no commercial traffic is allowed. The hotel has also agreed to direct all employees and agents to access the hotel from Gulf Blvd. Don Cesar Hotel service contracts will be amended to reflect the restrictions on El Centro Street.
- The hotel will provide an allowance of \$5,000 for private property signage and gating at certain access points along Blocks M and N. Placement of such signage is at the sole discretion of DCPOC. The hotel further agrees to provide other informative materials to its employees and guests informing them that the location of the hotel lies within a residential neighborhood and requesting their respect for the private and residential nature of the property surrounding the hotel.
- The hotel and DCPOC have agreed to participate in ongoing joint workshops regarding parking management surrounding the hotel. The City of St Pete Beach, the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department and, potentially, Florida Department of Transportation will be invited to the workshop. Both parties have agreed to hold the first workshop before July 1, 2022 and every twelve months following.
- DCPOC has agreed to rescind our letter and packet objecting to the Unnecessary and Undue Hardship Application, submitted to the City in December 2021, has agreed to provide a statement of support of the Application and to not object or legally challenge any further permit required to construct the proposed ballroom so long as such plans are consistent with the Application and the Agreement.

Members can read the full agreement by accessing the DCPOC website ([www.dcpoc.org](http://www.dcpoc.org)).

**On January 26, 2022, the St Pete Beach Board of Adjustment unanimously agreed to grant the Don Cesar Hotel and HHR's request for variance** which permits the hotel to proceed with the expansion as long as all agreements are met.

The DCPOC Board wants to thank members who spoke up on this important topic and to thank the DCPOC Advisory Council who spent countless hours in support of this effort. We

would also like to also thank The Don Cesar Hotel, Host Hotels & Resorts, and the City of St Pete Beach for their willingness to work with us in a collaborative way, to have open and honest conversations, and to accommodate many of the requests brought to them by DPOC in order to reach a mutually beneficial resolution.

The Community Relations Committee and M and N Stewardship Committee will serve an active role in our continued relationship with the Don Cesar Hotel, HHR and the City of St Pete Beach. See below for further details and how to get involved.

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## **DCPOC BYLAWS AND CHARTER**

Over the past year, the DCPOC Bylaws Committee spent countless hours rewriting the DCPOC Bylaws and Charter. The major revisions focused on topics such as assessments, dues, honorary membership, officers' terms, formation of an election committee, board powers, financial statements, membership meetings and the website. The Bylaws and Charter were submitted to the general membership (paid members) during the DCPOC Annual Meeting.

On February 21, 2022, 45 Members voted and, by a vote of 42 to 3, elected to accept the revised DCPOC Bylaws and Charter. If you would like to read the revised Bylaws and Charter, please visit our website ([www.dcpoc.org](http://www.dcpoc.org)).

Special thanks goes out to the DCPOC Bylaws Committee including Kim Caswell (chairperson), Katrina Bershaj, Jim Breslin, Joe Melendi, and Susanne Ward, for their hard work and effort over the past year.

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## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

The City of St Pete Beach is hosting quarterly district meetings each year so that residents can be brought up to date on current events and can have an opportunity to meet with city commissioners and managers to discuss issues and ideas. The meeting for District 3, of which Don Cesar Place is a part, is coming up soon. We encourage Don Cesar Place residents to attend this meeting to share your thoughts and concerns with local officials.

**WHAT:                    District 3 Town Hall Meeting**  
**WHEN:                 Monday, April 25, 2022 at 5:30 pm**  
**WHERE:                 St Pete Beach City Hall**  
**155 Corey Avenue**

Members are also reminded of the upcoming DCPOC General Membership Meeting.

**WHAT: DCPOC General Membership Meeting**  
**WHEN: Monday, May 9, 2022 at 6:00 pm**  
**WHERE: St Pete Beach Community Center, Raymond Room**  
**7701 Boca Ciega Drive**

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### GET INVOLVED

There are many important issues facing our community and involvement from members is vital to the betterment of our neighborhood. Therefore, the following committees have been formed:

- **Community Relations Committee** [Chairperson: TBD; Board Advisor: Ken Folsom] will collaborate with the City on important issues facing our neighborhood including, but not limited to, parking, neighborhood traffic, signage, and public areas within the community including the boat ramp and parks.
- **Flooding Committee** [Chairperson: TBD; Board Advisor: Betty Rzewnicki] will work on continuing to pressure the City to mitigate flooding in our neighborhood including monitoring construction of tidal flooding control valves and future flood prevention projects.
- **M and N Stewardship Committee** [Chairperson: Jim Thull; Board Advisors: Ed Chima and Kevin Hughes] will develop access and use guidelines and plans, address code violations and liability concerns, and develop plans for future construction, beautification and maintenance.
- **Social Committee** [Chairpersons: Janice & Randy Will; Board Advisor: Becky Purple] will plan neighborhood social events throughout the year. This may include social gatherings, neighborhood cleanup events and/or fundraising activities.
- **Advisory Council\*** will provide legal analysis and direction at the request of the Board of Directors. \*Not formally a committee. Members of the Advisory Council are not engaged to provide legal advice to DCPOC.

We need your help! If you are interested in volunteering your time to work on one of the committees please contact a member of the Board or sign up online (<https://dcpoc.org/volunteer/>).

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## **ANNUAL DUES**

With Title to M and N comes responsibility, including maintaining active general liability insurance. Though voluntary, annual dues are vital to this organization. As of this writing we have 117 paid members. If you have not yet done so, it's time to pay your **2022 Membership Dues**. Annual dues are \$40 per property. There are two easy ways to do so:

1. To pay by mail, make a check payable to DCPOC and mail it to DCPOC, P.O. Box 67015, St Petersburg, FL 33736; or
2. To pay in person (cash or check), reach out to Becky Purple (see contact information below) and she will be happy to pick it up from you.

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## **Contact Us**

Should you need to contact a member of the DCPOC Board, you may do so by accessing the DCPOC website ([www.dcpoc.org](http://www.dcpoc.org)) and clicking on the Contact tab or emailing us directly at:

Betty Rzewnicki, President	<a href="mailto:president@dcpoc.org">president@dcpoc.org</a>
Kevin Hughes, First Vice President	<a href="mailto:1stvp@dcpoc.org">1stvp@dcpoc.org</a>
Ken Folsom, Second Vice President	<a href="mailto:2ndvp@dcpoc.org">2ndvp@dcpoc.org</a>
Ed Chima, Third Vice President	<a href="mailto:3rdvp@dcpoc.org">3rdvp@dcpoc.org</a>
Linda Beaman, Treasurer	<a href="mailto:treasurer@dcpoc.org">treasurer@dcpoc.org</a>
Marta Slaughter, Recording Secretary	<a href="mailto:recordingsecretary@dcpoc.org">recordingsecretary@dcpoc.org</a>
Becky Purple, Corresponding Secretary	<a href="mailto:correspondingsecretary@dcpoc.org">correspondingsecretary@dcpoc.org</a>