A CRITICAL ELECTION

By William Nicoson

Next Saturday Reston residents will receive in the mail a critical envelope from the Reston Association. It will contain a ballot for the election of three members of RA’s board of directors. The ballot must be marked and returned by 5 p.m. on March 31.

Why is this envelope so “critical”? Because, over the 3-year term of the directors to be elected, RA faces long-term decisions affecting the property values and life-style of all residents.

One of the principal decisions will be whether to alter assessment limits, adopted in 1984, to reflect subsequent events not then anticipated which have significantly impacted RA’s costs and revenues. As to costs, RA’s board in 1991 eliminated the user fees for swimming and tennis, a decision which added about $62 to RA’s current annual assessment. As to revenues, residential units in Town Center were not made subject to the RA deed due to a dispute concerning design review jurisdiction. Absent these two events, the current assessment would be about $250 today rather than $370.

Furthermore in 1991, RA budgeted only $548,000 for repair and replacement of facilities. In 1999, that amount rose to $2.1 million over the 8 intervening years of wear and tear.

The RA board has established a “Blue Ribbon Committee” to review the limit on assessments and make recommendations. Those recommendations will undoubtedly be considered by the board during the 3-year term of the directors elected this month.

Do I know who I’ll vote for? Thought you’d never ask.

Two of the three seats in play will be occupied by directors-at-large. TIMOTHY DONAHUE is an incumbent director with two years’ experience on the fiscal committee. Being fully familiar with the critical issues at hand, he won’t be playing catch-up. By profession he’s a computer programmer, indicating a logical rather than emotional approach to problem-solving. His statement of candidacy stresses RA stewardship of its valuable assets. BERTHA HOSKINS, a Certified Public Accountant with 20 years experience in finance and accounting, is also running at-large. Her statement stresses her commitment to “innovative and creative programs” during RA’s transition from growth years to years of slower growth. She “strongly supports” joint efforts by RA, Reston Community Center, and Reston Citizens Association to address Reston’s concerns.

MICHAEL GUTHRIE is running for the South Lakes seat. He manages Long & Foster’s real estate office in Reston and served as Vice Chairman of the Reston 2000 Task Force. He’s been chosen by the Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce and Reston Interfaith for a Best of Reston Award on April 27, an honor not mentioned in his statement of qualifications. He proposes to
examine how best to provide services from assessment revenues and “alternatives for providing revenue.” He recognizes the challenge of creating “a unified Reston voice” in addressing community needs.

*William Nicoson is a former publisher of Connection Newspapers and a former RA director and fiscal committee chairman recently named by Timothy Donahue to serve on RA’s Blue Ribbon Committee.*