

BLOOD, SWEAT AND YEARS

Chairmen's expressions molded what chapter is today

By AMANDA VENTURA

At the helm of NAIOP Arizona, directing it into its fourth decade, is Voit Managing Director Tom Johnston. He has worked in commercial real estate for 19 years and been a member of NAIOP for most of them, he says.

"When I first became a member, it was a rocking four years. Everything was grandiose," he says. "Through the downturn, we struggled through the recession, we built up out reserves, our events weren't as well attended. Now, it has come back to life."

Johnston has been a member since 2008 and prior to that was the chair

for Best of NAIOP, during which he worked to expand the scope of the awards and recognitions.

NAIOP HAS SPENT THE LAST 15 TO 20 YEARS BECOMING FINANCIALLY STABLE. NOW THAT IT IS, HOW HAS THAT INFLUENCED THE CALIBER OF PROGRAMS AND MEMBER OPPORTUNITIES IT OFFERS?

You can look to the growing developing leaders program, to which we contribute some of our resources. You can look at bringing back the signature speakers series. And, Night at the Fights is approaching the levels



Tom Johnston

we saw in 2006 and 2007. (For Best of NAIOP, we received a) record number of nominations this year, and we may have broken an attendance record. On the education front is where some of these resources are being used. But, most importantly, we as an organization and as a board support public advocacy. So we can make sure bills are passed or not passed. We use our resources to ensure our members are protected.

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP IN CHAPTER GROWTH? WHAT KEEPS YOU A MEMBER?

LEADING LEGACIES



Megan Creecy-Herman
Term: 2014

Legacy: Created education committee; first female chairman of chapter



Keaton Merrell
Term: 2013

Legacy: Formation of philanthropic Dream Teams



John DiVall
Term: 2012

Legacy: Formalized MRED and mentorship programs



Mike Haenel
Term: 2011

Legacy: Developing Leader Group recognized as best in nation



Joe Ihrke
Term: 2009

Legacy: Improved Board governance policies and financial reporting

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Retail is going to be a big part of it. It's something we're going to push for. We'd like to attract more law firms, more lending institutions. We're largely owners, developers and brokers. We have some title companies and we have the banks, but (a goal is) to grow our existing base. With the market improving, it's naturally going to grow if we put on the right events for the right people.

NAIOP RECENTLY ANNOUNCED AN INITIATIVE TO INCLUDE THE RETAIL SECTOR IN MORE OF ITS MARKETING. HOW APPROPRIATE IS THAT CROSSOVER TO THE PHOENIX CHAPTER?

It's not just into the retail sector (that NAIOP National is expanding). We support developers, so it's all commercial development (we're trying to reach), which includes multifamily. What my goal is, and I've talked to

a few of the retail people in town, is to have a roundtable discussion of their involvement in NAIOP. I think it's natural when you look at Keirland, Esplanade and CityScape, there's office and multifamily. Retail plays right into what we do. It's just natural that retail would be mutually beneficial. It's a win-win to have them a part of our group or membership, part of our future. There's a lot of retail professionals out there who are already members of NAIOP — RED Development, for example, who does office and retail. Certainly, they have ICSC. What we feel is that through our education, we'd have a lot to offer as well as, and more importantly, on the public policy side. On the striker bill (Senate Bill 1241), working with Tempe, where they were going to add impact fees for the trolley system, the retail developers and owners benefit from our public policy efforts. Until we

get some feedback from them, I can't say exactly how they will benefit, I can say on a whole, retail will.

WHAT MAKES NAIOP DIFFERENT FROM OTHER INDUSTRY GROUPS?

NAIOP stands out. First and foremost, in my opinion, we're the best at networking. We do a pretty good job at education, but we need to do a better job. One thing we're really good at is philanthropy. This year, we founded a philanthropic foundation. It's a vehicle by which we can give back to the community. It's not using any of NAIOP members' money. It's a way for us to collaborate with those people who want to get involved, even non-members, who want to get involved in an event that caters to some type of charitable organization. We'd be able to give to a charity without it going through the NAIOP membership channels. It's being created under



Chris Toci
Term: 2008
Legacy: Instituted NAIOP Central Arizona Shelter Services homeless barbecue



Fred Stiles
Term: 2007
Legacy: All-time revenue high, help on property tax reform



Kurt Rosene
Term: 2006
Legacy: Political awareness of NAIOP, building better community



Steven Schwarz
Term: 2005
Legacy: Won National Chapter of the Year award, hired Executive Director Tim Lawless



Craig Coppola
Term: 2003
Legacy: Implemented professional management and lobbying

Right now, we're focusing as an executive committee on how we can make education more meaningful. There are a lot of organizations out there that do a great job with education, but we want to be a strong education organization as well.

my leadership, but it was fostered by (past Chairman) Keaton Merrell. Lastly, what I think we're most noted for and what we're best at is public policy. We're the group that goes to the Legislature to fight on behalf of our members, which are primarily developers. Whether it's real estate taxes or taxes on energy uses, we band together and we use our resources for the benefit of our members.

EVERY CHAIRMAN HAS LEFT A UNIQUE MARK ON THE ORGANIZATION. DID YOU ACHIEVE YOUR GOAL? WHAT DO YOU HOPE IS YOUR LEGACY?

As the chair, I'm somewhat involved in all the committees — public policy, education and have an active role in Night at the Fights. The Best of NAIOP has been my baby. The Signature

Speaker Series is something we've fostered under my term. This year, we had Dan Patrick and close to doubled in attendees. The other thing I have been involved with is our education. That's one of the three legs of the stool. We've tried to build that. We sent a survey out in April, we had a good response. The majority of the people wanted to see us improve our education platform, which is something Bob Hubbard will be focused on. Right now, we're focusing as an executive committee on how we can make education more meaningful. There are a lot of organizations out there that do a great job with education, but we want to be a strong education organization as well.

The organization is not broken. I had some phenomenal predecessors. Following Megan Creecy-Herman, those were some pretty big shoes to

fill. She won NAIOP Chairman of the year, nationally. I believe if it's not broken, don't fix it. If someone asks, "What did TJ do?" I'd say if we can get this foundation created, that'd be something I'd like to see under my leadership. Given my history as a manager, I'm most proud of working and training younger people and promoting their careers and their desires. I helped organize revamping the mentorship program with the developing leaders, more of an educational format, where they receive a certificate of completion at the end. That's something that was a tremendous success. The mentors loved it. The mentees really liked it. I've agreed to be a part of it, going forward to grow it and becomes more meaningful in years to come. That's something of which I'm proud. ■■■



Pete Bolton

Term: 2000

Legacy: Successful fight against Sierra Club development ring



John Strittmatter

Term: 1999

Legacy: Met board's goal for strengthening financial stability



David Krumwiede

Term: 1998

Legacy: Introduced Night at the Fights



Bill Petsas

Term: 1997

Legacy: Membership recruitment



Bob Mulhern

Term: 1996

Legacy: Recruited strong leaders to organization