



SENIOR
LEADERSHIP
TEAM

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December 2020 – The Year in Review

*“We are all in this together.”
“Wear the *#%! mask.”*

Office of the President/CEO

In retrospect, one year ago, in December 2019, life was rather complacent – familiar, steady, and routine. Holiday celebrations were being planned, people were shopping for gifts, and Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens were considered contenders for the Super Bowl. Columbia Association (CA) was ending the calendar year on a positive note; and Fiscal Year 2021, beginning in May 2020, was expected to be another successful year for the organization, the Columbia community, and our members.

In the enthusiasm and excitement of the holidays, many people may have missed or paid scant attention to information disseminated by the media on 31 December 2019 about authorities in Wuhan, China treating cases of pneumonia of unknown cause. As noted in an article in *The New York Times*, Chinese researchers had identified a new virus infecting dozens of people in Asia. The article went on to state, “At the time, there was no evidence that the virus was readily spread by humans. Health officials in China said they were monitoring it to prevent the outbreak from developing into something more severe.”

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared Coronavirus Disease 2019, aka COVID-19, a pandemic.

On 15 March 2020, CA closed its facilities, ostensibly for 14 days.

In fewer than three months, life throughout the world had changed.

The “Year in Review” for 2020 is more than a report summarizing accomplishments. It is an assimilation of thoughts, feelings and other emotions that need to be felt in the heart, as much as read with the eyes. The past nine months are about the shock and dismay felt by CA team members and all other individuals who were laid off, furloughed, had salary reductions, or even lost a business. It is about families whose relatives and/or friends succumbed to the disease, concern for front-line workers, social distancing, wearing masks, shortages in stores, limiting travel, working from home, and getting tested and waiting for the results. It is about the pain faced individually, collectively and globally when “life”, as we had known it, is abruptly altered.

As we present the “Year in Review” for 2020, we look to 2021 and the opportunity to continue to move forward – individually, as a community, and as an organization. We now face the ongoing challenges of rising above the past, refocusing our lives and CA to adapt to a post COVID-19 world. We must continue to shape our future in ways we could not have imaged one year ago. As we come to the end of 2020, let us enter 2021 with a steely focus on the future.

MISSION Engage our diverse community, cultivate a unique sense of place and enhance quality of life.

VISION CA creates and supports solutions to meet the evolving needs of a dynamic and inclusive community.

Department of Administrative Services

Prior to mid-March, the Accounting team led the organization in producing the draft Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and conditional FY 2022 budgets; the Human Resources (HR) Division continued the Dayforce implementation project, launching the Recruiting and Onboard modules; and the Information Technologies (IT) Division completed the upgrade of desktops and other devices throughout the organization to Windows-10.

Beginning 16 March 2020

Accounting/Finance

In March 2020, CA opted not to bill for memberships while our facilities were closed, producing a revenue loss of approximately \$3 million per month. The Director of Finance/Treasurer led department directors in implementing immediate expense reduction measures, including postponing capital projects for the remainder of FY 2020 (30 April 2020) and limiting capital spending for FY 2021. The Finance team also led the organization in updating projections – revenues, expenses and capital spending – for the end of FY 2020 and, ultimately, for a significantly revised FY 2021 budget.

The Finance team worked with the Department of Sport and Fitness, Department of Communications and Marketing, and the Information Technology (IT) Division to manage the membership billing cycle, as CA began to bill memberships in May, June and September. The Finance team also worked with the Department of Community Services to issue refunds for FY21 camps (summer 2020) that were cancelled due to COVID-19.

The Finance team closed on a new bank financing package for CA in late June.

The Finance team led the virtual external audit process for FY 2020 for both the financial statements and the 401K Plan, which were completed on time and with good results.

The Annual Charge team produced, printed and mailed the annual charge invoices, matching the same timeline from prior years. The team also transitioned tax credit and refund procedures to virtual processes.

Human Resources and Learning & Organizational Development (HR)

In response to closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HR Division assisted department directors in assessing staffing requirements and implementing pay reductions, layoffs, and furloughs that resulted in a 70% reduction in payroll expenses. The HR Division supported team members impacted by these difficult decisions by providing information about CA's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and invaluable guidance in navigating the State of Maryland's notoriously unresponsive unemployment insurance system.

HR researched an alternative to the unemployment system dysfunction and led the organization through the application process for the Workshare program, which was approved in late June. The Workshare program facilitates more timely unemployment benefit payments, including the \$600 weekly federal component.

HR worked with other CA leaders to finalize the *Reopening Playbook*, and conducted training and safety mitigation for team members returning to work in mid-May, as the Governor Hogan allowed various facilities to reopen.

The Learning and Organizational Development team developed and produced an e-newsletter, which was sent monthly to all team members covering information on coping with COVID-19, opportunities for learning and connection, and other timely content.

Additionally, the HR team launched several initiatives and addressed a steady stream of challenges during 2020:

- Updated and deployed annual ethics and compliance refresher training, covering code of business conduct, discrimination and harassment, ADA, diversity and respect, data security, workplace violence prevention, and reporting ethics violations.
- Promoted virtual activities for the 3rd Annual CX Day (customer experience/service) celebration, including developing a video recognizing customer service “Super Heroes” nominated by their peers and managers.
- In August, led the organization through a second reduction in force due to the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by steps to ensure CA’s continued participation in the Workshare program.
- Launched a survey among team members (anonymous) to gather insights and other perspectives about diversity, equity and inclusion at CA, followed by related conversations with team members.

Information Technology

The Information Technology (IT) Division spent many hours working to expand CA’s remote work capabilities (hardware, software, and communications), as well as to test alternatives and provide instructions to team members, some of whom were working remotely for the first time.

Working remotely, except for emergency situations, IT team members continue to manage and monitor the use of and security for CA’s network services and data. All internal systems and CA partner applications are performing without interruption.

The IT Division provided technical support and meeting-access information to CA Board members for the first-ever virtual meetings of CA’s Board of Directors.

The IT Division, using Virtru External Gateway, further improved CA’s cyber security by enacting mandatory encryption on external emails that may contain confidential information. Additionally, to improve reporting of results for follow-up, the team extended its development footprint into KnowBe4, an application used for cyber security training and testing.

Purchasing

The Purchasing Division researched and sourced materials and supplies needed for reopening CA’s facilities and headquarters, including disinfectants, PPE for team members, plastic shields for customer-facing spaces, etc.

The Purchasing Division completed the procurement process for a new operator for the Columbia Horse Center, with the contract signed and a transition plan in place prior to 31 December 2020.

The Division led the Board of Directors through the request for proposal process and assisted in hiring Baker Tilly, the search firm that will lead recruitment and selection steps for a new President/CEO.

Department of Sport and Fitness

Recognition

In February 2020, the United States Tennis Association (USTA) selected Columbia Association as the recipient of the Mid-Atlantic's Outstanding League Tennis Facility Award for 2019. The award recognizes a tennis organization for supporting and promoting the growth and development of USTA leagues in the Mid-Atlantic region, which includes Maryland, Virginia, Washington, DC, and parts of West Virginia.

In November 2020, the USTA featured a story on Columbia Association, which highlighted the extensive safety mechanisms, protocols and other procedures in place, as well as the successful overall return to play.

Reopenings

Following the mid-March shutdown, golf, outdoor tennis, and the SportsPark reopened for play on 14 May. All indoor facilities, with the exception of the Ice Rink, reopened on 20 June. The Ice Rink opened for programming on 15 July and for general use on 4 October.

Aquatics

Following USA swimming guidelines, the Aquatics Division was able to restart a portion of the Clippers Swim Team program on 20 June. Practice groups were expanded in mid-July, and full winter training began on 31 August.

CA's five indoor pools opened on 20 June. An online reservation system for lap swimming, recreation swimming, and aqua fitness helped members register safely for pool time, while adjusting to COVID-19 guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and the State of Maryland.

SportsPark

In coordination with Howard County's virtual school schedule, the SportsPark opened on Wednesdays for parents to bring their children for an outdoor physical activity. This offering has been very successful, with an average of 60 participants each Wednesday.

Since mid-October, the SportsPark has hosted 11 different baseball teams for rentals or token purchases. Coaches for the teams have plans to continue using the cages in the spring.

Personal Training

The Personal Training program launched a new activity on 2 November entitled "Columbia Athlete Performance Program" (CAPP). CAPP focuses on working with middle and high school athletes to develop strength, speed and agility in preparation for their return to sports.

TRIBE Team Training for Season 7 was relaunched using a hybrid format. A maximum of five participants is allowed in the studio during each session, while virtual participants are simultaneously coached.

Supreme Sports Club

KidSpace brought back "Adventure Day" to provide families with a day camp option when schools and School Age Service programs are closed.

Office of General Counsel

The Office of General Counsel expended a significant amount of time handling the variety of legal issues impacting CA as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. The Office also drafted, reviewed, revised, negotiated and finalized numerous contracts and other legal agreements for all departments of the organization.

The Office is currently handling 42 active covenant enforcement cases, of which 9 are in litigation and 33 are in pre-litigation. The Architectural Resource Committee (“ARC”) met 7 times (three meetings were conducted via Zoom) and reviewed 15 cases, of which 13 were accepted. The remaining 2 were declined or withdrawn. Ten covenant cases were closed. The Office also worked with the ten villages’ covenant advisors and managers on matters related to covenant enforcement practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Office analyzed the impact of and determined appropriate CA positions on 27 pieces of state legislation, and also monitored Howard County Council bills.

The Office continues to work with the Department of Open Space and Facility Services to develop and implement steps to abate property owner encroachments on CA open space, especially in circumstances where the department has been unsuccessful in reaching a resolution with the encroaching property owner.

The Office continues to work with the Department of Administrative Services to recover past due annual charge assessments through the enforcement of liens filed in the Howard County land records under the Maryland Contract Lien Act. At the end of calendar year 2019, there were 84 liens outstanding.

In 2020, past due annual charge assessments were paid on 14 accounts on which liens had been filed. Upon payment, liens are released.

Department of Open Space and Facility Services

Construction Services

Budget constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the focus to construction projects deemed necessary to maintain the safety and operations of our facilities. Major construction projects for 2020 included the completion of new TRIBE fitness and cycle studios at the Columbia Gym and the replacement of the ADA entrance ramp at Oakland Manor. Other notable projects included:

- Replacement and remodeling projects at Kahler Hall (one of which was completed prior to mid-March); Claret Hall (one of which was completed prior to mid-March); the Other Barn; Owen Brown Community Center; Hawthorn Center; and the Horse Center.
- Roof Replacements: Replaced roofs, gutters and downspouts at Fairway Hills Clubhouse and Maintenance facility, Kendall Ridge Pool, Thunder Hill Neighborhood Center, Bryant Woods Neighborhood Center, the Columbia Art Center, and Stonehouse.
- Pond Dedication: Dedication of wet ponds to be maintained by Howard County as public infrastructure is an ongoing cost saving measure. During 2020, the following ponds were turned over to Howard County for future maintenance: Proud Foot Pond, Bowl Pond, Pushcart

Pond, Shaker Pond, and Wayover Pond. Five additional wet ponds are currently in various states of the dedication process.

- Pond Sediment Removal: Bowl Pond forebays.
- Bridges: Replacements in Harpers Choice-HCBBR-19 (Mystic Court); Hickory Ridge-HRBR-32 (College Square), HRBR-17 (Yellow Bell), HRBR-25 (Shell Flower); River Hill-RHBR10 (Summer Sun Rise), RHBR-36 (Trailing Moss), RHBR-24 (Full moon Ride); Owen Brown-OBBR-11 (Seeding Lane); Oakland Ridge-ORBR-01 (Rumsey Road) and ORBR-07 Red Branch Road).
- Pathways - 2,420 linear feet (lf) of replacement: Dorsey Search (155lf), Hickory Ridge (590lf), Owen Brown (680lf), and Town Center (995lf).

Open Space Operations

Team members in Open Space Operations have navigated many operational challenges during the pandemic, including increased usage of CA's pathways and parks. Services were reduced due to modified work schedules, furloughs, and unfilled positions. Resources were committed to priority tasks, such as trash services, maintenance at all three lakes, mowing of designated high priority areas, and safety-related upkeep and repairs.

The Open Space team successfully completed the closing and subsequent reopening of tot lots, basketball courts, tennis courts, and the Columbia Dog Park.

Energy and Sustainability

CA's energy management program continued to advance our commitment to environmental sustainability in 2020. Our achievements represent CA's broader leadership in corporate social responsibility. Notable energy management projects completed include:

- Installation of solar photovoltaic systems at Slayton House and the Long Reach Tennis Club;
- Completion of LED lighting retrofits at Linden Hall, Claret Hall, and Stonehouse;
- Installation of ENERGY STAR® HVAC units at Supreme Sports Club, Claret Hall, Other Barn, and the River Hill Meeting Room;
- Completion of a total audio and video renovation of the Slayton House Theater; and
- Continuing to offset 100 percent of our electricity usage with clean solar and wind sources.

CA's efforts received national recognition with a 2020 ENERGY STAR Excellence Award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. CA has reduced its energy usage by more than 20% and its carbon footprint by 55% since 2012.

Watershed

Major activities included improving our open spaces by treating storm water runoff at several locations, and further reducing streambank erosion by addressing several badly eroding sites. Specific projects included:

- Bioretention facilities: Built at Faulkner Ridge Circle #2
- Stream Stabilization: Started construction on SHA stream stabilization projects in Harper's Choice and Town Center. Completed stream weir restoration project above Jackson Pond in Long Reach. Completed Rustling Leaf stream restoration above Lake Elkhorn.
- Rain Gardens: Built nine rain gardens in 2020, bringing the total number to 438.

- Resident Engagement: Programs continued for “Bugs that Bite” meetings, Weed Warrior training programs, Weed Warrior “Pull and Plants” events, pollinator gardens, and plant swaps and test your lawn.

Department of Community Services

Columbia Art Center

Columbia Art Center closed to the public in mid-March and reopened in October, with a limited range of programs and workshops, including a homeschool mixed media class that meets weekly, an advanced fused glass class, sampling ceramics workshops, and stained glass sampling workshops.

Columbia Art Center recently earned an Honorable Mention honor for Best Gallery in the “*Best of Howard County*” for 2020.

Columbia Maryland Archives

In February 2020, the Archives hosted its 2nd Annual Black History Month Program entitled “*Reflections and Current Perspectives of the Columbia Experience on African American College Students.*”

In 2020, Lela J. Sewell-Williams, manager of the Archives, was selected to serve on the Board of Directors of the Howard County Historical Society.

The Archives launched its online database to provide web searching of the Archives collections database. Concurrent with the launch, the name for the Archives was changed from Columbia Archives to *Columbia Maryland Archives*. The new name clarifies the purpose of the Archives, which is to serve as the repository of information related to the history of Columbia, Maryland.

International Exchange and Multicultural Program

The International Exchange and Multicultural program cancelled the summer exchange. However, the program implemented virtual international book clubs and language cafes, using a format where native speakers teach participants in several different languages.

School Age Services

School Age Services (SAS) cancelled its program in mid-March 2020 due to the closing of Howard County Public Schools. With distance learning taking place for most of the 2020 school year, SAS implemented an all-day child care program, serving approximately 60 children per week at three different schools.

Volunteer Center Serving Howard County

Prior to mid-March, Volunteer Center Serving Howard County coordinated six on-site volunteer opportunities for Martin Luther King Day, with 155 volunteers serving 236 verified hours; hosted a Roundtable discussion with representatives from local Rotary Clubs, the Lions Club, and Kiwanis Club to learn how to support each other’s service to the community and what types of service projects are preferred; and provided training to more than 200 people.

Youth and Teen Center

The Youth and Teen Center and Howard County Police Department hosted a Community IRON CHEF competition in March, with groups of police officers and youth teaming up to be crowned Top Chefs. Local chefs were invited to serve as judges and local officials invited as guests.

During the pandemic and its closure, the Teen Center has implemented virtual meetings with teens and collaborated with the Columbia Art Center for “Lights out After School” in which 30 teens participated in an outdoor activity.

Other Closure Information

Summer camps and the Lakefront Festival activities were cancelled during the summer of 2020 due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time.

During the closure, the Columbia Maryland Archives, Art Center, Camps, Teen Center, and School Age Services programs maintained connections to the community by way of virtual programming through *CA at home*. To help everyone stay active, content was uploaded biweekly to engage children and adults in arts and crafts, nature activities, Columbia history, and family programming.

Department of Communications and Marketing

Communications and Marketing launched the “*Live Life Larger*” branding project, which provided a cohesive message for community involvement, growth, and achievement through interaction with CA programs and facilities.

In August, Tim Pinel, as Chief Marketing Officer, and Dannika Rynes, as Senior Manager of Media Relations and Communications, joined the department.

Under the new leadership, the department began a reorganization to better serve the community. New audience channels in social media and email newsletters are being launched to provide depth in niche interest areas across major sports and recreation venues, such as golf, tennis, aquatics and fitness, as well as families/parents. In 2021, the team will the launch new arts and culture channels in anticipation of a re-emergence of local events and social activities. Also, there will be improvements to the organization’s website and further efforts focusing on community engagement. Efforts are already underway to identify and enable digital and online platforms for all stakeholders.

During the closure of CA’s facilities, programs and activities due to the pandemic, and throughout the subsequent re-openings, the Department of Communications and Marketing (DCM) supported the Columbia community via the following:

- Customer and Member Service Center (CMSC): Team members worked remotely and flexibly staffed to ensure a one-day or better response to incoming emails and telephone messages.
- Reopening Support: DCM prepared all signage, social media announcements and web site updates to communicate reopening of CA facilities, along with regular updates to protocols and participation requirements.
- CA at home: DCM continues to increase the number of on-line fitness and wellness videos and family activities programming with content furnished by the Departments of Sport and Fitness and Community Services. Information is available at <https://www.columbiaassociation.org/blog/ca-at-home/>

Office of Planning and Community Affairs

Planning and Development

Howard County meetings pertaining to development applications were temporarily put on hold during the start of the COVID pandemic, and have now resumed in a virtual capacity. The Office of Planning and Community Affairs (OPCA) continued to review draft plans, comment on development proposals, and “attend” planning-related public meetings during 2020. OPCA continues to prepare and distribute the *Development Tracker*, which is used by CA’s Board of Directors and the community to monitor development proposals and associated public meetings.

E-Scooters

As Howard County seeks to introduce e-scooter micro-mobility, OPCA worked with the Office of Transportation and an interested operator, Spin, to understand the implications of e-scooters and how they would affect Columbia pathways, trails, and land uses. After many months of coordination and discussion with community partners (Howard Hughes, Howard Community College, Howard County General Hospital, and more), as well as internal CA departments, OPCA recommended updates to CA’s open space policy and a one-year licensing agreement with Spin, pending their ultimate approval by the County. E-scooters are expected to launch in Howard County in spring 2021.

Bicycle & Pedestrian

OPCA continues to represent CA on Howard County’s Bicycle Advisory Group (BAG), as well as the Complete Streets work group that developed policy language and implementation strategy for the County’s Complete Streets Policy and Design Manual update. In house, OPCA completed final analysis of pathway user data collected during the past six years through the annual count program. OPCA is now developing a next generation of the count program to be implemented in calendar year 2021, which will focus on year-round data collection at select sites.

New Town Planning & Visioning

In spring 2020, OPCA retained a consultant team to hold workshops with CA’s Board of Directors (Board) and representatives from the 10 community village associations, with the goal of gaining a better understanding of best planning practices in mature master planned communities and facilitating a conversation regarding what the Board sees as the vision for the Columbia community to the future. The seven workshops offered educational topics and were an avenue for discussions about priorities of the community, such as housing, open space, and growth. A final report will be provided in January 2021 to the Board. The report will serve as a resource for the Board, capturing the priorities from the workshops and highlighting the community’s values and a shared point of view for the future.

Thought of the Month

“All endings are also beginnings. We just do not know it at the time.”

Mitch Albom

Author, Journalist, Philanthropist, and Broadcaster

Safe, Healthy, and Happy Holidays from CA