

# A Brief History of Oakmont Controversies and Next Door

This history is primarily for residents who have moved to Oakmont since 2015, although it may be helpful for some longer term residents. Many new residents sign up for Next Door because they want to be able to ask questions and get recommendations on restaurants, wineries, service people, etc. When new residents get on Next Door, they find many posts criticizing current and past OVA Boards.

Several neighbors have volunteered to me that they think our OVA Boards are bad and need to be changed. When I asked why, they said that they have heard about it on Next Door.

There is a historical reason that Next Door discussions have been dominated by critics, naysayers, and people angry at OVA Boards. When Next Door came to Oakmont, about 2015, its organizers and moderators were part of a group very unhappy with the then-current General Manager, Cassie Turner, and with dues increases being made by the Board. Leaders and organizers of this group included Greg Gewalt, Ken Heymann, Greg Goodwin, Kerry and Karen Oswald, and Ellen Leznik. They attended OVA Board meetings, where they made presentations that were uniformly critical of the Board, often intemperate and loud. They used Next Door to post their criticisms. Their Next Door moderators censored and suppressed posts they didn't like. Their followers swarmed over anyone posting dissenting opinions. I was banned from the site.

In 2015 the opposition group found a wedge issue: proposed construction of pickleball courts near the central swimming pool. When their attacks began in earnest, the new pickleball facility was estimated to cost \$300,000. It was condemned as being too great an expense for the benefit of too few people. The Board that approved it was attacked as being arrogant, out of touch, and unresponsive to public input.

The opposition group succeeded in electing Ellen Leznik and Gloria Young to the Board in 2016. Then, in 2017 it elected Greg Goodwin, Ken Heymann, and Carolyn Bettencourt, giving them a majority on the Board. Ellen Leznik was elected President, Ken Heymann Vice President, and Carolyn Bettencourt Secretary.

What followed was a combination of incompetence, antagonism, meanness, and chaos. The same day the election results were announced and the new Board seated, Heymann and Leznik went to the pickleball court site and ordered construction to halt. This was done without Board approval or consideration of the penalties Oakmont would pay for breaking its construction contract.

Leznik and Heymann harassed Cassie Turner, a much admired General Manager, until she left and filed a suit against the OVA (which a later Board settled for an undisclosed sum).

Ellen Leznik started the July, 2017 OVA Board meeting with a long rant villifying those who opposed her Board. You can watch her rant at <https://tinyurl.com/OVA717Video> (minutes 02:40 to 09:30). Watching the entire video will give one a good feeling for the divisiveness, antagonism, and incompetence that characterized the Leznik Board. Shortly after this meeting Ellen Leznik resigned.

Three other Board members resigned in 2017. Ken Heymann resigned before the next election, in January 2018, and then sued a former Board member, Cassie Turner, and others damages.

The OVA went through three treasurers, lost its legal counsel of 35 years, and spent over \$100,000 on legal expenses. No major repairs, upgrades, or new facilities were undertaken. After campaigning against dues increases, dues were increased by \$7 per month.

The chaos that enveloped the Board and much of the Oakmont community in 2017 was over a facility estimated to cost \$300,000 to perhaps \$350,000. At the higher estimate, this would have amounted to a one-time cost per resident of \$74. This was for a long-lasting facility, and its cost should appropriately be amortized over the life of the facility. If spread over just 10 years, the cost per member per month would have been 62¢ cents.

How could so much anger, attack, and ill will be created over such a modest expense? It seems a mystery, but not one that most residents who experienced it want to repeat.