

THE BOARDROOM

CELEBRATING 26 YEARS OF EDUCATING THE PRIVATE CLUB INDUSTRY

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Distinguished Clubs from BOARDROOM magazine

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Distinguished President of the Year

Diane Exter

Frenchman's Creek Beach and Country Club

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BEL-AIR BAY CLUB

Frenchman's Creek Beach and Country Club's Diane Exter

BoardRoom's Distinguished Club President for 2022

So... we're going to end up in a very different place than we had envisioned 20 months ago. But thanks to the hard work put in by the board, clubhouse committee, management and the club's professional consultants, along with a focus on transparency, communication and inclusiveness, we can look forward to moving into a beautiful new clubhouse sometime in the summer of 2025 and beginning an exciting new chapter in the life of our club.

Those words encapsulate Diane Exter's achievements as Frenchman's Creek Beach and Country Club President and highlight her selection as *BoardRoom magazine's Distinguished Club President for 2022*.

BoardRoom magazine this year is recognizing 24 Private Club Presidents of the Year – 2022 for practicing what they preach – leadership for the betterment of their clubs – board presidents or chairs who serve as their club's volunteer leaders.

It's the 15th year *BoardRoom magazine* has recognized the industry's top private club presidents for their outstanding work. *BoardRoom* received nominations and applications from different clubs throughout the United States and other locations worldwide.

"The selection of the top 23 presidents and Diane Exter as our *Distinguished Club President* signifies another successful search through the nomination of leaders who have contributed so much to their private clubs and their member experience," expressed John Fornaro, *BoardRoom magazine's* publisher and CEO.

"We honor board leaders, exemplary individuals, who go beyond the basic requirements of governance and work collaboratively with the club's management. The award underscores the role that a board president and her leadership play in driving a club's success and contributing to the club's long-term health." ➤



*Distinguished
President*

PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT: DIANE EXTER, FRENCHMAN'S CREEK BEACH AND COUNTRY CLUB PRESIDENT
MILES TUCKER, FRENCHMAN'S CREEK BEACH AND COUNTRY CLUB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / COO

Diane's professionalism has been evident from the start of her term as president. Her commitment to the job, attention to detail, focus on establishing clear goals, the inclusion of all board members in the process and her focus on achieving our objectives has made her a successful board president. Working with her over the last three years has been a real pleasure. She's a true role model for all board members.

-Michael Azeez, board member

Frenchman's Creek Beach and Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens, FL, offers an intriguing history. In the 1930s, the Hoyt family named the creek flowing through their property Frenchman's Creek after one of the family matriarch's favorite romance novels.

The name, Frenchman's Creek, stuck when developers opened the club in 1986 and again in 1991 when the membership acquired the facility, except for the yacht club and marina.

Today 606 homes on 770 acres are built around two highly regarded championship golf courses and practice facilities. In addition, residents enjoy a vibrant, healthy lifestyle offered by 14 Har-Tru tennis courts, six Har-Tru pickleball courts, and a 14,000 square-foot fitness, wellness and aquatics center with state-of-the-art equipment, lessons, clinics, Pilates and personal training. For boating enthusiasts, many homes offer deep-water ocean access.

As an all-inclusive single-membership club, Frenchman's Creek offers a community of friendships and interactive social pursuits that helps minds stay as nimble as the body.

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

"The non-profit private club industry is the most difficult industry to be a board member or manager. Board members, who are also the shareholders (owners) of the club, are also the customers. Often fraught with conflicts of interest, a private club can be very challenging to manage," Fornaro added.

"Through collaborative governance, the general manager, the club's president and the board members are meant to work collaboratively. We recognize board presidents that don't delve into micromanaging.

"Micromanagement is not only frustrating for management, but also wastes board members' often limited time to do their actual job, which is direct-

ing ... setting policy, and *not managing* the organization or operations. That's management's job," Fornaro emphasized.

"This is a wonderful achievement for Diane Exter," acknowledged Gordon Welch, APCD, the spearhead behind the Boardroom Institute, the online training arm for private club board members.

"Congratulations. The *Association of Private Club Directors* (APCD) is thrilled to recognize this outstanding achievement and award," he added.

The impetus for *BoardRoom's* top president recognition program comes from its sponsors, the *Association of Private Club Directors*, the parent organization of *Boardroom magazine*, and Kopplin Kuebler & Wallace, one of the country's leading private club industry consultants and executive search firms.

Dick Kopplin, Kurt Kuebler and Tom Wallace, partners with Kopplin, Kuebler & Wallace, have been involved with *BoardRoom's* outstanding presidents' program from day one and based on their work with private clubs, have an exceptional grasp on the nuances and requirements of private club governance.

"Our firm's almost 27 years of connectivity to the top club boards, specifically top club presidents, finds us impressed every year with their unwavering commitment to improving their clubs by focusing hard to ensure great governance practices are used and a culture of stewardship exists," expressed Tom Wallace.

"The leadership we continue to see is truly impressive. That's why we are so thrilled to support *BoardRoom magazine* in honoring these volunteer leaders who give so much of their time and energy to improve their club. We also appreciate the stable working environment these leaders provide their management team and staff," he added.

"I've had the good fortune of getting to know Diane and seeing first-hand the positive impact she has had on Frenchman's Creek, leading the effort to gain support for a significant new clubhouse and guiding the club through the transition from a successful long-time, retiring club executive to the next generation," commented Kurt Kuebler, partner with Kopplin Kuebler & Wallace.

"Managing expectations, process and myriad other key issues was a Herculean effort and her dedication and patience made it all happen in a very positive way!"

It's been an interesting period for Diane Exter, as the first female president of Frenchman's Creek Beach and Country Club. She assumed the president's role as the highly charged debate over whether to renovate or rebuild the club's aging clubhouse reached peak intensity.

"It surprised me when we first joined Frenchman's that there were so few women on the club's board of governors and that there had never been a woman president," said Exter. "As president, I don't believe my gender differentiates me as much as my leadership style and approach do. We're a community of 606 homes and 1,100 neighbors. I feel I need to hear from those neighbors and they need to hear from me.

"I'm focused on *transparency, communication, and inclusiveness*. Each week I communicate via emails, texts, calls, and in-person chats with many members who voice their concerns, complaints, and compliments. This frequent and regular communication gives me a good sense of the pulse of the community," Exter explained.

Also, Exter and executive director/COO Miles Tucker host a monthly "Meet the President" forum to discuss hot topics and answer members' questions. These meetings are videoed and a link sent out via email, enabling members to hear the questions and answers. ➤

Diane became president of Frenchman's Creek during the most tumultuous period of the club's storied history. The debate over whether our clubhouse should be renovated or replaced was raging. It had even boiled over into a few incidents of incivility in a community in which respect for others had always been the operating principle.

Strong disagreements exacerbated this tumult among board members. Diane took over with the goal of developing a process that would enable us to reach a decision on the clubhouse issue, which would ultimately be supported by a substantial majority of the members and at least be respected as fair by those in dissent.

While it is never possible to please everyone in a community with demographics and interests as diverse as ours, Diane has succeeded in realizing the goal through a combination of tenacity, extraordinarily hard work, attention to member concerns, and above all, unprecedented transparency concerning her actions and those of the board.

-Marty Krall, board member

After the board came to a unanimous determination that the significant structural and environmental deficiencies found in the existing building would unacceptably increase the costs and risks of renovation, Diane's focus turned to achieving consensus among the group as to the best course of action for the club.

This led to a (also unanimous) decision to rebuild the clubhouse instead, a decision ultimately approved by three-quarters of the membership. Since then, the club's leaders (both paid and volunteer) have moved in a unified fashion through the demolition of the old clubhouse to the finalization of plans for the new clubhouse and – coming soon – another vote of the membership to approve the final project budget and construction plans.

“Another challenge we have faced since the vote is a dramatic increase in building materials and labor costs because of pandemic-related supply chain issues, the war in Ukraine (which drove significant increases in stainless steel and energy prices), and an inflationary economy overall.

“We'll need the membership to approve additional funding to complete the project. We're optimistic that we will have continued strong membership support for the new clubhouse when an updated plan is presented in January 2023 and a final vote is taken. This is the last but very important step before we can start construction,” she added.

About three months into her tenure as president, the club's long-time COO and executive director determined that the moment was right for his retirement. This cleared the way for the search for a new COO/ED.

“Hiring a top-notch executive director and COO with the vision to take Frenchman's Creek to the next level remained one of the board's most important goals over the past 20 months,” expressed Exter.

The search eventually took Miles Tucker, after 10 years at Hillcrest Country Club in Los Angeles, across the country, to join Frenchman's Creek as COO/ED in April 2022.

“Miles presented a well-thought-out vision for our club and it was clear he had the experience and expertise to continue, and indeed improve, its reputation as a top-tier club,” she added.

One of the things that most impressed Diane about Miles' application was his approach to aligning the efforts of the club's paid and volunteer leaders through a SMART goals process...a subject he has presented on at the CMAA World Conference, and one very much in keeping with Exter's leadership philosophy.

Both Tucker and Exter believe that sharing the committees' goals and the progress made against them leads to greater transparency and organizational alignment. In the first year of her term as president, she made shared annual board goals a priority: in the second year of her term, this practice has expanded to include the COO and the members of the executive team.

“The establishment and monitoring of goals which are shared with the community is also an important exercise for the board of governors, for Miles as COO, and for executive managers as well,” Exter explained.

This year the board approved the engagement of GGA Partners to develop a comprehensive strategic plan which will encompass vision, mission, long term capital projects, club operations, financial capabilities, governance, market and member analysis, and branding. Part of this process will include member focus groups and surveys to determine what the community is looking for.

“The development of a shared community vision will drive the way we operate. This is a major priority for the board and for me, and is timed to roll out in concert with the club's new world-class facilities,” injected executive director Tucker.

President Exter has also focused on the growth and development of the club's management, which is another priority she shares with Tucker.

“Diane has also been 100 percent supportive of another priority of mine, which is the engagement of an executive leadership coach (with whom I had worked with very successfully in the past) to support my development as a leader and to maximize the alignment between my management team and the board,” Tucker added.

“Frenchman's Creek believes in actively supporting the continuing education, growth and development of all employees, and Miles and his team will benefit significantly from this philosophy,” offered Exter.

“In addition, we've collaborated on various board development initiatives, with the ultimate goal of ensuring the board's roles and responsibilities are well defined and that Miles and his team are empowered to run the club's day-to-day operations without being micromanaged,” she stressed. ➤

Diane has been a truly transformative leader for our club, leaving no stone unturned in the pursuit of building consensus on critical strategic issues at the board level and community-wide.

-Bob Scherer, board member

It is a pleasure to serve alongside Diane on the board of governors. As club president, she has set clear goals for the community and has worked diligently to achieve them. She came into office at a time marked by major change and navigating through COVID-19. Diane makes sure all voices in the community are heard at each step and for each issue. She is a consensus builder and is willing to roll up her sleeves to get the hard stuff done. And anyone who has served on a community board knows how difficult that can be. Diane has effectively managed through a period of transformational change that will serve Frenchman's Creek for years to come.

-Ellen Malasky, board member

I am proud to serve on the Frenchman's Creek board of governors with Diane as our president. Diane draws upon each board member's strengths and skills to keep us driving toward common goals and has inspired each of us to engage the community in the important work of making Frenchman's Creek the best it can be. Diane also sees it as a priority to ensure that our community is welcoming to both new and long-standing members. She has been an outstanding club leader at a time when we face numerous challenges but also exciting opportunities.

-Jill Kremer, board member

"Identifying clear and distinct roles for the board and management has long been a priority for me," explained Tucker. "I've been pleased to find in Diane a strong partner in ensuring that the Board stays focused on policy and guidelines and leaves managing to the managers." In other words, no micromanaging!

The club recently engaged multiple consultants to guide the board on club governance best practices.

"We've also placed a meaningful focus on this issue in the strategic planning process which we are currently working through," she said. In addition, management has been fortunate to have the complete support of Diane and the board in establishing clear roles and responsibilities for the paid and volunteer leaders of the club, an example of which has been the decision-making matrix that has been developed for our \$90 million clubhouse project.

In this matrix, management has full authority to approve change orders up to a set monetary value/scheduling impact limit, with the construction committee then being able to approve management's recommendations to a higher threshold. The full board becomes involved only when the cost or scheduling implications of the change are truly significant.

"Miles and I share a belief that the establishment of clear guidelines such as this ensures that management is empowered to drive the project in real time, with the board supporting the process and honoring its fiduciary responsibilities," Exter stressed.

So, it's been an interesting couple of years for President Exter and Frenchman's Creek Beach and Country Club and no doubt her engagement will continue.

"Our neighbors are highly accomplished people and have much to offer," Exter expressed. "At the beginning of each fiscal year, the president chooses the committee chairs. In the past, there was very little turnover among the committee chairs, as well as the members of each committee. When I became president, I asked the newly appointed committee chairs to diversify their committees by age, tenure, and gender, which promoted greater inclusion of the full community and enabled a broader swath of the membership to participate in the life of the club.

"In the old clubhouse (before it was demolished) we had pictures of the past presidents on the boardroom wall....none of whom were women. So, when the new clubhouse is built, I will be the first woman 'on the wall.' I'm very confident, however, that I will not be the last," Exter concluded. **BR** ➤



Clockwise top left: Ellen Malasky, Jeffrey Parker, Martin Krall, Diane Exter (President), Herb Selzer, Bob Annunziata, Miles Tucker (COO), Jeffrey Maurer, Jeffrey Glazer, Gale Salz, Jill Kremer, Stewart Friedman, Michael Azeez.

Not pictured: Bob Scherer, Harvey Schulweis, Jonathan Mayblum

Leadership Style Differentiates President Diane Exter

After an eight-year search for a home at Frenchman's, Diane and her husband Neil finally found 'the one' and purchased it in March 2015.

Now Florida residents, they enjoy the many aspects of the Frenchman's lifestyle and social culture, including the many great friends they have made, multiple food venues, attentive staff, 36 holes of golf for just 600 homes, Beach Club, Fitness Center & Spa, and tennis courts. They also have a small orchard in their yard where they enjoy growing several kinds of delicious fruit year-round.

Before moving to Florida, where she's been solely focused on her work for Frenchman's Creek, Diane was actively involved for many years in the Boston area in promoting and supporting the two causes about which she is most passionate - Jewish communities and inner-city education.

She served as board chair of City Year Boston, which puts idealistic young professionals in Boston schools for a year of service, and as a board member of Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP), where she co-chaired the Commission for Strategic Priorities (the organization's primary allocation committee).

Diane was also a board member and treasurer of uAspire, an organization dedicated to increasing college affordability for inner-city students. She also served on the United Way board in Boston, where she developed and chaired an inner-city scholarship program.

Diane and Neil are also members of Belmont Country Club, just outside of Boston, where she served on the board as treasurer during a

period of financial stress for the club. She oversaw the refinancing of the club's debt, working closely with management to reduce expenses while maintaining a very high level of service. She also spearheaded a new member engagement initiative with the goal of increasing the size of the membership.

Diane is a retired partner and managing director of Bain Capital. One of the original co-founders of Bain Capital's debt business, originally known as Sankaty Advisors (now Bain Capital Credit), she was involved in overall firm management, investment approvals, and the oversight of Sankaty's loan portfolio. Before joining Bain Capital, Diane was a managing director at BankBoston, where she focused on acquisition financing and debt workouts. Diane has a Master of Business Administration from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business.

As club president, Diane has enjoyed the opportunity she's had to work with the others who serve on the board, the club's committees, and with management and staff.

In her words, "We're engaged in a wonderful collaboration with a shared goal of making Frenchman's Creek, this place that we all love, the best that it can be."

Diane and Neil are blessed to have two grown sons and a daughter-in-law. As Diane likes to say, "Life is good!" **BR**

2022 Top Private Club Presidents & Board Chairs of the Year

BoardRoom magazine recognizes 23 presidents as *Private Club Presidents of the Year* and one *Distinguished Club President of the Year* for practicing what they preach – leadership for the betterment of their clubs. Congratulations to all!

Diane Exter	Frenchman's Creek Beach and Country Club	Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Jeffrey S. Bennett	Bald Peak Colony Club	Moultonborough, NH
John Beystehner	Hammock Dunes	Palm Coast, FL
Brock Denton	Kenwood Country Club	Cincinnati, OH
Charles W. Douglas	The Chicago Club	Chicago, IL
John C. Gammage Jr.	Round Hill Club	Greenwich, CT
Ira Green	Houston Country Club	Houston, TX
Robert F. Heiser	Belle Haven Country Club	Alexandria, VA
Dave Higgins, Jr.	Del Paso Country Club	Sacramento, CA
Scott Holden	Pittsburgh Field Club	Pittsburgh, PA
Monika Jain	West Side Tennis Club	Forest Hills, NY
Richard Kayne	Tara Iti Golf Club	Mangawhai, New Zealand
Todd Kennedy	Wilderness Country Club	Naples, FL
Bob Kline	Country Club at DC Ranch	Scottsdale, AZ
Justus Leachman	Meadow Club	Fairfax, CA
Brian Maxwell	Edina Country Club	Edina, MN
Paul Mihailides	The Preserve Club and Residences	Richmond, RI
Elizabeth Mullan	Bel-Air Bay Club	Pacific Palisades, CA
Marian Robson	Terminal City Club	Vancouver, BC, Canada
Corey Rose	Westwood Country Club	Vienna, VA
Bradley Schreier	Grey Oaks Country Club	Naples, FL
Steven M. Schultz	Hollywood Golf Club	Deal, NJ
Bill Turner	Loblolly	Hobe Sound, FL
Charlie Zacharias	Bear Lakes Country Club	West Palm Beach, FL

Private Club Presidents of the Year Major Sponsors

