



introducing

KEYSTONE



**OUR CHAPTER HAS NEW NAME, BUT THE SAME
COMMITMENT TO BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES**

Jonathan H. Katz, Esq. • Hill Wallack, LLC

With apologies to Jay-Z, the chapter's Board of Directors is pleased to announce our chapter's name change to the Keystone Chapter. No longer will we be burdened by that mouthful of a moniker – the Pennsylvania & Delaware Valley chapter.

What started with an idea in a strategic planning session in 2019, led to an exploratory committee being formed in early 2020, and a call to our membership for name suggestions in April 2020. In response, we received numerous suggestions (many very good and only a few not-so-good). All told, there were eighteen unique names suggested. The committee considered all of the suggestions, looking for the names that we felt adequately represented the enormous territory our chapter covers and that would be both eye-catching and representative of our history.

After discussing all of the submissions, the committee narrowed the names down to four contenders: Independence, Keystone, Liberty, and Mid-Atlantic. We requested the input of our members via an online poll in May 2020 and the response was mixed – of those who responded, Keystone received the most votes and Mid-Atlantic was a close second. From there, the Board of

Directors mulled it over with the staff, debated the name, and ultimately voted – unanimously – to select the Keystone Chapter. The new name was approved by the national CAI Board of Trustees, and since then the board and staff have been taking care of the legalities and other work to make the name official.

But before we talk about the name itself, let's take a quick look back at a brief history of the chapter and the chapter's name. In the early 1970s, before the chapter existed, there were approximately 10,000 community associations in the United States, which were made up of 2.1 million residents. And only a fraction of those were in the Delaware Valley. When the chapter was officially formed in 1975, its first name was the Mid-Atlantic Chapter, which included Philadelphia, its surrounding suburbs, and portions of South Jersey and Northern Delaware. In the 1980s, the chapter's name was changed from Mid-Atlantic to the Greater Delaware Valley Chapter. And in the late 1990s, the name was changed again, this time to the Pennsylvania & Delaware Valley chapter to reflect the addition of western Pennsylvania.

Our first paid Executive Director, Pam Bennett, started in the early 1990s. At the time, the chapter could only afford to have her work part-time. With no support staff, she kept the books, managed the funds, and organized and assisted in presenting programs until she left for a full-time job. Marie DiBello was hired in 1997 to replace Pam and would grow the position into a full-time one. The Western



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Pennsylvania chapter, which included Pittsburgh and its southwest suburbs, merged into our chapter in 1998. And the original Pocono chapter, which later became the Northeast Pennsylvania chapter, merged into our chapter in 2002, forming one statewide chapter including all of Pennsylvania, most of South Jersey, and Northern Delaware. Our current Executive Director, Tony Campisi, joined us in December 2003, and has guided us through unprecedented growth for the past seventeen plus years.

According to the 2019 Community Association Fact Book, which is put out by CAI's Foundation for Community Association Research, there are now over 350,000 community associations made up of 73.9 million residents in the United States. In Pennsylvania alone, there are approximately 6,900 associations comprising an estimated 1.3 million residents. What a long way we have come from the 1970s.

But let's get back to that new name. When we put out the poll in April 2020, the description we used to describe the proposed Keystone name was "a hallmark of strength and unity, recognizable in our region." Lofty goals to live up to, indeed.

In doing some research for this article, Communications & Programs Manager Michael Shaw provided me with the remarks that were given at the chapter's 40th anniversary gala in 2015. This quote about the chapter's early years from Past President, Terry W. Clemons, Esq., stuck out to me:

"CAI had an identity problem. Were we a trade association of vendors who provided services to the community association industry or an advocacy group of homeowners, management companies, insurance agents, and attorneys seeking to protect and further the interests of community associations? We came to realize we were (and are) both."

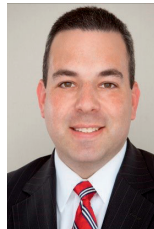
And that is what it comes down to for me – we were and are both. We are homeowner board members and leaders. We are community managers. We are business partners. And we have all come together, as volunteers, to build this chapter to close to 2,000 members (and we are far from done growing). What better symbol for our chapter than a keystone, which not only is the official nickname of

the Commonwealth where we were formed and grew, but has several other meanings, including being a central stone at the summit of an arch, which allows the arch to bear weight, and, harkening back to the region's role in holding together the states of a newly formed Union.

As we discussed when we embarked on this renaming saga, we knew that our task to rename the chapter would be difficult and not everyone would agree. We needed to balance our rich history and the enormity of our chapter while also choosing a name that was aesthetically pleasing. In choosing the name Keystone Chapter, I think we have done that. And, after all, it does flow off the tongue better than Pennsylvania & Delaware Valley chapter.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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