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## **NENA Members Forge Ahead With Legal Effort to Resolve Neighborhood Association Impasse and Have Their Voices Heard and Votes Counted**

The North End Neighborhood Association (NENA) is Boise's oldest neighborhood association. NENA works to preserve and protect the historic, social, cultural, and environmental character of the North End; embrace diversity in the neighborhood; foster civic unity; and represent the interests of those who live and work in the North End. Unfortunately, the actions of a few have silenced the voices of the majority of NENA members.

In March 2021, NENA members held a special meeting election to vote on the removal of five Board Directors. Nearly 800 NENA members participated in the membership vote, and 90 percent voted to remove Sarah Foregger, Daniel Foregger, Carlos Coto, Sitka Koloski, and Tory Spengler from the NENA Board. By contrast, less than 50 verified NENA members voted to elect each of these individuals to the Board. The recalled, or "Holdover," Board Directors, claiming the membership vote was "illegal" and refusing to vacate their board seats, have disenfranchised voting NENA members.

The March membership vote was an expression of an overwhelming number of NENA members exercising their right to choose their directors through a democratic process. It was carefully conducted to ensure a fair and transparent vote and to satisfy NENA's Bylaws and Idaho law. "Our desire was to refocus NENA on the issues that matter to North End neighbors: protect historical values and green spaces, distribute school grants, assist neighbors in need during the economic uncertainties of the pandemic, and put on the popular Hyde Park Street Fair and NENA Garden Tour," said petitioner Laurynda Williams.

In spite of this vote, the Holdover Directors have spurned the democratic principles on which NENA operates and denied members their right to have their vote count. The petitioners, after coordinating a fair and legal removal vote, have an obligation to the members who voted to remove the Directors to seek a declaration from the court that the removal vote was valid and enforceable.

Now North End residents, acting as individuals and members of NENA, have filed a petition in state court to resolve the dispute. The petition asks the court to declare the membership vote removing the Holdover Directors was valid and to order the Holdover Board Directors to vacate their board seats. The Petition is available upon request. In seeking to rebuild NENA, the petitioners also ask the Court to order a special meeting of members to elect a new board so NENA will have a functioning board of directors. "This is the right path forward for NENA. At a time of unprecedented growth in Boise, a strong and cohesive neighborhood advocacy group is essential to protect the North End's unique character and address the challenges we face. With a new election, all interested neighbors can seek Board seats to work for the good of the community," said petitioner Katie Fite.

The petitioners are confident the court will uphold the membership vote removing the Holdover Directors and that the North End community will pull together to advance NENA's mission and overcome the difficulties of the last year.