

MFA FINANCIAL, INC.
Form DEF 14A
April 09, 2019

**UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549**

**SCHEDULE 14A
(Rule 14a-101)**

INFORMATION REQUIRED IN PROXY STATEMENT

SCHEDULE 14A INFORMATION

**Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of the
Securities Exchange Act of 1934
(Amendment No.)**

Filed by the Registrant
Filed by a party other than the Registrant
Check the appropriate box:

- Preliminary Proxy statement
- Confidential, for use of the Commission only (as permitted by Rule 14a-6(e)(2))**
- Definitive Proxy Statement
- Definitive Additional Materials
- Soliciting Material Under Rule 14a-12

MFA Financial, Inc.

(Name of Registrant as Specified in its Charter)

(Name of Person(s) Filing Proxy Statement, if Other Than the Registrant)

Payment of Filing Fee (Check the appropriate box):

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS TO BE HELD ON MAY 22, 2019

To the Stockholders of MFA Financial, Inc.:

The 2019 Annual Meeting of Stockholders (the Annual Meeting) of MFA Financial, Inc., a Maryland corporation (MFA, we or our), will be held at The Lotte New York Palace Hotel, 455 Madison Avenue (between 50th Streets), New York, New York 10022, on Wednesday, May 22, 2019, at 9:00 a.m., New York City time, for the following purposes:

- (1) To elect the three (3) nominees named in the proxy statement to serve on MFA's Board of Directors (the Board) until our 2022 Annual Meeting of Stockholders and until their successors are duly elected and qualify;
 - (2) To consider and vote upon the ratification of the appointment of KPMG LLP as MFA's independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2019;
- (3) To consider and vote upon an advisory (non-binding) resolution to approve MFA's executive compensation as disclosed in the proxy statement; and
- (4) To transact such other business as may properly come before the Annual Meeting or any postponement or adjournment thereof.

The close of business on March 29, 2019, has been fixed by the Board as the record date for the determination of the stockholders entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the Annual Meeting or any postponement or adjournment thereof.

Whether or not you plan to attend in person, in order to assure proper representation of your shares at the Annual Meeting, we urge you to submit your proxy voting instructions to MFA by using our dedicated internet voting website, our toll-free telephone number or, if you prefer, the mail. By submitting your proxy voting instructions promptly, either by internet, telephone or mail, you can help MFA avoid the expense of follow-up mailings and ensure the presence of a quorum at the Annual Meeting. If you attend the Annual Meeting, you may, if so desired, revoke your prior proxy voting instructions and vote your shares in person.

In order to submit proxy voting instructions prior to the Annual Meeting, you have the option of authorizing your proxy (a) through the internet at www.proxyvote.com and following the instructions described on the notice and access card previously mailed to you or on your proxy card, (b) by toll-free telephone at 1-800-690-6903 and following the instructions described on your proxy card or (c) by completing, signing and dating your proxy card and returning it promptly in the postage-prepaid envelope provided.

Your proxy is being solicited by the Board.

By Order of the Board

Harold E. Schwartz
Secretary

New York, New York
April 9, 2019

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PROXY STATEMENT FOR ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS TO BE HELD ON MAY 22, 2019

GENERAL INFORMATION

This Proxy Statement is being furnished to stockholders in connection with the solicitation of proxies by and on behalf of the Board of Directors (the Board) of MFA Financial, Inc., a Maryland corporation (MFA, the Company, we, us), for exercise at MFA's 2019 Annual Meeting of Stockholders (the Annual Meeting) to be held at The Lotte New York Palace Hotel, 455 Madison Avenue (between 50th and 51st Streets), New York, New York 10022, on Wednesday, May 22, 2019, at 9:00 a.m., New York City time, or at any postponement or adjournment thereof.

If a proxy is properly authorized, submitted without specifying any instructions thereon and not revoked prior to the Annual Meeting, the shares of our common stock, par value \$0.01 per share (the Common Stock), represented by such proxy will be voted (i) **FOR** the election of the three (3) directors named in this Proxy Statement to serve on the Board until our 2022 Annual Meeting of Stockholders and until their successors are duly elected and qualify, (ii) **FOR** the ratification of the appointment of KPMG LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the year ending December 31, 2019, and (iii) **FOR** the advisory (non-binding) resolution to approve our executive compensation as disclosed in this Proxy Statement (Say-on-Pay). As to any other business that may properly come before the Annual Meeting or any postponement or adjournment thereof, the persons named as proxy holders on your proxy card will vote the shares of Common Stock represented by properly submitted proxies in their discretion.

This Proxy Statement, the Notice of Annual Meeting of Stockholders and the related proxy card are first being sent and made available to stockholders on or about April 9, 2019.

ANNUAL REPORT

This Proxy Statement is accompanied by our Annual Report to Stockholders for the year ended December 31, 2018, which includes financial statements audited by KPMG LLP, our independent registered public accounting firm, and their report thereon, dated February 21, 2019.

VOTING INFORMATION

Record Date and Outstanding Shares

Stockholders will be entitled to one vote for each share of Common Stock held of record at the close of business on March 29, 2019 (the Record Date), with respect to (i) the election of the three (3) directors named in this Proxy Statement to serve on the Board until our 2022 Annual Meeting of Stockholders and until their successors are duly elected and qualify, (ii) the ratification of the appointment of KPMG LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the year ending December 31, 2019, (iii) the advisory (non-binding) Say-on-Pay vote, and (iv) any other proposal for stockholder action that may properly come before the Annual Meeting or any postponement or

adjournment thereof.

As of the Record Date, we had issued and outstanding 450,482,694 shares of Common Stock.

Ownership of Shares

Stockholders may own shares of Common Stock in one or more of the following ways: (i) directly in their name as the stockholder of record, (ii) indirectly through a broker, bank or other intermediary in street name or (iii) indirectly through the Company's 401(k) Savings Plan (the 401(k) Plan).

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If shares of Common Stock are registered directly in the stockholder's name, we are sending proxy materials directly to the stockholder. As the holder of record, the stockholder has the right to give their proxy directly to our tabulating agent or to vote in person at the Annual Meeting. If the stockholder holds their shares in street name, the stockholder's broker, bank or other intermediary is sending proxy materials to them, and they may direct the intermediary how to vote on their behalf by completing the voting instruction form that accompanies the proxy materials or following the instructions in the notice they received. If the stockholder holds shares through the Company's 401(k) Plan, the proxy includes shares of Common Stock that the 401(k) Plan has credited to the participant's account.

Internet Availability of Proxy Materials

We utilize a notice and access model rather than mailing full sets of proxy materials to all of our stockholders, as we believe, among other things, that the Company benefits from the reduced costs associated with this method of delivery. Thus, pursuant to rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), we are making our proxy materials available to our stockholders electronically over the Internet rather than mailing the proxy materials to all our stockholders. Accordingly, we are sending a Notice Regarding the Availability of Proxy Materials to our stockholders. All stockholders will have the ability to access the proxy materials, including this Proxy Statement and our 2018 Annual Report to Stockholders, on the website referred to in the Notice or to request a printed set of the proxy materials. Instructions on how to access the proxy materials over the Internet or to request a printed set of such materials can be found on the Notice. In addition, stockholders may request to receive proxy materials in printed form by mail or electronically by e-mail on an ongoing basis.

How to Vote

In order to submit proxy voting instructions prior to the Annual Meeting, stockholders have the option to authorize their proxy by internet, telephone or mail. Stockholders are requested to authorize a proxy to vote their shares of our Common Stock at the Annual Meeting by using the dedicated internet voting website or toll-free telephone number provided for this purpose. Specific instructions regarding the internet and telephone voting options are described on the Notice Regarding the Availability of Proxy Materials previously mailed to you and/or on your proxy card.

Alternatively, stockholders may authorize their proxy by completing, signing and dating their proxy card and returning it in the postage-prepaid envelope provided. Stockholders who authorize their proxy by using the internet or telephone voting options do not need to also return a proxy card.

To allow sufficient time for the 401(k) Plan trustee to vote, the trustee must receive voting instructions for shares of Common Stock held through the plan by 11:59 p.m. New York City time on Sunday, May 19, 2019. If the trustee does not receive voting instructions from the 401(k) Plan participant by that date, the trustee will not vote the participant's shares. Accordingly, internet and telephone voting are available through 11:59 p.m. New York City time on May 19, 2019, for shares held in the 401(k) Plan. Internet and telephone voting are available through 11:59 p.m. New York City time on Tuesday, May 21, 2019, for all other shares.

Shares of Common Stock represented by properly submitted proxies received by us prior to the Annual Meeting will be voted according to the instructions specified on such proxies. Any stockholder submitting a proxy retains the power to revoke such proxy at any time prior to its exercise at the Annual Meeting by (i) delivering prior to the Annual Meeting a written notice of revocation to the attention of our Secretary at MFA Financial, Inc., 350 Park Avenue, 20th Floor, New York, New York 10022, (ii) authorizing a later proxy by internet or telephone or submitting a later-dated proxy card or (iii) voting in person at the Annual Meeting. Attending the Annual Meeting will not automatically revoke a stockholder's previously submitted proxy unless such stockholder votes in person at the Annual Meeting.

Quorum and Required Vote

The presence, in person or by proxy, of holders of Common Stock entitled to cast a majority of all the votes entitled to be cast at the Annual Meeting shall constitute a quorum.

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Assuming a quorum is present, the business scheduled to come before the Annual Meeting will require the following affirmative votes:

- (i) with respect to the election of directors, a majority of the total votes cast for and against the election of each nominee;
- (ii) with respect to the ratification of the appointment of our independent registered public accounting firm, a majority of the votes cast on the proposal; and
- (iii) with respect to the advisory (non-binding) Say-on-Pay vote, a majority of the votes cast on the proposal.

Abstentions and Broker Non-Votes

Abstentions and broker non-votes are each included in the determination of the number of shares present at the Annual Meeting for the purpose of determining whether a quorum is present.

An abstention is the voluntary act of directing your proxy to abstain or attending the meeting in person and marking a ballot to abstain.

A broker non-vote occurs when a nominee (i.e., a broker) holding shares for a beneficial owner has not received instructions from the beneficial owner on a particular proposal for which the nominee is not permitted to exercise discretionary voting power under New York Stock Exchange (the NYSE) rules, and therefore, the nominee does not cast a vote on the proposal.

Under NYSE rules, brokers are not permitted to vote shares held in their clients' accounts on elections of directors or the non-binding Say-on-Pay vote (each of which is considered a non-routine matter), unless, in each case, the client (as beneficial owner) has provided voting instructions to the broker. The ratification of the appointment of our independent registered public accounting firm is, however, a proposal for which brokers do have discretionary voting authority. If you hold your shares in street name (i.e., through a broker or other nominee), your broker or nominee will not vote your shares on non-routine matters unless you provide instructions on how to vote your shares. You can instruct your broker or nominee how to vote your shares by following the voting procedures provided by your broker or nominee.

Abstentions and broker non-votes, if any, do not count as votes cast on the election of directors, the ratification of the appointment of KPMG LLP or the advisory (non-binding) Say-on-Pay vote. Accordingly, abstentions and broker non-votes, if any, will have no effect on the election of directors, the ratification of the appointment of KPMG LLP or the advisory (non-binding) Say-on-Pay vote.

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CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Role of the Board

Pursuant to our Charter and Bylaws and the Maryland General Corporation Law, our business and affairs are managed under the direction of the Board. The Board is responsible for establishing broad corporate policies and for our overall performance and direction, but is not involved in our day-to-day operations. Members of the Board keep informed of our business by participating in meetings of the Board and its committees, by, among other things, reviewing analyses, reports and other materials provided to them and through discussions with our chief executive officer (CEO) and other executive officers.

Board Leadership Structure

We currently separate the roles of Chairman of the Board and CEO, with the chairmanship held by a non-executive independent director. Under our Bylaws, the Chairman of the Board does not automatically serve as CEO, and the Chairman may be an executive or non-executive of the Company. At present, our Board believes that the separation of roles, while not required, fosters clear accountability and enhances the Board's oversight of and independence from management, as well as assisting the Board's ability to carry out its roles and responsibilities on behalf of stockholders.

The Board also believes that the current leadership structure fosters effective decision-making and alignment on corporate strategy. In addition, the Board believes that separation of the Chairman and CEO roles strengthens risk management and allows our CEO to focus more of his time and energy on day-to-day management and operations of the business.

Role of the Non-Executive Chairman

George H. Krauss, an independent director, currently serves as our Chairman of the Board. Among other things, the Chairman of the Board: (1) presides at all meetings of the Board; (2) has the authority to call, and will lead, meetings and executive sessions of our independent and non-management directors; (3) consults with the CEO and the Board committee chairs in establishing the agenda for Board and Board committee meetings; (4) helps facilitate communication between the CEO and the Board; (5) acts as a liaison between the Board and management; (6) confirms the Board has a process of periodically assessing the effectiveness of the Board, its committees and individual directors and management; and (7) performs such other functions as may be designated from time to time.

The Chairman of the Board is elected annually by a majority of the directors then serving on the Board at the first meeting of the Board following the annual meeting of stockholders.

Board's Role in Risk Oversight

The Board is responsible for the oversight of MFA's risk management. The Board oversees and monitors MFA's risk management framework and reviews risks that may be material to us. As part of this oversight process, the Board periodically receives reports from management on areas of material risk to MFA, including operational, financial, interest rate, liquidity, credit, market, legal and regulatory, accounting, strategic and cyber (i.e., data protection and information security) risks. The Board receives these reports from the appropriate sources within MFA to enable it to understand our risk identification, risk management and risk mitigation strategies. To the extent applicable, the Board and its committees coordinate their risk oversight roles. As part of its written charter, the Audit Committee of the Board periodically discusses guidelines and policies to govern the process by which risk assessment and risk

management, including major financial risk exposures, are undertaken by MFA and its management, and the Compensation Committee of the Board oversees our compensation programs to ensure that they do not encourage unnecessary or excessive risk taking. The principal goal of these processes is to achieve thoughtful Board-level attention to (i) our risk management process and framework, (ii) the nature of the material risks we face, (iii) the adequacy of our risk management process and framework designed to identify, respond to and mitigate these risks and (iv) as necessary or appropriate, possible changes to our risk management process and framework to react to a fluid business environment.

Director Independence

MFA's Corporate Governance Guidelines (the Governance Guidelines), which have been adopted and are periodically reviewed by the Board, provide that a majority of the directors serving on the Board

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must be independent as affirmatively determined by the Board in accordance with the rules and standards established by the NYSE. In addition, as permitted under the Governance Guidelines, the Board has also adopted certain additional categorical standards (the Independence Standards) to assist it in making determinations with respect to the independence of directors. Based upon its review of all relevant facts and circumstances, the Board has affirmatively determined that seven of our eight current directors, Stephen R. Blank, James A. Brodsky, Richard J. Byrne, Laurie S. Goodman, Alan L. Gosule, Robin Josephs and George H. Krauss, qualify as independent directors under the NYSE listing standards and the Independence Standards. Craig L. Knutson, by virtue of his position as our CEO and President, is not an independent director.

The Independence Standards can be found on our website at www.mfafinancial.com.

Code of Business Conduct and Ethics

The Board has adopted a Code of Business Conduct and Ethics (the Code of Conduct) that applies to our directors, officers and employees. The Code of Conduct was designed to assist directors, officers and employees in complying with the law, in resolving certain moral and ethical issues that may arise in the performance of their duties and in complying with our policies and procedures. Among the areas addressed by the Code of Conduct are compliance with applicable laws, conflicts of interest, use and protection of our assets, confidentiality, communications with the public, internal accounting controls, improper influence on the conduct of audits, records retention, fair dealing, discrimination and harassment, and health and safety. The Board's Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for assessing and periodically reviewing the adequacy of the Code of Conduct and will recommend, as appropriate, proposed changes to the Code of Conduct to the Board.

The Code of Conduct can be found on our website at www.mfafinancial.com. We will also provide the Code of Conduct, free of charge, to stockholders who request it. Requests should be directed to the attention of our Secretary at MFA Financial, Inc., 350 Park Avenue, 20th Floor, New York, New York 10022.

Corporate Governance Guidelines

General. The Board has adopted the Governance Guidelines, which address significant issues of corporate governance and set forth procedures by which the Board carries out its responsibilities. Among the areas addressed by the Governance Guidelines are Board composition, Board functions and responsibilities, Board committees, director qualification standards, director resignations, director retirements, access to management and independent advisors, director compensation, management succession, director orientation and continuing education and Board and committee performance evaluations. The Board's Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for assessing and periodically reviewing the adequacy of the Governance Guidelines and will recommend to the Board, as appropriate, proposed changes to the Governance Guidelines.

The Governance Guidelines can be found on our website at www.mfafinancial.com. We will also provide the Governance Guidelines, free of charge, to stockholders who request them. Requests should be directed to the attention of our Secretary at MFA Financial, Inc., 350 Park Avenue, 20th Floor, New York, New York 10022.

Majority Voting for Directors/Director Resignation Policy. Our Bylaws provide that a nominee for director will be elected by receiving the affirmative vote of a majority of the total votes cast for and against the election of such nominee in a non-contested election (i.e., where the number of nominees is the same as the number of directors to be elected).

Under the terms of our Governance Guidelines, if a nominee for director who is an incumbent director is not elected by the vote required in our Bylaws, the director is required to promptly tender to the Board his or her offer to resign from the Board. Upon recommendation of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee, the Board, excluding such individual, will decide whether or not to accept such offer to resign, and thereafter, it will promptly and publicly disclose its decision. If the Board determines

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not to accept the director's offer to resign, the director will continue to serve on the Board until the next annual meeting of stockholders and until the director's successor is duly elected and qualified or until the director's earlier resignation or removal. The Board may consider any factors it deems relevant in deciding whether to accept a director's resignation.

In a contested election, the director nominees who receive a plurality of votes cast are elected as directors. Under the plurality standard, the number of individuals equal to the number of directorships to be filled who receive more votes than other nominees are elected to the board, regardless of whether they receive a majority of votes cast.

Director Retirement Policy. The Governance Guidelines provide that no person who has reached the age of 75 at the time of their election or appointment may be elected or appointed as a director; provided, however, that current directors of MFA who had reached the age of 70 as of October 1, 2014, may not be re-appointed or nominated for re-election after reaching the age of 77.

Review and Approval of Transactions with Related Persons

The Board has adopted written policies and procedures for review, approval and monitoring of transactions involving the Company and related persons (directors and executive officers, stockholders beneficially owning greater than 5% of our outstanding capital stock or immediate family members of any of the foregoing). The policy covers any related person transaction that meets the minimum threshold for disclosure in the Proxy Statement under the relevant rules of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) (generally, transactions involving amounts exceeding \$120,000 in which a related person has a direct or indirect material interest). A summary of these policies and procedures is set forth below:

Policies

Any covered related party transaction must be approved by the Board or by a committee of the Board consisting solely of disinterested directors. In considering the transaction, the Board or committee will consider all relevant factors, including, as applicable, (i) our business rationale for entering into the transaction; (ii) the available alternatives; (iii) whether the transaction is on terms comparable to those available to or from third parties; (iv) the potential for the transaction to lead to an actual or apparent conflict of interest; and (v) the overall fairness of the transaction to the Company.

On at least an annual basis, the Board or committee will monitor the transaction to assess whether it is advisable for the Company to amend or terminate the transaction.

Procedures

Management or the affected director or executive officer will bring the matter to the attention of the Chair of the Audit Committee or, if the Chair of the Audit Committee is the affected director, to the attention of the Chair of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee.

The appropriate committee Chair shall determine whether the matter should be considered by the Board or by a committee of the Board consisting solely of disinterested directors.

If a director is involved in the transaction, he or she will be recused from all discussions and decisions about the transaction.

The transaction must be approved in advance whenever practicable and, if not practicable, must be ratified as promptly as practicable.

If a transaction that has been entered into without prior approval is not ratified, the Board or committee may consider additional action, in consultation with counsel, including, but not limited to, with respect to transactions that are

pending or ongoing, termination of the transaction on a prospective basis or modification of the transaction in a manner that would permit it to be ratified by the Board or committee, and with respect to transactions that are completed, rescission of such transaction and/or disciplinary action.

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Identification of Director Candidates

In accordance with the Governance Guidelines and its charter, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for identifying and evaluating director candidates for the Board and for recommending director candidates to the Board for consideration as nominees to stand for election at our annual meetings of stockholders. Director candidates are nominated to stand for election to the Board in accordance with the procedures set forth in the written charter of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee.

We seek highly-qualified director candidates from diverse business, professional and educational backgrounds who combine a broad spectrum of experience and expertise with a reputation for the highest personal and professional ethics, integrity and values. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee periodically reviews the appropriate skills and characteristics required of our directors in the context of the current composition of the Board, our operating requirements and the interests of the Company. In accordance with the Governance Guidelines, director candidates should have experience in positions with a high degree of responsibility and decision making, be able to exercise good business judgment, be able to provide practical wisdom and mature judgment and be leaders in the companies or institutions with which they are affiliated. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee reviews director candidates with the objective of assembling a slate of directors that can best fulfill and promote our goals, and recommends director candidates based upon contributions they can make to the Board and management and their ability to represent MFA's long-term interests and those of its stockholders.

Although we do not have a formal written diversity policy, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee considers diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, age, cultural background, professional experiences and expertise and education in evaluating director candidates for Board membership. We believe that considerations of diversity are, and will continue to be, an important component relating to the Board's composition as multiple and varied points of view contribute to a more effective decision-making process.

Upon determining the need for additional or replacement Board members, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee identifies director candidates and assesses such director candidates based upon information it receives in connection with the recommendation or which it otherwise possesses, which may be supplemented by certain inquiries. In conducting this assessment, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee considers knowledge, experience, skills, diversity and such other factors as it deems appropriate in light of our current needs and those of the Board. If the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee determines, in consultation with other directors, including the Chairman of the Board, that a more comprehensive evaluation is warranted, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee may then obtain additional information about a director candidate's background and experience, including by means of personal interviews. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee will then re-evaluate the director candidate using its evaluation criteria. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee receives input on such director candidates from other directors, including the Chairman of the Board, and recommends director candidates to the Board for nomination. The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee may, in its sole discretion, engage one or more search firms and/or other consultants, experts or professionals to assist in, among other things, identifying director candidates or gathering information regarding the background and experience of director candidates. If the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee engages any such third party, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee will have sole authority to approve any fees or terms of retention relating to these services.

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee accepts stockholder recommendations of director candidates and applies the same standards in considering director candidates submitted by stockholders as it does in evaluating director candidates recommended by members of the Board or management. Stockholders may make

recommendations at any time, but recommendations of director candidates for consideration as director nominees at our next annual meeting of stockholders must be received not less than 120 days before the first anniversary of the date of the proxy statement for the prior year's annual meeting of stockholders. Accordingly, to submit a director candidate for consideration for

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nomination at our 2020 Annual Meeting of Stockholders, stockholders must submit the recommendation, in writing, by no later than the close of regular business hours on December 10, 2019. The written notice must demonstrate that it is being submitted by a stockholder of MFA and include information about each proposed director candidate, including name, age, business address, principal occupation, principal qualifications and other relevant biographical information. In addition, the stockholder must provide confirmation of each recommended director candidate's consent to serve as a director and contact information for each director candidate so that his or her interest can be verified and, if necessary, to gather further information.

Communications with the Board

The Board has established a process by which stockholders and/or other interested parties may communicate in writing with our directors, a committee of the Board, the Board's non-employee directors as a group or the Board generally. Any such communications may be sent to the Board by U.S. mail or overnight delivery and should be directed to the attention of our Secretary at MFA Financial, Inc., 350 Park Avenue, 20th Floor, New York, New York 10022, who will forward them to the intended recipient(s). Any such communications may be made anonymously. Unsolicited advertisements, invitations to conferences or promotional materials, in the discretion of our Secretary, are not required, however, to be forwarded to the directors. The Board has approved this communication process.

Executive Sessions of Independent Directors

The independent directors serving on the Board meet in executive session at least four times per year at regularly scheduled meetings of the Board. These executive sessions of the independent directors are presided over by George H. Krauss, in his capacity as the non-executive Chairman of the Board.

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BOARD AND COMMITTEE MATTERS

Board of Directors

The Board is responsible for directing the management of our business and affairs. The Board conducts its business through meetings and actions taken by unanimous written consent in lieu of meetings. During the year ended December 31, 2018, the Board held six meetings and acted 15 times by unanimous written consent in lieu of a meeting. Each of our directors then serving on the Board attended at least 75% of the meetings of the Board (and of the Board's committees on which they then served) that were held in 2018. All directors then serving on the Board attended our 2018 Annual Meeting of Stockholders. The Board's policy, as set forth in our Governance Guidelines, is to encourage and promote the attendance by each director at all scheduled meetings of the Board and all meetings of our stockholders.

Committees of the Board

The Board has three standing committees: the Audit Committee, the Compensation Committee and the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee.

Audit Committee. Laurie S. Goodman (Chair), Stephen R. Blank, Richard J. Byrne and Robin Josephs are currently the members of the Audit Committee. The Board has determined that all of the members of the Audit Committee are independent as required by the NYSE listing standards, SEC rules governing the qualifications of audit committee members, the Governance Guidelines, the Independence Standards and the written charter of the Audit Committee.

The Board has also determined, based upon its qualitative assessment of their relevant levels of knowledge and business experience (see Election of Directors beginning on page 15 of this Proxy Statement for a description of their respective backgrounds and experience), that each of Ms. Goodman, Mr. Blank, Mr. Byrne and Ms. Josephs qualifies as an audit committee financial expert for purposes of, and as defined by, SEC rules and has the requisite accounting or related financial management expertise required by the NYSE listing standards. In addition, the Board has determined that all of the members of the Audit Committee are financially literate as required by the NYSE listing standards. During 2018, the Audit Committee met seven times.

The Audit Committee is responsible for, among other things, engaging our independent registered public accounting firm, reviewing with the independent registered public accounting firm the plans and results of their audit engagement, approving professional services to be provided by the independent registered public accounting firm, reviewing the independence of the auditors, considering the range of audit and non-audit fees, reviewing the adequacy of our internal controls, accounting and reporting practices and assessing the quality and integrity of our consolidated financial statements. In accordance with its charter, the Audit Committee has a policy requiring that the terms of all auditing and non-auditing services to be provided by our independent registered public accounting firm be pre-approved by the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee also reviews and evaluates the scope of all non-auditing services to be provided by our independent registered public accounting firm in order to confirm that such services are permitted by the rules and/or regulations of the NYSE, the SEC, the Financial Accounting Standards Board or other similar governing bodies. The specific responsibilities of the Audit Committee are set forth in its charter, which can be found on our website at www.mfainancial.com.

Compensation Committee. Robin Josephs (Chair), Stephen R. Blank, James A. Brodsky and Alan L. Gosule are currently the members of the Compensation Committee. The Board has determined that all of the members of the Compensation Committee are independent as required by the NYSE listing standards, the Governance Guidelines, the

Independence Standards and the written charter of the Compensation Committee. During 2018, the Compensation Committee met six times and acted six times by unanimous written consent in lieu of a meeting.

The Compensation Committee is responsible for, among other things, overseeing the design, approval, administration and evaluation of MFA's compensation plans, policies and programs and reviewing and

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establishing the compensation of our directors and executive officers. The specific responsibilities of the Compensation Committee are set forth in its charter, which can be found on our website at www.mfafinancial.com.

Compensation Committee Interlocks and Insider Participation. There are no compensation committee interlocks and no insider participation in compensation decisions that are required to be reported under the rules and regulations of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the Exchange Act).

Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. George H. Krauss (Chair), James A. Brodsky, Richard J. Byrne, Laurie S. Goodman and Alan L. Gosule are currently the members of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. The Board has determined that all of the members of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee are independent as required by the NYSE listing standards, the Governance Guidelines, the Independence Standards and the written charter of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee. During 2018, the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee met four times.

The Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for, among other things, assisting the Board in identifying individuals qualified to become Board members, recommending to the Board the director nominees to stand for election by our stockholders, recommending to the Board the directors to serve on each of the Board's committees, developing and recommending to the Board the corporate governance principles and guidelines applicable to the Company and directing the Board in an annual review of its performance. The specific responsibilities of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee are set forth in its charter, which can be found on our website at www.mfafinancial.com.

We will provide the charters of the Audit Committee, Compensation Committee and/or Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee, free of charge, to stockholders who request them. Requests should be directed to the attention of our Secretary at MFA Financial, Inc., 350 Park Avenue, 20th Floor, New York, New York 10022.

Report of the Audit Committee

The Audit Committee of the Board of Directors is responsible for monitoring, on behalf of the Board, the integrity of our consolidated financial statements, our system of internal controls, the performance, qualifications and independence of our independent registered public accounting firm and our compliance with related legal and regulatory requirements. The Audit Committee has the sole authority and responsibility to select, determine the compensation of, evaluate the performance of and, when appropriate, replace our independent registered public accounting firm. The Audit Committee operates under a written charter adopted by the Board.

Management has the primary responsibility for our financial reporting process, including the system of internal controls, for the preparation of consolidated financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States and for the report on our internal control over financial reporting. KPMG LLP, our independent registered public accounting firm, is responsible for performing an independent audit of (i) our annual consolidated financial statements and expressing an opinion as to their conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States and (ii) the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting and expressing an opinion with respect thereto. The Audit Committee's responsibility is to oversee and review the financial reporting process and to review and discuss management's report on our internal control over financial reporting. The Audit Committee is not, however, professionally engaged in the practice of accounting or auditing and does not provide any expert or other special assurance as to such financial statements concerning compliance with laws, regulations or accounting principles generally accepted in the United States or as to auditor independence. The Audit Committee relies, without independent verification, on the information provided to it and on the representations made

by our management and our independent registered public accounting firm.

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During 2018, the Audit Committee held seven meetings. The meetings were designed, among other things, to facilitate and encourage communication among the Audit Committee, management, KPMG LLP, our independent registered public accounting firm, and Grant Thornton LLP, our internal auditing firm.

The Audit Committee reviewed and discussed the audited consolidated financial statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2018, and the related report prepared by KPMG LLP, with management and KPMG LLP. The Audit Committee discussed with KPMG LLP and Grant Thornton LLP the overall scope and plans for their respective audits, including internal control testing under Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. The Audit Committee also reviewed and discussed with management, KPMG LLP and Grant Thornton LLP management's annual report on MFA's internal control over financial reporting and the report prepared by KPMG LLP with respect to its audit of MFA's internal control over financial reporting. The Audit Committee met with KPMG LLP and Grant Thornton LLP, with and without management present, to discuss the results of their examinations, their evaluations of MFA's internal control environment and the overall quality of our financial reporting.

The Audit Committee reviewed and discussed with KPMG LLP its audit plan for MFA and their proposed implementation of this plan. The Audit Committee also discussed with KPMG LLP matters that independent accounting firms are required to communicate to audit committees under generally accepted auditing standards and standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB), including, among other things, matters related to the conduct of the audit of MFA's consolidated financial statements and the matters required to be discussed by Auditing Standard No. 16, as adopted by the PCAOB, which included a discussion of KPMG LLP's judgments about the quality (not just the acceptability) of MFA's accounting principles as applied to financial reporting.

The Audit Committee also discussed with KPMG LLP its independence from the Company. KPMG LLP provided to the Audit Committee the written disclosures and the letter required by applicable requirements of the PCAOB regarding the independent accountant's communications with the Audit Committee concerning independence and represented that it is independent from MFA. When considering the independence of KPMG LLP, the Audit Committee considered whether services provided by KPMG LLP, beyond those rendered in connection with its audit of MFA's consolidated financial statements, its reviews of MFA's interim condensed consolidated financial statements included in MFA's quarterly reports on Form 10-Q and its audit of the effectiveness of MFA's internal control over financial reporting, were compatible with maintaining its independence. The Audit Committee reviewed and approved the audit and other professional services performed by, and the amount of fees paid for such services to, KPMG LLP. The Audit Committee has adopted policies and procedures for the pre-approval of auditing and non-auditing services for the purpose of maintaining the independence of our independent registered public accounting firm. The Audit Committee received periodic updates on the amount of fees and scope of audit and other professional services provided.

Based on the Audit Committee's review and the outcome of these meetings, discussions and reports, and subject to the limitations on the Audit Committee's role and responsibilities referred to above and in its written charter, the Audit Committee recommended to the Board, and the Board has approved, that MFA's audited consolidated financial statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2018, be included in the Company's Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC and 2018 Annual Report to Stockholders. The Audit Committee has also selected and appointed KPMG LLP as MFA's independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2019, and is presenting this appointment to the Company's stockholders for ratification.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Laurie S. Goodman, Chair Richard J. Byrne

Stephen R. Blank

Robin Josephs

The foregoing Report of the Audit Committee shall not be deemed under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, to be (i) soliciting material or filed or (ii) incorporated by reference by any general statement into any filing made by us with the SEC, except to the extent that we specifically incorporate such report by reference.

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COMPENSATION OF NON-EMPLOYEE DIRECTORS

Pursuant to the terms of its charter, the Compensation Committee is responsible for reviewing and making recommendations to the Board with respect to the compensation of the non-employee directors (the Non-Employee Directors) on the Board. The Compensation Committee, with the assistance of an independent compensation consultant, most recently reviewed the compensation of Non-Employee Directors in the first half of 2017.

At present, we have the following compensation program for Non-Employee Directors:

an annual cash retainer of \$100,000, which retainer is payable in equal quarterly installments in arrears.
an annual grant to each director under the Company s Equity Compensation Plan of fully-vested shares of our Common Stock or fully-vested restricted stock units (RSUs) with a grant value of \$150,000.
an annual cash retainer for service on one or more committees of the Board pursuant to which each member of the Board s (i) Audit Committee (other than the Audit Committee Chair) receives \$15,000 per year, (ii) Compensation Committee (other than the Compensation Committee Chair) receives \$15,000 per year and (iii) Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee (other than the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee Chair) receives \$5,000 per year. These fees are payable in equal quarterly installments in arrears.
an annual cash fee of (i) \$35,000 per year paid to the Chair of the Board s Audit Committee, (ii) \$35,000 per year paid to the Chair of the Board s Compensation Committee and (iii) \$15,000 per year paid to the Chair of the Board s Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee, which fees are payable in equal quarterly installments in arrears.
an additional annual grant to the non-executive Chairman of fully-vested shares of our Common Stock or fully-vested RSUs with a grant date value of \$115,000.

Our Non-Employee Directors may also participate in our Fourth Amended and Restated 2003 Non-Employee Directors Deferred Compensation Plan (the Non-Employee Directors Plan), which allows participants to elect to defer receipt of 50% or 100% of their annual cash fees and to elect whether to receive their equity-based compensation in the form of fully-vested shares of our Common Stock or fully-vested RSUs. Under the Non-Employee Directors Plan, cash amounts deferred are considered to be converted into stock units, which do not represent our capital stock, but rather the right to receive a cash payment equal to the fair market value of an equivalent number of shares of Common Stock. Deferred amounts (and the resultant stock units), together with any cash dividend equivalents credited to outstanding stock units, increase or decrease in value as would an equivalent number of shares of Common Stock and are settled in cash at the termination of the deferral period, based on the value of the stock units at that time.

The Non-Employee Directors are subject to a share retention/alignment requirement pursuant to which each Non-Employee Director is required to hold and maintain equity in MFA, which could include Common Stock and/or RSUs under the Non-Employee Directors Plan (collectively, the Equivalent Shares), in an amount equal to no less than 37,500 Equivalent Shares. Generally, this retention requirement must be met within five years after becoming a director. All of our directors have met this retention requirement.

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The following table summarizes the compensation of our Non-Employee Directors for the year ended December 31, 2018.

2018 Non-Employee Director Compensation

Name	Fees Earned or Paid in Cash (\$) ⁽¹⁾	Stock/RSU Awards (\$) ⁽²⁾	Total (\$) ⁽³⁾
Stephen R. Blank	130,000	150,000	280,000
James A. Brodsky	120,000	150,000	270,000
Richard J. Byrne	120,000	150,000	270,000
Laurie S. Goodman	140,000	150,000	290,000
Alan L. Gosule	120,000	150,000	270,000
Robin Josephs	150,000	150,000	300,000
George H. Krauss	115,000	265,000	380,000

Amounts in this column represent, as applicable, the annual board retainer fees, annual committee chair fees and committee membership fees earned or paid to Non-Employee Directors for service in 2018. For Mr. Brodsky, Mr. (1) Byrne, Ms. Goodman, Mr. Gosule and Ms. Josephs, amount includes cash fees that the director has elected to defer under the Non-Employee Directors Plan.

Amounts in this column represent the aggregate grant date fair value of such stock or RSU awards computed in accordance with FASB ASC Topic 718. During 2018, each non-employee director (other than George H. Krauss) was granted 19,481 fully-vested RSUs on May 24, 2018 (based on a price per share of \$7.70, which was the (2) closing price of the Common Stock on such day). In addition, Mr. Krauss, our non-executive Chairman, was granted 34,416 fully-vested RSUs on May 24, 2018. A discussion of the assumptions underlying the calculation of RSU values may be found in Note 13 to our Consolidated Financial Statements on pages 129 to 130 of our 2018 Annual Report on Form 10-K.

Total compensation for Non-Employee Directors does not include dividend equivalents (which consist of a cash (3) distribution equal to the cash dividend paid on a share of Common Stock) paid during 2018 in respect of the fully-vested RSUs granted to each Non-Employee Director.

The following table summarizes certain additional information regarding cash amounts deferred by our Non-Employee Directors participating in the Non-Employee Directors Plan as of December 31, 2018.

Name	Fair Market Value of Deferred Amounts at Jan. 1, 2018 ⁽¹⁾ (\$)	Cash Distribution Jan. 15, 2018 (\$)	Remaining Deferred Amount after Jan. 15, 2018 Distribution ⁽²⁾ (\$)	Fair Market Value of Deferred Amounts at Dec. 31, 2018 ⁽³⁾ (\$)
James A. Brodsky	677,784	123,700	554,084	632,353
Richard J. Byrne	399,138		399,138	485,836

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Laurie S. Goodman	247,857	247,857	362,394
Alan L. Gosule	231,894	231,894	328,874
Robin Josephs	498,923	498,923	607,295

(1) Amounts in this column represent the value of compensation deferred by the director (including cash dividend equivalents credited to outstanding stock units) from the inception of the individual director's elected participation in the Non-Employee Directors Plan, less cash distributions, if any, made at the termination of any elected deferral and payment period before the effect of any distributions made during 2018. Amounts in this column represent the fair market value of stock units in the director's deferred compensation account (including cash dividend equivalents credited to

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outstanding stock units) based on the closing price of the Common Stock of \$7.92 per share as reported on the NYSE on December 29, 2017 (the last trading day of such year).

(2) Amounts in this column represent the value of the director's deferred compensation account under the Non-Employee Directors Plan following the distributions, if any, made on January 15, 2018.

(3) Amounts in this column represent the fair market value at December 31, 2018, of stock units in the director's deferred compensation account (including cash dividend equivalents credited to outstanding stock units) (based upon the closing price of the Common Stock of \$6.68 per share reported on the NYSE on December 31, 2018) under the Non-Employee Directors Plan.

Non-employee directors are also eligible to receive other grants of Common Stock and phantom shares, as well as grants of stock options, under the Company's Equity Compensation Plan. We also reimburse all Non-Employee Directors for reasonable travel and other expenses incurred in connection with attending Board, committee and stockholder meetings and other Company-sponsored events and/or other activities in which they engage or participate on our behalf. In addition, we provide all non-employee directors with up to \$500,000 of accidental death and dismemberment insurance while traveling to or attending Board, committee and stockholder meetings and other Company-sponsored events. Directors who are employees of the Company (currently, only Mr. Knutson) are not entitled to receive additional compensation for serving on the Board.

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1. ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Board of Directors

In accordance with our Charter and Bylaws, the Board is currently comprised of eight (8) directors, Stephen R. Blank, James A. Brodsky, Richard J. Byrne, Laurie S. Goodman, Alan L. Gosule, Robin Josephs, Craig L. Knutson and George H. Krauss, and it is divided into three classes, with Mr. Blank, Ms. Goodman and Mr. Knutson constituting the Class I directors, Ms. Josephs and Mr. Krauss constituting the Class II directors and Messrs. Brodsky, Byrne and Gosule constituting the Class III directors.

One class of directors is elected at each annual meeting of our stockholders for a term of three (3) years. Each director holds office until his or her successor has been duly elected and qualified or the director's earlier resignation, death or removal. The term of the Board's Class III directors expires at the Annual Meeting. The terms of the other two classes of directors expire at MFA's 2020 annual meeting of stockholders (Class I directors) and MFA's 2021 annual meeting of stockholders (Class II directors).

Upon the recommendation of the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee of the Board, Mr. Brodsky, Mr. Byrne and Francis J. Oelerich III have been nominated by the Board to stand for election as Class III directors by the stockholders at the Annual Meeting to serve a term until our 2022 annual meeting of stockholders and until their respective successors are duly elected and qualify. Mr. Brodsky and Mr. Byrne are currently directors of MFA, and Mr. Oelerich was recommended for consideration as a nominee by a non-management director, as well as by our CEO. Mr. Gosule, a current Class III director, is not permitted to stand for re-election and is retiring from the Board following the Annual Meeting in accordance with the Director Retirement Policy set forth in our Governance Guidelines (see page 5 of this Proxy Statement), unless his intended successor, Mr. Oelerich, is not elected at the Annual Meeting. As a result of Mr. Gosule's intended retirement, the number of nominees for director to be elected at the Annual Meeting has not been increased.

If the candidacy of Mr. Brodsky, Mr. Byrne or Mr. Oelerich should, for any reason, be withdrawn prior to the Annual Meeting, the proxies will be voted by the proxy holders in favor of such substituted candidate or candidates (if any) as shall be nominated by the Board or the Board may determine to reduce its size.

The Board has no reason to believe that Mr. Brodsky, Mr. Byrne or Mr. Oelerich would be unable or unwilling to serve as Class III directors.

The Board has determined that all of our current directors are qualified to serve as directors of the Company. The biographies of each of the Board's nominees standing for re-election and our continuing directors set forth below contain information regarding each person's service as a director, business experience and education, director positions held currently or at any time during the last five years and the experience, qualifications, attributes or skills that caused the Board and the Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee to determine that the person should serve as a director.

In addition to the specific information set forth in their respective biographies, we believe that each of our directors also possesses the tangible and intangible attributes and skills that are important to being an effective director on the Board, including experience in areas of expertise relevant and beneficial to our business and industry, a willingness and commitment to assume the responsibilities required of a director of the Company and the character and integrity we expect of directors of the Company.

Class III Directors

The following information is furnished regarding the nominees for election as our Class III directors by the holders of Common Stock.

James A. Brodsky, 73, has served as a director of MFA since 2004. Mr. Brodsky is a partner in, and a founding member of, the law firm of Weiner Brodsky Kider PC in Washington, D.C., and has practiced law

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with that firm and its predecessor since 1977. Mr. Brodsky provides legal advice and business counsel to publicly-traded and privately-held national and regional residential mortgage lenders on secondary mortgage market transactions (including those involving Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Ginnie Mae), mergers and acquisitions, asset purchases and sales, mortgage compliance issues and strategic business initiatives. Prior to 1977, Mr. Brodsky was a Deputy Assistant Secretary with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. He also currently serves as General Counsel of the National Reverse Mortgage Lenders Association. Mr. Brodsky also is a director of Enterprise Community Investment, Inc., which invests in affordable housing and community development projects nationwide through public-private investments, as well as raises and invests private investor capital, develops affordable housing and provides lending products for the commercial and multifamily real estate sectors. Mr. Brodsky is also a former Chairman of the Board of each of the Montgomery County Maryland Housing Opportunities Commission and the Montgomery Housing Partnership. Mr. Brodsky received a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center, an M.S. in electrical engineering from Columbia University and his undergraduate degree from Cornell University.

We believe that Mr. Brodsky's qualifications to serve on the Board include his significant experience as a lawyer and founding member of a national law firm specializing in residential mortgage finance, his extensive knowledge of the origination and servicing of, and the regulatory aspects relating to, residential mortgage loans, his experience with the federal executive branch agencies that regulate and directly affect the residential mortgage sector and his general experience with corporate governance, finance and other related matters.

Richard J. Byrne, 58, has served as a director of MFA since March 2014. Mr. Byrne has been President of Benefit Street Partners L.L.C., a wholly owned subsidiary of Franklin Templeton Investments, since April 2013. Prior to 2013, Mr. Byrne served as Chief Executive Officer of Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc. from 2008 to March 2013. Prior to serving as CEO of Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc., Mr. Byrne was Co-Head of Global Capital Markets at Deutsche Bank. Prior to Deutsche Bank, Mr. Byrne was Global Co-Head of Leveraged Finance and Global Head of Credit Research at Merrill Lynch. Mr. Byrne also serves as a director of Benefit Street Partners Realty Trust (where he also serves as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer) and Business Development Corp. of America (where he also serves as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer) and Wynn Resorts. Mr. Byrne received an M.B.A from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University and his B.A. from Binghamton University.

We believe that Mr. Byrne's qualifications to serve on the Board include his extensive experience in the investment banking industry, including his expertise in corporate finance and his substantial knowledge of the public and private capital markets and his executive management experience in the financial services industry.

Francis J. Oelerich III, 58, is not a current director of MFA. Mr. Oelerich has been a Managing Director of XMS Capital Partners, a global, independent financial services firm providing investment banking, asset management and merchant banking services, since 2018. Prior thereto, Mr. Oelerich was a Managing Director in the Mergers & Acquisitions Department of Deutsche Bank Securities, Inc. from 2008 to 2017. Prior to Deutsche Bank, Mr. Oelerich worked in investment banking for Morgan Stanley & Co. Incorporated from 1982 to 1984 and from 1986 to 2008, rising to the level of Managing Director. Mr. Oelerich received an M.B.A. from Harvard University, where he was elected a George F. Baker Scholar and named a Loeb, Rhoades Fellow, and a B.B.A. (with high honors) from the University of Notre Dame.

We believe that Mr. Oelerich's qualifications to serve on the Board include his extensive experience in the investment banking industry, including his expertise in corporate finance and his extensive experience advising public company Boards of Directors on mergers and acquisitions and other strategic matters.

THE BOARD RECOMMENDS A VOTE FOR THE ELECTION OF MR. BRODSKY, MR. BYRNE AND MR. OELERICH AS CLASS III DIRECTORS.

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Continuing Class I Directors

The following information is furnished regarding our Class I directors (who will continue to serve on the Board until our 2020 Annual Meeting of Stockholders and until their respective successors are duly elected and qualify).

Stephen R. Blank, 73, has served as a director of MFA since 2002. From 1998 to 2014, Mr. Blank was a Senior Resident Fellow, Finance, at the Urban Land Institute (ULI), a non-profit education and research institute which studies land use and real estate development policy. Prior to joining ULI, Mr. Blank served from 1993 to 1998 as Managing Director Real Estate Investment Banking of CIBC Oppenheimer Corp. From 1989 to 1993, Mr. Blank was Managing Director of the Real Estate Corporate Finance Department of Cushman & Wakefield, Inc. From 1979 to 1989, Mr. Blank served as Managing Director Real Estate Investment Banking of Kidder, Peabody & Co. From 1973 to 1979, Mr. Blank was employed by Bache & Co., Incorporated, as Vice President, Direct Investment Group. Mr. Blank currently serves as Lead Trustee of RPT Realty (formerly Ramco-Gershenson Properties Trust), where he is a member of the compensation, audit and nominating and governance committees. From May 1999 to February 2007, Mr. Blank was a member of the Board of Directors of BNP Residential Trust, Inc., and he was a member of the Board of Directors of Home Properties, Inc. from 2009 to October 2015 when it was acquired by a private real estate fund. Mr. Blank received an M.B.A. in finance from Adelphi University and his undergraduate degree from Syracuse University.

We believe that Mr. Blank's qualifications to serve on the Board include his extensive knowledge of the real estate industry as evidenced by his former position at ULI, his experience in the investment banking industry, including his expertise in public and private real estate finance and his substantial service on the boards and committees of other public and private companies.

Laurie S. Goodman, 63, has served as a director of MFA since July 2014. She is currently the Center Co-Director of the Housing Finance Policy Center at the Urban Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy. Ms. Goodman joined the Urban Institute in late 2013 from Amherst Securities Group, L.P., a boutique broker dealer specializing in securitized products, where she had been a Senior Managing Director since late 2008 leading a group known for its analysis of housing policy issues. Prior to her tenure at Amherst Securities, Ms. Goodman was head of Global Fixed Income Research and Manager of U.S. Securitized Products Research at UBS and its predecessor firms from July 1993 through November 2008. Prior to her tenure with UBS, Ms. Goodman spent ten years in senior fixed income research positions at Citicorp, Goldman Sachs, and Merrill Lynch. She was also a mortgage portfolio manager at Eastbridge Capital and a Senior Economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Ms Goodman also serves as a director of Arch Capital Group Ltd., a Bermuda-based insurance company, where she serves on its audit and underwriting oversight committees. Ms. Goodman has an A.M. and Ph.D. in economics from Stanford University and a B.A. in mathematics from the University of Pennsylvania. She has published more than 200 articles in professional and academic journals and co-authored and co-edited five books. Ms. Goodman was inducted into the Fixed Income Analysts Hall of Fame in 2009.

We believe that Ms. Goodman's qualifications to serve on the Board include her extensive knowledge of mortgage finance, housing policy issues, the fixed income capital markets and, in particular, the mortgage-backed securities markets.

Craig L. Knutson, 59, has served as a director of MFA and as our Chief Executive Officer and President since August 2017. Mr. Knutson was appointed Co-CEO in July 2017 and President and Chief Operating Officer in January 2014 and served in those capacities prior to his appointment as CEO and President in August 2017. Mr. Knutson

served as our Executive Vice President from 2008 to 2013. From 2004 to 2007, Mr. Knutson served as Senior Executive Vice President of CBA Commercial, LLC, an acquirer and securitizer of small balance commercial mortgages. From 2001 to 2004, Mr. Knutson served as President and Chief Operating Officer of ARIASYS Inc., a software development company specializing in custom solutions for small to midsize businesses. From 1986 to 1999, Mr. Knutson held various progressive positions in the mortgage trading and mortgage finance departments of First

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Boston Corporation (later Credit Suisse), Smith Barney and Morgan Stanley. From 1981 to 1984, Mr. Knutson served as an Analyst and then Associate in the Investment Banking Department of E.F. Hutton & Company Inc. Mr. Knutson holds an M.B.A. from Harvard University and an A.B. (magna cum laude) from Hamilton College.

We believe that Mr. Knutson's qualifications to serve on the Board include his position as our Chief Executive Officer as well as his prior senior-level positions with MFA, his extensive knowledge of mortgage-backed securities, residential mortgage loans and capital markets, his substantial knowledge of our business operations and investment strategies and his overall experience in the investment banking industry, including his expertise in corporate finance.

Continuing Class II Directors

The following information is furnished regarding our Class II directors (who will continue to serve on the Board until our 2021 Annual Meeting of Stockholders and until their respective successors are duly elected and qualify).

Robin Josephs, 59, has served as a director of MFA since 2010. From 2005 to 2007, Ms. Josephs was a managing director of Starwood Capital Group L.P., a private equity firm specializing in real estate investments. From 1986 to 1996, Ms. Josephs was a senior executive with Goldman, Sachs & Co. serving in the real estate group of the investment banking division and, later, in the equity capital markets division. Ms. Josephs currently serves as a member of the board of directors of iStar Inc., where she is lead director, Chair of the nominating and governance committee and a member of the compensation committee, QuinStreet Inc., a provider of performance marketing products and technologies, where she serves as Chair of the compensation committees and a member of the audit committee, Safehold Inc., an investor in commercial real estate ground leases, and Starwood Real Estate Income Trust, where she serves as a member of the audit committee. Ms. Josephs also served as a member of the Board of Directors of Plum Creek Timber Company, Inc. from 2003 until its sale to Weyerhaeuser Company in February 2016.

Ms. Josephs is a trustee of the University of Chicago Cancer Research Foundation. Ms. Josephs received her undergraduate degree from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and an M.B.A. from Columbia University.

We believe that Ms. Josephs's qualifications to serve on the Board include her significant knowledge of the specialty finance and real estate industries, her extensive experience in the investment banking industry, including her expertise in public and private real estate finance and equity capital markets, her substantial service on the boards and committees of other public companies, her experience with corporate governance, finance and other related matters.

George H. Krauss, 77, has served as a director of MFA since 1997. Mr. Krauss was named a Managing Director of The Burlington Capital Group LLC (Burlington) in 2010 and, prior thereto, had been a consultant to Burlington since 1997. From 1972 to 1997, Mr. Krauss practiced law with Kutak Rock LLP, serving as such firm's managing partner from 1983 to 1993 and, from 1997 to 2006, was Of Counsel to such firm. Mr. Krauss currently serves as a member of the Board of Managers of Burlington, which is the general partner of America First Tax Exempt Investors, LP. Mr. Krauss was a member of the boards of directors of Gateway, Inc., from 1991 to October 2007, West Corporation, from January 2001 to October 2006, America First Apartment Investors, Inc., from January 2003 to September 2007, and *info* GROUP, Inc., from December 2007 to July 2010. Mr. Krauss received a J.D. and an M.B.A. from the University of Nebraska.

We believe that Mr. Krauss's qualifications to serve on the Board include his significant experience as a managing partner of a major law firm, his substantial service on the boards and committees of other public and private companies, his considerable legal and business experience in corporate, mergers and acquisitions and regulatory matters and his significant exposure to our business and industry through his years of service on the Board.

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In accordance with our Charter and Bylaws, vacancies occurring on the Board as a result of death, resignation, retirement, disqualification, removal from office or other cause may be filled only by a majority of the remaining directors in office.

There is no familial relationship among any of the members of our Board or executive officers.

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2. RATIFICATION OF APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

On March 6, 2019, the Audit Committee of the Board appointed KPMG LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the year ending December 31, 2019.

The Board is asking stockholders to ratify the Audit Committee's appointment of KPMG LLP for 2019. In the event that stockholders fail to ratify the appointment, the Audit Committee will consider it a direction to consider other accounting firms for the subsequent year. Even if the selection is ratified, the Audit Committee, in its discretion, may direct the appointment of a different independent registered public accounting firm at any time during the year if it determines that such a change would be in the best interests of the Company.

KPMG LLP first audited our financial statements beginning with the year ended December 31, 2011.

One or more representatives of KPMG LLP are expected to be present at the Annual Meeting and will be provided with an opportunity to make a statement if so desired and to respond to appropriate inquiries from stockholders.

Independent Registered Public Accounting Firm Fees

The following table summarizes the aggregate fees (including related expenses) billed to us for professional services provided by KPMG LLP in respect of the fiscal years ended December 31, 2018 and 2017.

	Fiscal Year Ended December 31,	
	2018	2017
Audit Fees ⁽¹⁾	\$ 1,574,300	\$ 1,462,000
Audit-Related Fees ⁽²⁾		
Tax Fees ⁽³⁾		
All Other Fees ⁽⁴⁾	271,769	1,938
Total	\$ 1,846,069	\$ 1,463,938

2018 and 2017 Audit Fees include, as applicable: (i) the audit of the consolidated financial statements included in our Annual Report on Form 10-K and services attendant to, or required by, statute or regulation; (ii) reviews of the interim consolidated financial statements included in our quarterly reports on Form 10-Q; (iii) the audits of the (1) financial statements of certain subsidiaries of the Company; and (iv) comfort letters, consents and other services related to the SEC and other regulatory filings and communications. Audit Fees for 2018 and 2017 also include the audit of the effectiveness of our internal control over financial reporting, as required by Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002.

(2) There were no Audit-Related Fees incurred in 2018 and 2017.