

CommonWealth REIT
Form DEF 14A
February 28, 2012

QuickLinks -- Click here to rapidly navigate through this document

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549

SCHEDULE 14A

SCHEDULE 14A INFORMATION

Proxy Statement Pursuant to Section 14(a) of
the Securities Exchange Act of 1934

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 §240.14a-12

COMMONWEALTH REIT

(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):

- No fee required.
- Fee computed on table below per Exchange Act Rules 14a-6(i)(1) and 0-11.
 - (1) Title of each class of securities to which transaction applies:
 - (2) Aggregate number of securities to which transaction applies:
 - (3) Per unit price or other underlying value of transaction computed pursuant to Exchange Act Rule 0-11 (set forth the amount on which the filing fee is calculated and state how it was determined):
 - (4) Proposed maximum aggregate value of transaction:

Edgar Filing: Commonwealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

(5) Total fee paid:

- o Fee paid previously with preliminary materials.
- o Check box if any part of the fee is offset as provided by Exchange Act Rule 0-11(a)(2) and identify the filing for which the offsetting fee was paid previously. Identify the previous filing by registration statement number, or the Form or Schedule and the date of its filing.

(1) Amount Previously Paid:

(2) Form, Schedule or Registration Statement No.:

(3) Filing Party:

(4) Date Filed:

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

COMMONWEALTH REIT
Two Newton Place
255 Washington Street, Suite 300
Newton, Massachusetts 02458

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS
TO BE HELD ON MAY 8, 2012

To the Shareholders of CommonWealth REIT:

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of shareholders of CommonWealth REIT, a Maryland real estate investment trust, will be held at 9:30 a.m., local time, on Tuesday, May 8, 2012, at Two Newton Place, 255 Washington Street, Suite 100, Newton, Massachusetts 02458 for the following purposes:

1. To elect the nominee named in our proxy statement to our Board of Trustees as the Independent Trustee in Group II ("proposal 1").
2. To elect the nominee named in our proxy statement to our Board of Trustees as the Managing Trustee in Group II ("proposal 2").
3. To consider and vote upon a proposal to adopt the CommonWealth REIT 2012 Equity Compensation Plan ("proposal 3").
4. To hold an advisory vote relating to our executive compensation ("proposal 4").
5. To ratify the appointment of Ernst & Young LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2012 ("proposal 5").
6. To consider and vote upon such other matters as may properly come before the meeting and at any adjournments or postponements thereof.

OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES UNANIMOUSLY RECOMMENDS THAT YOU VOTE "**FOR**" THE NOMINEES FOR TRUSTEE IN PROPOSALS 1 AND 2 AND "**FOR**" PROPOSALS 3, 4 AND 5.

We encourage you to contact the firm assisting us in the solicitation of proxies, Innisfree M&A Incorporated, or Innisfree, if you have any questions or need assistance in voting your shares. Banks and brokers may call Innisfree, collect, at (212) 750-5833. Shareholders may call Innisfree, toll-free, at (877) 825-8971.

Shareholders of record at the close of business on February 17, 2012, are entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the meeting and at any adjournment or postponement thereof.

Securities and Exchange Commission rules allow us to furnish proxy materials to our shareholders on the internet. You can now access proxy materials and authorize a proxy to vote your shares at www.proxyvote.com. You may also authorize a proxy to vote your shares over the internet or by telephone by following the instructions on that website. In order to vote over the internet or by telephone you must have your shareholder identification number, which is set forth in the Notice Regarding the Availability of Proxy Materials mailed to you. If your shares are held in the name of a brokerage firm, bank, nominee or other institution, you should provide instructions to your broker, bank, nominee or other institution on how to vote your shares. You may also request a paper proxy card to submit your vote by mail. If you attend the meeting and vote in person, that vote will revoke any proxy you previously submitted. If you hold shares in the name of a brokerage firm, bank, nominee or other institution, you must provide a legal proxy from that institution in order to vote your shares at the meeting. Whether or not you plan to attend the meeting, please read the proxy statement and complete or authorize a proxy for your shares as soon as possible. Your vote is important, no matter how many or how few shares you own.

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

By Order of the Board of Trustees,

Jennifer B. Clark, Secretary

Newton, Massachusetts
February 28, 2012

COMMONWEALTH REIT
Two Newton Place
255 Washington Street, Suite 300
Newton, Massachusetts 02458

PROXY STATEMENT
FOR THE
ANNUAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

To be held at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 8, 2012

at

Two Newton Place
255 Washington Street, Suite 100
Newton, Massachusetts 02458

INTRODUCTION

A notice of the annual meeting of shareholders of CommonWealth REIT, a Maryland real estate investment trust, or the Company, is on the preceding page and a form of proxy solicited by our Board of Trustees, or our Board, accompanies this proxy statement. This proxy statement and a form of proxy, together with our annual report to shareholders for the year ended December 31, 2011, are first being made available, and a Notice Regarding the Availability of Proxy Materials, or the Notice of Internet Availability, is first being mailed, to shareholders on or about February 28, 2012.

The annual meeting record date is February 17, 2012. Only shareholders of record at the close of business on February 17, 2012, are entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the meeting and at any postponement or adjournment thereof. We had 83,721,736 common shares of beneficial interest, \$0.01 par value per share, or common shares, outstanding on the record date and entitled to vote at the meeting. Our common shares are listed on the New York Stock Exchange, or NYSE. The holders of our outstanding common shares are entitled to one vote per common share.

A quorum of shareholders is required for shareholders to take action at the meeting, except that the shareholders entitled to vote at the meeting may adjourn the meeting if less than a quorum is present at the meeting. The presence, in person or by proxy, of holders of common shares entitled to cast a majority of all votes entitled to be cast at such meeting shall constitute a quorum. Common shares represented by valid proxies will count for the purpose of determining the presence of a quorum for the meeting. Abstentions and broker non-votes, if any, will be treated as shares present for purposes of determining whether a quorum is present. Failure of a quorum to be present at the meeting will necessitate adjournment of the meeting and will subject us to additional expense. Under our bylaws, the chairperson of the meeting may adjourn the meeting if less than a quorum is present at the meeting.

The affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast will be necessary to elect the nominees for Trustee described in proposals 1 and 2, to approve the CommonWealth REIT 2012 Equity Compensation Plan in proposal 3, to approve the resolution regarding named executive officer compensation described in proposal 4 and to ratify the appointment of Ernst & Young LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm in proposal 5. For purposes of satisfying NYSE Rule 312.07, or the NYSE Shareholder Approval Rule, which sets forth the vote required under the NYSE listing standards for shareholder approval of a new equity compensation plan, the total votes cast on proposal 3 also must represent greater than 50% of all shares entitled to vote on the proposal.

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

Proposals 4 and 5 are nonbinding shareholder advisory votes and, if approved, would serve only as recommendations to our Board.

The individuals named as proxies on a properly completed proxy will vote in accordance with your directions as indicated thereon. If you properly complete your proxy and give no voting instructions, your shares will be voted "FOR" the nominees for Trustee in proposals 1 and 2 and "FOR" proposals 3, 4 and 5.

Shareholders of record may authorize a proxy to vote their shares over the internet or by telephone in the manner provided on the website indicated in the Notice of Internet Availability mailed to them, or, if they requested and received paper or email copies of proxy materials, by completing and returning the proxy card or by attending the meeting and voting in person. Proxies submitted by mail, over the internet or by telephone must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on Monday, May 7, 2012.

Broker non-votes occur in respect of shares held in street name when the broker indicates that voting instructions for a particular matter have not been received from the beneficial owners or other persons entitled to vote those shares and the broker does not have discretionary voting authority to vote those shares on that particular matter. Broker non-votes and abstentions will have no effect on the outcome of proposals 1, 2, 4 and 5. For purposes of the NYSE Shareholder Approval Rule, we understand that under NYSE policy broker non-votes with respect to proposal 3 will not count as a "vote cast" and, if the total votes cast on the proposal represent over 50% of all shares entitled to vote on the proposal, broker non-votes will have no effect on the outcome of proposal 3. For purposes of the NYSE Shareholder Approval Rule, we understand that under NYSE policy abstentions will be treated as "votes cast" and, thus, will have the effect of a vote against proposal 3. A proxy marked "WITHHOLD" will have the same effect as an abstention.

The record date for the meeting will apply to any adjournment or postponement of the meeting unless our Board fixes a new record date for the adjourned or postponed meeting. If we adjourn the annual meeting, we will announce the time and place of the adjourned meeting at the original meeting, but we do not intend to deliver another notice of the meeting unless we fix a new record date for the adjourned meeting. At any subsequent reconvening of the annual meeting, all proxies will be voted in the same manner as they would have been at the original convening of the meeting (except for any proxies that have been effectively revoked or withdrawn).

IMPORTANT: If your shares are held in the name of a brokerage firm, bank, nominee or other institution, you should provide instructions to your broker, bank, nominee or other institution on how to vote your shares. Please contact the person responsible for your account and give instructions for a proxy to be completed for your shares. If you have any questions or need assistance in voting your shares, please call the firm assisting us in the solicitation of proxies:

**Innisfree M&A Incorporated
501 Madison Avenue, 20th Floor
New York, New York 10022
Brokers and Banks Call Collect at (212) 750-5833
Shareholders Call Toll-Free at (877) 825-8971**

A shareholder of record who has given a proxy may revoke it any time prior to its exercise by delivering to our Secretary a written revocation or a duly executed proxy bearing a later date, by

Edgar Filing: Commonwealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

authorizing at a later date a proxy to vote his or her common shares over the internet or by telephone in the manner provided on the website indicated in the Notice of Internet Availability or by attending the meeting and voting his or her common shares in person. If a shareholder of record wants to receive a paper or email copy of the proxy card, he or she may request one. Proxies submitted by mail, over the internet or by telephone must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on May 7, 2012. If your shares are held in the name of a brokerage firm, bank, nominee or other institution and you wish to change a prior instruction you gave to your brokerage firm, bank, nominee or other institution to vote your shares, you must follow the brokerage firm's, bank's, nominee's or other institution's instructions for changing your prior voting instructions. In addition, if you hold shares in the name of a brokerage firm, bank, nominee or other institution, you must provide a legal proxy from that institution in order to vote your shares at the meeting.

Our principal executive offices are located at Two Newton Place, 255 Washington Street, Suite 300, Newton, Massachusetts 02458.

Our website address is included in this proxy statement as a textual reference only, and the information in the website is not incorporated by reference into this proxy statement.

Notice Regarding the Availability of Proxy Materials

From the date of mailing of the Notice of Internet Availability through the conclusion of the meeting, shareholders will be able to access all of the proxy materials on the internet at www.proxyvote.com. The proxy materials will be available free of charge. The Notice of Internet Availability will instruct you as to how you may access and review all of the important information contained in the proxy materials (including our annual report to shareholders) over the internet or through other methods specified at the website designated in the Notice of Internet Availability. The website designated contains instructions as to how to vote over the internet or by telephone. The Notice of Internet Availability also instructs you as to how you may request a paper or email copy of the proxy card. If you received a Notice of Internet Availability and would like to receive printed copies of the proxy materials, you should follow the instructions for requesting such materials included in the Notice of Internet Availability.

PROPOSALS 1 AND 2 ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The number of our Trustees is fixed at five, and our Board is divided into three groups, with two Trustees in Group I, two Trustees in Group II and one Trustee in Group III. Trustees in each group are elected for three year terms and serve until their successors are elected and qualified.

Our current Trustees are William A. Lamkin and Adam D. Portnoy in Group II with a term of office expiring at the meeting to which this proxy statement relates, Patrick F. Donelan in Group III with a term of office expiring at our 2013 annual meeting of shareholders and Barry M. Portnoy and Frederick N. Zeytoonjian in Group I with a term of office expiring at our 2014 annual meeting of shareholders. The term of the Group II Trustees elected at the meeting to which this proxy statement relates will expire at our 2015 annual meeting of shareholders.

Our Trustees are also categorized as Independent Trustees or Managing Trustees. Our Board is composed of three Independent Trustees and two Managing Trustees. Our Independent Trustees are not employees or affiliates, as such term is defined in our declaration of trust and our bylaws, of Reit

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

Management & Research LLC, or RMR, our manager, do not have a material business or professional relationship with RMR or any other person or entity that holds in excess of 9.8% of our issued and outstanding shares of beneficial interest, are not involved in our day to day activities, do not perform services for us except as Trustee and are persons who qualify as independent under our declaration of trust, our bylaws and the applicable rules of the NYSE and the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC. Our Managing Trustees are not Independent Trustees and have been employees of RMR or involved in our day to day activities for at least one year. Messrs. Donelan, Lamkin and Zeytoonjian are our Independent Trustees, and Messrs. Adam Portnoy and Barry Portnoy are our Managing Trustees. Biographical information relating to our Trustees and other information relating to our Board appears elsewhere in this proxy statement.

PROPOSAL 1: ELECTION OF ONE INDEPENDENT TRUSTEE

Our Board has nominated Mr. William A. Lamkin for election as the Independent Trustee in Group II, whose nomination was recommended to our Board by our Nominating and Governance Committee. The term of the Independent Trustee in Group II elected at the meeting will expire at our 2015 annual meeting of shareholders. The persons named in the accompanying proxy intend to exercise properly executed and delivered proxies "FOR" the election of Mr. Lamkin, except to the extent that properly completed proxies indicate that the votes should not be so cast.

Mr. Lamkin has agreed to serve as the Independent Trustee in Group II if elected. If, however, Mr. Lamkin becomes unable or unwilling to accept election to our Board, the proxies will be voted for the election of a substitute nominee designated by our Board. Our Board has no reason to believe that Mr. Lamkin will be unable or unwilling to serve.

The affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast will be necessary to elect Mr. Lamkin as the Independent Trustee in Group II.

Our Board recommends you vote "FOR" the election of Mr. Lamkin as the Independent Trustee in Group II.

PROPOSAL 2: ELECTION OF ONE MANAGING TRUSTEE

Our Board has nominated Mr. Adam D. Portnoy for election as the Managing Trustee in Group II, whose nomination was recommended to our Board by our Nominating and Governance Committee. The term of the Managing Trustee in Group II elected at the meeting will expire at our 2015 annual meeting of shareholders. The persons named in the accompanying proxy intend to exercise properly executed and delivered proxies "FOR" the election of Mr. Adam D. Portnoy, except to the extent that properly completed proxies indicate that the votes should not be so cast.

Mr. Adam D. Portnoy has agreed to serve as the Managing Trustee in Group II if elected. If, however, Mr. Adam D. Portnoy becomes unable or unwilling to accept election to our Board, the proxies will be voted for the election of a substitute nominee designated by our Board. Our Board has no reason to believe that Mr. Adam D. Portnoy will be unable or unwilling to serve.

The affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast will be necessary to elect Mr. Adam D. Portnoy as the Managing Trustee in Group II.

Our Board recommends you vote "FOR" the election of Mr. Adam D. Portnoy as the Managing Trustee in Group II.

PROPOSAL 3
ADOPTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH REIT
2012 EQUITY COMPENSATION PLAN

Our 2003 Incentive Share Award Plan, or the 2003 Plan, became effective on May 30, 2003, and is scheduled to expire on May 30, 2013. In order to replace the 2003 Plan, on February 22, 2012, our Board approved, subject to shareholder approval, the CommonWealth REIT 2012 Equity Compensation Plan, or the 2012 Plan, in the form attached to this proxy statement as Appendix A. The 2012 Plan is intended to replace the 2003 Plan as the plan under which we grant equity awards to meet our objective of compensating and rewarding our officers and Trustees, employees of our manager, consultants, advisors or other persons or entities providing management, administrative or other services to us or to our subsidiaries. In particular, the 2012 Plan will:

reserve for issuance a total of 3,000,000 of our common shares for new awards; and

permit us to continue to grant awards of our common shares through the tenth anniversary of the date of this annual meeting of shareholders.

In considering and approving the 2012 Plan, our Board determined that the number of common shares to be reserved for issuance under the 2012 Plan can be expected to allow us to continue our historical equity compensation practices through the ten year term of the 2012 Plan. If the 2012 Plan is approved by our shareholders, it will replace the 2003 Plan and no new awards will be made under that plan. If the 2012 Plan is not approved by our shareholders, we will continue to use the 2003 Plan until all available common shares under the 2003 Plan are exhausted or until the term of such plan expires.

Principal Reasons for Adoption of the 2012 Plan

Permit Grants Through 2022. The term of the 2003 Plan will expire on May 30, 2013, following which, absent approval of the 2012 Plan, we will no longer have an equity compensation plan to enable us to accomplish our compensation objectives. Shareholder approval of the 2012 Plan will permit us to use that plan to satisfy our equity compensation needs through the tenth anniversary of the 2012 annual meeting.

Reservation of Additional Common Shares. Under the 2003 Plan, there are currently 1,335,960 common shares available for issuance pursuant to new awards. If the 2012 Plan is approved by our shareholders, we will have reserved 3,000,000 common shares for issuance pursuant to new awards. Based on past practices, our Board has determined that the common shares reserved for issuance under the 2012 Plan can be expected to permit us to meet our compensation needs for the grant of equity awards during the ten year term of the 2012 Plan. If the 2012 Plan is not approved by our shareholders, we will only be able to utilize the remaining 1,335,960 common shares available under the 2003 Plan until its expiration on May 30, 2013 to achieve our compensation objectives.

Description of Material Terms of the 2012 Plan

The following description of the material terms of the 2012 Plan is qualified in its entirety by the terms of the plan document, which is attached hereto as Appendix A.

Administration. The 2012 Plan will be administered by our Board or, in the discretion of our Board, a committee designated by our Board and composed of at least two members of our Board. Each member of any committee administering the 2012 Plan is required to qualify as a "non-employee

Edgar Filing: Commonwealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

director" (within the meaning of Rule 16b-3 promulgated under Section 16 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act). Our Board or a committee thereof has the authority to administer the 2012 Plan, including the authority to interpret the plan, to make awards thereunder (and determine the terms of such awards), to adopt and approve from time to time the forms of award agreements under the plan, to make adjustments to awards in response to changes in applicable laws, regulations or accounting principles and to prescribe, amend and rescind rules and regulations relating to the plan.

Awards. The 2012 Plan permits discretionary grants of awards of or with respect to our common shares, which will be subject to such terms and conditions as our Board or a committee may determine, which may include, without limitation, terms with respect to vesting, forfeiture, repurchase and transfer restrictions, typically based on continued employment. If it determines to do so, our Board or the designated committee may grant shares under this Plan that are not subject to vesting, forfeiture, repurchase and transfer restrictions.

Participants. The 2012 Plan permits awards to be made to our officers and Trustees, employees of our manager, consultants, advisors or other persons or entities providing management, administrative or other services to us or to our subsidiaries. Actual participants are determined by our Board or a committee thereof in its discretion.

Amendment and Termination. The 2012 Plan may be amended or terminated by our Board, subject to shareholder approval where required by law or applicable listing requirements. Our Board may not amend or terminate the terms of an outstanding award or the plan so as to adversely affect a participant's rights, without the participant's consent. The 2012 Plan will, unless terminated earlier by our Board, terminate on the tenth anniversary of the date of the 2012 annual meeting of shareholders. However, awards granted before the termination of the 2012 Plan may extend beyond that date in accordance with their terms.

Common Shares Available. The maximum number of common shares that may be granted under the 2012 Plan is 3,000,000, subject to adjustment for certain transactions as set forth in the plan. If any common shares subject to an award are forfeited, cancelled, repurchased or surrendered, the shares with respect to such award will, to the extent of any such forfeiture, cancellation, repurchase or surrender, again be available for awards under the plan. The number of common shares reserved for issuance under the 2012 Plan and the awards made under the plan are generally subject to adjustment by our Board upon the occurrence of any stock dividend or similar distribution, stock split or combination of shares, conversion, reorganization, consolidation, split-up, spin-off, combination, merger, exchange of stock, extraordinary cash dividend or other similar transaction or event. No Trustee or officer of the Company may be granted more than 1,000,000 shares under the share award plan after the plan's effective date.

On February 24, 2012, the last reported sale price of our common shares on the NYSE Composite Transactions reports was \$19.07 per share.

New Plan Benefits

If approved by our shareholders, participants in the 2012 Plan will be eligible for awards of shares as determined by our Board or designated committee. Persons eligible to receive grants of shares under the 2012 Plan will be those key persons selected by our Board or committee in its discretion from among our officers and Trustees, employees of our manager, consultants, advisors or other persons or entities providing management, administrative or other services to us or to our subsidiaries. Approximately 50 individuals will be eligible to participate in the 2012 Plan.

Awards under the 2012 Plan following its adoption will generally be made in the discretion of our Board or designated committee and are therefore not determinable at this time. Please refer to the *Grants of Plan Based Awards Table* in this proxy statement to review equity awards made to our named executive officers in 2011. If the 2012 Plan is approved by our shareholders, we intend to utilize the Plan to make annual equity grants to our Trustees following such approval. In 2011, each Trustee received a grant of 2,000 common shares, although the size of such grant may change from time to time in the future as determined by our Board or a committee thereof.

Certain Federal Income Tax Consequences

Set forth below is a discussion of certain federal income tax consequences with respect to awards that may be made under the 2012 Plan. The following discussion is a brief summary only, and reference is made to the Internal Revenue Code and the regulations and interpretations issued thereunder for a complete statement of all relevant federal tax consequences. This summary is not intended to be exhaustive and does not describe state, local or foreign tax consequences of participation in the 2012 Plan. Participants in the 2012 Plan are advised to consult with their own tax professionals regarding the consequences of participating in the plan.

Share Awards. A participant will generally recognize taxable income on the grant of unrestricted common shares in an amount equal to the fair market value of the shares on the grant date. The Company will ordinarily be entitled to a deduction at the same time and in the same amounts as the ordinary income recognized by the participant.

Restricted Shares. The term "restricted shares" refers to a grant of common shares under the 2012 Plan that are subject to forfeiture restrictions. A participant generally will not be taxed at the time of a restricted share award but will recognize taxable income when the award is no longer subject to a substantial risk of forfeiture. The amount of taxable income will be the fair market value of the shares at the time the risk of forfeiture lapses. The Company will ordinarily be entitled to a deduction at the same time and in the same amounts as the ordinary income recognized by the participant.

Securities Authorized for Issuance under Equity Compensation Plans

The following table provides information about common shares that may be issued upon the exercise of options and restricted stock units under all of our existing equity compensation plans as of December 31, 2011.

Plan category	Number of securities to be issued upon exercise of outstanding options, warrants and rights	Weighted-average exercise price of outstanding options, warrants and rights	Number of securities remaining available for future issuance under equity compensation plans (excluding securities reflected in column (a))
	(a)	(b)	(c)
Equity compensation plans approved by security holders	None	None	None
Equity compensation plans not approved by security holders 2003 Plan	None	None	1,335,960 ⁽¹⁾
Total	None	None	1,335,960⁽¹⁾

(1)

Pursuant to the terms of the 2003 Plan, in no event shall the number of shares issued under the 2003 Plan exceed 1,611,495. 1,335,960 represents the aggregate number of shares that were available under such plans as of December 31, 2011. 275,535 shares have been issued under the 2003 Plan since it was established, excluding shares that have become available again under the 2003 Plan as a result of their forfeiture, cancellation, repurchase or surrender. Share amounts have been adjusted to give effect to the reverse stock split that resulted in a one for four combination of our common shares effective July 1, 2010.

Approval of the 2012 Plan

The affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast is necessary to approve the 2012 Plan. For purposes of satisfying the NYSE Shareholder Approval Rule, the total votes cast on proposal 3 must represent greater than 50% of all shares entitled to vote on the proposal.

Our Board recommends you vote "FOR" proposal 3 to approve the 2012 Plan.

PROPOSAL 4
ADVISORY APPROVAL RELATING TO EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

As previously reported in the Current Report on Form 8-K/A that we filed with the SEC on August 12, 2011, our Board has determined that we will hold a nonbinding, advisory vote on the compensation paid to our named executive officers pursuant to Section 14A of the Exchange Act once every year. Accordingly, we are including a proposal for our shareholders to vote to approve, on a nonbinding, advisory basis, the compensation of those of our executive officers listed in the *Summary Compensation Table for 2011, 2010 and 2009* elsewhere in this proxy statement, or our named executive officers, as disclosed pursuant to Item 402 of Regulation S-K in this proxy statement.

We do not have any employees. Our manager, RMR, conducts our day to day operations on our behalf and provides services to us that otherwise would be provided by employees. Each of our named executive officers is an employee of RMR and the officer's services are provided to us by RMR. RMR

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

compensates our named executive officers directly and in its sole discretion in connection with the officers' services rendered to RMR and to us. None of our named executive officers has an employment agreement with us and we do not pay them salaries or bonuses, or provide them other compensation or benefits, except for the grants of shares under our share award plan described in the *Compensation Discussion and Analysis*, *Compensation Tables* and narrative discussion in this proxy statement.

We make grants of shares under our share award plan to reward our named executive officers and to foster a continuing identity of interest between them and our shareholders. We award shares under our share award plan to recognize our named executive officers' scope of responsibilities, reward demonstrated performance and leadership, motivate future performance, align the interests of our executives with those of our other shareholders and motivate our executives to remain employees of our manager and to continue to provide services to us through the term of the awards. Our award of shares under our share award plan is designed to reward executive performance that contributes to our success and increases shareholder value. We urge you to read the *Compensation Discussion and Analysis*, *Compensation Tables* and narrative discussion in this proxy statement.

We are asking you to vote to approve the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED: That the shareholders of the Company approve, on a nonbinding, advisory basis, the compensation paid to the Company's named executive officers, as disclosed pursuant to Item 402 of Regulation S-K, including the *Compensation Discussion and Analysis*, *Compensation Tables* and narrative discussion in this proxy statement.

The affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast will be necessary to approve proposal 4. The shareholder vote on proposal 4 is advisory and nonbinding, and serves only as a recommendation to our Board.

Our Board recommends you vote "FOR" proposal 4.

PROPOSAL 5 RATIFICATION OF APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

On January 10, 2012, our Audit Committee voted to appoint Ernst & Young LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2012 (our fiscal year being a calendar year). Ernst & Young LLP acted as our independent registered public accounting firm for 2010 and 2011. A representative of Ernst & Young LLP is expected to be present at the meeting, with the opportunity to make a statement if he or she desires to do so. This representative will be available to respond to appropriate questions from shareholders who are present at the meeting. Proposal 5 is nonbinding. If the appointment is not ratified, our Audit Committee will consider whether to appoint another independent registered public accounting firm in its discretion. If the appointment is ratified, our Audit Committee, in its discretion, may appoint a different independent registered public accounting firm at any time if it determines that such a change would be advisable.

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

The fees for services provided by Ernst & Young LLP to us for the last two fiscal years were as follows:

	2010	2011
Audit Fees	\$ 1,034,000	\$ 1,078,160
Audit Related Fees	64,000	567,000
Tax Fees	19,700	21,150
Subtotal	1,117,700	1,666,310
All Other Fees		
Total Fees	\$ 1,117,700	\$ 1,666,310

Our Audit Committee has established policies and procedures that are intended to control the services provided by our independent registered public accounting firm and to monitor their continuing independence. Under these policies, no services may be undertaken by our independent registered public accounting firm unless the engagement is specifically approved by our Audit Committee or the services are included within a category that has been approved by our Audit Committee. The maximum charge for services is established by our Audit Committee when the specific engagement or the category of services is approved. In certain circumstances, our management is required to notify our Audit Committee when approved services are undertaken and the Committee or its Chair may approve amendments or modifications to the engagement or the maximum fees. Our Director of Internal Audit is responsible to report to our Audit Committee regarding compliance with these policies and procedures.

Our Audit Committee will not approve engagements of our independent registered public accounting firm to perform non-audit services for us if doing so will cause our independent registered public accounting firm to cease to be independent within the meaning of applicable SEC or NYSE rules. In other circumstances, our Audit Committee considers, among other things, whether our independent registered public accounting firm is able to provide the required services in a more or less effective and efficient manner than other available service providers and whether the services are consistent with the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board Rules.

All services for which we engaged our independent registered public accounting firm in 2010 and 2011 were approved by our Audit Committee. The total fees for audit and non-audit services provided by Ernst & Young LLP in 2010 and 2011 are set forth above. The increase in audit related fees from 2010 to 2011 reflects fees associated with the proposed initial public offering, or IPO, of our wholly owned subsidiary, Select Income REIT, or SIR. The tax fees charged by Ernst & Young LLP during 2010 and 2011 were for services involved in reviewing our tax reporting and tax compliance procedures related to our income tax returns for the fiscal years ended December 31, 2009 and 2010, respectively. Our Audit Committee approved the engagement of Ernst & Young LLP to provide these non-audit services because it determined that Ernst & Young LLP's providing these services would not compromise its independence and that its familiarity with our record keeping and accounting systems would permit it to provide these services with equal or higher quality, more quickly and at a lower cost than we could obtain these services from other providers.

The affirmative vote of a majority of the votes cast will be necessary for the ratification of the appointment of Ernst & Young LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

year ending December 31, 2012. The shareholder vote on proposal 5 is advisory and nonbinding and serves only as a recommendation to our Board.

Our Board recommends you vote "FOR" the ratification of the appointment of Ernst & Young LLP as our independent registered public accounting firm for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2012.

SOLICITATION OF PROXIES

Proxies may be solicited, without additional compensation, by our Trustees, officers and employees, and by RMR and its directors, officers and employees by mail, telephone or other electronic means or in person. We are paying the costs of this solicitation, including the preparation, printing, mailing and website hosting of proxy materials. We will request banks, brokers and other custodians, nominees and fiduciaries to forward proxy materials to the beneficial owners of our common shares and to obtain their voting instructions. We will reimburse those firms for their expenses. In addition, we have retained Innisfree to assist in the solicitation of proxies for a fee of \$15,000 plus reimbursement of expenses. We have agreed to indemnify Innisfree against certain liabilities arising out of our agreement with Innisfree.

TRUSTEES AND EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

The following are the ages and recent principal occupations, as of February 26, 2012, of our nominees, Trustees and executive officers. Unless otherwise specified, the business address of our nominees, Trustees and executive officers is c/o CommonWealth REIT, Two Newton Place, 255 Washington Street, Suite 300, Newton, Massachusetts 02458.

Independent Trustee Nominee for a Term Expiring in 2015

WILLIAM A. LAMKIN, Age: 52

Mr. Lamkin has been one of our Independent Trustees since 2006. Mr. Lamkin has been a partner in Ackrell Capital LLC, a San Francisco based investment bank, since 2003, and a partner in Ackrell & Company LLC, a San Francisco based investment advisory firm, since 2002. Previously, he was employed as a financial consultant and as an investment banker, including as a Senior Vice President in the investment banking division of ABN AMRO, Incorporated. Prior to working as a financial consultant and as an investment banker, Mr. Lamkin was a practicing attorney. Mr. Lamkin has served as an Independent Trustee of Hospitality Properties Trust, or HPT, since 2007.

Our Board concluded that Mr. Lamkin is qualified to serve as one of our Independent Trustees based upon, among other things, his experience in and knowledge of the commercial real estate and investment banking industries, his work on and with public company boards and board committees, his demonstrated management ability, his experience in capital raising and strategic business transactions, his professional training, skills and expertise in, among other things, legal and finance matters, his institutional knowledge earned through service on our own Board for six years and his qualifying as an Independent Trustee in accordance with the requirements of the NYSE, the SEC, our declaration of trust and our bylaws. Mr. Lamkin is an Independent Trustee in Group II and, if elected at the meeting, his term will expire at our 2015 annual meeting of shareholders.

Managing Trustee Nominee for a Term Expiring in 2015

ADAM D. PORTNOY, Age: 41

Mr. Adam D. Portnoy has been one of our Managing Trustees since 2006 and our President since 2011. He also served as our Executive Vice President from 2003 through 2006. Mr. Portnoy has been a Managing Trustee of HPT, Senior Housing Properties Trust, or SNH, and Government Properties Income Trust, or GOV, since 2007, 2007 and 2009, respectively. Mr. Portnoy has been an Interested Trustee of RMR Real Estate Income Fund, or RIF, and its predecessor funds since 2009. He was President of GOV from 2009 until 2011. Mr. Portnoy has been an executive officer of RMR since 2003 and currently is the President, Chief Executive Officer and a Director of RMR. Additionally, Mr. Portnoy is an owner of RMR and of RMR Advisors, Inc., or RMR Advisors, an SEC registered investment advisor. Mr. Portnoy has been President and Director of RMR Advisors since 2007 and was a Vice President prior to that time since 2003. He has also been President of RIF and its predecessor funds since 2007 and was President of RMR Funds Series Trust from its formation in 2007 until its dissolution in 2009.⁽¹⁾ Prior to becoming President in 2007, Mr. Portnoy served as Vice President of certain of the closed end RMR Funds beginning in 2004. Prior to 2004, Mr. Portnoy held various positions in the finance industry and public sector, including as a Senior Investment Officer of the International Finance Corporation (a member of The World Bank Group) and Vice President of an investment bank. Mr. Portnoy is also currently Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Bulgaria to Massachusetts. Mr. Adam Portnoy is the son of Mr. Barry Portnoy, our other Managing Trustee.

Our Board concluded that Mr. Portnoy is qualified to serve as one of our Managing Trustees based upon, among other things, his extensive experience in and knowledge of the commercial real estate industry and real estate investment trusts, or REITs, his leadership position with RMR, his public company director service, his demonstrated management ability, his experience in investment banking, his government organization service, his institutional knowledge earned through service on our own Board for six years and in key leadership positions with our manager for eight years and his qualifying as a Managing Trustee in accordance with the requirements of our declaration of trust and our bylaws. Mr. Adam Portnoy is a Managing Trustee in Group II and, if elected at the meeting, his term will expire at our 2015 annual meeting of shareholders.

Independent Trustees Continuing in Office

PATRICK F. DONELAN, Age: 69

Mr. Donelan has been one of our Independent Trustees since 1998. Mr. Donelan has been principally a private investor since 2003. Mr. Donelan was Non-Executive Chairman and a member of the advisory board from 2002 until 2003, and was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer from 2001 through 2002 of eSecLending (Europe) Ltd., a London based privately owned company in the business of managing securities lending programs for institutional owners of publicly owned securities. Prior to its acquisition by Dresdner Bank in 1995, Mr. Donelan was Chairman of Kleinwort Benson (North America) Inc., the U.S. based subsidiary of Kleinwort Benson Limited, a United Kingdom based bank. At the time of his retirement in 2001, he was a Managing Director at Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, a U.K. subsidiary of Dresdner Bank of Germany and had held senior management positions with

(1) RIF, its predecessor funds and RMR Funds Series Trust are collectively referred to herein as the "RMR Funds."

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

Dresdner (or its predecessor) for many years. Mr. Donelan has also been an Independent Director of TravelCenters of America LLC, or TA, since 2007.

Our Board concluded that Mr. Donelan is qualified to serve as one of our Independent Trustees based upon, among other things, his demonstrated leadership ability, his extensive investment banking and commercial banking experience, his knowledge of the commercial real estate industry, his work on public company boards and board committees, his institutional knowledge gained through service on our Board for 14 years and his qualifying as an Independent Trustee in accordance with the requirements of the NYSE, the SEC, our declaration of trust and our bylaws. Mr. Donelan is an Independent Trustee in Group III, and his term expires at our 2013 annual meeting of shareholders.

FREDERICK N. ZEYTOONJIAN, Age: 76

Mr. Zeytoonjian has been one of our Independent Trustees since 1999. Mr. Zeytoonjian is the founder and has been Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Turf Products, LLC, one of the largest distributors of lawn care equipment in the United States, for over 40 years. Mr. Zeytoonjian also has been an Independent Trustee of SNH since 2003.

Our Board concluded that Mr. Zeytoonjian is qualified to serve as one of our Independent Trustees based upon, among other things, his demonstrated business leadership as a successful entrepreneur for decades, his work on public company boards and board committees, his experience in and knowledge of commercial real estate, his financial background and his institutional knowledge earned through service on our Board for 13 years and his qualifying as an Independent Trustee in accordance with the requirements of the NYSE, the SEC, our declaration of trust and our bylaws. Mr. Zeytoonjian is an Independent Trustee in Group I, and his term expires at our 2014 annual meeting of shareholders.

Managing Trustee Continuing in Office

BARRY M. PORTNOY, Age: 66

Mr. Barry M. Portnoy has been one of our Managing Trustees since 1986. Mr. Portnoy has been a Managing Trustee of HPT, SNH and GOV since 1995, 1999 and 2009, respectively. He has been a Managing Director of Five Star Quality Care, Inc., or Five Star, and of TA since 2001 and 2006, respectively. Mr. Portnoy is an owner of RMR and of RMR Advisors. Mr. Portnoy has been an owner and a Director of RMR (and its predecessor) since its founding in 1986, a full time employee of RMR since 1997, the Chairman of RMR since 1998 and a Director and Vice President of RMR Advisors since 2002. Mr. Portnoy has been an Interested Trustee of RIF and its predecessor funds since shortly after their formation (the earliest of which was in 2002) and was an Interested Trustee of RMR Funds Series Trust from shortly after its formation in 2007 until its dissolution in 2009. Mr. Portnoy practiced law for many years as a partner in, and chairman of, a law firm until 1997. Mr. Barry Portnoy is the father of Mr. Adam Portnoy, our other Managing Trustee and President.

Our Board concluded that Mr. Portnoy is qualified to serve as one of our Managing Trustees based upon, among other things, his demonstrated leadership capability, his extensive experience in and knowledge of the commercial real estate industry and REITs, his leadership position with RMR, his extensive public company director service, his professional skills and expertise in, among other things, legal and regulatory matters, his institutional knowledge earned through prior service on our Board and in key leadership positions with our manager and his qualifying as a Managing Trustee in accordance

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

with the requirements of our declaration of trust and our bylaws. Mr. Barry Portnoy is a Managing Trustee in Group I, and his term expires at our 2014 annual meeting of shareholders.

Executive Officers

ADAM D. PORTNOY

Mr. Portnoy has been our President since 2011, in addition to being one of our Managing Trustees and having other experience as described above.

JOHN C. POPEO, Age: 51

Mr. Popeo has been our Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer since 1999 and Assistant Secretary since 2008, and served as Secretary from 1999 to 2008. Mr. Popeo has also been Treasurer and an Executive Vice President of RMR since 1997 and 2008, respectively, and previously served as a Vice President of RMR from 1999 to 2006 and as a Senior Vice President from 2006 to 2008. Mr. Popeo served as Vice President of RMR Advisors from 2004 to 2009 and has served as Vice President of RIF and its predecessor funds from shortly after their formation (the earliest of which was in 2002). Mr. Popeo is a certified public accountant.

DAVID M. LEPORO, Age: 51

Mr. Lepore has been our Chief Operating Officer since 2008 and Senior Vice President since 1998 and is primarily responsible for the operations of our properties. Mr. Lepore has also been a Senior Vice President of RMR since 2006 and was a Vice President and served in other capacities prior to that time. Mr. Lepore is a member of the Building Owners and Managers Association, the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties and is a certified real property administrator.

Except as noted with regard to Mr. Barry Portnoy and Mr. Adam Portnoy, there are no family relationships among any of our Trustees or executive officers. Our executive officers serve at the discretion of our Board.

RMR, RMR Advisors, HPT, SNH, GOV, Five Star, TA and RIF may be considered to be affiliates of us. Each of RIF's predecessor funds and RMR Funds Series Trust may have been considered to be affiliates of us. RMR is a privately owned company that provides management services to public and private companies, including us, HPT, SNH, GOV, Five Star and TA. HPT is a publicly traded REIT that primarily owns hotels and travel centers. SNH is a publicly traded REIT that primarily owns senior living properties and medical office buildings. GOV is a publicly traded REIT that primarily invests in properties that are majority leased to government tenants. Five Star is a publicly traded real estate based operating company in the healthcare and senior living services business. TA is a publicly traded real estate based operating company in the travel center business. RIF and each of its predecessor funds is or was a closed end investment company registered under the Investment Company Act of 1940, as amended, or the 1940 Act. RMR Funds Series Trust was an open end investment company registered under the 1940 Act prior to its dissolution in 2009.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Our business is conducted under the general direction of our Board as provided by our declaration of trust, our bylaws and the laws of the State of Maryland, the state in which we were organized on October 9, 1986.

Three of our Trustees, Patrick F. Donelan, William A. Lamkin and Frederick N. Zeytoonjian, are our Independent Trustees within the meaning of our declaration of trust and our bylaws. Two of our Trustees, Adam D. Portnoy and Barry M. Portnoy, are our Managing Trustees within the meaning of our bylaws.

Our declaration of trust and our bylaws require that a majority of our Board be Independent Trustees. In determining the status of those Trustees who qualify as Independent Trustees, each year our Board affirmatively determines whether Trustees have a direct or indirect material relationship with us, including our subsidiaries, other than serving as our Trustees. When assessing a Trustee's relationship with us, our Board considers all relevant facts and circumstances, not merely from the Trustee's standpoint, but also from that of the persons or organizations with which the Trustee has an affiliation.

Our Board has determined that Messrs. Donelan, Lamkin and Zeytoonjian currently qualify as independent trustees under applicable NYSE rules and are Independent Trustees under our declaration of trust and our bylaws. In making that determination with respect to Mr. Donelan, our Board considered Mr. Donelan's past employment with Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, an affiliate of which was the agent and a lender under our previous revolving bank credit facility. Such former relationship ended over six years ago and was with a large bank at which we did not account for a material amount of revenues. Our Board also considered each of these three Trustees' service in other enterprises and on the boards of other companies to which RMR and its affiliates provide management services. Our Board has concluded that none of these Trustees possessed or currently possesses any relationship that could impair his judgment in connection with his duties and responsibilities as a Trustee or that could otherwise be a direct or indirect material relationship under applicable NYSE standards.

During 2011, our Board held seven meetings, our Audit Committee held seven meetings, our Compensation Committee held six meetings and our Nominating and Governance Committee held four meetings. In addition, our ad hoc special committee formed in connection with our consideration of the sale of 13 additional medical office, clinic and biomedical, pharmaceutical and laboratory buildings, or MOBs, to SNH held four meetings. During 2011, each Trustee attended 75% or more of the total number of meetings of our Board and any committee of which he was a member during the time in which he served on our Board or such committee. All of our Trustees attended last year's annual meeting of shareholders.

Pursuant to our Governance Guidelines, our Independent Trustees meet at least once each year without management. The presiding Trustee at these meetings is the Chair of our Audit Committee, unless the Independent Trustees in attendance select another Independent Trustee to preside.

We do not maintain directors' and officers' liability insurance for our Trustees and officers. Subject to certain limitations, our declaration of trust, our bylaws and separate indemnification agreements require that we indemnify our Trustees and officers.

Board Leadership Structure

Our Board is comprised of both Independent Trustees and Managing Trustees, with a majority being Independent Trustees. Our Independent Trustees are not employees or affiliates, as such term is defined in our declaration of trust, of RMR, do not have a material business or professional relationship with RMR or any other person or entity that holds in excess of 9.8% of our issued and outstanding shares of beneficial interest, are not involved in our day to day activities, do not perform services for us except as Trustee and are persons who qualify as independent under our declaration of trust, our bylaws and the applicable rules of the NYSE and SEC. Our Managing Trustees are not Independent Trustees and have been employees of RMR or involved in our day to day activities for at least one year. Our Board is composed of three Independent Trustees and two Managing Trustees. Our President is a member of our Board. Our Treasurer is not a member of our Board, but he regularly attends Board meetings, as does our Director of Internal Audit. Other officers of RMR also sometimes attend Board meetings at the invitation of our Board.

Our Audit, Compensation and Nominating and Governance Committees are comprised solely of our Independent Trustees, and an Independent Trustee serves as Chair of each such committee. Our three standing committees have responsibilities related to our leadership and governance, including among other things: (1) our Audit Committee reviews our financial reports, oversees our accounting and financial reporting processes, selects our independent accountants, determines the compensation paid to our independent accountants and assists our Board with its oversight of our internal audit function and our compliance with legal and regulatory requirements; (2) our Compensation Committee annually evaluates the performance of our Director of Internal Audit and approves the compensation we pay to him, determines any compensation that we directly pay to our President, reviews and approves any compensation that we directly pay to our Treasurer and any other senior executive of ours who is also a senior executive of RMR, reviews our business and property management agreements with RMR, evaluates RMR's performance under those agreements and the expenses, costs and compensation we pay under those agreements, approves those expenses, costs and compensation that we pay under those agreements, determines whether those agreements will be renewed, amended, terminated or allowed to expire and administers all our equity compensation awards; and (3) our Nominating and Governance Committee considers nominees to serve on our Board, recommends to our Board nominees for election to our Board, assesses our Board's performance and reviews and assesses our Board leadership structure and Governance Guidelines and recommends to the Board any changes it determines appropriate. The Chairs of the Audit, Compensation and Nominating and Governance Committees set the agenda for their respective committee meetings, but committee members, our Managing Trustees or members of our management may suggest agenda items to be considered by these committees.

We do not have a Chairman of our Board or a lead Independent Trustee. The President, any Managing Trustee or any two Independent Trustees may call a special meeting. Our President and Managing Trustee and our other Managing Trustee, in consultation with our Treasurer, set the agenda for our Board meetings, and any Independent Trustee may place an item on an agenda by providing notice to our President and Managing Trustee, our other Managing Trustee or our Treasurer. Discussions at Board meetings are led by the Managing Trustee or Independent Trustee who is most knowledgeable on a subject. Our Board is small, which facilitates informal discussions and communication from management to the Board and among Trustees. Our Independent Trustees meet to consider Company business without the attendance of our Managing Trustees or our officers, and

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

they meet separately with our officers, with our Director of Internal Audit and with our outside accountants. In such meetings of our Independent Trustees, the Chair of the Audit Committee presides unless the Independent Trustees determine otherwise.

In light of the size of our Board and the oversight provided by and involvement of our Independent Trustees and Board committees in the leadership of our Company, our Board considers that our current leadership structure and conduct combines appropriate leadership with the ability to conduct our business efficiently and with appropriate care and attention.

Risk Oversight

Our Board oversees risk as part of its general oversight of our Company, and oversight of risk is addressed as part of various Board and Board committee activities and through regular and special Board and Board committee meetings. The actual day to day business of our Company is conducted by RMR, and RMR implements risk management in its activities. In discharging their oversight responsibilities, our Board and Board committees regularly review a wide range of reports provided to them by RMR and other service providers, including reports on market and industry conditions, operating and compliance reports, financial reports, reports on risk management activities, regulatory and legislative updates that may impact us, legal proceedings updates and reports on other business related matters, and discusses such matters among themselves and with representatives of RMR, counsel and our independent accountants. Our Audit Committee, which meets at least quarterly and reports its findings to our Board, performs a lead role in helping our Board fulfill its responsibilities for oversight of our financial reporting, internal audit function, risk management and our compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Our Board and Audit Committee review periodic reports from our independent registered public accounting firm regarding potential risks, including risks related to our internal controls. Our Audit Committee also annually reviews, approves and oversees an internal audit plan developed by our Director of Internal Audit with the goal of helping our Company systematically evaluate the effectiveness of our risk management, control and governance processes, and periodically meets with our Director of Internal Audit to review the results of our internal audits, and directs or recommends to the Board actions or changes it determines appropriate to enhance or improve the effectiveness of our risk management. Our Compensation Committee also evaluates the performance of our Director of Internal Audit and RMR's performance under our business and property management agreements. Also, our Compensation Committee and our Board consider the fact that we have a share grant program that requires share grants to vest over a period of years, rather than a stock option program such as is employed by many other publicly owned companies. We believe that the use of share grants vesting over time rather than stock options mitigates the incentives for our management to undertake undue risks and encourages our management to make longer term, less risk prone decisions.

While a number of risk management functions are performed, it is not possible to identify all of the risks that may affect us or to develop processes and controls to eliminate all risks and their possible effects, and processes and controls employed to address risks may be limited in their effectiveness. Moreover, it is necessary for our Company to bear certain risks to achieve our objectives. As a result of the foregoing and other factors, our Company's ability to manage risk is subject to substantial limitations.

BOARD COMMITTEES

We have a standing Audit Committee, Compensation Committee and Nominating and Governance Committee, each of which has a written charter. Each of the above committees is currently comprised of Messrs. Donelan, Lamkin and Zeytoonjian, who are independent under applicable NYSE listing standards and each committee's respective charter, and, in the case of our Audit Committee, the applicable independence requirements of the SEC. In 2011, we formed an ad hoc special committee comprised of Messrs. Donelan and Lamkin, our Independent Trustees who were not also trustees of SNH, in connection with our consideration and negotiation of the sale of 13 MOBs to SNH, as more fully described below in the section entitled *Related Person Transactions and Company Review of Such Transactions*. Our Audit Committee, Compensation Committee and Nominating and Governance Committee are delegated the powers of our Board necessary to carry out their responsibilities.

Our Audit Committee was established in accordance with section 3(a)(58)(A) of the Exchange Act. The primary function of our Audit Committee is to assist our Board in fulfilling its responsibilities for oversight of: (1) the integrity of our financial statements; (2) our compliance with legal and regulatory requirements; (3) our independent registered public accounting firm's qualifications and independence; and (4) the performance of our internal audit function and independent registered public accounting firm. Our Board has determined that Mr. Lamkin is our Audit Committee financial expert and is "independent" as defined by the rules of the SEC and the NYSE. Our Board's determination that Mr. Lamkin is our Audit Committee financial expert was based upon: (i) his current position as partner of Ackrell Capital LLC, an investment banking firm and (ii) his prior experience (a) as a financial consultant; (b) as a Senior Vice President in the investment banking division of ABN AMRO, Incorporated; and (c) in various investment banking positions with Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette and PaineWebber and Kidder, Peabody, where his work included real estate investment banking and project lease financing matters. Under its charter, our Audit Committee has the final authority and responsibility to select our independent registered public accounting firm.

Our Compensation Committee's primary responsibilities include: (1) reviewing the terms of RMR's business management and property management agreements with us, evaluating the performance of RMR under these agreements and the expenses, costs and compensation we pay under these agreements, approving those expenses, costs and compensation that we are required to pay under these agreements and making determinations regarding continuance of or changes to these agreements; (2) evaluating the performance of our President and determining and approving any compensation, including any equity compensation, paid directly by us to our President; (3) evaluating the performance of our Director of Internal Audit and determining the compensation payable to him and the costs of our internal audit function generally; (4) evaluating, approving and administering all of our equity compensation plans; (5) evaluating whether our executive compensation programs encourage appropriate levels of risk taking by our executives; and (6) reviewing and considering the incentives and risks associated with our compensation policies and practices.

The responsibilities of our Nominating and Governance Committee include: (1) identification of individuals qualified to become members of our Board and recommending to our Board the Trustee nominees for each annual meeting of shareholders or when Board vacancies occur; (2) development, and recommendation to our Board of governance guidelines; and (3) evaluation of the performance of our Board.

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

The charter of each of our standing committees provides that the committee may form and delegate authority to subcommittees of one or more members when appropriate. Subcommittees are subject to the provisions of the applicable committee's charter.

Our policy with respect to Board members' attendance at our annual meetings of shareholders can be found in our Governance Guidelines, the full text of which appears at our website at www.cwhreit.com. In addition to our Governance Guidelines, copies of the charters of our Audit, Compensation and Nominating and Governance Committees, as well as our Code of Business Conduct and Ethics, may be obtained free of charge at our website, www.cwhreit.com, or by writing to our Secretary, CommonWealth REIT, Two Newton Place, 255 Washington Street, Suite 300, Newton, Massachusetts 02458.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH TRUSTEES

Any shareholder or other interested person who desires to communicate with our Independent Trustees or any Trustees, individually or as a group, may do so by filling out a report at our website, www.cwhreit.com, by calling our toll-free confidential message system at (866) 511-5038 or by writing to the party for whom the communication is intended, c/o Director of Internal Audit, CommonWealth REIT, Two Newton Place, 255 Washington Street, Suite 300, Newton, Massachusetts 02458. Our Director of Internal Audit will then deliver any communication to the appropriate party or parties.

SELECTION OF CANDIDATES FOR TRUSTEES; SHAREHOLDER RECOMMENDATIONS, NOMINATIONS AND OTHER PROPOSALS

Our Board has established Governance Guidelines which, together with our declaration of trust and our bylaws, set forth the qualifications for service on our Board. Our Governance Guidelines may be changed from time to time by our Board upon the recommendation of our Nominating and Governance Committee. Our Board makes nominations of persons to be elected by shareholders as Trustees. Our Board also elects Trustees to fill Board vacancies that may occur from time to time. In both these circumstances, our Board will act upon recommendations made by our Nominating and Governance Committee.

In considering candidates to serve as Trustees, our Nominating and Governance Committee seeks individuals who have qualities that the Committee believes will be effective in serving our long term best interests. Among the characteristics that the Committee considers are the following: integrity, experience, achievements, judgment, intelligence, competence, personal character, ability to make independent analytical inquiries, willingness to devote adequate time to Board duties, likelihood that a candidate will be able to serve on our Board for an extended period and other matters that our Nominating and Governance Committee deems appropriate. While our Board does not have a specific diversity policy in connection with the selection of nominees for Trustee, due consideration is given to our Board's desire for an overall balance of diversity of perspectives, backgrounds and experiences. Our Board does not consider gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, national origin or citizenship to be relevant considerations and does not discriminate on the basis of such criteria. When considering candidates, our Nominating and Governance Committee will also assist our Board in determining the desired mix of experience, skills, attributes and other criteria that will strengthen our Board in a way that best serves the long term interests of our Company and complement the experience, skills, attributes and qualifications of existing Trustees. Depending on whether the position to be filled is that of an Independent Trustee or a Managing Trustee, the qualifications of the candidate

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

to meet the criteria for each such category of Trustee is considered. In seeking candidates for Trustee who have not previously served as our Trustees, the Nominating and Governance Committee may use the business, professional and personal contacts of its members, it may accept recommendations from other Board members and, if it considers it appropriate, the Nominating and Governance Committee may engage a professional search firm. In addition to other criteria, our bylaws require that nominees submit any additional information required in connection with our license or regulation by state insurance authorities.

In 2011, we did not pay any third party to identify or to assist in the evaluation of any candidate for election to our Board. We did not receive any shareholder recommendations or nominations for our Board for the 2012 annual meeting of shareholders, except the nominations made by our Board and recommendations by our Nominating and Governance Committee, each of which includes Board members who are shareholders of record.

Shareholder Recommendations for Nominees. A responsibility of our Nominating and Governance Committee is to consider candidates for election as Trustees who are properly recommended by shareholders. To be considered by our Nominating and Governance Committee, a shareholder recommendation for a nominee must be made by such shareholder's written notice to the Chair of our Nominating and Governance Committee and our Secretary, which notice should contain or be accompanied by the information and documents with respect to the recommended nominee and recommending shareholder that the recommending shareholder believes to be relevant or helpful to our Nominating and Governance Committee's deliberations. Our Nominating and Governance Committee may request additional information about the shareholder recommended nominee or about the shareholder recommending the nominee. Any recommended nominee will be considered by our Nominating and Governance Committee in its discretion using the same criteria as other candidates considered by it.

The preceding paragraph applies only to shareholder recommendations for nominees to our Nominating and Governance Committee. A shareholder nomination must be made in accordance with the provisions of our bylaws, including the procedures discussed below, and applicable state and federal laws.

2013 Annual Meeting Deadlines for Shareholder Proposals Pursuant to Rule 14a-8 under the Exchange Act. Shareholder proposals intended to be presented pursuant to Rule 14a-8 under the Exchange Act at our 2013 annual meeting of shareholders must be received at our principal executive offices on or before October 31, 2012, in order to be considered for inclusion in our proxy statement for our 2013 annual meeting of shareholders, provided that if we hold our 2013 annual meeting on a date that is more than 30 days before or after May 8, 2013, shareholders must submit proposals for inclusion in our 2013 proxy statement within a reasonable time before we begin to print our proxy materials. Under Rule 14a-8, we are not required to include shareholder proposals in our proxy materials unless conditions specified in the rule are met.

2013 Annual Meeting Deadlines for Shareholder Nominations and Shareholder Proposals not Made Pursuant to Rule 14a-8 under the Exchange Act. In order for one or more shareholders properly to propose a nominee for election to our Board or propose business outside of Rule 14a-8 under the Exchange Act, the shareholder(s) must comply in all respects with the advance notice and other provisions set forth in our bylaws, which currently include, among other things, requirements as to the shareholder's timely delivery of advance notice, share ownership and submission of specified

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

information. For example, to nominate a Trustee for election to our Board at our annual meeting, the shareholder(s) must, among other things: (1) at the date such shareholder gives its advance notice, hold individually or in the aggregate at least 3% of our shares entitled to vote at the meeting on such election and must have held such shares continuously for at least three years and continuously hold such shares through and including the time of the annual meeting (including any adjournment or postponement thereof); (2) be a shareholder of record at the time of giving notice through and including the time of the annual meeting (including any adjournment or postponement thereof); (3) be entitled to make nominations and to vote at the meeting on such election; (4) hold a certificate for all shares of beneficial interest of the Company owned by such shareholder during all times described in clause (1); and (5) comply with the advance notice procedures as to such nomination. The advance notice must set forth detailed specified information about the nominee and the nominee's affiliates and associates, the shareholder making the nomination and affiliates and associates of that shareholder, and provide to the extent known by the shareholder giving the notice, the name and address of any other shareholder supporting the shareholder's nomination.

As a further example, to propose other business to be considered by the shareholders at our annual meeting (other than the nomination of individuals for election to our Board), the shareholder must: (1) have continuously held at least \$2,000 in market value, or 1% of our shares entitled to vote at the meeting on the proposal for such business for at least one year from the date the shareholder gives its advance notice and continuously hold such shares through and including the time of the annual meeting (including any adjournment or postponement thereof); (2) be a shareholder of record at the time of giving notice through and including the time of the annual meeting (including any adjournment or postponement thereof); (3) be entitled to propose such business and to vote at the meeting on the proposal for such business; (4) hold a certificate for all shares of beneficial interest of the Company owned by such shareholder during all times described in clause (1); and (5) comply with the advance notice procedures as to such business. The advance notice must set forth a description of such business, the reasons for proposing such business at the meeting and any material interest in such business of the shareholder, a description of all agreements, arrangements and understandings involving the shareholder in connection with the proposal of such business and a representation that the shareholder intends to appear in person or by proxy at the meeting to bring the business before the meeting.

Our bylaws require that shareholder nominations and proposals intended to be made outside of Rule 14a-8 under the Exchange Act at our 2013 annual meeting of shareholders must be submitted, in accordance with the requirements of our bylaws, not later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern time on October 31, 2012 (which is also the date, after which, shareholder nominations and proposals made outside of Rule 14a-8 under the Exchange Act would be considered "untimely" within the meaning of Rule 14a-4(c) under the Exchange Act) and not earlier than October 1, 2012; provided, that, if our 2013 annual meeting is called for a date that is more than 30 days earlier or later than May 8, 2013, then a shareholder's notice must be so delivered not later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern time on the tenth day following the earlier of the day on which (1) notice of the date of our 2013 annual meeting is mailed or otherwise made available or (2) public announcement of the date of our 2013 annual meeting is first made by us.

In addition, at the same time as the submission of a shareholder nomination or proposal for consideration at a meeting of our shareholders that, if elected or approved and implemented by us, would cause us to be in breach of any covenant in or in default under any debt instrument or

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

agreement or other material agreement of ours or any subsidiary of ours, the shareholder must submit to our Secretary (i) evidence satisfactory to our Board of the lender's or contracting party's willingness to waive the breach of covenant or default, or (ii) a detailed plan for repayment of the applicable indebtedness or curing the contractual breach or default and satisfying any resulting damage, specifically identifying the actions to be taken or the source of funds, which plan must be satisfactory to our Board in its discretion, and evidence of the availability to us of substitute credit or contractual arrangements similar to the credit or contractual arrangements which are implicated by the shareholder nomination or other proposal that are at least as favorable to us, as determined by our Board in its discretion. Additionally, if (i) the submission of a shareholder nomination or proposal of other business to be considered at a shareholders meeting could not be considered or, if elected or approved, implemented by us without our or any subsidiary of ours, or the proponent shareholder, the nominee, the holder of proxies or their respective affiliates or associates filing with or otherwise notifying or obtaining the consent, approval or other action of any governmental or regulatory body, or a governmental action, or (ii) such shareholder's ownership of our shares or any solicitation of proxies or votes or holding or exercising proxies by such shareholder, the nominee or their respective affiliates or associates would require governmental action, then, at the same time as the submission of the shareholder nomination or proposal of other business, the proponent shareholder shall submit to our Secretary (x) evidence satisfactory to our Board that any and all governmental action has been given or obtained, including, without limitation, such evidence as our Board may require so that any nominee may be determined to satisfy any suitability or other requirements or (y) if such evidence was not obtainable from a governmental or regulatory body by such time despite the shareholder's diligent and best efforts, a detailed plan for making or obtaining the governmental action prior to the election of the nominee or the implementation of the proposal for other business, which plan must be satisfactory to our Board in its discretion.

The foregoing description of the procedures for a shareholder to propose a nomination for election to our Board or other business for consideration at an annual meeting is only a summary and is not a complete listing of all requirements. Copies of our bylaws, including the provisions that concern shareholder recommendations and the requirements for shareholder nominations and other proposals, may be obtained by writing to our Secretary at CommonWealth REIT, Two Newton Place, 255 Washington Street, Suite 300, Newton, Massachusetts 02458, or from the SEC's website at www.sec.gov. Any shareholder considering making a nomination or other proposal should carefully review and comply with those provisions. Under our declaration of trust and our bylaws, a shareholder is obligated to indemnify us for costs and expenses we incur arising from the shareholder's breach or failure to fully comply with any covenant, condition or provision of our declaration of trust or our bylaws, including costs and expenses we may incur as a result of the shareholder's failure to comply with the requirements to make nominations and proposals.

COMPENSATION DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Compensation Overview

We do not have any employees. None of our executive officers has an employment agreement with us or any agreement that becomes effective upon his termination or a change in control of us. Our manager, RMR, provides services that otherwise would be provided by employees. RMR conducts our day to day operations on our behalf and compensates our named executive officers, Messrs. Adam Portnoy, John Popeo and David Lepore, directly and in its sole discretion in connection with their services rendered to RMR and to us. We do not pay our executive officers salaries or bonuses or provide other compensatory benefits except for the grants of shares under our share award plan discussed below. Although our Compensation Committee reviews and approves our business management and property management agreements with RMR, it is not involved in compensation decisions made by RMR for its employees other than the employee serving as our Director of Internal Audit. Our payments to RMR are described in *Related Person Transactions and Company Review of Such Transactions* in this proxy statement.

In September 2011, the Chair of our Compensation Committee met with our Managing Trustees and the chairs of the compensation committees of the other public REITs, the RMR Funds and the operating companies for which RMR and its affiliates provide management services. RMR provides management services to: (1) HPT, a publicly traded REIT that primarily owns hotels and travel centers; (2) SNH, a publicly traded REIT that primarily owns senior living properties and medical office buildings; (3) Five Star, a publicly traded real estate based operating company in the healthcare and senior living services business; (4) TA, a publicly traded real estate based operating company in the travel center business; and (5) GOV, a publicly traded REIT that primarily invests in properties that are majority leased to government tenants. The purpose of this meeting was, among other things, to discuss compensation philosophy and factors that may affect compensation decisions, to consider the compensation payable by us to our Director of Internal Audit who provides services to us and to other companies managed by RMR and its affiliates, to consider the allocation of internal audit and related services costs among us and other companies to which RMR or its affiliates provide internal audit and related services, to provide a comparative understanding of potential share grants by us and the other affected companies and to hear and consider recommendations from our Managing Trustees concerning potential share grants. The share grants made by the companies and other REITs managed by RMR and its affiliates are considered to be appropriately comparable because of the similarities between certain services we require from our share grantees and the services provided to these other companies and, in particular, with respect to the other REITs managed by RMR. Subsequent to this meeting, the members of our Compensation Committee held a meeting at which the Chair provided a report of the information discussed with the Managing Trustees and others, and made recommendations for share grants to executive officers. Our Compensation Committee then discussed these recommendations and other factors, including the following factors for the 2011 share grants: (1) the value of the proposed share grants; (2) the historical awards previously granted to each executive officer and the corresponding values at the time of the grants; (3) the recommendations by RMR as presented by our Managing Trustees; (4) the value of share grants to executive officers providing comparable services at other REITs and companies managed by RMR; (5) changes, if any, in the responsibilities assigned to, or assumed by, each executive officer during the past year and on a going forward basis; (6) the length of historical services to us by each executive officer; (7) the responsibilities of each executive officer and the Committee's perception regarding the quality of the services provided by each executive officer

in carrying out those responsibilities; and (8) our financial and operating performance in the past year and our perceived future prospects. Our Compensation Committee's starting premise each year is to award our named executive officers the same number of shares as they were awarded in the prior year in an effort to meet recipients' expectations. Our Compensation Committee then considers these multiple factors in determining whether to increase or decrease the amounts of the prior year's grants. There was no formulaic approach using these various factors in determining the number of shares to award to each executive officer. The share amounts were determined on a subjective basis using the various factors at our Compensation Committee's sole discretion. Our executive officers (other than Mr. Adam Portnoy) did not participate in these meetings and were not involved in determining or recommending the amount or form of executive compensation they receive from us. Our current President, Mr. Adam Portnoy, in his capacity as our Managing Trustee and as president of RMR, participated in these meetings and in share grant recommendations. Our Compensation Committee did not engage compensation consultants to participate in the determination or recommendation of the amount or form of executive compensation.

In evaluating our compensation process for 2011, our Compensation Committee generally considered the results of the 2011 advisory vote of our shareholders on the compensation of the executive officers named in our 2011 proxy statement. Our Compensation Committee noted that more than 96% of votes cast approved of the compensation of those executive officers as described in our 2011 proxy statement. Our Compensation Committee considered these voting results as supportive of the committee's general executive compensation practices.

Analysis of Grants under Our Share Award Plan

Although we do not pay any cash compensation directly to our officers and have no employees, we have adopted a share award plan to reward our executive officers and other RMR employees who provide services to us and to foster a continuing identity of interest between them and our shareholders. We award shares under our share award plan to recognize our executive officers' scope of responsibilities, reward demonstrated performance and leadership, motivate future performance, align the interests of our executives with those of our other shareholders and motivate the executives to remain employees of our manager and to continue to provide services to us through the term of the awards.

Under its charter, our Compensation Committee evaluates, approves and administers our equity compensation plans, which currently consist solely of our share award plan providing for the grants of our common shares. The Compensation Committee has historically determined to use grants of restricted common shares rather than stock options as equity compensation. Because the value of our common shares may be determined in part by reference to its dividend yield relative to market interest rates rather than by its potential for capital appreciation, we believe a conventional stock option plan might not provide appropriate incentives for management for a business like ours, but a share grant plan may create a better identity of interests between management and other shareholders. Also, because we believe a stock option plan may encourage excessive short term risk taking, we have historically granted restricted shares rather than stock options.

Our Compensation Committee uses comparative information about other REITs managed by RMR as additional data to help it determine whether it is awarding share amounts that it deems reasonable based on the characteristics of those REITs and their respective officers. The Compensation Committee also considers the size and structure of the other REITs and other RMR managed

businesses, and the experience, length of service and scope of duties and responsibilities of the officers at these other companies to assess the value of the share awards proposed for our officers in light of the proposed awards for officers with comparable roles at the other companies. Our Compensation Committee reviewed the data regarding the other REITs and their officers to help it gauge the reasonableness of the recommended 2011 awards together with the other factors discussed above, but the Compensation Committee did not undertake a detailed comparison of the named executive officers across the REITs or other companies managed by RMR or assign weight to any particular characteristic of these other companies or their officers because our Compensation Committee determines the share amounts in its sole discretion on a non-formulaic basis. In 2011, the Compensation Committee considered the foregoing factors and decided to increase the number of shares awarded to our named executive officers in accordance with the recommendation of our Managing Trustees.

We determine the fair market value of the shares granted based on the closing price of our common shares on the date of grant. The Compensation Committee has imposed, and may impose, vesting and other conditions on the granted common shares because it believes that time based vesting encourages the recipients of the share awards to remain employed by RMR and to continue to provide services to us. The Compensation Committee currently uses a vesting schedule under which one fifth of the shares vest immediately and the remaining shares vest in four equal, consecutive annual installments commencing on the first anniversary of the date of grant. The Compensation Committee utilizes a four year time based vesting schedule to provide an incentive to provide services for a long term and in consideration of the tax treatment of the share grants to us and to the recipients. In the event a recipient granted a share award ceases to perform duties for us or ceases to be an officer or an employee of RMR or any company that RMR manages during the vesting period, we may repurchase for nominal consideration the common shares that have not yet vested. As with other issued common shares, vested and unvested shares awarded under our share award plan are entitled to receive distributions that we make on our common shares.

Because the schedule for consideration of share awards by our Compensation Committee and our Board is determined on a regular schedule (i.e., in September for our officers and employees of RMR and at the first meeting of our Board after the annual meeting of shareholders for our Board members), the proximity of any grants to earnings announcements or other market events, if any, is coincidental.

We believe that our compensation philosophy and programs are designed to foster a business culture that aligns the interests of our executive officers with those of our shareholders. We believe that the equity compensation of our executive officers is appropriate to the goal of providing shareholders dependable, long term returns.

COMPENSATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The undersigned members of the Compensation Committee have reviewed and discussed the Compensation Discussion and Analysis with our management. Based upon this review and discussion, the Compensation Committee recommended to the Board that the Compensation Discussion and Analysis be included in this proxy statement and incorporated by reference into our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011.

COMPENSATION
COMMITTEE
Frederick N.
Zeytoonjian, Chairman
Patrick F. Donelan
William A. Lamkin

COMPENSATION TABLES

The following tables provide: (1) summary 2011, 2010 and 2009 compensation information relating to our named executive officers; (2) information with respect to share awards made to, or held by, our named executive officers during the periods or at the dates specified below; and (3) compensation information relating to our Trustees for 2011. Our named executive officers consist of four individuals, our current President, our former President and Chief Investment Officer, our Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer and our Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President, the compensation of whom is required to be reported in this proxy statement under the rules of the SEC. None of our named executive officers are employed by us. Our manager, RMR, provides services that otherwise would be provided by employees and compensates our named executive officers directly and in RMR's sole discretion in connection with their services rendered to RMR and to us. We do not pay our executive officers salaries or bonuses or provide other compensatory benefits except for the grants of shares under our share award plan.

SUMMARY COMPENSATION TABLE FOR 2011, 2010 AND 2009

Name and Principal Position	Year	Stock Awards (\$) ⁽¹⁾	All Other Compensation (\$) ⁽²⁾	Total (\$)
Adam D. Portnoy ⁽³⁾ President	2011	\$ 202,840	\$ 3,000	\$ 205,840
John A. Mannix ⁽³⁾ Former President and Chief Investment Officer	2011	\$ 149,700	\$ 14,725	\$ 164,425
	2010	\$ 102,375	\$ 11,182	\$ 113,557
	2009	\$ 97,760	\$ 8,664	\$ 106,424
John C. Popeo Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer	2011	\$ 149,700	\$ 14,725	\$ 164,425
	2010	\$ 102,375	\$ 11,182	\$ 113,557
	2009	\$ 97,760	\$ 8,664	\$ 106,424
David M. Lepore Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President	2011	\$ 149,700	\$ 14,725	\$ 164,425
	2010	\$ 102,375	\$ 11,182	\$ 113,557

(1) Represents the grant date fair value of shares granted in 2011, 2010 and 2009, as applicable, compiled in accordance with FASB Accounting Standards Codification Topic 718, "Compensation Stock Compensation," or ASC 718. No assumptions are used in this calculation.

(2) Consists of distributions in each year on unvested shares.

(3) Effective January 10, 2011, Mr. Mannix resigned his position as our President and Chief Investment Officer and Mr. Adam Portnoy was appointed our President. Mr. Mannix remains an Executive Vice President of RMR, and has temporarily relocated to oversee our and RMR's business investments in Australia. Mr. Adam Portnoy continues his position as Managing Trustee. Mr. Adam Portnoy's compensation for 2011 attributable to his services as a Managing Trustee, which consisted of a stock award with a value of \$53,140, is included above and is also included in the *Trustee Compensation for 2011* table below.

GRANTS OF PLAN BASED AWARDS FOR 2011

(Shares granted in 2011, including vested and unvested grants)

Name	Grant Date	All Other Stock Awards: Number of Shares of Stock or Units (#)	Grant Date Fair Value of Stock and Option Awards ⁽¹⁾
Adam D. Portnoy ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	9/16/11	7,500 Common Shares	\$ 149,700
John A. Mannix ⁽³⁾	9/16/11	7,500 Common Shares	\$ 149,700
John C. Popeo	9/16/11	7,500 Common Shares	\$ 149,700
David M. Lepore	9/16/11	7,500 Common Shares	\$ 149,700

- (1) Represents the value based upon the closing price on the date of grant, which is also the grant date fair value under ASC 718. No assumptions are used in this calculation.
- (2) The value of shares granted to Mr. Adam Portnoy as compensation for his services as Managing Trustee in 2011 is set forth in the *Trustee Compensation for 2011* table below.
- (3) Effective January 10, 2011, Mr. Mannix resigned his position as our President and Chief Investment Officer and Mr. Adam Portnoy was appointed our President. Mr. Mannix remains an Executive Vice President of RMR, and has temporarily relocated to oversee our and RMR's business investments in Australia.

Share awards granted by us to executive officers in 2011 provide that one fifth of each award vests on the grant date and one fifth vests on each of the next four anniversaries of the grant date. In the event a recipient granted a share award ceases to perform duties for us or ceases to be an officer or an employee of RMR or any company that RMR manages during the vesting period, we may repurchase the common shares that have not yet vested for nominal consideration. Holders of vested and unvested shares awarded under our share award plan are eligible to receive distributions that we make on our shares on the same terms as other holders of our common shares.

OUTSTANDING EQUITY AWARDS AT FISCAL YEAR END FOR 2011

(Shares granted in 2011 and prior years, which have not yet vested)

Name	Year Granted	Stock Awards	
		Number of Shares or Units of Stock That Have Not Vested (#) ⁽¹⁾	Market Value of Shares or Units of Stock That Have Not Vested (\$) ⁽²⁾
Adam D. Portnoy ⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾	2011	6,000	\$ 99,840
John A. Mannix ⁽⁴⁾	2011	6,000	\$ 99,840
	2010	2,250	\$ 37,440
	2009	1,300	\$ 21,632
	2008	550	\$ 9,152
John C. Popeo	2011	6,000	\$ 99,840
	2010	2,250	\$ 37,440
	2009	1,300	\$ 21,632
	2008	550	\$ 9,152
David M. Lepore	2011	6,000	\$ 99,840
	2010	2,250	\$ 37,440
	2009	1,300	\$ 21,632
	2008	550	\$ 9,152

- (1) Share awards granted by us to our executive officers provide that one fifth of each award vests on the grant date and one fifth vests on each of the next four anniversaries of the grant date. The shares granted in 2011 were granted on September 16, 2011; the shares granted in 2010 were granted on September 17, 2010; the shares granted in 2009 were granted on September 18, 2009; and the shares granted in 2008 were granted on September 22, 2008. At our option, in the event a recipient granted a share award ceases to perform duties for us or ceases to be an officer or an employee of RMR or any company that RMR manages during the vesting period, the recipient shall forfeit or we may repurchase all or a portion of the shares that have not yet vested.
- (2) Represents the value based upon the closing price of our shares on December 30, 2011.
- (3) Shares granted to Mr. Adam Portnoy as compensation for his services as Managing Trustee vested at the time of grant, and the value of such shares is set forth in the *Trustee Compensation for 2011* table below.
- (4) Effective January 10, 2011, Mr. Mannix resigned his position as our President and Chief Investment Officer and Mr. Adam Portnoy was appointed our President. Mr. Mannix remains an Executive Vice President of RMR, and has temporarily relocated to oversee our and RMR's business investments in Australia.

STOCK VESTED FOR 2011

(Share grants that vested in 2011, including shares granted in prior years)

Name	Stock Awards	
	Number of Shares Acquired on Vesting (#)	Value Realized on Vesting (\$) ⁽¹⁾
Adam D. Portnoy ⁽²⁾⁽³⁾	1,500	\$ 29,940
John A. Mannix ⁽³⁾	3,850	\$ 74,610
John C. Popeo	3,850	\$ 74,610
David M. Lepore	3,850	\$ 74,610

- (1) Represents the value based upon the closing price on the 2011 dates of vesting of grants made in 2011 and prior years.
- (2) Shares granted to Mr. Adam Portnoy as compensation for his services as Managing Trustee vested at the time of grant, and the value of such shares is set forth in the *Trustee Compensation for 2011* table below.
- (3) Effective January 10, 2011, Mr. Mannix resigned his position as our President and Chief Investment Officer and Mr. Adam Portnoy was appointed our President. Mr. Mannix remains an Executive Vice President of RMR, and has temporarily relocated to oversee our and RMR's business investments in Australia.

TRUSTEE COMPENSATION FOR 2011

(2011 compensation; all share grants to Trustees vest at the time of grant)

Name	Fees Earned or Paid in Cash (\$)	Stock Awards (\$) ⁽¹⁾	All Other Compensation (\$)	Total (\$)
Patrick F. Donelan	\$ 50,750	\$ 53,140		\$ 103,890
William A. Lamkin	\$ 60,750	\$ 53,140		\$ 113,890
Adam D. Portnoy ⁽²⁾	\$	\$ 53,140		\$ 53,140
Barry M. Portnoy ⁽²⁾	\$	\$ 53,140		\$ 53,140
Frederick N. Zeytoonjian	\$ 48,500	\$ 53,140		\$ 101,640

- (1) Represents the value based upon the closing price of our shares on the date of grant. This is also the compensation cost recognized by us for financial reporting purposes pursuant to ASC 718. No assumptions are used in this calculation.
- (2) Our Managing Trustees do not receive cash compensation for their services as Trustees. The compensation of Mr. Adam Portnoy for his services as President is described above.

Each Independent Trustee receives an annual fee of \$30,000 for services as a Trustee, plus a fee of \$750 for each meeting attended. Up to two \$750 fees are paid if a Board meeting and one or more Board committee meetings are held on the same date. The chairpersons of our Audit Committee, Compensation Committee and Nominating and Governance Committee receive an additional \$10,000, \$5,000 and \$5,000, respectively, each year. Under our Governance Guidelines, each Trustee is required to maintain the necessary level of expertise to perform his or her responsibilities as Trustee and we

Edgar Filing: Commonwealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

reimburse each Trustee for the out of pocket costs he or she incurs from attending continuing education programs. In 2011, Mr. Lamkin received \$5,000 for serving as the chair of our ad hoc special committee that was formed in connection with our consideration and negotiation of the sale of 13 MOBs to SNH. In addition, each Trustee received a grant of 2,000 of our common shares in 2011. We generally reimburse all our Trustees for travel expenses incurred in connection with their duties as Trustees.

Our Board believes it is important to align the interests of Trustees with those of our shareholders and for Trustees to hold equity ownership positions in our Company. Accordingly, our Board believes that a portion of each Trustee's compensation should be paid in shares. In determining the amount and composition of such compensation, our Board considers the compensation of trustees and directors of other comparable enterprises, both with respect to size and industry, including the compensation of trustees and directors of other companies managed by RMR.

In 2011, our Board reviewed the compensation paid to our Trustees and determined both the amount of such compensation and the allocation of such compensation between equity based awards and cash. Our Managing Trustees do not receive any cash compensation for their services as Trustees, but they do receive common share grants equal to the share grants awarded to our Independent Trustees.

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

In the course of our oversight of the Company's financial reporting process, we have: (1) reviewed and discussed with management the audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2011; (2) discussed with Ernst & Young LLP, the Company's independent registered public accounting firm, the matters required to be discussed by the Statement on Auditing Standards No. 61, as amended (AICPA, *Professional Standards*, Vol. 1, AU section 380), as adopted by the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board in Rule 3200T; (3) received the written disclosures and the letter from the independent registered public accounting firm required by applicable requirements of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board regarding the independent accountant's communications with the audit committee concerning independence; (4) discussed with the independent registered public accounting firm its independence; and (5) considered whether the provision of non-audit services by the independent registered public accounting firm is compatible with maintaining its independence and concluded that it is compatible at this time.

Based on the foregoing review and discussions, the Audit Committee recommended to the Board that the audited financial statements be included in the Company's Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2011, for filing with the SEC.

AUDIT COMMITTEE
William A. Lamkin, Chairman
Patrick F. Donelan
Frederick N. Zeytoonjian

SECURITY OWNERSHIP OF CERTAIN BENEFICIAL OWNERS AND MANAGEMENT

Unless otherwise indicated, the information set forth below is as of February 17, 2012. The following table sets forth information regarding the beneficial ownership of our common shares (not including any fractional shares that may be beneficially owned by such persons) by: (1) each person or entity known to us to be the beneficial owner of more than 5% of our outstanding common shares; (2) each of our Trustees, nominees and the persons listed in the *Compensation Tables* in this proxy statement; and (3) our Trustees and executive officers as a group. Unless otherwise indicated, we believe that each owner named below has sole voting and investment power for all our common shares shown to be beneficially owned by that person or entity. As of the date first set forth in this paragraph, we do not know of any outstanding rights to acquire our shares of the type specified in Rule 13d-3(d)(1) under the Exchange Act.

Name and Address of Beneficial Owner ⁽¹⁾	Amount and Nature of Beneficial Ownership ⁽²⁾	Percent of Share Class ⁽²⁾
<i>Beneficial Owners of More Than 5% of Our Common Shares</i>		
The Vanguard Group, Inc. ⁽³⁾	7,597,884	9.1%
Security Capital Research & Management Incorporated ⁽⁴⁾	7,579,052	9.1%
BlackRock, Inc. ⁽⁵⁾	4,866,968	5.8%
<i>Trustees, Nominees and Executive Officers</i>		
Barry M. Portnoy ⁽⁶⁾	208,789	*
John A. Mannix	35,474	*
Adam D. Portnoy ⁽⁶⁾	29,099	*
John C. Popeo	26,000	*
David M. Lepore	25,500	*
Frederick N. Zeytoonjian ⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾	8,967	*
Patrick F. Donelan	8,312	*
William A. Lamkin	6,812	*
All Trustees and executive officers as a group (seven persons) ⁽⁶⁾	313,479	*

*

Less than 1% of our common shares.

- (1) Unless otherwise indicated, the address of each identified person or entity is: c/o CommonWealth REIT, Two Newton Place, 255 Washington Street, Suite 300, Newton, Massachusetts 02458.
- (2) Our declaration of trust and bylaws place restrictions on the ability of any person or group to acquire beneficial ownership of more than 9.8% of any class of our shares. The percentages indicated are based upon the number of shares shown divided by the 83,721,736 of our common shares outstanding as of February 17, 2012.
- (3) This information is as of December 31, 2011, and is based on a Schedule 13G/A filed with the SEC on February 7, 2012, by The Vanguard Group, Inc., or Vanguard. According to the Schedule 13G/A filed by Vanguard, the address of Vanguard is 100 Vanguard Boulevard, Malvern, Pennsylvania 19355. In the Schedule 13G/A filed by Vanguard, Vanguard reports having sole voting power over 58,123 shares, sole dispositive power over 7,539,761 shares and shared dispositive power over 58,123 shares. Additionally, the Schedule 13G/A filed by Vanguard reports that Vanguard Fiduciary Trust Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Vanguard, is the beneficial owner of 58,123 shares as a result of its serving as investment manager of collective trust accounts,

Edgar Filing: Commonwealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

and that Vanguard Fiduciary Trust Company directs the voting of those shares. In addition, Vanguard Specialized Funds Vanguard REIT Index Fund, or Vanguard REIT Index Fund, also filed a Schedule 13G/A with the SEC on January 26, 2012, reporting beneficial ownership of 3,635,814 of our shares and that it has sole voting power over those shares. According to the Schedule 13G/A filed by Vanguard REIT Index Fund, the address of Vanguard REIT Index Fund is 100 Vanguard Boulevard, Malvern, Pennsylvania 19355. Vanguard has confirmed that the 3,635,814 of our shares reported as beneficially owned by Vanguard REIT Index Fund as of December 31, 2011 in its Schedule 13G/A are included in the 7,597,884 of our shares reported as beneficially owned by Vanguard in its Schedule 13G/A.

(4)

This information is as of December 31, 2011, and is based on a Schedule 13G/A filed with the SEC on February 13, 2012, by Security Capital Research & Management Incorporated. According to the Schedule 13G/A filed by Security Capital Research & Management Incorporated, the address of Security Capital Research & Management Incorporated is 10 South Dearborn Street, Suite 1400, Chicago, Illinois 60603. In the Schedule 13G/A filed by Security Capital Research & Management Incorporated, Security Capital Research & Management Incorporated reports sole voting power over 4,773,429 shares and beneficial ownership of and sole dispositive power over 7,579,052 shares. According to that same Schedule 13G/A, Security Capital Research & Management Incorporated reported beneficial ownership of 8.3% of our common shares outstanding. However, based on 83,721,736 of our common shares outstanding on February 17, 2012, Security Capital Research & Management Incorporated's actual percentage of beneficial ownership is 9.1%.

(5)

This information is as of December 31, 2011, and is based solely on a Schedule 13G/A filed with the SEC on February 13, 2012, by BlackRock, Inc. Based on the information provided in that Schedule 13G/A, the address of BlackRock, Inc. is 40 East 52nd Street, New York, New York 10022, and BlackRock, Inc., which reports beneficial ownership of and sole voting and dispositive power over 4,866,968 shares, is the parent holding company or control person for certain subsidiaries that have acquired our shares and that are listed in that Schedule 13G/A.

(6)

SNH beneficially owns 250,000 of our common shares. RMR is the manager of SNH, and Messrs. Barry Portnoy and Adam Portnoy own all of the outstanding shares of Reit Management & Research Trust, or RMR Trust, the sole member of RMR. RMR and Messrs. Barry Portnoy and Adam Portnoy, in their respective positions as the Chairman and a director of RMR and the Chairman, majority beneficial owner and a trustee of RMR Trust and as the President and Chief Executive Officer and a director of RMR, and the President and Chief Executive Officer, a beneficial owner and a trustee of RMR Trust, may be deemed to have beneficial ownership of the common shares owned by SNH; however, each disclaims beneficial ownership of these shares. Under applicable regulatory definitions, Mr. Zeytoonjian, who is an Independent Trustee of SNH, may also be deemed to have beneficial ownership of the common shares owned by SNH; however, Mr. Zeytoonjian disclaims beneficial ownership of such shares. None of the 250,000 shares beneficially owned by SNH are included in the shares listed as beneficially owned by Messrs. Barry Portnoy, Adam Portnoy or Zeytoonjian in the above table.

(7)

Includes 3,324 common shares owned by Mr. Zeytoonjian's wife. Mr. Zeytoonjian disclaims beneficial ownership of these shares, except to the extent of his pecuniary interest in the shares.

RELATED PERSON TRANSACTIONS AND COMPANY REVIEW OF SUCH TRANSACTIONS

We have adopted written Governance Guidelines that address, among other things, the consideration and approval of any related person transactions. Under these Governance Guidelines, we may not enter into any transaction in which any Trustee or executive officer, any member of the immediate family of any Trustee or executive officer or any other related person, has or will have a direct or indirect material interest unless that transaction has been disclosed or made known to our Board and our Board reviews, authorizes and approves or ratifies the transaction by the affirmative vote of a majority of the disinterested Trustees, even if the disinterested Trustees constitute less than a quorum. If there are no disinterested Trustees, the transaction shall be reviewed, authorized and approved or ratified by both (1) the affirmative vote of a majority of our entire Board and (2) the affirmative vote of a majority of our Independent Trustees. The Governance Guidelines further provide that, in determining whether to approve or ratify a transaction, our Board, or disinterested Trustees or Independent Trustees, as the case may be, shall act in accordance with any applicable provisions of our declaration of trust, consider all of the relevant facts and circumstances and approve only those transactions that are fair and reasonable to us. All related person transactions described below were reviewed and approved or ratified by a majority of the disinterested Trustees or otherwise in accordance with our policies described above. In the case of transactions with us by RMR employees (other than our Trustees and executive officers) subject to our Code of Business Conduct and Ethics, the employee must seek approval from an executive officer who has no interest in the matter for which approval is being requested.

We have no employees. Personnel and various services we require to operate our business are provided to us by RMR. We have two agreements with RMR to provide management and administrative services to us: (1) a business management agreement and (2) a property management agreement. One of our Managing Trustees, Mr. Barry Portnoy, is Chairman, majority owner and an employee of RMR. Our other Managing Trustee, Mr. Adam Portnoy, who is also our President, is the son of Mr. Barry Portnoy, an owner, President and Chief Executive Officer, and a Director of RMR. Each of our other executive officers is also an officer of RMR. Additionally, Mr. Barry Portnoy's son-in-law, who is Mr. Adam Portnoy's brother-in-law, is an officer of RMR. RMR has approximately 740 employees and provides management services to other companies in addition to us.

Our Board has given our Compensation Committee, which is comprised exclusively of our Independent Trustees, authority to act on our behalf with respect to our management agreements with RMR. The charter of our Compensation Committee requires the Committee annually to review the terms of these agreements, evaluate RMR's performance under the agreements and renew, amend, terminate or allow to expire the management agreements.

On November 1, 2011, we and RMR entered into an amended and restated business management agreement, or the business management agreement. The business management agreement provides for compensation to RMR at an annual rate equal to 0.7% of the average historical cost of our real estate investments, as described in the business management agreement, located in the United States, Puerto Rico or Canada, for the first \$250.0 million of such investments, and 0.5% thereafter, and 1.0% of the average historical cost of our real estate investments located outside the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada. In addition, RMR receives an incentive fee equal to 15% of the product of (i) the weighted average of our common shares outstanding on a fully diluted basis during such fiscal year and (ii) the excess if any of FFO Per Share, as defined in the business management agreement, for such fiscal year over the FFO Per Share for the preceding fiscal year. The incentive fee is paid in our

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

common shares and in any year shall not exceed \$0.04 multiplied by the weighted average number of our common shares outstanding on a fully diluted basis during such fiscal year. Our investment in GOV, which is described below, is not counted for purposes of determining the business management fees payable by us to RMR.

In determining the fees payable by us to RMR under the business management agreement, the average invested capital of any assets we have acquired or may in the future acquire from another REIT to which RMR provides business management or property management services, or an RMR Managed REIT, will be equal to the applicable selling RMR Managed REIT's historical costs for those properties, determined in the manner specified in the business management agreement, rather than our acquisition costs for those properties. The business management agreement also provides that, with certain exceptions, if we determine to offer for sale or other disposition any real property that, at such time, is of a type within the investment focus of another RMR Managed REIT, we will first offer that property for purchase or disposition to that RMR Managed REIT and negotiate in good faith for such purchase or disposition.

The property management agreement provides for management fees equal to 3.0% of gross collected rents and construction supervision fees equal to 5.0% of construction costs. However, with respect to our investments in Australia, RMR has agreed to waive half of the fees payable by us under the property management agreement and half of the business management fees related to real estate investments located outside of the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada, so long as our business and property management agreement with MacarthurCook Fund Management Limited with respect to those investments is in effect and we or any of our subsidiaries are paying fees under that agreement.

The aggregate business management and property management fees earned by RMR for 2011 were \$69.5 million. In addition, MacarthurCook Fund Management Limited earned \$1.9 million in 2011 with respect to our Australian properties, which amount is equal to the fees waived by RMR and excluded from the amounts earned by RMR during 2011. No incentive fees were earned by RMR in 2011 because the FFO Per Share for fiscal year 2011 did not exceed the FFO Per Share for fiscal year 2010.

RMR also provides internal audit services to us in return for our pro rata share of the total internal audit costs incurred by RMR for us and other publicly owned companies managed by RMR and its affiliates, which amounts are subject to determination by our Compensation Committee. Our Audit Committee appoints our Director of Internal Audit. Our pro rata share of RMR's costs of providing this internal audit function was approximately \$240,000 for 2011. These allocated costs are in addition to the business and property management fees we paid to RMR. We are generally responsible for all of our operating expenses, including certain expenses incurred by RMR on our behalf. We are not responsible for payment of RMR's employment, office or administration expenses incurred to provide management services to us, except for the employment and related expenses of RMR employees who provide on-site property management services and our pro rata share of the staff employed by RMR who perform our internal audit function.

Both the business management agreement and the property management agreement automatically renew for successive one year terms unless we or RMR give notice of non-renewal before the end of an applicable term. We or RMR may terminate either agreement upon 60 days prior written notice. RMR may also terminate the property management agreement upon five business days notice if we undergo a change of control, as defined in the property management agreement. The current terms for

Edgar Filing: Commonwealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

these agreements expire on December 31, 2012, and will be subject to automatic renewal unless earlier terminated.

Under our business management agreement with RMR, we acknowledge that RMR manages other businesses, which include HPT, SNH, GOV, Five Star, TA and Sonesta International Hotels Corporation, and will not be required to present us with opportunities to invest in properties that are primarily of a type that are within the investment focus of another business now or in the future managed by RMR. Each of the business management agreement and the property management agreement also includes arbitration provisions for the resolution of certain disputes, claims and controversies.

RMR also leases from us approximately 24,000 square feet of office space for eight regional offices. We earned approximately \$566,000 in rental income from RMR in 2011, which we believe is commercially reasonable rent for this office space.

Pursuant to our business management agreement, RMR may from time to time negotiate on our behalf with certain third party vendors and suppliers for the procurement of services to us. As part of this arrangement, we may enter agreements with RMR and other companies to which RMR provides management services for the purpose of obtaining more favorable terms with such vendors and suppliers.

As part of our annual restricted share grants under our share award plan, we typically grant restricted shares to certain employees of RMR, some of whom are our executive officers, in their capacities as RMR employees or executive officers of us. In 2011, we granted a total of 73,050 restricted shares with an aggregate value of \$1.5 million to such persons in such capacities, based upon the closing price of our common shares on the NYSE on the date of grant. One fifth of those restricted shares vested on the grant date and one fifth vests on each of the next four anniversaries of the grant date. These share grants to RMR employees are in addition to the fees we pay to RMR.

SNH was formerly our 100% owned subsidiary. It was spun off to our shareholders in 1999. At the time of SNH's spin off, we and SNH entered into a transaction agreement pursuant to which, among other things, we and SNH agreed that so long as we own 10% or more of SNH's common shares, we and SNH engage the same manager or we and SNH have any common managing trustees: (1) we will not make any investment in senior apartments, congregate communities, assisted living properties, nursing homes or other healthcare properties, but excluding medical office properties, medical clinics and clinical laboratory buildings, without the prior approval of a majority of SNH's independent trustees, and (2) SNH will not make any investment in office buildings, warehouses or malls, including medical office properties and clinical laboratory buildings without the prior approval of a majority of our Independent Trustees.

In May 2008, concurrently with our agreements to sell 47 MOBs to SNH for \$562.0 million, we and SNH entered into an amendment to the transaction agreement to permit SNH, rather than us, to invest in MOBs. At the same time, we granted SNH a right of first refusal to purchase up to 45 additional identified properties that we owned and that were leased to tenants in medical related businesses in the event that we determined to sell such properties, including an indirect sale as a result of a change of control of us or our subsidiaries which owned those properties.

Between November 2010 and January 2011, we sold to SNH 27 properties (approximately 2.8 million square feet), which were majority leased as MOBs, for an aggregate sale price of

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

\$470.0 million, excluding closing costs. We recognized net gains totaling approximately \$168.3 million from these sales. On September 30, 2011, we sold to SNH 13 additional properties (approximately 1.3 million square feet), which were located in eight states and majority leased as MOB's, for an aggregate sale price of \$167.0 million, excluding closing costs, and we recognized net gains totaling \$7.8 million from these sales. Certain of the properties included in these sales were subject to SNH's right of first refusal referred to above. In connection with our September 2011 sale of 13 properties to SNH, we and SNH terminated the existing SNH right of first refusal, as substantially all of the properties that were subject to that right of first refusal had been purchased by SNH. Our sale agreements with SNH include arbitration provisions for the resolution of certain disputes, claims and controversies.

As of February 27, 2012, SNH owned 250,000 of our common shares. Both we and SNH are managed by RMR; Mr. Barry Portnoy and Mr. Adam Portnoy are Managing Trustees of both us and SNH; and Frederick N. Zeytoonjian is an Independent Trustee of both us and SNH. Also, all of our and SNH's officers are employees of RMR. Accordingly, the sale and amendment agreements between us and SNH described above were negotiated and approved by special committees of each company's board of trustees comprised solely of Independent Trustees who were not also Independent Trustees of the other company.

GOV was formerly our 100% owned subsidiary. In June 2009, GOV completed an initial public offering pursuant to which GOV ceased to be a majority owned subsidiary of ours. In connection with this offering, we and GOV entered a transaction agreement, which governs our separation from and relationship with GOV. Pursuant to this transaction agreement, among other things, we and GOV agreed that, so long as we own in excess of 10% of GOV's outstanding common shares, we and GOV engage the same manager or we and GOV have any common managing trustees: (1) we will not acquire ownership of properties that are majority leased to government tenants, unless a majority of GOV's independent trustees who are not also our Trustees have determined not to make the acquisition; (2) GOV will not acquire ownership of office or industrial properties that are not majority leased to government tenants, unless a majority of our Independent Trustees who are not also GOV's trustees have determined not to make the acquisition; and (3) GOV will have a right of first refusal to purchase any property owned by us that we determine to divest if the property is then majority leased to government tenants, which right of first refusal will also apply in the event of an indirect sale of any such properties resulting from a change of control of us. The provisions described in (1) and (2) do not prevent GOV from continuing to own and lease its current properties or properties otherwise acquired by GOV that cease to be majority leased to government tenants following the termination of government tenancies; and, similarly, the provisions described in (1) and (2) also do not prohibit us from leasing our current or future properties to government tenants. We and GOV also agreed that certain disputes, claims and controversies arising under the transaction agreement may be referred to binding arbitration proceedings.

We are GOV's largest shareholder and as of February 27, 2012, we owned 9,950,000 common shares of GOV, which represented approximately 21.1% of GOV's outstanding common shares. Both we and GOV are managed by RMR, Mr. Barry Portnoy and Mr. Adam Portnoy are Managing Trustees of both us and GOV and Mr. Adam Portnoy is our President and was the President of GOV from its formation in 2009 until January 2011 when he became our President. Also, all of our officers and GOV's officers are officers of RMR.

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

Our Independent Trustees also serve as directors or trustees of other public companies to which RMR provides management services. Mr. Barry Portnoy serves as a managing director or managing trustee of those companies, including SNH, GOV, HPT, Five Star and TA, and Mr. Adam Portnoy serves as a managing trustee of some of those companies, including SNH, GOV and HPT. We understand that the other companies to which RMR provides management services also have certain other relationships with each other, including business and property management agreements and lease arrangements. In addition, officers of RMR serve as officers of those companies. We understand that further information regarding those relationships is provided in the applicable periodic reports and proxy statements filed by those other companies with the SEC.

On December 22, 2011, our wholly owned subsidiary, SIR, filed a registration statement with the SEC for an IPO of common shares as a REIT that is focused on owning and investing in net leased, single tenant properties. If the SIR registration statement becomes effective and the IPO is completed, we expect to continue to own a majority of SIR's common shares after the completion of the offering and because of our retained majority interest in SIR, we expect SIR will remain one of our consolidated subsidiaries. On February 16, 2012, we transferred 251 properties (approximately 21.4 million rentable square feet) to SIR, including substantially all of our commercial and industrial properties located in Oahu, Hawaii and 23 suburban office and industrial properties located throughout the mainland U.S. In exchange for our contribution of 251 properties to SIR, we received 22,000,000 SIR common shares and a \$400.0 million demand promissory note, or the Demand Note. We expect that SIR would use net proceeds of its proposed IPO to repay in part amounts outstanding under the Demand Note. Upon completion of the IPO, SIR expects to enter into a \$500.0 million bank facility with a group of commercial banks. Upon completion of the IPO, SIR intends to borrow under the bank facility to repay the balance of the Demand Note and reimburse us for the costs we incurred in organizing SIR, establishing its bank facility and preparing for its IPO. There can be no assurance that SIR will be successful in completing its share offering and establishing the bank facility or that it will have the funds to repay the Demand Note or to reimburse us for the costs we incurred in organizing SIR.

In order to govern the separation of SIR from us, upon completion of the IPO, we intend to enter into a transaction agreement with SIR. We expect that the transaction agreement will provide, among other things, that (1) the current assets and liabilities of the properties to be transferred to SIR will, as of the time of the closing of the IPO of SIR's common shares, be settled between us and SIR so that we will retain all pre-closing current assets and liabilities and SIR will assume all post-closing current assets and liabilities and (2) SIR will indemnify us with respect to any liability relating to any property transferred to it by us, including any liability which relates to periods prior to SIR's formation.

Our two Managing Trustees, Mr. Barry Portnoy and Mr. Adam Portnoy, are also trustees of SIR, and Mr. John Popeo, our Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer, also serves as the Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer of SIR. In addition, if the IPO is completed, it is currently expected that Mr. William Lamkin, one of our Independent Trustees, will serve as an independent trustee of SIR.

If the SIR IPO is completed, we also expect that RMR will provide business and property management services to SIR. We expect that SIR will enter into management agreements with RMR that are on terms that are substantially similar to our management agreements with RMR. Accordingly, our management fees to RMR may be reduced by the amount of the management fees that would have otherwise been payable by us with respect to properties contributed by us to SIR. The SIR IPO will not occur unless, among other things, the SEC has declared the registration statement to be

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

effective and underwriters have agreed to purchase and distribute the shares proposed to be offered by SIR. In addition, we may determine in our discretion, due to market conditions or otherwise, not to proceed with the SIR IPO. Accordingly, there can be no assurance that the IPO will occur.

We, RMR, SNH, GOV, HPT, Five Star and TA each currently own approximately 14.29% of AIC, an Indiana insurance company. All of our Trustees, all of the trustees and directors of the other publicly held AIC shareholders and nearly all of the directors of RMR currently serve on the board of directors of AIC. RMR provides management and administrative services to AIC pursuant to a management and administrative services agreement with AIC. Our Governance Guidelines provide that any material transaction between us and AIC shall be reviewed, authorized and approved or ratified by both the affirmative vote of a majority of our entire Board and the affirmative vote of a majority of our Independent Trustees. The shareholders agreement that we, the other shareholders of AIC and AIC are parties to includes arbitration provisions for the resolution of certain disputes, claims and controversies.

As of February 27, 2012, we have invested \$5.2 million in AIC since its formation in November 2008. We may invest additional amounts in AIC in the future if the expansion of this insurance business requires additional capital, but we are not obligated to do so. For 2011, we recognized income of \$139,000 related to our investment in AIC. In June 2010, we and the other shareholders of AIC purchased property insurance providing \$500.0 million of coverage pursuant to an insurance program arranged by AIC and with respect to which AIC is a reinsurer of certain coverage amounts. This program was modified and extended in June 2011 for a one year term. Our annual premiums for this property insurance of approximately \$6.7 million was paid in 2011. We are currently investigating the possibilities to expand our insurance relationships with AIC to include other types of insurance. By participating in this insurance business with RMR and the other companies to which RMR provides management services, we expect that we may benefit financially by possibly reducing our insurance expenses or by realizing our pro rata share of any profits of this insurance business.

The foregoing descriptions of our agreements with RMR, SNH, GOV, SIR and AIC are summaries and are qualified in their entirety by the terms of the agreements. A further description of the terms of certain of those agreements is included in our annual report to shareholders and our Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC, in each case for the year ended December 31, 2011. In addition, copies of certain of those agreements are filed with the SEC and may be obtained from the SEC's website at www.sec.gov.

We believe that our agreements with RMR, SNH, GOV, SIR and AIC are on commercially reasonable terms. We also believe that our relationships with RMR, SNH, GOV, SIR and AIC and their affiliated and related persons and entities benefit us, and, in fact, provide us with competitive advantages in operating and growing our business.

COMPENSATION COMMITTEE INTERLOCKS AND INSIDER PARTICIPATION

Our Compensation Committee is currently comprised of Messrs. Donelan, Lamkin and Zeytoonjian. None of the members of our Compensation Committee is, or has been, an officer or employee of our Company. None of our executive officers serves on the board of directors (or related governing body) or compensation committee of another entity that has an executive officer who serves on our Board or Compensation Committee. Members of our Compensation Committee serve as independent trustees or independent directors and compensation committee members of other public companies managed by or affiliated with RMR.

SECTION 16(A) BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP REPORTING COMPLIANCE

Section 16(a) of the Exchange Act requires that our Trustees, executive officers and persons who own more than 10% of a registered class of our equity securities file reports of ownership and changes in ownership of securities with the SEC and the NYSE. Our executive officers, Trustees and greater than 10% shareholders are required to furnish us with copies of all forms they file pursuant to Section 16(a). Based solely on a review of the copies of these reports furnished to us or written representations made to us that no such reports were required, we believe that, during 2011, all filing requirements under Section 16(a) of the Exchange Act applicable to our executive officers, Trustees and persons who own more than 10% of a registered class of our equity securities were timely met.

HOUSEHOLDING OF ANNUAL MEETING MATERIALS

Some banks, brokers and other record holders of our common shares may participate in the practice of "householding" proxy statements, annual reports and notices of internet availability of those documents. This means that, unless shareholders give contrary instructions, only one copy of our proxy statement, annual report or notice of internet availability may be sent to multiple shareholders in each household. We will promptly deliver a separate copy of any of those documents to you if you write to us at Investor Relations, CommonWealth REIT, Two Newton Place, 255 Washington Street, Suite 300, Newton, Massachusetts 02458, or call us at (617) 796-8222. If you want to receive separate copies of our proxy statement, annual report or notice of internet availability in the future, or if you are receiving multiple copies and would like to receive only one copy per household, you should contact your bank, broker or other record holder, or you may contact us at the above address or telephone number.

OTHER MATTERS

At this time, we know of no other matters that will be brought before the meeting. If, however, other matters properly come before the meeting or any postponement or adjournment thereof, the persons named in the proxy will vote the proxy in accordance with their discretion on such matters to the maximum extent that they are permitted to do so by applicable law.

February 28, 2012

IMPORTANT

If your shares are held in your own name, please complete a proxy over the internet or by telephone in the manner provided on the website indicated in the Notice of Internet Availability that you received in the mail; alternatively, please request, complete and return a proxy card today. If your shares are held in "street name," you should provide instructions to your broker, bank, nominee or the other institution holding your shares on how to vote your shares. You may provide instructions to your broker, bank, nominee or other institution over the internet or by telephone if your broker, bank, nominee or other institution offers these options, or you may return a proxy card to your broker, bank, nominee or other institution and contact the person responsible for your account to ensure that a proxy is voted on your behalf.

If you have any questions or need assistance in voting your shares, please call the firm assisting us in the solicitation of proxies:

**Innisfree M&A Incorporated
501 Madison Avenue, 20th Floor
New York, New York 10022
Brokers and Banks Call Collect at (212) 750-5833
Shareholders Call Toll-Free at (877) 825-8971**

APPENDIX A

**COMMONWEALTH REIT
2012 EQUITY COMPENSATION PLAN**

CommonWealth REIT (the "Company") hereby adopts the CommonWealth REIT 2012 Equity Compensation Plan (the "Plan"); effective as of the Effective Date (as defined in Section VIII).

I.
PURPOSE

The Plan is intended to advance the interests of the Company and its subsidiaries by providing a means of rewarding selected officers and Trustees of the Company, employees of the Manager, and others rendering valuable services to the Company, its subsidiaries or to the Manager, through grants of the Company's Shares.

II.
DEFINITIONS

Terms that are capitalized in the text of the Plan have the meanings set forth below:

- (a) "Board" means the Board of Trustees of the Company.
- (b) "Company" means CommonWealth REIT, a Maryland real estate investment trust.
- (c) "Exchange Act" means the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended.
- (d) "Key Person" means an employee, consultant, advisor, Trustee, officer or other person providing services to the Company, to a subsidiary of the Company, or to the Manager.
- (e) "Manager" means a person or entity providing management or administrative services to the Company.
- (f) "Participant" means a person to whom Shares have been granted, or any other person who becomes owner of the shares by reason of such person's death or incapacity.
- (g) "Plan" means this CommonWealth REIT 2012 Equity Compensation Plan, as it may be amended from time to time.
- (h) "Securities Act" means the Securities Act of 1933, as amended.
- (i) "Share Agreement" means an agreement between the Company and a Participant regarding Shares issued to the Participant pursuant to the Plan.
- (j) "Shares" means the Company's common shares of beneficial interest, par value \$0.01 per share.
- (k) "Trustee" means a member of the Board.

III.
SHARES SUBJECT TO THE PLAN

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

Subject to the provisions of Article VII, the maximum number of Shares which may be granted under the Plan following the Effective Date is 3,000,000, subject to adjustment as set forth herein. If any Shares subject to an award under the Plan are forfeited, cancelled, repurchased or surrendered, the Shares with respect to such award shall, to the extent of any such forfeiture, cancellation, repurchase or surrender, again be available for awards under the Plan.

Subject to the terms of any Share Agreement, a holder of Shares granted under the Plan, whether or not vested, shall have all of the rights of a shareholder of the Company, including the right to vote the shares and the right to receive any distributions, unless the Board shall otherwise determine. Certificates representing Shares may be imprinted with a legend to the effect that the Shares

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

represented may not be sold, exchanged, transferred, pledged, hypothecated or otherwise disposed of except in accordance with the terms of the Securities Act and the applicable Share Agreement, if any. In addition, the Company may hold the certificates representing Shares pending lapse of any applicable vesting, forfeiture, repurchase, transfer or similar restrictions.

IV.

METHOD OF GRANTING SHARES

Grants of Shares to any Key Person shall be made by action of the Board, which shall have the sole discretion to select persons to whom Shares are to be granted, the amount and timing of each such grant, the extent, if any, to which vesting restrictions or other conditions (which may include repurchase rights) shall apply to the award and all other terms and conditions of any award (which terms and conditions need not be the same as between recipients or awards). If a person to whom such a grant of Shares has been made fails to execute and deliver to the Company a Share Agreement within ten (10) days after it is submitted to him or her, the grant of Shares related to such Share Agreement may be cancelled by the Company, acting by the Board, at its option and in its discretion without further notice to the Participant. No Trustee or officer of the Company may be granted more than 1,000,000 Shares under the Plan after the Effective Date. Nothing in this Section IV shall prevent the Board from delegating its authority to make grants to a committee pursuant to Section V.

V.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PLAN

The Plan shall be administered by the Board or, in the discretion of the Board, a committee designated by the Board and composed of at least two (2) members of the Board. All references in the Plan to the Board shall be understood to refer to such committee or the Board, whichever shall be administering the Plan from time to time. All questions of interpretation and application of the Plan and of grants of Shares shall be determined by the Board in its sole discretion and the Board shall have the authority to do all things necessary to carry out the purposes of the Plan, and its determinations shall be final and binding upon all persons, including the Company and all Participants. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Board is authorized to (i) adopt and approve from time to time the forms and, subject to the terms of the Plan, the terms and conditions of any Share Agreement; (ii) make adjustments to awards in response to changes in applicable laws, regulations, or accounting principles; and (iii) prescribe, amend and rescind rules and regulations relating to the Plan. If it determines to do so, the Board may grant shares under this Plan which are not subject to vesting, forfeiture, repurchase and transfer restrictions.

For so long as Section 16 of the Exchange Act is applicable to the Company, each member of any committee designated to administer the Plan shall qualify as a "non-employee director" within the meaning of Rule 16b-3 under the Exchange Act and, in the event that the Board determines to grant awards under the Plan which constitute "qualified performance-based compensation for purposes of Section 162(m) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended from time to time (the "Code"), each member of any committee designated to administer the Plan shall qualify as an "outside director" within the meaning of Section 162 of the Code and the regulations thereunder.

With respect to persons subject to Section 16 of the Exchange Act ("Insiders") with respect to the Company, transactions under the Plan are intended to comply with all applicable conditions of Rule 16b-3 or its successor under the Exchange Act.

VI.
ELIGIBLE PERSONS

The persons eligible to receive grants of Shares shall be those persons selected by the Board in its discretion from among Key Persons who contribute to the business of the Company and its subsidiaries.

VII.
CHANGES IN CAPITAL STRUCTURE

In the event of any stock dividend or other similar distribution (whether in the form of stock or other securities), stock split or combination of shares (including a reverse stock split), conversion, reorganization, consolidation, split-up, spin-off, combination, merger, exchange of stock, extraordinary cash dividend or other similar transaction or event, the Board shall make adjustments to the maximum number of Shares that may be issued under the Plan under Article III and Article IV and shall also make appropriate adjustments to the number and kind of shares of stock, securities or other property (including cash) subject to awards then outstanding under the Plan affected by such change and to the other terms and conditions of such awards. No fractional Shares shall be issued pursuant to any such adjustment, and any fractions resulting from any such adjustment shall be eliminated in each case by rounding downward to the nearest whole Share.

VIII.
EFFECTIVE DATE, DURATION, AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION OF PLAN;
EFFECT ON PRIOR PLAN

The Plan shall be effective at the close of business on May 8, 2012 (the "Effective Date"), subject to its approval by the Company's shareholders. Shares may be granted under the Plan from time to time until the close of business on the tenth anniversary of the Effective Date. Awards outstanding at Plan termination shall remain in effect according to their terms and the provisions of the Plan. The Board hereafter may at any time amend or terminate the terms of an award or the Plan in any respect, provided that (without limiting Article VII hereof) the Board may not, without the affected Participant's consent, amend or terminate the terms of an award or the Plan so as to affect adversely the Participant's rights under an outstanding award. Any amendments to the Plan shall be conditioned upon shareholder approval only to the extent, if any, such approval is required by applicable law or listing requirement. Upon the approval of the Plan, no further awards shall be made under the HRPT Properties Trust 2003 Incentive Share Award Plan (the "Prior Plan"). Awards granted under the Prior Plan before the Effective Date shall continue to be governed by the terms of the Prior Plan and any applicable Share Agreement.

IX.
MISCELLANEOUS

- A. Nonassignability of Shares. Shares subject to a Share Agreement shall not be assignable or transferable by a Participant except in accordance with the terms of the applicable Share Agreement or as may be permitted by the Board.
- B. No Guarantee of Employment. Neither the award of Shares nor a Share Agreement shall give any person the right to continue in the employment or service of, or to continue to act as an officer or, Trustee of, or to serve in any other capacity with, the Company, any subsidiary or the Manager.
- C. Tax Withholding; Section 409A. To the extent required by law, the Company shall withhold or cause to be withheld income and other taxes incurred by a Participant by reason of a grant of Shares, and as a condition to the receipt of any grant such a Participant shall agree that if the amount payable to him by the Company in the ordinary course is insufficient to pay such

Edgar Filing: CommonWealth REIT - Form DEF 14A

taxes, he or she shall upon request of the Company pay to the Company an amount sufficient to satisfy its tax withholding obligations. It is intended that awards granted under the Plan be exempt from the application Section 409A of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and the Plan and such awards shall be construed in accordance with that intention.

D.

Conditions to Issuance. The issuance of Shares under the Plan is subject to compliance with (1) the laws, rules and regulations of all public agencies and authorities applicable to the issuance and distribution of Shares and (2) the listing rules of any stock exchange or national market system on which the Shares are listed.

E.

No Fractional Shares. No fractional Shares shall be issued or delivered pursuant to the Plan. The Board shall determine whether cash, other Awards, or other property shall be issued or paid in lieu of such fractional Shares or whether such fractional shares or any rights thereto shall be forfeited or otherwise eliminated.

F.

Governing Law. The Plan shall be governed by and construed and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland applicable to contracts made and to be performed therein, without reference to the conflicts of law principles thereof.

QuickLinks

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[PROPOSALS 1 AND 2 ELECTION OF TRUSTEES](#)

[PROPOSAL 3 ADOPTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH REIT 2012 EQUITY COMPENSATION PLAN](#)

[PROPOSAL 4 ADVISORY APPROVAL RELATING TO EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION](#)

[PROPOSAL 5 RATIFICATION OF APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM
SOLICITATION OF PROXIES](#)

TRUSTEES AND EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD COMMITTEES

COMMUNICATIONS WITH TRUSTEES

SELECTION OF CANDIDATES FOR TRUSTEES; SHAREHOLDER RECOMMENDATIONS, NOMINATIONS AND OTHER PROPOSALS

COMPENSATION DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

COMPENSATION COMMITTEE REPORT

COMPENSATION TABLES

SUMMARY COMPENSATION TABLE FOR 2011, 2010 AND 2009

GRANTS OF PLAN BASED AWARDS FOR 2011 (Shares granted in 2011, including vested and unvested grants)

OUTSTANDING EQUITY AWARDS AT FISCAL YEAR END FOR 2011 (Shares granted in 2011 and prior years, which have not yet vested)

STOCK VESTED FOR 2011 (Share grants that vested in 2011, including shares granted in prior years)

TRUSTEE COMPENSATION FOR 2011 (2011 compensation; all share grants to Trustees vest at the time of grant)

AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

SECURITY OWNERSHIP OF CERTAIN BENEFICIAL OWNERS AND MANAGEMENT

RELATED PERSON TRANSACTIONS AND COMPANY REVIEW OF SUCH TRANSACTIONS

COMPENSATION COMMITTEE INTERLOCKS AND INSIDER PARTICIPATION

SECTION 16(A) BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP REPORTING COMPLIANCE

HOUSEHOLDING OF ANNUAL MEETING MATERIALS

OTHER MATTERS

IMPORTANT

APPENDIX A COMMONWEALTH REIT 2012 EQUITY COMPENSATION PLAN