

The House Special



Volume 30 Issue 2

Skylines House

February 2010



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President, Norman Baker

The Board met on January 27, 2010 and considered and approved two action items.

The Board approved effective immediately, a SS&NWC recommendation to make year round, the recent one month test of opening the garage exit door during non-holiday, Monday-Friday, 7:00 am to 9:00 am rush hours (see announcement with details elsewhere in this issue.)

The Board then approved a Management initiative which had been approved and recommended by the PPOC and the FMC to try to encourage owners to easily and affordably replace old/original 5 gallons-of-water-per-flush toilets with new, water efficient 1.6 gallons-of-water-per-flush toilets. In short, but described in more detail elsewhere in this issue, if an owner purchase a high-efficiency toilet, whether it be directly from the Association or from any other vendor, to replace an old low-efficiency toilet, the Association's in-unit staff will install the toilet(s) free of charge.

Everyone involved in both these initiatives is to be commended for creatively trying to find ways to reduce overall costs **and to ultimately slow the increase in every owner's annual assessments**. I note in the case of the toilet replacement proposal, now that it is approved, it will be up to every owner to take action in order to effect real cost reduction. It will be fascinating to see how many owners are really interested in reducing costs when the burden is directly on them to actually make it happen.

The 2010 election for 2 (3 year) seats on the Board of Directors is March 23rd. By the time you are reading this the date by which a candidate must submit an application to Management—Monday, February 8th— might have passed. If not, then, as always, I encourage owners to consider running for a seat on the Board. If so, then I also, encourage all owners to consider joining a committee. In some respects, one can have more impact as a committee member than as a Board member. Make 2010 the year you decide to get involved in your Association's governance. **YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU! Above all, come the election date, please vote. Every owners vote is needed.**



MANAGEMENT

General Manager, Gusbey Silva

Balcony Concrete Repairs and Railing Replacement Project

The estimated start date for the balcony repairs and rail replacement project on the North side of the West Building is March 1, 2010, contingent upon obtaining Fairfax County permits. The contractor mobilization date is scheduled for Monday, February 22nd, when the contractor will proceed to install the overhead protection needed along the North side and building entrances and to set up the rig equipment to be ready to access all balconies and perform the survey of the entire area, by no later than March 1, 2010.

Notices were delivered under the doors of all units, in tiers 06 through 13 of the West Building, on Friday, January 29th, notifying residents that all furniture and window screens should be removed from their balconies by not later than February 22nd, prior to the contractor setting up of the rig equipment over their balconies.

All residents should routinely check for notices to be posted on all bulletin boards at least 48 hours in advance, alerting residents of the closing of guest parking and/or the front driveway, when needed, for the delivery of construction equipment and material and a possible hazard to drivers and pedestrians during some of the balcony concrete demolition.

ALL OWNERS -- Toilet Replacement/Water Conservation Project

In 2009 the Association spent \$190,000 on Water and Sewer bills. The Association is currently looking into measures which can be implemented at Skyline House to improve water conservation. As a result, the Board of Directors has approved offering, through our In-Unit Maintenance Program, **FREE INSTALLATION** if you replace any original toilet (5.02 gallons of water per flush) with a new water efficient toilet (1.6 gallons or less of water per flush). We encourage residents to take advantage of this offer. You may purchase any toilet you like on the open market or you can order the toilet to be offered through our in-unit service. This program will be available during March and April 2010 to take advantage of the time available to our engineers prior to the start of the air conditioning and pool seasons. You may contact the Management Office during the month of February if you want your toilets replaced as soon as possible and the parts needed for the job are already available.

First Floor Decoration Project

The painting of East and West gallery walls was completed in December 2009. Our in-house painters are now in the process of painting the first floor residential corridor walls. Following that, the painters will proceed to paint all doors and adjacent walls in the first floor residential corridors with the colors selected by the Ad Hoc Decorating committee to match the new carpet.

RESIDENT VEHICLE REGISTRATION

Rule 18 E. 6. Of the Rules and Regulations states

“All vehicles...parked in the garage or outside spaces on a regular basis, shall display the Skyline House registration decal issued by the Association.” If you park inside or outside on Skyline House property, register your car with the Association and display the sticker on your vehicle window as instructed or risk having your vehicle towed at your own expense.



PHYSICAL PLANT & OPERATIONS

Chair, Al Lambert

Greetings! In December, a committee member conducted the annual inventory of the Association's non-expendable supplies (those items with a value greater than \$50). All items were accounted for, an outcome that speaks well of Management oversight.

On January 14th the Physical Plant and Operations Committee (PPOC) held its first meeting of 2010, and considered three items: 1) a Management initiative for greater utilization of Water Efficient Toilets, 2) the use of e-mail to report maintenance issues for the Resident Services Coordinator (noemi@shuoa.org), and 3) the creation of a PPOC landscaping sub-committee.

WATER EFFICIENT TOILETS: Management proposed to provide free installation of any water efficient toilet bought by an owner to replace a non-water efficient toilet. In addition, the Association would offer an American Standard toilet, (1.6 gpf) for purchase through the in-unit maintenance program. The Association would carry spare parts for these toilets, and residents could use the In-Unit for future repairs. (Plumbing and Electrician fees to make a house call typically run \$50 to \$100, plus the estimated cost of repairs, made at a labor cost of at least \$75 an hour. Our in-unit service fees are considerably less). There is an extensive selection of water-efficient toilets on the market today, including those made for the handicapped, as well as toilets with a heightened base. Our water bill (approximately \$182,000 per year), would be reduced, (condo fee savings), and our water usage reduced by up to 3200 gallons each year per toilet.

The PPOC recommended the Board approve this initiative.

MAINTENANCE ITEMS REPORTED BY E-MAIL: In addition to entries in the Maintenance Log kept at the Front Desk, residents can now report to the Resident Services Coordinator Noemi Najera, via e-mail (noemi@shuoa.org), items needing repair. This should help us become even more diligent in having deficiencies fixed in a timely manner, thereby maintaining building aesthetics, increasing our safety and security, and saving us all money in the long run. Items reported and repaired promptly increase our property values and help to attract potential owners, looking for a well-kept new home. Newer condominiums have the latest technology, but with a steep purchase price and high condo fees. We can offer an upscale condo with a proven maintenance repair record, with appropriate current technology, together with a financially sound Reserve Fund—yet selling at a cheaper purchase price.

CREATION OF LANDSCAPING SUB-COMMITTEE: PPOC member Howard Haymes provided a list of suggested improvements for the landscaping of our grounds. After a question and answer session, the PPOC voted to form a sub-committee to interface with our landscaper and to provide recommendations to Management. Although the sub-committee will be composed only of PPOC members, an opportunity will exist for unit owners to provide input. Please attend a meeting or contact Howard to provide your ideas on plants, shrubs and flowers. His e-mail address is hankeel@gmail.com.

Let's glance at major 2010 projects about which your input at a PPOC meeting can make a difference:

- a) Continuation of balcony and railing renovation on North side of the West Building
- b) New wall covering in the Penthouse galleries
- c) Resurfacing of the asphalt pavement
- d) New computer hardware
- e) Renovation of hydraulic elevators
- f) Annual Landscaping tasks (sub-committee formed)
- g) Checking paint condition of residential corridors (walk-around)
- h) Inspect condition of common area hardware (door knobs, peepholes, marble thresholds)
- i) New security cameras (Security Committee)

The next PPOC meeting will be February 11, 2010, at 7:00 p.m. Don't forget the monthly property walk-around the last Thursday of every month, in which we learn more about and examine more closely our home investment. As always, I welcome your feedback on this article, or on any matter pertaining to the PPOC. This is your home! We welcome you to join us. Thank you!



INFO FROM THE ENGINEER

Chief Engineer, Greg Grimm

ALL OWNERS -- Toilet Replacement/Water Conservation Project

The Board of Directors has approved offering **FREE INSTALLATION** during the months of March and April, for any owner replacing an original toilet with a water efficient toilet at Skyline House. Original toilets in the building use 5.02 gallons of water per flush and the average person flushes four times a day. A new toilet (1.6 gallons of water per flush) results in average water savings of 3.42 gallons of water per flush or 13.68 gallons of water per day per person. As you can see, if you do the math for the number of residents here, this savings will quickly add up to thousands of gallons of water saved per year. We are currently working with our vendors for volume pricing on a toilet that unit owners will be able to purchase in-house, or, of course, you can purchase any toilet of your choice on the open market. We will have more information available about the toilet, price, and installation soon in the Management Office.

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT THE GARAGE EXIT DOOR

On the recommendation of the Security, Safety and Neighborhood Watch and Financial Management Committees, the Board of Directors has approved the **garage EXIT door remaining open 7 AM to 9 AM Monday through Friday**, except on holidays. This is an effort to reduce the extensive amount of wear and tear to the exit door and to ultimately reduce the costs associated with everyone's monthly assessment.

Currently, staff are manually opening and closing the door. By the time you read this our contractor will have installed a timer on the door to do this automatically. **We need to caution any resident who might try to walk in the garage exit door around 9 am that there is no safety to stop the door from closing on you when the timer turns the door back on.**

Please note that before 7 AM and after 9 AM the exit door will resume cycling up and down with each vehicle and normal care should be taken when exiting the garage to prevent damage to your vehicle and the door.



COVENANTS

Chair, Joseph Livingston

I would like to thank all of the members of the Covenants and Election Committees for their work in 2009. I would also like to thank unit owners who have supported our work through attendance at our meetings, and offered helpful comments and suggestions, and of course, I thank Board members and management staff, without whose support we would accomplish little.

While we'd like to share with you some of the achievements of these Committees, during the past year, now is not the time, as we must address the challenges affecting our future. February 8th is the deadline to apply to be a candidate for the two vacancies on the Board of Directors. This is a plea all Unit Owners to get more involved in the governance of your Association. One very meaningful way is to consider becoming a candidate for an elective position (Board of Directors) or becoming a member of one or more of the several working committees of the Association. As always, you are welcome to attend meetings of, or join, the Covenants or other Association committees. Our next meeting will be on March 17th (St. Patrick's Day), at 7:00 p.m.



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Chair, Wynfred Joshua

The Financial Management Committee (FMC) met on January 25, 2010. Total income for the month of December 2009 was \$308,800 with expenditures of \$260,171. Total income less expenditures amounted to \$48,629. The monthly Reserve Contribution was \$104,317 leaving a deficit before taxes of \$55,687. One large item in the deficit was the bill for snow removal.

Usually we do not have snow until January and/or February. Other expenses that were larger than expected were legal fees, utilities, maintenance items, and several contract items.

We had a total annual deficit in 2009 of some \$92,000 to which utilities contributed more than \$70,000 and legal fees roughly \$18,000. Although an increase in our utilities bill was expected, it was accentuated by the very cold weather in November/December; we have significantly increased funds for utilities in the 2010 budget. The legal fees increase was largely for representation in response to an owner lawsuit but also due to a couple of other situations for which the Board has required ongoing legal counsel. As long as these situations remain ongoing in 2010, we can expect our legal fees to continue to be above average.

Once the auditors determine final 2009 figures, we will have to fund the deficit from the Working Capital Fund, currently \$172,254. This would leave us with only some \$80,000 which does not give us much of a cushion for potential future deficits.

As to delinquencies, at the end of the year we had 14 owners who were between 10 and 30 days in arrears for a total of \$6,368. Three owners were overdue between 30 to 60 days for \$2,621 and four were delinquent more than 60 days for a total of \$15,557. The Association's Attorney is handling the cases beyond 60 days. Two owners are listed as delinquent for \$1,590 because they were in violation of the bylaws. Total arrears were \$26,137, but we note that a few weeks later \$5,093 had been repaid. Rental percentage remains the same at 121 units or 22%.

With respect to old business, the FMC was informed that Management had been able to clean and paint the room behind the mail boxes in the West building but so far had not been able to get sufficient access to the corresponding room in the East building.

The FMC unanimously supported the PPOC recommendation to provide free installation by our staff of new, water efficient toilets. It is our understanding that this service will be offered during March and April. We hope that if enough owners accept the offer we will see a corresponding decrease in our water bill or, at least, we will be able to avoid large increases in that utilities bill.

Because of the Presidents' Day holiday, the next FMC meeting will be on February 22nd rather than the third Monday of the month. We welcome owners to join us when we discuss the financial results of last year. Come and give us your ideas.



SECURITY, SAFETY AND NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Chair, Robert J. "Bob" De Mayo

Your Security, Safety, and Neighborhood Watch Committee (SS&NWC) met January 13, 2010. Management related three complaints of speeders in the garage. Offenders were dutifully reminded of the speed limit and urged to be more careful when driving in the garage. Happily, none of the speeding occurred during the time that the garage exit door was opened for the trial period (see more info on this below). Security Officer Justin Nichol, previously assigned to the night shift, has now been appointed our Lead Security Officer. Security Officer Zenbaba is new to our building, has completed his 16 hours of required training; and will be sharing night shift coverage with Officer Terrance Harris who has been assigned to Skyline House since early December 2009. Please say "Hi!" to them when you see them on their appointed rounds.

Management reported it is awaiting updated proposals from two of the three companies that submitted proposals last year for the replacement of our outdoor security cameras. An additional company has also indicated an interest in furnishing us a new proposal for our surveillance needs. To better facilitate our understanding of the security camera improvement proposals, at our March meeting the committee will be escorted on a tour behind the Front Desk to become familiar with the functions of the security camera surveillance of our grounds.

As agreed to by the Board, our Garage Exit Door was opened during the rush hours of 7AM-9AM, Monday thru Friday, for a 30 day trial period from December 7th – January 7th. The door was opened each morning by Joaquin from the Housekeeping Staff that comes in just before 7AM; either Greg or Tettie from the Engineering Staff closed it each morning at 9AM. No complaints or issues were reported to us during this trial period. Therefore, the SS&NWC will furnish a recommendation to the Board to continue to keep the garage exit door open,

indefinitely during the specified times. The Management Office, the Neighborhood Watch group, the SS&NWC members, and all residents will continue to monitor this new initiative and report any safety or security issues (e.g., excessive speeding out of the garage onto/around the roadway, excessive noise, accidents, vandalism or trespassing) to the Management Office. This initiative is aimed at conserving the usage of the door mechanism as well as moving auto traffic out of the garage more quickly and conveniently for our residents during the morning rush hours. Management will also evaluate installing – as part as the security camera upgrade – a camera specifically aimed at the garage exit door with pixel resolution to snapshot the license plate (i.e., catch any speeders) and provide facial recognition of persons walking in/out of the open door.

As discussed at our November meeting, vehicular and pedestrian safety concerns continue to be very high regarding vehicles stopped and/or parked in the road in front of the West Mail Lobby door, sometimes without a driver behind the wheel. Such parking restricts and bottlenecks roadway traffic to a dangerous level, exacerbated by inclement weather and darkness. The SS&NWC chairperson presented a laptop viewing of his video recordings of some of these violations during November/December 2009. Violators can be seen parked for up to a half hour, with and without flashers operating, in front of the West Mail Lobby door unloading passengers and groceries. Even furniture was observed being unloaded from a minivan during weekday daylight hours. Meanwhile, the roadway is bottlenecked (i.e., down to one lane) causing both entering-and-exiting vehicles to swerve around the stopped vehicle, at speed. At the same time, passengers from the parked vehicle are standing in the roadway and/or pedestrians are walking through the general roadway area, sometimes during very restricted visibility caused by weather (e.g., rain or snow) or the hours of darkness. This is a recipe' for an accident or personal injury!

The SS&NWC believes that permitting – even tacitly – any parking at any time in front of the West Mail Lobby door is a clear safety hazard and a dangerous habit exercised by some residents. The SS&NWC will evaluate specific options to prohibit this practice (e.g., clearly marked curbs painted red, “NO STOPPING, NO PARKING” signs posted on the curb front) which are backed up by strict enforcement by our Security Officers, Covenants Committee, and Management Office. Meanwhile, the SS&NWC invites the observations, views, and experiences of residents on this traffic safety issue.

On a happier note, let's focus on our Neighborhood Watch function! **THE SS&NWC WILL HOST, AND INVITES ALL RESIDENTS TO ATTEND A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GENERAL MEETING IN THE FRONT LOBBY ON FEBRUARY 10TH AT 7:00 P.M. FOR ABOUT AN HOUR. REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED!** Our agenda will cover, for discussion, the need for a group-derived, specific “Neighborhood Watch Checklist” or guidelines for Neighborhood Watch volunteers to follow while on patrols (e.g., directions to look for 10 specific items); overlap – good or bad – with Neighborhood Watch volunteers reporting observed maintenance/repair issues on their reports versus on the Maintenance Log; suggestions to focus patrol activity on more security aspects; and, any creative ideas to make the patrols simpler, easier, more interesting, and even more fun! Refreshments will be served! **New residents with an interest in Neighborhood Watch, or previous residents with an interest in volunteering for Neighborhood Watch, are all warmly invited to attend. Oh, and did I mention that refreshments will be served?!!**

FEBRUARY GOOD NEIGHBORS

Good Neighbors assist residents in need of temporary help due to illness or emergency. Services provided are typically short term and in the local area. For example, picking up mail or prescriptions or making small grocery purchases.

Anyone experiencing a medical emergency should call 911 immediately.

VIRGINIA FISSMER 703-379-2901

ELAYNE HAYMES 703-347-7918

Good Neighbors welcomes new members to assist those in need. If you are interested in serving your neighbors, call Coordinator Toska Prather or Virginia Fissmer. Their contact information is listed in the newsletter directory.



SKYLINE HOUSE CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2010

(WWW.SHUOA.ORG)



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Library Open 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. East Penthouse	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 Library Open 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. East Penthouse	9	10 Security, Safety & Neighborhood Watch Comm. Neighborhood Watch Recruitment 7:00 p.m. Front Lobby	11 Physical Plant & Operations Committee 7:00 p.m. W. Card Room	12	13
14	15 Library Closed	16	17	18	19	20
21	22 Financial Mgt. Committee 7:00 pm W. Card Room Library Open 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. East Penthouse	23	24 BOARD MEETING 7:00 p.m. W. Card Room	25 Physical Plant & Operations Committee Walk Around 7:00 p.m.	26	27
28						
GOOD NEIGHBORS: ELAYNE HAYMES 703-347-7918 and VIRGINIA FISSMER 703-379-2901						

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