

**Annual Board Meeting  
November 12, 2008**

**I. Meeting called to order by President Rosemary Gorski at 7:33 p.m.**

**II. 2007 Annual Board Minutes:**

**Motion was made (Frances McCoy) and seconded (Jon Fisher) to approve the 2007 Annual Board minutes. PASSED.**

**III. Election of Officers:**

Rosemary gave the owners a brief background of the duties of the officers on the Board. Floor was opened to nominations to fill three vacant seats, two 2-year terms to replace Jon Fisher (Secretary) and Rosemary Gorski (President) whose terms are up, and a one-year term to replace John Kisko (member-at-large) who is resigning. Elections were temporarily postponed in favor of discussing the increase in condo fees to allow residents to base their votes on that discussion.

**IV. Increase in Fees**

In 2005, we had a 50% increase in our insurance policy, sharp increases in water and sewer charges, increased gas fees, and two underground sewer line breaks. These costs (~\$30,000) were borrowed from reserves and need to be repaid. In 2006, we had a flood which was quite expensive, and given the special assessment did not want to also raise the fees higher than the 13% approved. In 2007/2008 due to more increasing fees (e.g. 17% increase from Dominion Power), snow/ice roof damage, waterproofing the foundation, and more we were ~\$70,000 overspent (which again was borrowed from reserves). The board discussed many options, and decided that this was the most responsible way to both repay our reserves (which we're required to do by law). Fee increases of the last 10 years have been artificially small, and we are also now forced to make a large increase to catch up.

**Comments:**

Tracy Scorce 2805 #302: Why weren't the gaps addressed in prior years, and why wasn't the deficit from 2005 noticed earlier? Given that we expect costs to go up slightly every year, why is this increase so large? How can residents get more information about the details of these costs and why this increase was approved? Would it be possible to phase in these increases over two years? **RESPONSE**: Every few years the board requests an updated reserve study (or commissions a new one). Rosemary will post our reserve study to the Cambridge Courts website. The board has voted on increases, but several consecutive difficult years have made it difficult to catch up sufficiently. When we looked at the options, we also considered a special assessment on top of the fees, but it was rejected due to the fact that all of us are cognizant of the potential burden this places on the residents, and the fact that banks look poorly on special assessments (as it potentially shows poor planning). The board feels that this increase puts us in the position to catch up with past expenses, and begins to put us in a position of planning for

the future.

Mike Nichols 2811 #102: It would be helpful for the board to benchmark our fees against other condominiums of a similar age and style. The board should also look at the costs of other management companies, and submit RFPs for alternatives. The costs of the management company and the porter are going up, despite the fact that the services have been poor. No response requested.

Lenny Goldberg, 2607 #101: Is there frequent inspection of the plumbing, electrical wiring, etc.? **RESPONSE**: No, it is difficult when it is behind walls, but what we try to do is replace as much of a damaged line as possible whenever we discover a break. It is challenging in an older complex like this. This year we have had a very high number of leaks this year, and are increasing our plumbing budget for the next year, and will be looking into the potential cost of a wholesale replacement. We have old sectioned terra cotta lines which are highly susceptible both to breakage and infiltration by tree roots. We do as much preventative maintenance as possible.

Marlene Drohan, 2813 #101: Is the board going to do a request for other property management companies? She has raised several complaints over the past year and a half and seen no response. **RESPONSE**: Yes, we are considering several proposals right now. We did recently replace our porter with a new one due to the complaints, are looking at a new exterminator contract, have signed a new landscaping contract. Last year we replaced our legal counsel in response to dissatisfaction from the residents.

Mary Ackourey, 2813 #201: What % of our fees going into reserves every month? Also, at the end of the year, what happens to funds that are not used? **RESPONSE**: Usually about 20%, in the coming year it will be more like 25% as we try to pay back what we owe. At the end of the year, any excess income is generally allocated to reserves.

## **V. Officers' Reports**

### **A. President:**

We have made a number of improvements this year: basement waterproofing was completed in 3 buildings, we have touched up a lot of paint in hallways, the roofs at 2401 and 2403 are supposed to be done by this Friday, this summer we replaced 3 hot water boilers, we replaced a breaking up stoop at 2401, we have worked with several contractors on our landscape.

## **VI. Election of Officers (continued):**

One nomination for Tracy VanDuston was received in advance. Tracy has been on a board of a 501c3 foundation, and believes that if you are willing to complain that you should be willing to run. **Motion to close nominations, vote for Tracy, and to reelect Rosemary and Jon by acclamation was made (Frances McCoy, 2501**

**#101) and seconded (Lenny Goldberg, 2607 #101) Passed (with opposition from two residents).** The board will meet later to determine who will fill which term, and what role each board member will fill.

## VII. Committee Reports

### A. Landscaping

Jon Fisher reported on the landscape situation:

1. Our arborist (hired last year) has continued to take care of our trees, and we've been very happy with his work.
2. We have struggled to work with our landscaping company (Bladerunners) to improve the quality of our lawn and shrub care. Unfortunately, we have been largely unsuccessful in getting them to respond to our wishes, so we will be switching our landscaping company to Denchfield Landscaping. They are a smaller company and seem much more interested in working with us to improve the property rather than doing identical basic maintenance on each visit.
3. We have made a large number of landscaping improvements over the last two months, and some of them are still continuing now.
4. Due to concern about residents modifying the landscape (by removing or planting vegetation), the board passed a resolution clarifying the existing Bylaws which state that residents cannot make modifications on their own. Residents can be charged for the cost of restoring the property if they make such changes without approval.

## VIII. Owner's Forum

- A. Christine Smythe, 2607 #103: She has worked on coordinating a lot of recent improvements to the landscape. She would like help watering from anyone who is willing.
- B. Frances McCoy, 2501 #101: She believes that the fees have been kept artificially low for several years, and has seen deteriorating landscape and infrastructure across the property in recent years.
- C. Charlotte Hoffman, 2507 #302: The budget should be a topic for discussion at future board meetings for everyone to mull over. Suggestions for small changes could be encouraged, for example how we can all save costs of water. **RESPONSE**: We have offered a \$75 credit for installing low-flow toilets, conducted a plumbing audit of each unit to check for leaks, and continue to look for ways like this to encourage residents to make changes that will save us all money. These initiatives are announced in board meetings, newsletters, and on our web site.
- D. Lenny Goldberg 2607 #101: How much snow has to fall before we

get it plowed? Why don't we use something cheaper like just sand?  
**RESPONSE:** 2" is the threshold for plowing, although we can have it plowed by request as well. We have purchased a spreader and icemelt material to supplement services from the snow contractor. Our contractor does use sand in addition to icemelt, but the problem is that over time sand accumulates (especially in the parking lot) and we have to pay to remove the sand.

- E. Ingrid Herbert, 2703 #101: How can we identify the porter? Does he wear a uniform? **RESPONSE:** First ProCAM wants to make sure he's a good fit for the community, but they will then get him an ID badge with a photo. He was introduced through the newsletter and the bulletin board, his name is Jose Lopez and he has worked for ProCAM for over a year. He is fluent in English.
- F. Debbie Colglazier, 2501 #202: How often are gutters cleaned? There was \$3,000 allocated in 2008, but none in 2006 and 2007. She has experienced water damage both years that she has been here and has been told that it was due to the gutters not being properly maintained. **RESPONSE:** Previously gutters were cleaned about twice a year, but more recently we have had increasing rain and difficulty with clogging by oak catkins which expand when wet, so we have increased this to 4 times per year (it costs ~\$1,000 per year). The reason for the difference is that in 2007 we had a lot of ice damage which ripped the gutters off of the roof. Also, the gutters we have are too small to handle intense rains, and will be replacing them with larger ones as roofs are replaced. They will be cleaned soon (there are two cleanings each fall).
- G. Lorraine Bailey, 2703, #102: She is an original owner (has lived here since 1985), and has attended every annual meeting. She has served on the board from 1991-1994, and continuously since 1997. She is tired with serving on the board, feels she can no longer be effective, and resigns effective immediately. All of the decisions that she has made were made with the best interests of the condominium association in mind.
- H. Kevin Aurand, 2411 #201: He thinks the back end of 2411 does not get the attention it deserves. He appreciates the new door, but thinks that the whole back of the building is structurally unsound, and has a problem with planting shrubs when this has not been addressed. There is nothing underneath the sidewalks and the soil is eroding. **RESPONSE:** Rosemary has looked at this and we are trying to figure out first how the water can be redirected, and then looking at how to address the damage caused so far.

**IX. Meeting adjourned at 9:01pm**