

Cambridge Courts Condominium Board of Directors Meeting
8/27/08

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:30pm

II. Quorum Count

Board Members present: Rosemary Gorski, President (2807, #202); Jon Fisher (2811 #101B), Secretary; Anna Santos de Dios, Treasurer (2403 #202); John Kisko, Member-at-Large (2601, #201), and Jeff Bridges, Property Manager. Lorraine Bailey (2703, #102), Vice President arrived at 7:32pm.

III. Owners Forum

Frances McCoy, 2501, #101: (1) Junipers in front of her building were overgrown, so she started trimming them herself. She is overall very disappointed with the landscaping across the community, and doesn't understand why it seems that for the first time in years the shrubs are not being maintained properly. She wrote two letters to the board (which were not received). One is to get a comprehensive plan and contract to manage the landscaping so that the board doesn't have to manage the minutia. **RESPONSE:** We have not had this because we can't afford it, it would be considerably more expensive. We were working with a landscape architect and he developed some plans for implementation but unfortunately due to illness he has been unable to keep working with us. We are working on getting the landscape committee to help organize residents interested in working in the gardens, and to get a list of work written up to get estimates on and prioritize. Rosemary has asked Mike Dollard from Bladerunners for some additional information and quotes for some of the work discussed.

Tracy (2501, unit? – owner did not sign list with info) (1) Supported the idea of getting more professional looking landscaping. **RESPONSE:** The landscape committee asked that owners with concerns let them know what their specific concerns are and what they consider 'unprofessional.'

Matt Becht, (2603, #101): (1) Basement of 2511 the water that has been leaking for 2 months has turned black, and there are dead rodents in it. **RESPONSE:** Triple State has been in touch with the owner, but since she doesn't live there, they have had difficulty getting into the unit (but finally did recently). If they didn't get into the unit yesterday, they will do so tomorrow, as well as cleaning and disinfecting the basement. The board discussed the idea that we need to have a clear policy that will allow us to get a locksmith to let us in and bill the owner after they have ignored requests for access for a set time. (2) Holes in the brick at 2603 and 2605 are still not fixed (this was reported last month). We also need a permanent fix for the small metal door that has gone missing from the basement. Perhaps we could ask the plumbing contractor to replace the door (or brick it

over) since they left it unsecured? **RESPONSE:** Since the door was a coal chute, we could potentially just brick it over. Jeff will have Dolan address both areas.

Jon Fisher, 2811 #101B: (1) Bait boxes have not been replenished as they should be; some have not been serviced for at least 6-8 months, others have false records indicating they have been serviced in the future. This is likely contributing to the rodent problem in my unit. Should I take pictures of the bait boxes in their current state? **RESPONSE:** Jeff talked to Joyce from Action Environmental, and their contract calls for monthly servicing of bait boxes and servicing specific requests of individual units. She claimed that they're there at least monthly and usually more, but the technicians just are not filling out the service records (although Jon noted that skeletons found make this unlikely). She will send a written response and documentation of service visits. We also have a different company (Sherlock Pest Control) coming out on Friday to investigate the problems with Jon's unit and give us a proposal for handling our entire property. John indicated that we should consider withholding funds if they can't keep the records current. Jon agreed to take some photos of the bait boxes for evidence, John and Rosemary will look over the contract as well.

(2) What procedure should I follow for remediating mouse damage in my ceiling (e.g. replacing urine-soaked Styrofoam in HVAC, possibly replacing some ceiling drywall, etc.)? Is this my responsibility or the association's? **RESPONSE:** Jeff will have to look at the new condo bylaws for the specifics, although ultimately it is up to the board to decide. Jon should ask the other company for ideas, and wait until the source is addressed.

(3) I have receipts for foam and mesh for the work I did (~\$60). **RESPONSE:** We can reimburse this, and Jon should make sure to show Jay all of the areas affected and

Anna Santos, (2403 #202) (1) Screen in window in stairwell of 2403 has been missing for weeks and needs replacing. **RESPONSE** We have a ton of spare parts, Luis can replace them: (2) Basement of 2401 still needs to be addressed. The door is not closing/locking well. (3) Almost everyone in 2403 has moved recently, and the paint job has been trashed. We should be sure to collect move-in fees, and after the last tenant moves in we should redo the paint. **RESPONSE:** Luis can take care of the touch-up, and we need a list of places where people have moved in (Anna already sent it in). (4) There appears to be a leak from 2403 #201 into #101. **RESPONSE:** Jeff will contact the owner and ask if she is aware of it.

Rosemary, 2807, #202: (1) Are any board member positions opening up this year? **RESPONSE:** Yes. We need to verify which so that we can address it during the annual meeting.

IV. Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Motion was made (Jon) and seconded (Rosemary) to approve the minutes of the 7/23 meeting. PASSED.

V. Reports from Officers

No report.

VI. Report from Committees

Landscape:

We have recently completed a walkthrough of the property and identified/mapped about 25 issues we would like to get estimates on and prioritize for implementation. We need to take photos of them and write up additional text to make sure that we have enough detail for a company like Bladerunners to implement.

We still have not received an estimate yet for remediating the soil and planting grass at the construction areas, but Rosemary is following up on this. Bladerunners is also planning on planting loriope on the slope by 2409 to address some of the erosion there. Christine raised a concern that mice and rats really like loriope as it provides excellent habitat, and suggested that she could send pictures of possible alternative groundcovers. We are also planting on putting in yew hedges that will match the existing hedge, and Christine noted that they shouldn't be too close to the stoop.

The board decided to get more bids for the landscaping contract, and to let the companies bid the work as a group as well as on the whole. Concern was raised that having a single contract for grounds maintenance may be too difficult, but apparently the commercial-grade contractors can handle it (although they generally won't be able to handle hand-pruning and customization). Jeff will get some bids.

Christine suggested that we could get leaf mulch put in instead of paying for soil remediation (for \$25 we get it from Arlington county, and Luis could apply it). She also asked about the idea of getting rid of the loriope in the central circular gardens, and instead just putting in a small tree (like a cherry or holly) with some rings of miniature azaleas and nandina hollies interspersed with flowers. This would look more formal than the current design. The board agreed this sounded good for a long-term plan although for now we are focused on addressing the more pressing issues.

VII. Management Report

Financial: Anna asked why we have money allocated for new benches, the board agreed that this is not a priority at the moment. For the last month, the general building repairs line showed a credit of \$1,352 (this was because we voided a check to Dolan, probably because they mistakenly cut the check twice or the bill was issued to Cambridge courts when it should have been for another property).

Roof Proposal: We got 6 bids ranging from \$46,000 to \$148,000. We clarified that these base prices are fixed, but they are allowed to bill extra if the work exceeds what was specified in the bid we put out. In other words, RCLA estimates the scope of the project (e.g. # of linear feet plywood that needs replacing, etc.). Economic Roofing (\$71,646) did the last batch of roofing and apparently did a good job. Contractors varied also considerably in components such as unit pricing for extra work, materials, and hourly wages. Jeff talked to the chief engineer at RCLA (who has been the project manager for

all of our roof projects), and he said that Masterson (the low bidder) is about to finish up a 10-year roof replacement contract, that they've done a good job there, and that they're eager for more business (he had no qualms about working with them again). An additional small property they did also turned out well according to the engineer. Lorraine noted that the cost overruns in the earlier replacements were fairly small. The engineer also included an estimate of about \$3,000 for putting in the insulation which the contractors would have to comply to. Based on the price and good feedback from Masterson, we are leaning towards them. However, we would like to ask let Cole and Economic know that they're under consideration and confirm their estimates within a week, as well as including a price for the insulation (and insurance for Cole). Anna volunteered to contact the board members where Masterson's recent work was done to confirm their experience was good.

Concrete Proposal: Jeff started the process last fall for getting bids for replacing the front stoop at 2401 (which is badly cracked and is deteriorating quickly), but the bids were extremely high (\$10,000-\$16,000), so he got additional bids and we now have 3 (\$5,719-\$10,242). Dolan also provided an option for removing and replacing just the two bottom steps and two walkway sections for \$3,690. **Motion was made (Anna) and seconded (Lorraine) to accept Dolan's bid to replace the stoop at 2401 for a cost of \$5,920. PASSED**

Late Fees and Surcharges: Legal has advised that there's no cap on the late fee we can charge, and that we can charge to recoup the cost of payment by coupon or bank check (as opposed to direct deposit). ProCam estimates that cost of printing payment coupons and processing checks (they charge a set fee based on # of units paying by check) is about \$25/unit/year. **Motion was made (Jon) and seconded (Anna) to begin charging \$25 per unit per year (payable in the first quarter of the calendar year, and starting in January of 2009) for each unit that is not signed up for direct deposit. PASSED.** We will stop printing coupons for units that use direct deposit, and begin letting residents know in the next newsletter and the annual notice.

Retainer Agreement: Jeff will clarify with Kim whether her retainer fee covers emails or solely telephone.

FiOS: **Motion was made (Anna) and seconded (John) to accept Verizon's proposal to survey Cambridge Courts to determine suitability for FiOS at Cambridge Courts, contingent upon receipt of email from legal council (within 7 days) that accepting this proposal will not conflict with any existing agreement with Comcast or any other utility. PASSED.**

Landscaping Issues: Rosemary indicated that with the high number of recent incidents of residents either removing plants or planting new flowers (and complaints about both), we need a clear policy to address this. In the past the board of directors has allowed residents to do whatever they wish, although the bylaws states that nothing should be modified in the common elements without the prior consent of the board of directors. **Motion was made (Rosemary) and seconded (Lorraine) that as stated in article 10 (use restrictions on units and common elements), article p, page 34, common grounds can not be modified (including removing, planting, or otherwise altering the landscape or community grounds) without explicit permission of the board. Furthermore, residents can be charged for the cost of restoring the property if they make changes without approval. Methods of obtaining approval include coming to a board meeting or filling out an eform on the Cambridge Courts website. PASSED.**

Budget: The revised FY09 budget currently includes a 25% increase in assessments (since costs are up sharply, past years have operated at a deficit, there have been large unexplained expenses, and requests for services have increased). The board also discussed levying an additional special assessment in order to help address these costs and plan for future surprises, but the majority felt that it would be an undue burden when combined with the sharp increase. We decided instead to see how the next year goes and reserve the option to levy a special assessment later as needed. **Motion was made (John) and seconded (Jon) to accept the proposed FY09 budget, including a 25% increase in monthly condominium fees. PASSED, with four in favor and disagreement from Rosemary.**

VIII. Business Items

1. Review of action items from last month (see ActionItems080723revised.doc for details)

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 pm