

NORTHBROOK CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 260
AMESBURY, MA. 01913

Northbrook Open Board Meeting September 22, 2019. This meeting was held at the Hampton Hotel located on Elm Street in Amesbury. There were 8 unit owners present.

Board Members present: Don Silva, Doreen Silva, Chris Lamkins, Cathy Morrison, Paul Mahoney and Ben Corjay.

Absent Board Member: Wilma Bybee.

The meeting was called to order at 11:00am by Treasurer, Doreen Silva, who acted as the facilitator. It was stated that Wilma Bybee's proxy was given to Doreen Silva. Wilma's only notation on the proxy was that if a vote was taken on the landscaping, please note she is against hiring the present company in the future. All other matters, her proxy is given to Doreen Silva.

First order of business was to discuss Landscaping. Doreen Silva opened up the discussion to the other Board members to give their opinion of the current landscaping company and to vote on whether or not to renew their contract. Ben Corjay voted to renew the landscaper's contract. Paul Mahoney voted to renew the contract. Paul stated that the summer contract was being performed where he lives, but that the winter contract he had a few issues with, and he would like restructuring of that part of the contract. Chris Lamkins voted to renew the landscaping contract. Don Silva voted yes to renew the contract, as did Doreen Silva. Cathy Morrison voted no. The vote was 5 to renew and 2 not to renew.

Discussion continued and it was agreed that the contract with the landscaper needs to be rewritten. Paul Mahoney volunteered to help do this. It was also brought up that Cathy Morrison's unit never received replanting in front of her unit after her water main leak two years ago. The plants in front of her unit were removed in order to fix the leak, and they were never replaced. Planting of bushes was never in the contract initially negotiated. How does this get done? Do we hire a separate contractor? Can ask landscaping contractor to do it, but it would cost extra to do this. Chris Lamkins stated that the contract that he negotiated was specific. It is snow removal as number one and then the landscaping is separate. The contractor was given the option to decide if loam was not needed, to not do so. They were to trim the shrubs once a year. Chris stated that this was the first time, this year, that they have done the trimming of shrubs and that they have voided the contract. Paul Mahoney stated that they have trimmed the bushes in front of his condo. Chris Lamkins continued by saying that they are responsible for putting mulch in, for the labor components of it, but we are responsible for the product – purchasing the mulch itself. Everything else is separate. Cathy Morrison's planting would be separate. Chris Lamkins stated that he believes that the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know and he thinks the most important issue is the snow removal. They do an adequate job. Getting to Cathy Morrison's issue, discussion focused on writing into the contract things like mulch and plantings. Chris stated we could, however we are trying to contain costs. Chris suggested having an outside source to do these things, because current landscaper is unwilling to contact him for things outside of the contract.

Doreen Silva stated that she had a solution. Speaking with David Olsen, he could work part-time to help with snow removal and landscaping issues. A snowblower has been purchased. Chris Lamkins mentioned that because he is not a landscaper, could the board come to an agreement to have an outside source that he could negotiate with, in order to provide the plantings for Cathy Morrison and others. Doreen Silva mentioned that we need to stay within a budget, which is \$76,000 a year and far below when we had private workers, overtime and extra workers to shovel. Chris agreed, however Chris mentioned that Doreen had said there was \$4,000 in the landscaping budget per season for extra landscaping. Doreen stated that this money was for materials, mulch, plants and shrubs. Chris stated that to fix Cathy Morrison's issue would cost \$200-\$300 at most. Doreen stated that the board could discuss this later, as she could not say on record that this money could be provided at this time, and needed to look at her records due to all the projects being completed.

Discussion started among the board members regarding this issue. It was decided that the plants would be bought and Cathy Morrison would put them in. Chris Lamkins stated that the landscaper would not communicate with him regarding this type of matter, which is why he wanted to have an outside source. Doreen Silva then added that Chris Lamkins had contacted her previously to state he would no longer be negotiating with the landscaper. She then stated that she would be overseeing the landscaping and snow removal, and hoping to have Paul Mahoney's help. Cathy Morrison then stated that we need to place in the contract that contractor should respond to communications from the Board within two days. Plowing issues need to be addressed and placed in contract.

The next order of business was the ballots. When the ballots go out for the election, they are mailed. Because the mailing cost is huge, and sometimes the mail misdirected, the board would like to have the ballots sealed and hand delivered to each unit owner living on the property. Those unit owners who have renters and live off-site will have the ballots mailed to them. This way it would ensure that the ballots are delivered. The board voted unanimously to hand deliver ballots to the unit owner's doors.

David Olsen was introduced and thanked the board and residents in attendance for giving him the opportunity to do maintenance jobs for the Association.

Doreen Silva then discussed all the projects that have been completed so far. Since April 1st, they are as follows:

- Roof Replacements – Maintenance garage, mail house, 17, 19, 21, 23 Pamela rear only, 34, 36, 38, 40 Pamela rear only, 42, 44, 46, 48 Pamela rear only, 50, 52, 54 Pamela front only. Installed two overhangs at 28 and 30 Pamela. Total of \$34,000. Matt Nyman inspects the roofs and informs Doreen which ones need to be done.
- Buildings painted - 2, 4, 6, 8 Pamela – all on even side, 34, 36, 38, 40 Pamela, 42, 44, 46, 48 Pamela, 66, 68, 70, 72 Cynthia. Total of about \$27,000.
- New Stairs - 2 Pamela, 4 Pamela, 24 Pamela, 26 Pamela, 32 Pamela, 34 Pamela, 48 Pamela, 74 Cynthia. Total of about \$54,000.
- Tree Trimming – Tree trimming service has started trimming trees. Front of Pamela Lane on even side has been trimmed. Need to do the odd side of Pamela front, even side of Pamela in back, and the even side of Cynthia Lane in back. Board will call the owners on Cynthia Lane because they have gardens.

All this work was done in six months, with no assessments. There's a few more stairs to do. Some of them don't look that bad. Repair for stairs is intensive. It takes a lot of time, 2-3 dump trucks to remove the stairs. There's one on Cynthia Lane that is huge and would cost \$14,000.

Treasurer turned over the meeting to President Don Silva. Don stated that each candidate running for election to the Board would have 5 minutes to speak and then answer any questions. The candidates are Chris Lamkins, incumbent, Cathy Morrison, incumbent, Connie MacLeod, and Gail McElhinney.

Chris Lamkins spoke first, stating his intention to run for the board. "Since I have been on the board, I have seen significant improvements, getting rid of our onsite management and replacing them with a commercial company. They've done an adequate job, but at a lower cost which I think is important because, you've all heard this before, you've seen my newsletters that go out once or twice a year. Our mission is to maintain costs here and not have any assessments and we have not had an assessment for a long time. We're the largest self-managed association in the state and I think that we've accomplished that is fantastic. My roles during my tenure on the board have been many things. I arranged for the landscaping company to come in. I had almost weekly contact with Doreen to see what's new and what I could do, when I did do that. Part of our position as board members is just putting out fires of different sizes. I do think I'm an asset to the Board. I really am doing this because I love the neighborhood and am interested in keeping the value of my property up and since I've been here the value of my property has doubled in value. It's the only thing financially that I've done right. I hope to be reelected and I promise to do a good job. Thanks for listening."

Cathy Morrison went next. "I've been living at Northbrook since 1997 and I can tell you right now, the community I moved into in 1997 and the community I live in now is so much better. When I moved in, it was not a good place. The people were nice, the stuff that was happening was not. I have been on the board for six years. I walk my dog twice a day. I walk through the community twice a day and am approached by homeowners. They know that if I'm out and walking, please come to me, pet my dog, have her shed all over you. I'm visible and I've been approached multiple times on my walks and it's always I'm sorry to bother you, but I'm like you're not bothering me. I've run a business for 10 years, accounts payable, accounts receivable, all of that. I understand them completely. I ran my dad's sub shop for 10 years. I've been employed by the town of Amesbury in the school system for 20 years, so I know what's going on, I see what's going on and if I see something that is not right, I approach it and we deal with it. I love what I do. Doreen and I have a great like, I'll be walking the dog and she'll be like, got a minute, and I'm like yep, from her bedroom window. We're all very approachable, with the people we have now. Not that we're looking for new blood, but anybody who's willing to step in is fine with me. But I do it to serve the community. I'm not doing it to forward my personal or professional life and I'm not doing it to get favors, because I was accused before that my parking space was big because I was friends with the President of the board and that's why I got the big space."

Connie MacLeod then spoke. "I'm Connie. I just moved to Northbrook last year and I love living in the community and am amazed how much has improved just in a year. I would like to continue to improve, staying the same in some ways and continuing the path it is on. I have really good neighbors and I would like to help."

Gail McElhinney then spoke. "I'm Gail McElhinney. I live at 67 Cynthia Lane and I've lived here for 7 years. This is the second condo association I have lived at, but the 1st one that is self-maintained. When I moved here, my other condo association was charging us \$8 more than what it is costing here. Six or seven years later, it is costing \$200 more than what it is for us. This is at Whitehall condos. It was never maintained as well as our place. It looks fabulous here. It's taken care of by homeowners, by people who want to live here. You guys do a thankless job. If can help, I will help. Otherwise, you're doing a fabulous job. Even if I don't get elected, if you need some help, call me."

Any questions for the candidates? Candy Hayford asked Connie MacLeod what made her come to this development. She stated that she used to live in Manchester by the Sea and raised her children there. It was an expensive community to live in. Her older son moved to Maine and her husband's family is from Maine so they decided to work their way North. Started looking at Amesbury, which seemed to be in an upward trend. When they started learning about the town, they really loved being in Amesbury. Then they found the condo, on the edge of town. It's almost rural here and she loves that. It's a far cry from living in town, like in Manchester. It's a lovely town, but very noisy. It's quieter here.

There were no more questions. Doreen Silva then stated that the last three buildings needing to be painted are on Pamela. One may not be painted due to lack of hoses, no working outside spicket, badly damaged and mold. This would need power washing, and none of the units have a working outside spicket. Outside spickets are the responsibility of the unit owner.

Doreen then stated that unit owners should be aware that in the event that you had an underground water leak and no neighbor had an outside spicket that they could hook into when the water is shut off, they will be without water for the duration it takes to fix it, which could be quite some time. Expense of an outside water spicket is minimal. Chris Lamkins had a cracked pipe for the outside spicket and paid only \$70 for his to be fixed.

Another issue with spickets is watering lawns, reseeding without water. Cathy Morrison mentioned that for middle units whose spickets are in the back, there is not an easy way to get water to the front yard. You may need to use a watering can.

David Olsen then spoke, stating that a way around the painting issue is to get a power pressure washer not hooked up to water supply, that works out of a 5-gallon bucket or whatever bucket you have. Discussion started on the condition of lawns, that resodding had been tried on areas where construction had been done. The issue of dog waste not being picked up was brought up, not always Northbrook residents, but definitely some.

Candy Hayford then mentioned, as we enter the winter months and tend to hibernate, there are safety issues with cleaning out dryer vents. She stated she knows that it's the responsibility of the unit owner. Is there a company who could do multiple units with a discount, and bringing this to resident's attention? Cathy Morrison stated that Unit owners could do this, but it would be up to them to contact the other unit owners in their building/neighborhood to set this up.

The discussion of lawns came up again, with Chris Lamkins mentioning that the trimming of trees would bring more light and hopefully better lawns. David Olsen mentioned that the reason he brought up the lawns was due to the terrible smell from the dog waste and the lawn being brown and not green from dogs.

Cathy Morrison then stated that she feels the board should address the unit owners who are leaving their garbage and recycling barrels along the side of their garage. Most unit owners have a back yard or a garage, so there is no need to put the barrels in plain sight. The only unit owner that the board can understand having a garbage can in front of the unit is for the unit owner who is blind. Chris Lamkins asked what is the best way to address the issue of the dog waste and barrels. Cathy Morrison mentioned a letter to the unit owner, or out to the public, though she and Chris do not want to spotlight anyone.

Doreen Silva then brought up the fact that the landscapers will not do any lawns covered in dog waste. In the past, they have been hit in the face with dog waste, as they were cutting the lawns. This is why the landscapers have access to the maintenance garage and why it has hot and cold running water. They have to be able to take a shower if they need to or wash whatever waste or chemicals they may come in contact with. That's why the water heater was replaced in the maintenance garage, why there is paper towels and soap.

Cathy Morrison then mentioned that a letter to the public should be sent, stating that the trash barrels aren't being put back and the dog poop. She stated that she has picked up dog poop that is not her dogs. Doreen Silva stated she has done the same, and no one in their entire building has a dog. Chris Lamkins stated he would print out a letter for that. Cathy Morrison stated that there is a chemical spray that dissipates the odor of dog urine and feces. She gets it at PetSmart.

Doreen Silva brought back the conversation to finishing painting of the rear of the last three buildings on Pamela, coming in Spring. She stated they were continuing with the tree trimming until it's all done. After it's all done, the board has set up a contract with the tree trimming company to do maintenance on the trees yearly. The cost is very reasonable, they do a good job and there have been no issues. Also being planned in the Spring is repairing and replacing the outside light poles and wiring. Not doing it right now because of the work being done by National Grid. We are asking people to use their light outside their doors. Solar lights were tried for a lot of the light poles, but it did not work. Paul Mahoney mentioned that his neighbor has an issue with the lack of light. Due to their jobs and hours of work, they are coming and going in the dark, and there is no light. Paul Mahoney stated that there are motion detected lights that are reasonably priced. Cathy Morrison asked who was going to be responsible for that electricity. It was stated it would be common area expense. Don Silva then mentioned the wiring under the ground, the costs for excavating the wiring, and proper placement - \$55,000. Doreen Silva stated that this will be replaced in the future. Cathy Morrison then asked if we knew when National Grid was going to finish. Doreen Silva stated that they were supposed to be finished last week, but that has not been done.

Doreen Silva brought the conversation back to repairing and replacing the lights and wiring. The lights are outdated and not illuminating. It was just a quick fix years ago. They were not part of the original construction. The wiring is so close to the surface that that's why they're all corroded. Nothing was protecting the wiring. The poles themselves need to be replaced. This is going to be addressed.

Doreen stated that another thing they are going to be doing next year is replacing the retaining walls. Even though some of the concrete walls are still very sturdy and holding up, they are 45-46 years old. They are peeling, and have been painted, but they are not attractive. In order to bring Northbrook up to a level where we're competitive with all the other beautiful condos that are in Amesbury, replacing 3-4 every year is not going to be a big deal. The roofing is going to be done. The painting is done. The stairs are done. The lights are going to be done. Everything that is of the utmost urgency for our safety will be accomplished. When you see the new retaining walls, they are beautiful and add so much to the outer part of the building. It's an important thing to not just stop at the few that have been done. On Cynthia Lane we just need to do two and two to four on Pamela that need to be done. That's where we stand for next year.

Doreen then stated that she appreciates everyone who pays their fees on time, as this is how we operate. If fees are not paid, we do not have a sufficient amount of money. She was sorry that not many people came to the meeting, as it is very costly.

David Olsen asked what do we do to get everyone else involved? It was mentioned that people only show up when the place is a mess. No news is good news. Discussion of long-ago previous meetings that were uncontrollable ensued. Question was asked about long-term, what could we do. We've tried cookouts, meetings, etc. People have confidence in the current Board. Things have changed for the better. Property values have doubled. Discussion started of former times compared to now. Things are much better now.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm by Doreen Silva.