



**NEWS  
AROUND  
THE  
NEIGHBORHOOD**

*Spring 2014*

**2014 Board of Directors**

**Jay Popp, President**  
**Ralph Flens, Secretary**

**Joe Arias, Treasurer**  
**Ron Szikora, Director**

## WOW

It was the winter that never stopped giving, but we can all say that we survived the “Polar Vortex of 2014.” To say the weather dominated our lives is to put it mildly. It affected everything we did and everything we thought about doing. Perhaps it made us more patient and offered us many opportunities to help our family, friends and neighbors with random acts of kindness. It has also given us many stories to tell in the years to come. Finally, the snow is melting and might be gone by Easter!

We are proud to say that Briar Cove also survived the constant rounds of snowfall and our residents were able to get around. Mastercut did a tremendous job given the hardships of heavy snows and brutal cold. Even our mail is being delivered earlier because our mail carrier said “we are the best plowed community in Schererville and she can get her route done faster here than anywhere else.” Joe Arias spent so much time monitoring the weather and speaking and texting with the snow contractor, he could do Tom Skilling’s job next winter. Thanks Joe.

The winter also brought other challenges. As the new Board was beginning to get organized, we were faced with the resignations of our Board President and Board Secretary. We also had to organize a New Architectural Review Committee. But this is Briar Cove, a special place, where we will always meet the challenge and move forward.

## A General Thought

Why did we decide to move to Briar Cove, a maintenance free community with rules and bylaws? The answers could be endless, but some of the more obvious answers could be...

You are no longer interested or are incapable of doing yard work or snow removal.

Your work load won’t allow you time to do a lot of yard maintenance.

You intend to travel or be away from home for extended periods of time and you don’t want your home to look unattended.

You don’t want to worry about your neighbor doing something at their home which will have a negative effect on your home value or appearance.

(Continued on the next page)

# Briar Cove News Around the Neighborhood – Spring 2014

Your Homeowners Association provides contractors to paint your home, care for the grass, remove snow, seal coat your driveway and manage the Association's money-- all under the direction of your volunteer Board of Directors.

Your Board does its overview with strong consideration being given to manage cost to keep our monthly assessment as stable as possible. SO FAR SO GOOD.

One problem that arises from time to time are residents who want services done differently, or at times other than what is scheduled because of personal past experience. This, in general, is difficult to accomplish and most likely would result in increased assessment charges.

Our contractors quote work to a specific set of conditions. This is the ONLY way services can be provided that is fair and equitable to our community as a WHOLE.

From time to time the contractor may do something that is not to a resident's liking, and if indeed it was something the contractor could control, report same to Peter and the problem will be corrected.

## Your New Board and ARC Committee

Last January, Steve Probst, our Board President and Denise Warren, our Board Secretary, resigned due to increased occupational workloads. As such, the remaining Board members appointed Ron Szikora to a position of Board Director per our Bylaws Article 111 Section 6. Ralph Flens was appointed as Board Secretary and Jay Popp as Board President.

The new Board is as follows:

Jay Popp, President  
Ralph Flens, Secretary  
Joe Arias, Treasurer  
Ron Szikora, Director

The new ARC Committee is as follows:

Bill Sliepka, Chairman  
Virgil Jordan  
Jack Doherty  
Bobbie Czajka

## External Modification to Home or Yard

Quick reminder. Please remember to submit any proposed "external modification request" to Peter Bylen, who will distribute it to the ARC Committee. The ARC Committee has insight of what can and cannot be accomplished with modifications to the exterior of your home.

# Briar Cove News Around the Neighborhood – Spring 2014

## EMAIL Addresses VERY IMPORTANT

Whether we like it or not we are in the computer age and as such need to try and stay connected. As of late, Peter Bylen has been doing what are referred to as “email blasts” to the Briar Cove residents with information that affects our community. It should be stressed that his use of email is community specific. It is not used for any other purpose. Examples of recent uses are when snow removal will take place following a snow event and a request of your opinion whether your tax dollars should be used for extension of the South Shore Railroad to Dyer. It should also be noted Peter’s “email blasts” are blind copied so your email address will not be in the header of the email. If you are not receiving “email blasts” please make sure Peter has your email. If you do not have email, please make arrangements with a friend, neighbor or relative to use their email address so you will be kept informed. Peter’s email is: [pbylen@1stpropertymanagers.com](mailto:pbylen@1stpropertymanagers.com)

Please note also to check your “spam” file for anything from Peter. Briar Cove residents represent hundreds of emails and on group mailings by 1<sup>st</sup> American Management can be mistaken for “spam.”

## Financial Review

Typically a financial review occurs at the end of a year. While a review of 2013 took place at our Annual Meeting in November, we were working with incomplete financial data at the time. Our incoming income is monitored monthly to anticipate and plan ahead with the goal of hitting our budget targets. We are very pleased to report that the 2013 financial numbers exceeded our expectations. We were able to schedule and complete quite a few “unplanned projects.” Then early in 2014, to put it bluntly, “we got hammered” by this year’s snowfalls. It either snowed on Tuesday and Wednesday, disrupting our garbage pickup or on Saturday and Sunday. However the “good news” is that we are in good shape financial.

Our YTD income is \$64,348

Our YTD operating expense is \$51,005

Net operating income of \$13,343

Checking Acc. Balance \$90,650

Capital Reserve Balance \$81,730

# Briar Cove News Around the Neighborhood – Spring 2014

## This Winter and Lawn Care

Last year (2013), our lawn consultant, Phil Hargarten, implemented a lawn care program that he designed for Briar Cove. The program was designed after Phil analyzed the lawn condition, took soil samples and presented his findings to the Briar Cove Board. His findings/program were also presented to the community.

This year (2014), the program will be continued as it produced positive results last year.

Concern about the effect on the program due to the severe winter was expressed to Phil Hargarten. According to Phil, the work that was done last year should continue to produce positive results. The snow melt will provide a good amount of moisture and many 'pests' were eradicated due to the cold weather. Moles could still present a problem. Until the snow melts, it won't be known if there is a problem with snow mold.

**As a side issue, any damage to our lawns caused by the snow plows will be corrected as the weather warms.**

## Proposed Amendments

Why are we amending the association documents?

Our documents were written by the developer, who is no longer involved with the Association. The developer may also have included “boilerplate” provisions, anticipating that as we evolved and matured we would propose amendments to reflect our changing needs.

The previous Board proposed the “Third Amendment to the Declaration” to address our “Lawns and Landscaping” and “Existing trees.” This proposed amendment was presented at the 2013 annual meeting. We are asking for your support in our efforts in finalizing this amendment change by sending in your signed “Consent to Amendment” form. The current Board is proposing another amendment change to the Declaration. This change to the Declaration is to clarify the language concerning the Architectural Review Committee and will be the Proposed Fourth Amendment to the Declaration. The board asks for your support.

The Board is also proposing adding a NEW amendment to the by-laws, which will be the Second Amendment to the By-Laws. We are asking that you support adding the criteria that is needed to define what a “Homeowner in Good Standing” means regarding eligibility for candidacy as a Director.

Please help us by taking the time to review, sign and return your consent forms which are included with this mailing.

As always, thank you for your help. If you have any question feel free contact Peter Bylen or any Board member.

# Briar Cove News Around the Neighborhood – Spring 2014

## A brief overview of the needed amendment addition or changes .

### Proposed Third Amendment to the Declaration

Old Article IV, Section 1g and f of the Declaration sets forth as the Association’s responsibility for maintenance, repair and replacement of “Lawns and landscaping” and “Existing trees.”

New **Article IV, Section 1g of the Declaration as follows: “Lawns and landscape plantings installed by the developer or the Association” and “Common Area, lot line, and perimeter trees originally installed by the developer or the Association.”**

### Proposed Fourth Amendment to the Declaration

Old Article X, Section 1 of the Declaration concerning the Architectural Review Committee: “The Architectural Review Committee (the “ARC”) shall consist of at least three (3) and no more than five (5) members, all of whom shall be appointed by the Board of Directors. The ARC shall have exclusive jurisdiction over all new or original construction, and all modifications, additions or alterations (including color) made on or to existing Residential Units and the open space, if any, appurtenant thereto, and Common Areas.”

New **Article IV, Section 1 of the Declaration as follows: “The Architectural Review Committee (the “ARC”) shall consist of at least three (3) and no more than five (5) members, all of whom shall be appointed by the Board of Directors. The ARC shall have jurisdiction over submissions based upon guidelines established by the Board of Directors for all modifications, additions or alterations (including color) made on or to existing Residential Units and the open space, if any, appurtenant thereto, and Common Areas.”**

### Proposed Second Amendment to the By-Laws

Old No existing language.

New **Article III adding Section 18 of the By-Laws as follows: “Good Standing. Only Association Members in good standing will be eligible for candidacy as a Director either by vote of Association Members or appointment by the Board of Directors. Good standing will be defined as (1) not being in a state of sanction as a result of the Enforcement procedures in Article XII of the Declaration, (2) being in compliance with the Association’s Rules and Regulations, and (3) being current with Association Assessment or Special Assessment charges levied; current defined as no more than thirty (30) days in arrears. An Association Member’s good standing shall be among the discretionary factors considered by the Nominating Committee.”**

# Briar Cove News Around the Neighborhood – Spring 2014

## Landscaping and Beautification

The Landscaping and Beautification Committee provided wreaths at our main entrance this Christmas Season. Thank you.

Sue Arias thanks our great group: Betty, Beverly, Chris, Dee, Leslie, Ken, Mary, Millie, & Nancy.

## Trash and Recycling Carts

A reminder . . . although the larger carts have proven to be a challenge to store out of view, in addition to Briar Cove rules, the Towns of Schererville and Dyer also have ordinances that prohibit leaving carts out in the open other than at specified pick-up times. Make every effort to return your carts into your garage. Direct your questions to Republic/Allied Services (219-662-8600). All necessary information is posted on our web-site for your convenience. There may be different rules for our Dyer and Schererville residents, so call them directly.

## Pet Etiquette

We continue to be hopeful that all homeowners with pets would clean up after their pets.

Unfortunately, we still continue to receive calls asking us to please address the problems of the pet owners that ignore the rules. Our non-pet owners bristle when they have to clean up the droppings left behind in their yards. Before you walk your pet, grab a bag and then dispose of the pet waste in your own trash container. If you feel a homeowner is disregarding our “clean up after your pet” rule, send the homeowner’s name to 1<sup>st</sup> American. Respect the yards of other homeowners by following the leash and scoop rule.

**\*Confine your pets to the sidewalk or parkways only, not your neighbor's yards.**

**\*Walk your pet on a short leash for better control.**

**\*Immediately pick up after your pet and you won't have to read about poop in every news letter.**

**\*Just be a good neighbor and clean up your pet's poop.**

These rules also apply to any guests who bring their dogs for a visit to Briar Cove. Please be sure that your guests are aware of the rules if they are going to walk their pets in Briar Cove.

# Briar Cove News Around the Neighborhood – Spring 2014

## Fire Hydrant Location Rods

Ralph Flens is currently working with the City of Schererville to have location rods attached to all our fire hydrants so they will be less likely to be covered by snow drifting or plowing.

## Welcoming Committee

Rita Stopper and Beverly Perotti from our Social Committee were pleased to announce that during 2013 they have welcomed and delivered 17 fruit baskets along with a binder to greet our new neighbors with general information and our governing documents.

Thank you Rita and Beverly.

## Neighborhood Watch

Ron Szikora and Don Stopper are members of the Schererville VIPS (Volunteers in Police Services) and their community involvement is most appreciated. They offer some input as follows:

Crime Watch--keep an eye out for persons walking around the neighborhood saying they are looking for their missing dog. These persons are walking around patios and back doors looking for open doors. Also, be vigilant if your garage door is open. This can provide an easy access to the inside of your house. Suspects are always trying to take advantage of senior citizens. If you see someone that you don't recognize, don't hesitate to call the Schererville Police Department, 322-5000. It is better to be safe than sorry.

Vacation Checks--Schererville Police Department now offers free vacation checks on your home. When you go on vacation, call and get information for a VIPS member to check out your house while you are gone.

# Briar Cove News Around the Neighborhood – Spring 2014

## Briar Cove Book Club

The Briar Cove Book Club will be discussing “The Fault In Our Stars” on April 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm in the home of one of our new neighbors, Debbie Rose.

The Fault in Our Stars is not just a novel - it is literature at its best. The author is John Green, who writes for the young adult audience; however, this crossover hit is popular among “seasoned” readers and is being made into a movie for release this summer.

The story is told through the voice of Hazel, a 16-year old cancer patient who is forced to attend a support group where she meets the love of her life, Augustus Waters. The story tells of their health crises, their attempts to live life to the fullest despite their parents concern and alarm, and also of their love and devotion to each other. Despite the sad circumstances of the characters, this is an uplifting story with many lessons to be learned about how to face death and to relate to family and friends with terminal illnesses.

The books will be available on loan from the Lake County Public Library through their Book Club to Go Kit. To reserve a copy and get more information, contact Karen Davis at [KDavis5722@att.net](mailto:KDavis5722@att.net) or call 219-865-2241.

## Next Open Board Meeting

April 17, 2014, 6:30 pm  
Schererville/ Dyer Library (on US 30)

Peter Bylen 1<sup>st</sup> American 219-464-3536 Ext 310 / 800-990-3536  
pbylen@1stpropertymanagers.com

[www.briarcovehomeownersassociation.com](http://www.briarcovehomeownersassociation.com)