



**NEWS
AROUND
THE
NEIGHBORHOOD**

Summer 2014

2014 Board of Directors

***Jay Popp, President
Ralph Flens, Secretary
Joe Arias, Treasurer***

***Ron Szikora, Director
Kathy Skurauskis, Director***

A NEW BEGINNING

For every bad there is a good. Our winter was horrible, but perhaps it has permitted our spring to be very generous with the rain and moderate temperatures. Ever since the grass cutting started, all cuttings but two were delayed by at least a day due to rain. That rain has spared us irrigation water expense and provided a great opportunity for the aeration and fertilizer process to work.

Speaking about beginnings, the Briar Cove Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Kathy Skurauskis to your Briar Cove homeowner's association board. Kathy's appointment brings our Board back to its original five members. Kathy has prior board experience and has expressed a desire to share her time and talents for the betterment of our community. Welcome aboard Kathy.

Our next open Board meeting will be Thursday, July 17, 6:30 pm, at the Schererville Library.

A General Thought

We are very fortunate to have a rather quick sale of homes as they become available. This is due in part to the orderly and attractive appearance of our community. One of the keys aspects in keeping our community attractive and orderly are the "External Modification Requests."

We all have a certain degree of creativity in our minds when planning changes to the exterior of our homes. It is the charge of the Architectural Review Committee and the Board to provide guidance to the resident in what is appropriate for the community as a whole by working with the resident to comply with our rules, covenants and guidelines. Thank you to all that participate in following the procedure when making exterior modifications.

It has been more than 10 years since our community grew out of what was an old airport runway. Our homes have had time to mature and your Board is proud to say that with the guidance of our rules and covenants she is one fine looking community.

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Please help us help you. If you suspect your or your neighbor's irrigation system is not operating correctly (operating at abnormal times, large areas of lawn appearing unusually dry, spraying water directly on driveway or street), please advise Peter Bylen. If neglected, Association funds are unnecessarily wasted. Our irrigation contractor, during his spring startup, has tested and replaced many spray heads that were either damaged or just worn out. As such, it is currently felt the dependability of the irrigation system has been greatly improved.

It should be noted, that if it is obvious that heads adjacent to the driveway are damaged during the summer by automobiles running over them, the cost of repair will be the responsibility of the homeowner.

One problem that continues to arise 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.**

Help to prevent thefts from garages and residential burglaries

- 1- Keep the doors/windows of residence locked, even if you will only be working in the yard or leaving your house for a few minutes.
 - 2- Keep your garage door closed when it is not necessary for them to be open, keep your service door and connecting doors (from your residence) locked at all times. Install a deadbolt if possible.
 - 3- Keep your vehicles inside the garage locked at all times.
 - 4- Keep the outside of your home well-lit by using dusk to dawn lighting, motion detecting lights or timed lighting.
 - 5- If you have an alarm or surveillance systems use them and display appropriate signage (in mulched areas only) as a deterrent.
 - 6- **Towns of Schererville and Dyer have an ordinance for alarm systems. The first two false alarms are free; the third false alarm will result in a fine.**
- A special thanks to Ron Szikora for his efforts in working with the city law enforcement system.

Community Garage Sale

This year's community garage sale will be Saturday, August 16, 2014, from 8:00 AM until 2:00 PM.

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Save your money-Food for thought

As the homes in Briar Cove are getting older, the topic of roof replacement has once again come to the forefront. As you know, the replacing/repairing of the roofs due to aging/damage IS NOT an Association expense. ALL roof repair and/or replacement costs are the responsibility of the homeowner(s). Total roof replacement (both halves of the paired cottage) is best done at the same time. Homeowners will have to work together on this maintenance item.

To help you in planning for the future, the Briar Cove Board worked with the roofing contractor that did most, if not all, of the roofing in Briar Cove to establish a “today” cost of reroofing (developed in 2010). These costs were then used to project the cost for the future. REMEMBER, these are only projections. Many variables can alter these numbers. Roofs are expected to last 30 years, but the contractor stated that most roofs will need to be replaced after 25 years. Depending on the model of home you have and a projected 25 year span from when the home was built, your half of the total roofing cost is estimated to be between \$12,500 and \$14,500.

Briar Cove /Town Relationships

Over the years, Briar Cove has established and maintains a relationship with the elected officials of both Dyer and Schererville. As you are aware, except for Ludington Avenue, Briar Cove is part of the Town of Schererville. Through the established contacts, the Briar Cove residents have been benefactors of additional street lighting and most recently with the installation of markers (rods) on the fire hydrants. These markers will help keep the hydrants visible during snowy conditions. The additional street light will help to keep our community safer for the residents. The Town officials have also been most receptive to our inquiries, concerns and complaints regarding the CN Railroad. Our concerns have been brought to the attention of the railroad officials. It is for the benefit of the Briar Cove residents that these relationships be maintained. A special thanks to Ralph Flens for his continued efforts in maintaining relationships with the city officials.

Architectural Review Committee Report

This has been a busy six months for the ARC Committee. The Committee has had almost 30 requests to review this past six months. We also worked with the Board to update the Awning Guidelines. Most Exterior Modifications have been very easy to work. FYI: As homeowners you can make the Exterior Modification process very easy by simply filling out the modification forms completely, being very clear in what you want to do, making a drawing showing what the project will look like, and also making sure you are clear with the dimensions of the project, if needed. If you do not have a computer, please contact Peter Bylen and he can mail you a hard copy of rules and guidelines for external modifications. I would like to thank the ARC Committee for the amount of work and time they have donated to the Briar Cove Community.

Bill Sliepka, ARC Committee Chairman

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Social Committee Welcomes New Homeowners

After a busy year, our “tandem welcoming team” of Rita and Beverly from our Social Committee is again ready to make contact with about 3-4 expected new neighbors. Last year, they welcomed nine new homeowners. Along with a smiling “welcome to the neighborhood,” they provide a welcome packet that consists of general information, our governing document in a binder and a gift basket of fruit.

Lawn Care Program Update

We are slowly reaping the fruits of our Lawn Care Program with the services of Philip Hergarten, Consulting Turfgrass Agronomist. The program tailored for Briar Cove lawns continues to focus on the long term health of our lawns. The program runs from the fall of 2013 through the summer of 2014. At the present time no adjustments are planned. We may need to make adjustments after soil samples are taken for the next season. The soil samplings are needed to determine the content of the fertilizing treatment. Phil’s overall assessment is that he “sees no adjustments needed to his program at this point as it is designed to proactively address the needs of turf under varying environmental stresses and changes. I think the results to date are very acceptable and you are getting the “best bang for the buck.” We realize that in light of last year’s improvements there are a few lawns that will take more time. All our vendors have played an intricate part in the success of our lawn care program. Even with the ravages of the harsh winter behind us, our contractors moved early to repair our lawns and they appear to have taken hold with the advantage of a wet spring.

How good do our lawns look? We hear that our vendors are sending other communities to look at our lawns. We realize we have made great strides in most of our lawns considering the variation in the soil used as fill in our community. For additional information please visit our website under Lawn Care Program.

An update article about what DuPont is doing about Imprelis damaged trees can be found on our website under the lawn care program tab.

Landscaping Committee

Our appreciation to the L & B committee for their zeal in their quest to add “Community Curb Appeal” to our neighborhood. This spring they had our lawn contractor plant hardy ground cover geraniums (Rozaanne) to our Ludington entrance. They had our contractor thin out the existing ground cover and fill in the bare spots in the main entrance. Their latest project involves tackling the effect of “The Polar Vortex” at the waterfall. We lost a number of box woods. The Board challenged them with the task of redesigning the placement of the box woods at the waterfall area. We want to thank Ken, Beverly, Mary, Chris, Dee, Nancy, Leslie, Millie and Sue for all their work and effort.

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Financial Summary

A mid-summer review of our financial health shows despite going over budget in the cost of snow removal our financial health remains strong. Many of our neighboring communities did not fare as well.

Our incoming income remains steady and on target slightly above plan. The only non-budgeted expense of any significance was the waterfall pump which was replaced. The pump pit was checked for buildup of sludge but with the lack of sludge in the pit, the failure of the pump was determined to be mechanical failure. We also had electrical panel failure and the electrical panel was repaired at no expense to Briar Cove. The replacement waterfall pump cost \$5,600.

This summary covers from January through May, 2014

- Our Year to Date Income \$160,709
- Our Year to Date Operating Expense is \$135,840
- Our Net Operating Income of \$24,869
- Checking Account Balance \$102,173
- Capital Reserve Balance \$93,732

A special thanks to Joe Arias and Ralph Flens for their efforts in keeping our community financially sound.

EMAIL Addresses and Home Insurance 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 lawn mowing will be delayed due to rain or announcement of our new board member Kathy Skurauskis. 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

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

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As a reminder, please make sure Peter has a copy of your homeowners insurance. This is vital to your well-being, as well as that of your attached neighbor.

Proposed Amendments (STILL NEED YOUR CONSENTS)

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 were included with your spring newsletter. If you have misplaced your ballots please contact Peter Bylen for replacements.

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

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.”

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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.”

Pet Etiquette-much better

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

At present it appears our hoping is working. In the last several months we have only received ONE POOP complaint ...a very special thanks to all the pet owners and visiting pet owners.

As a reminder....

- *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.

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A word of caution

It has been brought to the Board's attention that several residents have had wood rot problems with the wood panel area above the garage door. External evidence of a potential problem could be softness of the paneling or trim over the garage door, stain discoloration in the same area as well as actual vegetation growing in the wood trim area. In some cases black mold may also be visible either inside or outside the garage door header area.

If this problem is suspected at your home, it is suggested you contact a qualified contractor and have it professionally inspected. If the problem is left unchecked it could lead to further damage and expense.

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