

The House Special

Volume XX, No. 3

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March 2000

MEET THE CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2000
7:00 P.M., IN THE WEST PARTY ROOM

Meet the candidates and hear their presentations. Questions and comments from unit owners welcomed

Resumes included in this issue

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ELECTION AND ANNUAL MEETING

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2000
7:30 P.M., MAIN LOBBY

Pick up ballot starting at 7:15 P.M.

Editor Nadyne McKelvey

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: *The House Special Welcomes brief comments from its readers.* Please limit your letters to 250 words and include your name and unit number. The Association Board reserves the right to refuse incorrect or improper statements.

Information for the House Special may be left at the Management Office, the Reception Desk, or sent by e-mail to nmckelvey@hotmail.com

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

The Management office is pleased to announce that a Notary Public will be available to notarize your documents. This service is, of course, free.

MONTHLY DEBATES: This is the second announcement for this activity. Jan Edward Helfeld indicated that he had a couple of people who had shown interest, but more people are needed. Here is Jan's note:

Debates are exciting and intellectually stimulating. Are you interested? We could have our own monthly debate activity either among Skyline residents or with invited guests. Did you see the great think off on CSPAN? A Minnesota town meeting with less residents than Skyline, produced a great and exciting debate that was covered by

CSPAN television. We could do the same. Please call me if you have any interest at 933-7870, T14E, or leave a message at the front desk.

Jan Edward Helfeld

RECREATION COMMITTEE

Tony Di Salvo, co-chair

Patricia (Tish) Linsinbigler, co-chair

The committee did not meet in February. Next meeting on March 8. A number of people asked the committee where we rented the 50" TV for the month of January. Here it is: Rent-A-Center in the Williamston Center, Arlington Blvd near Wards Department Store.

The Italian Dinner was held on February 16 and all who attended had an enjoyable evening and dinner. Thanks to my wife, Nancy, who assisted, along with Tish, Carroll and Margaret who served and helped wash dishes at the end. Thank you all.

Thanks to Louis Albin who took the photos on New Year's Eve. Photos were posted on the bulletin board and copies were provided to those who requested them.

The next meeting of the committee will be Wednesday, March 8, 7:00 P.M., West Card Room. Come join us if you have any ideas that you would like to bring to our attention. Even if you do not, please join us. You are more than welcome.

If you are a resident and have not attended the monthly TGIF, make this your first --March 3, East Party Room. Do NOT bring a plate of hors d'oeuvres, just your own liquid refreshments.

COMING EVENTS

TGIF — Friday, March, 3, 6:30 P.M., EAST PARTY ROOM

Rec. Com. Meeting- March 8, 7:00 PM WCR.

From the President

COMPLAIN

That's rightcomplain. As I leave the Board of Directors I've tried to think of the best advice I can give, the one thing I wish you had done more, the one thing that will make things better here at Skyline House. Complain, but do it, please, in certain useful ways.

1. When you see someone doing something they shouldn't be doing, tell them so. You don't have to be hostile about it. That only makes people defensive. But be confident when you remind a youngster that he cannot rollerblade or ride a bicycle in the hallway. Better yet, tell his parents.
2. If you don't feel confident approaching someone as in paragraph #1, fill out a Unit Owner Action Form. These forms are available at the Front Desk. In the case of infractions, my policy has been to give management one crack at resolving matters through a discussion with the resident(s) concerned or, in the case of renters, with the unit owner. Second offenses get referred to the Covenants Committee for action.
3. When you see something out of order or in need of repair, report it. You can call the Front Desk and be switched over to the Hot Line, or you can go to the Front Desk and write the item into the Maintenance Log.
4. Bring items of concern to a meeting of one of the Association's committees. You don't have to be a regularly attending voting member of a committee to bring a matter of concern before it.
5. Speak up in Town Meetings, Owners' Open Forum and the Unit Owner Comment period of the Regular Board meetings.
- 6....Bring your concerns to one or more of the members of the Board of Directors. They are the Association's elected officers and directors.

Now, having invited you to complain more, I want to invite you to complain in useful ways and to avoid forms of complaint that actually create friction and keep things from getting done.

When I was in the Navy, I got to travel in tropical areas where malaria was a threat. To go ashore in those areas, the crew was required to take medication which ...well...cleaned you out. I don't need to be graphic. You get the picture. Well, on an aircraft carrier with a crew of 5,000, with the next port of call 45 days off in the future, what would be the most unwelcome news a sailor could hear? That the ship is running out of toilet paper. I heard this rumor several times in my Navy career. It turned honest men into thieves. Navy Captains would get

(Continued on Page 4)

on the “One-M-C” and make announcements to the crew that this was only a rumor, that there was plenty of toilet paper and that officers and men caught hoarding it would be punished. Looking back, I’m sure that USS ENTERPRISE probably carried more toilet paper than bombs and rockets when we went to the Indian Ocean. And the XO was always right — we never ran out of toilet paper. Moral of the story: rumors cause problems. Don’t start ‘em. Don’t repeat ‘em.

Closely related to the problem of rumors is that of discerning the true facts in a story. Service as President of the Association is performed without remuneration, but if I had a dollar for every time someone said to me in the past three years “They say...” we wouldn’t have needed a Special Assessment. Why is it necessary to identify the person or persons who observed a particular problem? We all remember the elementary school or church youth group game of “telephone.” That’s the game in which we all sat with our chairs in a circle and repeated a story whispered from one person to the next until the message reached the last person in the circle. The originator would repeat the original message, and the last person in the circle would repeat what he or she thought the last message was. The result was always the same — lots of laughter because the two stories bore no resemblance to one another. Moral of the story: if you want to pass on a complaint you heard from someone else, please provide that person’s identity so the story can be traced back to its origin.

Confidentiality is an issue, but it shouldn’t be when you are making a complaint. A number of times in the past year, Association members have put members of the Board of Directors on the spot by (1) reporting a problem — often with very skimpy details — and (2) asking the Board member to keep their identities confidential. In the best circumstances, the Board of Directors makes its decisions with a free exchange of information. When you put constraints of confidentiality on a Board member you are, in effect, asking the Board to (a) make a decision based on a limited examination of the issue or (b) force the Board to delay action while the Board member who received the confidence goes back and checks the facts. Constraining a Board member’s ability to share information divides the Board and can have the effect of pitting Board member against Board member, not a recipe for productive Board action.

When you complain you may want to vent. This is not particularly welcome, but Board members understand this comes with the territory. When you are through venting, however, make sure that you share all the information YOU have concerning the problem you are complaining about. Snide comments — I call them “hand grenades” — lobbed at the Board do not help us assess the scope of the problem or fix it. Board members are unpaid volunteers. Their time is valuable. Don’t expect them to do leg work researching what you already know. Be part of the solution....if only by helping the Board ...and Management ...come to a clear understanding of the problem.

Finally, please be patient. The problem you write in the Maintenance Log has to be prioritized and worked off among many tasks. Items requiring budgetary action need to be identified in

(Continued on Page 5)

in the May-June time frame to find their way into the following year's budget, which is finalized in November.

On behalf of the 1999-2000 Board of Directors, thank you for your encouraging words. They keep us going. And thank you for your complaints. They are, in part, what prompts the Board and Management to make things better here at Skyline House.

Sincerely yours,

Charley Roberts

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENT

SWIMMING POOL

RULE 24: Proposed changes from “H” thru “K”. Others remain the same except numbering. Any comments or criticism should be sent IN WRITING to the Covenants Committee within 60 days from the date published in the HOUSE SPECIAL.

Proposal for Revision of Rules and Regulations language governing use of the pool by children:

Paragraph:

- H. Delete from the first paragraph of “H” the last sentence: “Babies in diapers shall wear waterproof pants in the pool”.**
- I. New Paragraph: “Children under 3 are not permitted in the main pool; they are permitted in the kiddie pool provided they are wearing rubber pants and are accompanied by an adult”.**
- J. New Paragraph: “Any child using the main pool must be toilet trained”.**
- K. Appropriate swimming attire shall be worn in the pool. Appropriate attire is defined as the usual or customary one-piece or two-piece bathing suits that conform to local community standards; cut-off denims and dungarees or other attire considered to be street clothes are prohibited. (This paragraph was formerly the second paragraph of “H”). All other paragraphs dealing with pool use will be renumbered starting with “L”.**

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

The Financial Management Committee has been very busy this month evaluating contractors for the outsourcing of our accounting function. We have received three bids from local condo management firms and have visited the contractors on site for an introduction to their firm and capabilities. After over a year of struggling to "fix" our accounting problems, the FMC is beginning to become convinced that outsourcing is the only solution.

Our current accounting situation possesses a major problem in the area of internal controls. This situation is what I want to talk about today. Internal controls are management processes and procedures that should be implemented to prevent or minimize the opportunities for waste, fraud, or other misuse of our financial resources. A major component of internal controls is "separation of duties." A "separation of duties" means that the person who receives monies should not be the person who records the transaction into the general ledger and that neither of those two employees should be the person to make the bank deposit. If you have been counting, you notice that this requires three people. We only have one person in the accounting office and herein lies our problem.

YOU CAN HELP!!

The association has a lock box with the Bank of America and we pay the bank a tidy sum each month to receive our assessment payments, record the receipts, and send us a printout of payments received. Homeowners also have an option to pay their assessment through an electronic transfer of funds from their bank to Bank of America. If all owners cooperated, we would not have a problem with internal controls and we could rest assured that our money was properly safeguarded.

YOU CAN HELP.

Unfortunately, some owners continue to drop off their payments at the accounting office and sometimes even PAY IN CASH. Can you see how that opens the door of opportunity for money mismanagement? We even had an incident where one owner paid their special assessment (over \$4,000) in cash! The practice of making payments to the accounting office is undesirable for several reasons.

It increases the risk of loss or theft.

Increased risk requires a more extensive audit each year.

The more extensive the audit, the greater our audit fees.

It requires our accountant to spend a large amount of her time performing as a cashier when she already has more accounting duties to perform than there are hours in the day.

It delays the arrival of Association funds at the bank resulting in a loss of income we could receive from interest.

It violates generally accepted accounting standards of Internal Control as established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

We could avoid all of these problems with just a 33-cent stamp.

CAN YOU HELP?

PHYSICAL PLANT AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

George Beams, Co-Chair, reporting

The Committee met on February 10. Management reported that the new cooling towers should be delivered by March 3, 2000, and work is scheduled to begin on March 10. These new cooling towers will be more efficient. They will save on water, electricity and require less maintenance. They are replacements for the original towers. Renovation of the current towers would cost approximately \$80,000 and would only increase their life by 5-10 years. New towers are expected to last 30-40 years. The cost for the new towers is \$190,875. Funding for the new towers is in the Reserves.

Many residents who purchased Rheem hot water heaters have found that the dip tube has disintegrated. If the heater was purchased before September 8, 1999, and manufactured between August 1993 and October 1996, residents can become part of a class action suit brought against the tank manufacturers. The deadline for action is June 30, 2000. If you haven't checked your hot water heater yet, you should. Check the hot water heater's serial and model numbers and call 1-800-329-0561 for more information.

Several residents have reported large amounts of water on the A and B levels of the garage. This condition will continue until Commercial Roofing's work on the Plaza Terrace permits the re-installation of the expansion joint. Work is expected to be completed by April 15, 2000.

The next PPOC meeting is March 9 at 7:00 P.M. in the West Card Room. The next "walk around" will be March 22 at 2 P.M. Meet in the main lobby. We plan to visit the garage roof plaza and observe the renovations. All are welcome.

GOOD NEIGHBORS

Toska Prather, Co-chair	379-7849
Virginia Wallace, Co-Chair	671-7648

Good Neighbors for the Month of March 2000 are:

David Shandloff	820-3673
Shalini Arora	933-2230

The Good Neighbors are ready to assist all residents who need help temporarily. They are also looking for additional members to assure the continuation of this valuable service in Skyline House. Please call one of the Co-Chairs and join us.

Joint Management/PPOC Property Inspections

now known more familiarly as

THE WALK AROUND

These monthly inspections, inaugurated in 1998, provide an opportunity for residents to familiarize themselves with the complexities of our buildings and grounds. They have become a most useful opportunity for an informal exchange of opinions and ideas between residents and management for early action on emerging problems as well as for potential improvements to the area visited. These ninety minute visits have gone to interior and exterior common areas as well as behind the scenes to equipment rooms.

PARTICIPATION OPEN TO ALL RESIDENTS

Committee membership not required

Next scheduled Walk Around:

Wednesday March 22 , at 2:00 pm.

Meet in main entrance lobby

To visit the Garage Roof Plaza and observe progress on the renovations.

A COVENANTS NOTE

Throwing cigarette butts or any other object off the balconies is not only a violation of Skyline House Rules and Regulation, but IT IS ALSO A FELONY IN FAIRFAX COUNTY.

If you witness anything thrown from a balcony, first call the Fairfax County police, then, second, make a report to our Management.

REMEMBER: CALL THE POLICE FIRST THEN CALL MANAGEMENT.

**H. David Kafka
Chairman, Covenants Committee**

LIBRARY HAPPENINGS:

The Library will be closed on Monday, March 20, 2000, so that all will be able to attend the MEET THE CANDIDATES NIGHT. The Library will be open to all on the other Mondays in March. Come visit us.

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REMEMBER: YOU NEED TO DIAL THE 703 AREA CODE

Beginning on MARCH 1, you will need to dial the 703 area code when making a local call. This allows for the introduction of the additional Northern Virginia area code 571 in APRIL.