

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF THE LATHROP COMMUNITY, NORTHAMPTON

COUNCIL MEETING

January 4, 2017

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 by the President, Carol Neubert. The Council observed the customary moment of silence.

Minutes. The minutes of the December 7, 2016 Council meeting were accepted, with an amendment that the problem on the hiking trail was a “gulley” not a “valley.”

Treasurer's Report. Beverly Bowman presented the Treasurer's Report, which was approved as presented. We received \$109.04 in donations and expended \$84.54 since the last report. We now have an unencumbered balance of \$4985.76. The full report has been filed with these minutes in the Library.

Management Report

Thom Wright reported occupancy figures very near 100 per cent for town homes; Inn occupancy has improved to 55 per cent. The overall occupancy rate is 88 per cent.

Two candidates have been identified as possible successors to Deborah Peavey. Their references are currently being checked, and he hopes to offer one of them the position by the end of January.

Thom provided an update on the progress of the Master Plan. This month will be spent preparing financial estimates for the plan, to be presented to the Task Force and the full Board. Resident meetings will be initiated in February to discuss the impact of financing the project.

Thom introduced the concept of enhanced independent living, an alternative to assisted living which provides better nursing service for Inn residents, as well as up to an hour a day in other individual assistance, for an increased monthly fee. Following the model of the “universal worker,” staff would be trained to provide a holistic approach to care of Inn residents. Stacy Carmichael asked what the impact would be on the master plan, and Thom explained that this is a pilot program designed to give us some financial assistance; it will sync with the master plan. Helen Armstrong asked if this meant more full-time staff, and was assured that the “universal worker” concept would require this. Dave Morrissey wonder if this program could be carried out within wood frame construction; Thom reminded the group that only memory care required something different.

Ongoing Business

Carol reported on her investigation of a **state grant for trail development** to enhance the project we hope will be funded by a Kendal grant. We would have to provide money up front and be reimbursed later by the state. Further, it is not at all clear that the state program will be continued. Carol advised the Council that a wait-and-see approach was probably prudent at this juncture. There was consensus on this approach. Stacy Carmichael thought it was important to fill the

gully (or chasm, as she put it) now. Arlene Jennings suggested that we construct an intentional detour around the gully, closer to the brook. Hans van Heyst noted that we must wait until spring, and suggested that an ad hoc committee could deal with it then.

Carol then introduced a draft of legislation regarding **invisible fencing for dogs** proposed by the Property committee for inclusion in the Resident handbook: “No pet fences (electrical or structural) are allowed. If there is an extenuating circumstance where a resident or prospective resident feels that such a fence is necessary, that person can make a case to the Property committee. If the Property committee agrees with the requestor, a member of the Property committee will talk with that person’s neighbors to determine if there are any objections or concerns. If there are none, the proposal will be sent to the Council for a final recommendation to the management.” Stacy Carmichael, as a member of the Property committee, said she found this an acceptable compromise; the Council concurred.

Carol also presented a recommendation from the Property committee that **dogs ought not to be allowed in the Meeting House**. Arlene Jennings wondered why this was a Property committee issue. Hans van Heyst replied that the committee had been asked to consider both dog-related issues for reasons of resident safety. Audrey Bozzo had the impression that the Council had recommended that dogs be excluded from the Meeting House as a safety issue at the last Council meeting. This was formerly the policy (until it was changed last year) and there was never a problem about tying dogs outside while their owners picked up their mail. Hans said that although lane reports from the last meeting were incomplete and inconclusive, the Property committee felt that general opinion was weighted toward excluding dogs from the Meeting House. Carol felt that safety in the Meeting House was the central issue and said she had had many calls about safety concerns. Judy Buhner suggested that a designated place on the porch to tie dogs would alert those who did not wish to meet dogs to avoid them, while those who wished to greet dogs could find them there. Helen Armstrong thought that the issue was keeping dogs under control, and if there were a schedule of dog-friendly times for the Meeting House, they could, under control, be allowed in at those times. Audrey reminded the Council that fear of falling is real among the elderly, and should be respected. Thom referenced a policy which allows therapy dogs at the Inn. After several more comments on both sides of the issue, Arlene remarked that this was an issue on which consensus would probably never be reached. In an effort to reach some resolution, the group assented to go ahead with the proposed policy, and investigate finding a safe space for dogs to be tied.

Carol then introduced the possibility of a **dog park** on campus where dogs could, under supervision, run free. Initiated at the last Council meeting, the proposal was investigated by an ad hoc committee of Arlene Jennings, Helen Armstrong and Joan Davis. They investigated three possible locations: the swale located across the parking lot from the Meeting House entrance, an area south of the Meeting House surrounding the flagpole, and an area to the north (non-street side) of the community garden. They vastly preferred the latter, and identified an area approximately 17 by 30 feet. Fitzgerald Fencing has been approached for a proposal on costs of the project. It was agreed that we would like to designate that area as a dog park, pending the cost estimate. As to how we might meet that cost, Carol suggested that we delay final approval until we know what the tab is, and be thinking in the meantime about the most feasible way to

underwrite the project. She will describe this new initiative at the Association meeting in February, but donations are welcome at any time.

Audrey commented that she would be happy to donate if it meant no dogs in the Meeting House.

The **Earth Friendly Organizers** have been hard at work, and will give a fuller report at the Association meeting in February. Among many projects, this includes an energy audit by Bob Buhner. Audrey Bozzo also mentioned an invitation which has been extended by the Program committee for a city employee to talk with us about recycling. Judy Buhner wondered if the results of the earth friendly efforts would be included in the Resident Handbook, and was assured that there will be a special section for them.

Carol gave a report on the **entryway/mailroom** project. Cushions for the new bench are being negotiated by the ad hoc committee which planned the renovations. There remained some disagreement about the coat rack, formerly just inside the door, and now in the sitting room. A thorough discussion of the issue ensued, with some Council members feeling that the coat rack should remain in the sitting room for the winter and be stored in the summer when the new hooks would suffice. Others asked that the coat rack be returned to the mailroom where it was originally located, in order to restore the pleasant surroundings the sitting room should provide. Ultimately, it was decided to return the coat rack to the mail room.

New Business

Carol announced the appointment of Judy Buhner, Hans van Heyst and Peg Rasmussen as members of the Nominating committee, reflecting the three areas of the campus. Judy has been designated Chair of the committee. Twenty-four new residents joined us last year and 18 this year, so there is a lot of fresh talent to tap. Carol also announced that she would not be a candidate for President again. She said that when they moved to Lathrop, she and Alex had hoped to lead a more spontaneous life and do all sorts of new things, but that whenever an idea has arisen, she has had a meeting to attend. Stacy Carmichael expressed thanks to Carol for her exemplary service as President; applause followed.

Discussion then turned to the composition of the Council, for we have received a request from the men's group that they be assigned a seat on the Council. This would require a by-law change. Carol noted that our current configuration of officers and lane representatives was designed to be representative of the community as a whole, and asked if it did in fact provide adequate coverage. She has talked with people in Easthampton, which has quite a different organization: six lane and two Inn representatives, officers and all committee chairs, totalling 24 people. Everyone she discussed this with over there advised her strongly *not* to adopt their model, for it has proved to be very unwieldy. Audrey Bozzo observed that we have adequate representation. She does not favor anything done by gender. We have about 70 women and 30 men; therefore, if we have one more man, we should have two more women members. Bob Comerford said that the men's group has grown significantly with our influx of new residents. They discuss many issues, but feel that their discussions don't go anywhere. If it were a standing committee with representation on the Council, this would allow for better exposure of ideas, which would be added to the general discussion of, for instance, the Master Plan. Rob Olmsted asked if this was an "affinity"

group, and if so giving it representation set a dangerous precedent, opening a Pandora's box for any and all such groups to ask for recognition. Judy asked if the men's group had an alternative way to be heard. She was assured that the route through the lane representatives was available, as well as the open discussion at quarterly Association meetings. There was a consensus to allow the organization of the Council to remain as currently configured.

Discussion for the Good of the Community

Representatives from Aspen, Firethorn and Hawthorn Lanes reported serious problems with ice in the last few weeks. Mike Strycharz offered to have the landscaper's trucks do an extra run under icy conditions. He was admonished to make sure that they reached fully to the garage doors when they did so. He also explained the composition of the magic salt used by the landscapers, which has a husky and pervasive odor. Stacy Carmichael asked if we could have sand stations placed around campus.

Two people have complained recently about people, including dog walkers, who are not cleaning up after their dogs. A notice will go in the Lamp Post, and we were reminded that those who are lax in this regard can also be confronted directly.

The Program committee announced that this Thursday at 10:00 will be Take-down-the-decorations-Day; any and all volunteers welcome. Audrey also announced the Program committee plan for a **Reception for New Residents**, on January 18 at 3:00.

Judy Buhner asked if the Calendar could be published earlier, so that residents do not lose notice of events the first week of the month.

Carol announced not only the New Residents reception on January 18, but Thom's Fireside Chat at 11:00 on January 26, and the Association meeting, open to all residents, on February 1 at 10:00, with Goldenchain providing refreshments at 9:30.

She asked for comments from the several observers present. Jack Hjelt reinforced the complaints about ice problems, and said he was aware of 4 or 5 falls in his neighborhood recently.

Warren Hammack said he had found this an informative and useful meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Davis
Secretary

