

*Stonebridge  
Townhome  
Owners'  
Association*

*c/o Conway Management Group  
2207 Concord Pike, #232  
Wilmington, DE 19803  
(mailing address only)*

**Open Forum  
19 January 2010**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM, Wayne Elvin, Vice President, Presiding.

Board Members Present:

Wayne Elvin, Vice President  
Adrienne Woodbury, Treasurer

Robb Mackes, Secretary  
Beth Kuhn

Also Present: Tabitha Palmer, Conway Management

Board Members Excused:

Sue Snider, President

Chris Ayotte

10 Residents Present:

#238 Vëssa Fulton  
#313 Sarah Cannon Johnson  
#338 David Wyatt & Alissa Frampton  
#340 Reginald Seabrook  
#451 Daniela Rogers  
#463 Catherine Hoopes  
#505 David & Daniela Hillman  
#XXX Robert Blades

Website: <http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/ncastle/sbthoa>

Greeted residents thanked for coming, and announced that the next Open Forum will be on March 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. He then opened the floor to residents to voice concerns or ask questions.

Resident: questioned the budget summary for 2010 which was mailed out in December. He questioned the stated amount of dues income at \$218,300 did not add up correctly. T. Palmer explained the error: the incorrect number based on residents paying the old rate of \$295 per quarter rather than the increased fee of \$310 per quarter. The budget will be corrected and redistributed to residents. In addition, W. Elvin explained the other income lines from legal fees paid by residents with outstanding past due fees.

Residents questioned the increase in quarterly Association dues. What are residents getting for their fees? W. Elvin explained that costs to operate the Association increase constantly. Our fees include costs for landscapers, utilities, trash removal, the pool and snow removal.

Resident: informed the board that he is instituting legal action against Attorney Michael Morton with the Office of Professional Management, asserting that Mr. Morton is “double dipping” with regard to legal fees. When asked, the resident explained that the Board budgets for legal fees each year. The resident admits that he’s behind in his association fee payments, and notes that, when he receives invoices from Mr. Morton, legal fees are included on the invoice. The resident feels that he should not have to pay the attorney fees because the Board pays those fees; he feels this is double dipping. T. Palmer, W. Elvin and B. Kuhn explained that, as with any other attorney/client transaction the Board pays fees to the attorney in advance to cover the attorney’s costs. When fees are collected from a homeowner, those fees are returned to the HOA. TP explained budgeted fees versus fee income in our budget process. Resident further states that there is a conflict of interest because Mr. Morton is related to board member. All Board members deny this allegation. Resident requests that the Board provide an itemization of fees that are returned to Association. T. Palmer explains that all fees are reported on the Association’s ledgers. Resident offered to provide the Board with copies of the results from his complaints with the Office of Professional Management when his complaints are resolved. To address the resident’s concern about legal fees and all resident’s concerns about increasing Association fees, B. Kuhn and A. Woodbury explained that residents owe \$134,521 to the association. Resident suggests that the Board needs to be more connected with homeowners – in person, through social networking, and other avenues

B. Kuhn & W. Elvin addressed attendees: the Board needs input from all residents regarding the things that they want to see happen in the community, and the Board needs that input on an ongoing basis. Communication with the Board is a two-way street. The Board has a responsibility to disseminate information to residents, but residents also have the responsibility of making their wishes known to the Board. Open Forum meetings are only one avenue for

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residents to communicate with the Board. If residents can't attend a meeting, call or send an email to T. Palmer who will present all issues at each Board meeting. For some time now, the Board has been making decisions based on very little input from residents.

W. Elvin addressed several residents' concerns:

1. Regarding increasing Association fees: Stonebridge is one of the most efficient Home Owner Association in the area in terms of costs.
2. Several residents were disappointed in the way the Association's streets were taken care of during and after the pre-Christmas storm. W. Elvin explained the situation with regard to snow removal contractors. In most circumstances, crews will not start snow removal until at least three inches of snow is on the ground. In a community like ours, it is difficult to clean streets because of parked cars in the courts. The Boulevard does get plowed, but often becomes ice covered because drainage issues between the 200 and 300 courts. Crews do the best they can, but the Board must balance the amount of work done with being fiscally responsible to residents. Residents can help by shoveling snow from their driveways, parking spots and walkways onto grassy area and planting beds rather than shoveling their snow out into the street. This creates a safety hazard for all residents.
3. Notes that all meeting minutes and newsletters are posted on the Association's website. The website URL is posted on all Board communications, and appears on the bottom of each page of Board meeting minutes.

Resident request for the next Open Forum: open discussion with residents and Board members about how residents and Board members can communicate more effectively.

Resident: asked the status of the retaining pond at the entrance of the community. Resident also asked why commercial vehicles are parking in the development, and why vehicles are parallel parking in the middle of tight court streets. Resident asked why people are not picking up after their dogs? How can we enforce this rule?

B. Kuhn and T. Palmer explained the situation with the pond and fountain: right now, the county is the hold up. Years ago, the County agreed that they would help maintain retaining ponds throughout the County. Our pond is on the list to be dredged, and right now, we are "somewhere near the top." Silt has accumulated in pond that must be removed, but the county keeps delaying because of their own budget and staff concerns. Residents are encouraged to contact representatives, both state and county, to assist the Board in getting the county to uphold their end of the bargain. It was suggested that we include information in the next newsletter for residents to write to their representatives.

Dog waste is a continual problem that requires diligence on part of all homeowners.

Towing: parallel parking continues to be an issue throughout the development. Because Conway staff (Management Company) and Board members cannot be aware of parking issues all the time, the Board requests that residents report illegally parked vehicles to T. Palmer. It would be best if residents can include a description of the vehicle and the license number when calling. A new towing company has been engaged to help with this issue. Signs have been posted around the community warning that illegally parked vehicles will be towed. The company has been authorized to cruise through the community from time to time and tow parallel parked vehicles without notice. In addition, Midway will also be called to tow vehicles with expired registration, as well as vehicles that have flat tires or are inoperable. Vehicles may park temporarily on the Boulevard if no other spaces are available, particularly near the Clubhouse.

Residents also raised concerns about both the cost of operating the pool and non-residents using the pool. The pool is for the enjoyment of Stonebridge residents only. Each homeowner receives two passes for access to pool, plus two passes for guests. Exceptions are made for families with more than 2 children.

Garbage Dumpster: the Dumpster is still being used by residents of Stonebridge and Scotch Hills apartments. If you this see happening, please make a note of the license plate and a description of the vehicle and call Tabitha. The Board needs homeowners help to curtail this problem.

Dumpster fires: T. Palmer reports that Dumpster fires were widespread around the area. County police believe they have caught the people that started the fires.

W. Elvin thanked all residents for attending the meeting.

Open forum adjourned at 8:30

Executive Session: 8:40

Minutes: Corrections were made to Dec 15<sup>th</sup> minutes. B. Kuhn made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by A. Woodbury; motion carried.

Pond: Conway purchased 1 ton of river rocks and covered the eroded area in the pond last week. The county has been notified and asked to come back to inspect. The pond maintenance form was completed and mailed back to the county.

Dumpster area: T. Palmer and W. Elvin began investigating the cost of installing a motion sensor camera over dumpster area. Depending on quality, the cost could range from \$400 to \$2,400.

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High quality outdoor security cameras are expensive and often can only be purchased by police or other government entities. Board recommends putting this on the agenda for the next Open Forum and ask residents to form a subcommittee to investigate all options.

Towing: as discussed during the Open Forum, Midway Towing has been engaged to tow any parallel or illegally parked vehicle. 302.323.4850 Any board member or resident may call to report illegally parked vehicles.

Snow: Issues were addressed in open forum. A contract has been signed with Widdoes for snow removal. We can still use Conway as a backup. When using Conway, we need to remember that the Apartments do get plowed first.

Recycling – T. Palmer has been investigating setting up a recycling center within the community. She has gotten information from DSWA and Waste Management. Space is going to be a major stumbling block as a recycling center requires 50 feet of width and 20 feet in height. DSWA would pick up recycling for free while Waste Management charges to pick up.

Illegal Dumping: It appears that a catering company is dumping their trash in our Dumpster. Vigilance needed to catch illegal dumpers. W. Elvin caught a carpet installer dumping carpet scraps. In addition, residents of Scotch Hills are using out Dumpster as well.

Contract status: Conway Management – signed a two-year contract in December 2009. A contract has been signed with Widdoes for snow removal. Upcoming contracts: pool management, landscaping and pond maintenance. Projects requiring bids: asphalt and concrete work, and tree installation.

Pool – the Board recommends forming a subcommittee of residents to address pool issues.

Drain field: the drain system for the field is not working properly. The field is not draining well, and the water that does drain is flooding the Boulevard. In addition, the frozen water is breaking down the road surface. T. Palmer will have Jose address the problem.

Association Rules & Regulations: verbiage regarding delinquent fees need to be addressed in the rules and regulations. T. Palmer has provided Board members with an updated copy of the Rules & Regulations that states that Association fees are due by the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, April, July and October. A \$45 late fee will be assessed to all accounts not paid by the 30<sup>th</sup> of the month. Board needs to vote on and approve updated Rules & Regulations. Because two members are not present, action has been tabled. Board members are asked to read the document and send any suggestions for revision to T. Palmer as soon as possible. Voting will take place via email.

T. Palmer reported that New Castle County has finally refunded the property tax money that was due to the Association.

Tax Return: W. Elvin moves that Conway be instructed to use their suggested auditor to prepare the tax return. Motion was seconded by B. Kuhn; motion carried.

Reserve review: T. Palmer will email information about this. The Board needs to decide on a set amount to transfer to the reserve account on a monthly basis.

W. Elvin and A. Woodbury need to visit TD Bank together to add Adrienne to the sign signature card. They will go on Thursday. A. Woodbury will begin to receive invoices effective immediately.

Resident issues:

T. Palmer reports that the water issue in the 500 court is ongoing. T. Palmer contacts Artesian every two weeks for a status update. Artesian states that the issue will be resolved.

An arborvitae tree at 414 is leaning. Artesian promises to address the issue. T. Palmer will continue to follow up with Artesian.

T. Palmer reported on a dispute between the owners of 509/505 regarding the placement of the privacy fence and access to the outdoor faucet. This is a homeowner/homeowner issue over which the Board has no jurisdiction. The issue must be resolved between the homeowners.

During the Open Forum, a resident volunteered to go door to door to deliver meeting minutes, the newsletter or any other information we need to distribute to residents. W. Elvin will create a synopsis of the meeting minutes for the resident to distribute as minutes that have not been approved by the board cannot be distributed.

There being no further business, B. Kuhn moved to adjourn executive session. The motion was seconded by A. Woodbury and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Robb Mackes  
Secretary