



Babbler

Changes

New Board - The general meeting occurred on 8 December 2009 and the meeting marked the end of term for three of our Board members. While two of them decided to stay on for another two years, the third, Brian Lachapelle, will be trying to get done the work he's ignored at his real job for the past year. Brian, we appreciate everything you've done, and you leave Indian Brook in much better shape than you found it. Thanks for all the hard work on our behalf. In addition to the two returning board members, we had one person submit nomination papers to run for the board. Since there was not a quorum at the meeting, an election for trustees could not be held at the meeting. The Board appointed Kerry Reisner of Lilac Court to fill Brian's spot. Good luck, Kerry. Thank you. And welcome aboard.

New Management Company - In late July/early August, the Board decided to change management companies. Dannin has managed the property for the past 13 years and it will be sad to disconnect from the large amount of institutional memory Dannin has about us, but the Board felt it had to be done. Like every part of the budgeting process, our management contract was evaluated to see whether better options existed.

A search committee was created (Brian, Flossie O'Donnell, and Ron Reidy) and they contacted ten management companies, evaluating cost and customer service options. Indian Brook was about to embark on a lot of capital spending, and Dannin, unlike some of the other management companies, charges Indian Brook 6% of large capital projects in order to manage them. In most cases, this isn't a big deal – for example, a \$20,000 roof now costs \$21,200 because of the Dannin fee. But we have 28 roofs to replace in the coming years and that 6% for the roofs alone is \$33,600 or \$300 from each and every unit.

In addition, other management companies offer a lot more customer service for the expenditure. For example, the Board wanted more visibility to track issues at Indian Brook and wanted better reporting and more visibility than Dannin was providing. Let's use the new management company, Salisbury Management of Boylston MA, as an example:

- Residents will be able to log problems directly from their home or work computers
- Residents will receive a work order number within 24 hours and will be able to see the status of that work order at any time.
- Additional updates and any resolution will be entered right into the same work order
- More importantly, the Board will get a listing of all open work orders each month so that the Board will be able to tell when the leak in one unit has continued to be a problem for months. This makes it much harder for residents' issues to be forgotten.
- Residents will also be able to pay their condo fees by computer, and check balances.

With greater benefits to the community, and for less cost, the decision turned out easier than imagined. So.....

Salisbury Management takes over managing Indian Brook on 1 January 2010. The president of Salisbury is Bob Hadden. Our manager will be Jean Killeen. Jean can be reached on **508-869-4570** (direct line to her office), and the new 24-hour emergency number will be **508-869-0764**. Salisbury will be running in parallel with Dannin for this month, but go ahead and call Salisbury from this point on. Salisbury will be asking you for your contact information, and an email address to set up an account to create work orders on their computers. A mailing is due out imminently.

New Landscape Company - The Landscape Committee decided at roughly the same time that they'd like to move on to a new landscape vendor. (Riverside has been with the property as long as Dannin has.) As with the management company search, a half-dozen companies were contacted and given a request for proposal. Most of them replied and, after much work and evaluation, the finalists were walked through the property. The winner, Rosado and Sons, is a local company that has been in business for 25 years, and has been trying to get our business for almost as long. Their references were stellar, and best of all, the new contract will save us \$10,000 a year for the base contract alone.

New Tree Company - Landscape also broke out the tree contract and will be bidding that separately. Getting a specialist should result in better/more complete service and fewer problems for the residents.

New Snow Company - And as if two major changes weren't enough, our snow vendor from last year, Groundskeeper, notified us in September that they wouldn't pick up our snow contract for 2009-2010 unless they got Indian Brook's landscape contract as well. We scrambled – landscape was asked to add Groundskeeper as an additional bidder in their search. Meanwhile the Board spun off yet another group to evaluate the other snow vendors.

Groundskeeper did give us proposals for both snow and landscape. But their numbers were on the high side. Once the Landscape Committee decided Groundskeeper was not a finalist, the Board pushed to finalize a new vendor for this job. As with the



other searches, six bids were received from companies in Hopkinton and the surrounding towns. The bidders were winnowed down to two finalists and the property was walked with the finalists before Maximum Grounds of Upton and Hopkinton was hired. Maximum Grounds comes with a “2 hour zero tolerance” snow guarantee. The company also likes to apply sand when it’s icy, Magic when it is light snow, and one of several salt compounds for other storms rather than blindly doing just sand or just Magic. So Indian Brook should get better results even though the new company will cost a little less than last year’s vendor.

Note: Maximum Grounds has been driving around honking their horns when cars should be moved. Please take advantage!

Phew– The Board members spent more time working on all these changes this year than had been spent total in the last three. This was only possible by their hard work and the sacrifice of their free time. Thank you to the Board for finding solutions to better Indian Brook. The operational budget was reduced by \$41,000 per year because of it.



Annual Meeting – The turnout at the annual meeting was small. Salisbury was introduced. The operational budget results were discussed. The Board then talked about the capital items that needed to be done. They are summarized here:

- **Roofs:** a roofing company (Flo-Dell) evaluated our roofs and found a lot of hail damage from the May and July storms. The Board has put in an insurance claim. Once the insurance claim is resolved, any moneies will be applied to new roofs. An engineer had previously designed a roofing system for us, and the Board will be adding elements of that design to what the building code requires when replacing the roofs. *No money is allocated for this in 2010.*
- **Lampposts:** This year we bought new lanterns. Current lights are broken on Weybridge and Birchwood. The Board has identified a contractor (Mayo) and will go ahead and replace all the lightposts in (April?). *{\$22,000}*
- **Walkways:** The Board identified 18 walkways that have major issues. One was done in 2009. *{\$7500}*
- **Decks:** This year the Board sent around someone to fix treads and spindles. Next year we will stain/seal Leman, Doyle, and Weybridge. The Board will also work with Salisbury to come up with a cost effective way to start replacing/resurfacing some decks each year going forward. *{\$30,000}*
- **Perimeter Reclamation:** the Board keeps looking at the encroaching trees and has set aside money for a tree company to come in and move the trees back 5’ from the units, especially on Birchwood, Rosewood, and Lilac. There’s also the bittersweet vine that is eating everything along the edge of the Leman parking lot. Encroaching trees allow pests to get into the units, and cause water and other damage. Time to stop this. *{\$10,000}*
- **Painting:** We will paint 3 buildings, 13-16 Birchwood (which got delayed from this year) and 2 of the three buildings on Rosewood. Carpenters will be sent around to fix up issues on other building as well. *{\$37,500}*

All of this could have been done and the monthly payments could still have been reduced. Unfortunately, Massachusetts passed a law that decrees our nitrogen levels are too high in the STP. Massachusetts wanted this to be fixed by August of this year at a cost of \$150,000. The Board asked for and received an extension to December 2012, but the money still has to be raised to do this work. Because there is a \$70,000 STP reserve, the Board decided to make this a five-year plan: raise \$30,000 each year, plus the reserve, to build what Massachusetts requires in 2012, then have two more years to replenish the STP reserve (as also required by law). Meanwhile we’re having an engineer design a system for us; hopefully he’ll find a way to create a solution that costs less.

What All This Means – The condo fee is reduced 8% as a result of the dramatic cost reductions in the operations budget. In addition, there will be a supplemental fee of roughly \$300 per unit in March and again in August to cover the capital budget and STP.

Scouts and Christmas Trees - Throwing out your Christmas tree and having BP pick it up results in a charge to Indian Brook. We’d like to suggest an alternative: the Scouts’ Christmas tree pick-up program is a good way to get rid of your tree at low cost; high convenience. Plus, it puts some money -- not a lot -- into the Boy Scouts’ coffers. The cost of the service is \$5 for trees under 8’ and \$10 for larger trees. Just attach cash or check, made out to "BSA - Troop 4" to the tree (a ziploc baggy works best). Here’s a link to their page that explains things: <http://trees.troop4hopkinton.org/>

Board of Trustees	Alison Sholock, Debra Foley, Florence O’Donnell, Kerry Reisner, Lily Zhan, Roland Janbergs, Scott Cellupica
	Next Board meeting: 6 PM TUESDAY 19 January at 15 Weybridge
Salisbury	Problems? Please contact Jean Killeen jean@salisburymanagement.com first. Phone (508) 869-4570
Babblers	Website: www.indianbrookcondos.com Email: board@indianbrookcondos.com