

Westmont Homes Association Minutes ~ June 20, 2022

The following meeting was convened via Zoom due to high levels of Covid transmission in Johnson County.

Board members present:	President – Ian Morris Vice President – Nancy Kocourek Treasurer – Michelle VanMill Secretary – Jan Hodgson Grounds Chair – Linda Stogsdill Communications Chair – Sam Harpalani Social Chair – John Ziegelmeier	Identified as: Ian Nancy Michelle Jan Linda Sam John
Board members absent:	None	

Guest present:	Mark Huffman, Precision Lawn	Mark
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Ian called the meeting to order at 6:35pm and was conducting the Zoom meeting from London, where it was much later. Because there have been some recent conversations about sprinkling and watering, he thought it would be good to start with Mark so we didn't waste a lot of his time. Some of the homeowners have brought up some ideas because of the pinch of rising prices in fuel and water and he thought it would be a good idea to give Mark a clear steer. He asked Linda to put the objective to us.

- Linda revisited a homeowner's recent suggestion that we consider only watering the beds with plantings in order to save some money. She shared the average monthly cost from last year's watering:
 - \$ 342. cost of having an account with Water One
 - \$1728. cost metered water usage from sprinkler system
 - \$2070. Total cost per month during watering season (Note: \$2000 is the annual watering cost.)
 With that, Linda turned the meeting over to questions for Mark.
- Ian thought one of the homeowners suggested we reset the timers or stagger the days or look at the time they were running the sprinkler and asked if he was remembering the previous discussions correctly. The purpose being to save money. Picking a time when we use the sprinklers and seeing if we do the beds more often and the grass less often and investigating what we need to do. He called on Mark for his insights.
- Mark shared that he has it programmed to water 4 days a week and that's the minimum he would do. In June, July and August, it's super-hot. If he's going to fertilize and spray the weeds, you've got to be watering 4 days a week in his opinion.
 - In the contract, there are only 27 mowings and he offered to skip one week of mowing in order to realize \$2000 savings to apply toward the sprinkler costs. The grass inside the community is super dry, but the outside is important to him because it brings people into the community.
 - If he's fertilizing and all the rest, if you knock down the watering, you're allowing the weeds and seeds to increase. He woke up on this past Sunday and he blanket-sprayed all the outside because all the nutsedge is coming up right now and if you don't take control of those things, they grow into a bigger problem and there will be more next year and the year after that. To him the watering is very important and it's just on the outside of the community. To him, \$2000 is not a lot of money so if you want to not mow one time to have more money for water, he's willing to do that.
- Jan asked if he had it set to water 4 times a week last year, too, and he said he did but he moved it up to 5 when it got really hot in July, but you're not going to go over that. If we could agree to 4 now and see where that gets us, he thinks that's a good idea and it's super-hot already.
- Nancy asked if he would change the duration on any of the stations? Mark didn't really think so but he knows there's an issue with how long it takes to run through all the stations. It's set for 3:00am now but he thinks if he backs it up a little farther (to start earlier) it wouldn't hurt anything. He can do the calculations and see if starting at 2:00am would get it to shut off earlier. But he personally thinks we need to keep running it 4 days a week.
- Ian asked Michelle what the last water bill was and she explained the bills come after the fact of metered water usage, so May was \$29 and that's just the service fee.
- Mark noted that the system was just turned on a couple of weeks ago and reminded everyone that we also saved money because it has rained so much.

- Ian summed up the discussion by reaffirming that we want Westmont looking good and we don't want to get so scrimpy that we devalue all of our assets. But, equally, we don't want to overwater so he asked if it was acceptable to all if we ratchet back to 4 days a week and review in the coming months what the costs are and how that's looking.
- John agreed and shared that we hire Mark to take care of the lawn and we need to take his advice.
- Nancy explained that our main concern in watering early is because we border city sidewalks and we're trying to avoid getting people trapped on the sidewalk being sprayed by a sprinkler because they have no place to go on our busy streets.
- Ian followed up hoping Mark had good steering tonight and asked if there were any concerns about the contract? Are there any people complaining? Is there anything we can do better to help him do things better?
- Mark said no and reflected that now that he has done it for a year, the first year was difficult because quite a few people would want special care. They came up to him and his people who are just there trying to do their job. They want him to mow their yard with the mower they think is best. He caters to a lot of them but can't do that with everyone because he wouldn't make very much money. He tries to decipher that himself and uses his guys and their intelligence. He hopes people will defer to his judgement and if he messes up their yard, then they have reason to talk to him and he can address it. He can't mow everyone's yard with a push mower just because they want it if it doesn't need it. People need to realize that in the spring, there is so much water, they have to go super slow, but they are still going to tear some stuff up here and there. But he does strive to never get a complaint.
- Ian asked if he thought it had calmed down now that he was in his second year and he said, "For sure." There are still a few who come to him, but he explains what needs to be done and overall, he thinks it's a lot better and it's about building relationships. He wants this contract for 10 years. He really takes pride in his work and wants it to look good. "I spray those weeds and would do it even if you didn't pay me to do it because it needs to be done and I take care of it because I want it to look good. I care a lot."
- Jan shared that the fence committee had been working on a lot of things and one of the observations that came up was that on the inside of the fence there were some tire marks, and while we didn't think they came from him, she wondered if the message got relayed to him about being careful on the inside of the fence? She didn't know if he used a hand mower there and trusted his expertise on that, but wondered if he got the message about bumping the fence, etc. Mark did get the message. He said they're pretty careful about that but accidents do happen and he tries to get his guys to tell him whenever anything happens so he thinks they're doing a pretty good job with it right now.
- Ian asked about the areas between the white fence and homeowners privacy fences and remembered it as being pretty ratty when he and Nancy looked at it a year ago. Nancy agreed that there are some areas that don't even have grass. Mark agreed there are a lot of bad areas in there and thought the homeowner really needs to take care of that stuff. He said that if you go in all those back yards, there are quite a few that don't care at all about their backyard. He said it's hard. He wants to please everyone. Mark said they try every week to do their best. Hopefully, every week it gets better and better, but he thinks things are going pretty well now.
- Linda asked if we wanted to extend the temporary contract allowing for an increased gas allowance that ends June 30th and after some discussion it was moved and seconded (by John and Jan) that the contract be extended through the end of the mowing season. Mark will draft an addendum for the rest of the year and submit it for signatures.
- Ian thanked Mark for coming to the meeting and told him it was very nice meeting him and Mark said the same and signed off. Ian was glad we had him and thought it was worthwhile. You could tell he cares and at the end of the day, you can't please every homeowner.
- Nancy shared that we've been trying to pass more responsibility on to the homeowners. Some need to bring in more topsoil, etc. and we can work toward that angle, too.

President's Report: Ian apologized for the last-minute cancellation of the May meeting and explained his father-in-law was in the hospital that night and is bravely fighting cancer. He is living in their basement now where they can keep a close eye on him. Westmont seems to be looking good at the moment and everyone seems to be working hard, he thought. He checked with Jan about what minutes were up for approval and since there were no May minutes, Nancy moved and Michelle seconded that the April minutes be approved

as drafted. Ian asked if it could be noted on the website that there was no May meeting and Jan offered to take care of that.

Treasurer's Report: Michelle reported everything looked to be in order with the May financial statements she received and shared with the board.

- A prior dues delinquency had been resolved following a mix up with the transfer of property to a new homeowner.
- There was another delinquency because of a delayed Social Security check and the homeowner will make 2 payments in June to catch up. Ian and Michelle commented on how nice the man was.
- Action Items:
 1. The fence insurance increase in coverage, taking it from \$50,000 to \$90,000 (or 90% of current value/replacement cost), is estimated to be an additional \$600/yr. premium according to Doug at HA-KC. The policy renews in November.
 - Linda asked about the deductible and Michelle found it to be \$1000. And the deductible on the new director's policy is \$500.
 - Nancy asked if the policy also covered the monuments and John said it did and that he thought they were valued at \$15,000 total for both.
 - After some discussion and change in start date, Jan moved and Ian seconded that Michelle activate the increase in the fence insurance policy as soon as it could be arranged.
 - John reminded everyone who would be on the board in the years to come that we still need to live up to the 90% requirement of the replacement cost on the fence insurance moving forward.
 2. Update on new employment practices insurance policy previously agreed to; Michelle sent the request to Doug and is just waiting for his confirmation. She will have Doug adjust the budget with the prorated insurance amounts and make notes to include the increased insurance costs in next year's budget. Nancy asked if Michelle was going to stay on as treasurer and she said she could. She doesn't know what the rules are but she's happy to help for another year.
 3. Michelle shared that she, Ian and Nancy discussed a variety of options for renaming one of our "reserves" lines in our budget and Doug recommended that we rename the "Fence Project" to "Capital Improvements." Doug said that since we don't have any funds to put into the fence reserve fund, we could rename it to make it more general. However, if we know we want to set aside funds to replace the fence, having a dedicated fence fund is a good idea. He suggested two options:
 - You could rename the fence fund to capital improvement fund.
 - Or create a second capital improvement fund to earmark money for improvements other than the fence.
 - Ian and Michelle reviewed details of our current finances and the total members equity as of the end of May was about \$190,000 and the annual budget is \$177,484. And we should have an equal amount in reserves. So, anything in addition to that is surplus as Ian sees it. The \$178,000 is strictly for emergencies, not for the fence. Michelle agreed you can't rob Peter to pay Paul. Ian continued that if a catastrophe happened in the neighborhood, you've got the reserves there to move forward. Anything else you have above that should be a separate item. So, he personally feels we should have two-line items. He's open to what they're called.
 - Nancy made a good case for renaming one reserve line-item Capital Improvements. The three things that are already expenses above our lawn and snow maintenance obligations are the fence, the sprinkler system and the landscaping so it almost has to be called capital improvements, so people will know that as we are filling up the fund, it can be used for any of those or any other capital improvement needs that might come up.
 - Ian's fine with that as long as we always make sure we have 12 months of funds in the Emergency Reserves. Then anything that comes in over that amount that we can put in another reserve account, we can notify future board members why we've done it that way and they can see that we've tried to be fiscally responsible.
- Jan asked about the 4 lines now in Member's Equity or reserves, one blank or unlabeled, and asked if we were changing that label. Michelle clarified that the one labeled Emergency Fund is the one we always strive to keep equal to our annual budget. The \$15,000 that is in the unallocated line can be moved to the Emergency Fund and that will bring it closer to the recommended total to match our budget. She'll

have Doug move those funds. And the line labeled Fence Project will be renamed Capital Improvement Fund. Everyone agreed.

- Jan asked about the 4th line that shows about \$20,000 in excess of expenses so far and Michelle explained that it's left-over snow removal funds that we haven't needed to spend and if we're lucky we won't need to use them before the end of the year. Nancy pointed out some years we've had so much snow we used all that was budgeted and had to dip into reserves.
- Jan asked for clarification about the many conversations we've had about being \$5,000 short so far this year and it comes from the reserves being about \$5,000 short of the goal after we move the unallocated \$15,000 to the Emergency Fund (that now has about \$156,000).
- Ian shared for reference that one of the good things to note is that Doug thinks we are one of the best HOAs in terms of trying to keep our reserves account equal to our budget and not all HOAs do that. Most were in support of having that goal. 100% coverage is the right thing to do, he said, because we never know what's going to happen.
- Jan reminded everyone that we just approved new insurance expenditures that were not in the budget so they will have to come out of reserves.
- Nancy pointed out that our HOA is responsible for so little compared to others with a pool or more landscaping or common area and ours is pretty simple by comparison.
- Ian asked us to bear in mind that if costs increase dramatically in the next 24 months, we can't increase the dues above a certain percentage so we need that equilibrium to protect everything.
- Nancy reminded us that Mark will be submitting a new contract for next year and we know his costs are going up. On that point, Michelle asked if he would like to lock into a 3-year contract and Linda has talked to him about it and knows he would be interested. There was discussion about having that come to the board in the next few months so we can plan the budget. Nancy suggested he could lock in a percentage rather than a specific amount because gas prices could continue to go up, etc. Linda pointed out he also needs to maintain competitive wages to keep a good crew.
- It was moved and seconded by Linda and Jan that the April and May financial statements be approved.

Vice President's Report: Nancy noted that she had received and processed a couple of ARC forms through the board. She noted that the two updated units on the west side of Hemlock have been completed and really look nice. The landlord really appreciated our cooperation on working with him during all the delays.

Grounds Report: Linda shared that she would be going on vacation in a couple of weeks and John would fill in for her starting 7/10. She also reminded everyone that yellow oak leaves mean the tree needs iron treatment. Nancy shared that Ryan Lawn and Tree has an arborist and Linda thought Mark was one, too. And Mindy Forman gave Linda the name of someone who was less expensive and she'll follow up with an email.

Social Report: John shared an update on his two projects:

- In Directory Spot, about 50% of the homeowners have logged in and set up their accounts. He gets 1-2 emails a week. Linda is also working on tracking down emails. One family has hidden their information from public view on the site. He's printed 3-4 copies of directories for people who don't have an email or aren't computer savvy. He noted that it's 30 pages long on his personal computer. Michelle offered to buy some reams of paper and expense it to the budget and Ian offered to drop some extra reams off.
- The Fence Committee has an initial report and is scheduled to meet again on 6/30 to iron out the final details and he hopes to have the report to the board by 7/10.
- The garage sale is scheduled for September 8-10 and he has put a notice in the newsletter. And the neighborhoods to the south and west are having theirs at the same time.

Communications Report: Sam asked everyone to get newsletter information to her by 6/25.

Adjournment: With no further business to come before the board, Ian adjourned the meeting at 7:27pm.

Next regular board meeting: Monday, July 18, 2022 at 6:30pm via Zoom. Homeowners are welcome and can request the Zoom link from Ian.

Respectfully submitted, July 6, 2022
Jan Hodgson, Secretary