



A Newsletter dedicated to educating and informing the Spring Lake Neighborhood

# The Spring Lake Connection

July 2017

## FROM THE EDITOR

The newsletter is back! Actually, it never really left. The editor has simply been overloaded on the work front. But all things eventually pass as did this; so there should be more regular communication in the coming months. There is quite a lot to report and catch up on, so this newsletter is longer than usual.

There have been some changes with the HOA Board of Directors, which you will hear about later. For now, what I would like to say is that the board is in the process of planning what issues to tackle going forward; so we would like to hear from you!

Enclosed with this newsletter is an opinion survey. It is rather long, but this is your chance to be heard. We hope that everyone will take the time to fill it out and return it as soon as possible. Most of all, we are REALLY interested in what you think; so, compliment or criticism, don't hold back.

While tabulated results may be made public, any individual responses will be kept confidential. Also, responses are for opinion survey purposes only and do not constitute an official vote on any issue.

## THE ANNUAL MEETING IN MARCH

Two major issues were addressed, as always, at the annual meeting in March: approval of the budget for the coming year and election of board members.

With the fence construction project completed and the seawall project wrapping up, it was felt that no additional funds were needed for operation of the

association. Therefore, the monthly dues were not increased this year. YEAH!

In recent years, we've had massive legal bills due to litigation relating to the seawall. The board is looking very forward to paying significantly less money for legal services.

Three board members had their terms expire in March: Shelley Kuroghlian, Mary Lou Quinn and Geoff Barnes. Shelley and Mary Lou ran for re-election and were successful in their attempt. Geoff decided not to run again but subsequently volunteered and was posted to the Fine Review Committee. In Geoff's place, Rachael Pifer, a young, energetic newcomer to the subdivision was elected.

Immediately after the Annual Meeting was adjourned, the new board convened a regular monthly meeting to elect officers. This process is specifically laid out in association documents. Members elect the board; then the board, amongst itself, elects its officers. Your officers for this year are:

President – Michael Andre  
Vice President – Shelley Kuroghlian  
Secretary – Dr. Greg Gulick  
Treasurer – Koren DeRusso  
Architectural Chair – Tim Bishop  
Social/Communications Chair – Rachael Pifer  
Landscaping Chair – Mary Lou Quinn

## SEA WALL CONSTRUCTION

When the last newsletter was published in September, the construction of the seawall was in progress. The

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main construction was completed shortly thereafter, but there was still one other small phase that needed to be bid and done, that being the drainage element.

In the agreement between the association and the adjacent homeowners, under which the seawall was constructed, the homeowners were required to have gutters on their houses that meet certain criteria. These gutters had to be tied in to a drainage system that routed runoff from each house through the seawall to avoid erosion. Any needed gutter work was the responsibility of the homeowner, but the drainage system and the tie-in was the responsibility of the association. The winning bidder for installing the drainage system was Chad Irrigation and they did an excellent, problem-free job both with the construction and the tie-ins.

The board arranged for Absolute Gutters to assist any homeowners who needed gutter improvements. Homeowners were not required to use this company; but most did because the association had negotiated a discount on the services.

Homeowners along the north lake are asked to water the new sod along the seawall to ensure that it takes root and reminded that digging is not allowed within five feet of the wall to prevent damage to the sub-surface drainage system.

So, with the possible exception of a final inspection by the project engineer and a few minor “final punch list” items, this project can be reported as DONE!

So, the Board of Directors is looking for new projects. Hence the reason for the enclosed survey.

## **OPERATION OF THE ASSOCIATION AND RULES VIOLATION NOTIFICATION**

The basic purposes of the homeowners’ association are to oversee the maintenance of common areas and ensure compliance with association rules. These activities are embarked upon by the Board of Directors, committee members and our management company with the ideals of serving association

members and maximizing the value of properties in the subdivision.

Vendors who provide services to the association, such as lawncare and tree maintenance, are obtained through a bid process. Of course, we almost always accept the lowest bid. If a vendor does a good job, they get to keep doing it. If not, they are dumped and we get a new one. It’s pretty boring stuff, usually.

Rules compliance is where all of the excitement happens! Most homeowners happily follow the rules in the spirit of which they were written; and when they are informed of a violation, quickly correct the oversight. But as in any group, there are a few... (Well, you know how this sentence ends.)

Anyway, there is a whole process that is followed for the “few” that is in compliance with Florida (and probably Federal as well) law. Most homeowners never see any of this beyond the first notice (which is the point of this article) because they happily correct the oversight, and life goes on.

Well, last year, some of the laws changed relating to this stuff and the lawyers had to write new notification letters. They did an excellent job of making them sound official and lawyerly, and apparently scary and insensitive, because we started getting complaints to that effect. So, yours truly has stepped in and re-written the first notice to be less of the aforementioned and more friendly and informative. I know no one likes to get one of these things; but if you do get a violation notice in the future, I hope you find it a more pleasant experience.

## **OWNER-OCCUPIED VS. RENTALS**

From time to time, the subject of rental properties is discussed in board meetings and in the newsletter. This is because the percentage of rental properties in a subdivision affects the property values. So, of course, we prefer homeowners to occupy their properties. Also, most (but, admittedly, not all) of the most severe and long-term rules violations occur with the rental properties.

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Spring Lake is very fortunate in that most of the homeowners who rent their properties do a great job of taking care of their units and ensuring that their tenants know and follow the rules. And most of the tenants are assets to the neighborhood and blend right in.

Unfortunately, the realtors and banks don't care about that. They just look at the numbers. They see that we have about 10% of our properties rented, and they don't like that very much. So, we get to discuss it and talk about how we can get more owner-occupied units and less rentals. Well, apparently, because of this type of conversation, some of the landlords have started to feel like they are *persona non grata*. (Latin meaning "an unacceptable or unwanted person.") And while they are perhaps technically correct, we don't want to paint a "scarlet letter" on their foreheads. *The Board of Directors treats all homeowners and occupants exactly the same*. We actually want you to participate just as much as everyone else. So, landlords and tenants, feel free to come to the meetings and contribute to the betterment of the neighborhood. After all, it's your property values and neighborhood too that we are talking about.

All that having been said, I feel more comfortable in reporting that I know of four properties that have, in the past few months, been sold and transitioned from bank or landlord-owned to owner-occupied. So, *every* homeowner can sit back, close their eyes, and add a few more dollars to the value to their property.

### **DESIRABILITY OF PROPERTIES RISING**

As a member of the Board of Directors, I try to get around and meet people that I don't know and keep abreast of happenings. The sense that I'm getting is that properties in Spring Lake are in high demand. One property on the water in immaculate condition recently sold for \$290,000; furthermore, the purchase agreement was signed 24 hours after the property went on the market.

Additionally, I recently spoke with a homeowner who had just purchased in the neighborhood. She told me

that she wanted to move into the subdivision so badly, that she drove through the subdivision every week looking for houses to go on the market until she found one to buy.

### **RECREATIONAL AREA TREE REMOVAL**

You may have noticed something different at the parking lot of the recreational area. A number of trees have been removed which were either dead or dying. In total, three large oaks were removed along the east side of the parking lot and five small pine trees were removed adjacent to the tennis courts near the parking lot. No decision has been made yet about replacement landscaping.

### **MORE WATER USAGE RESTRICTIONS**

In case you haven't heard, Pinellas County has increased water usage restrictions in response to a water shortage declaration by the Southwest Florida Water Management District. These changes went into effect on June 5<sup>th</sup>. Homeowners are now allowed to only water their lawns once per week now rather than twice. The specific day for each homeowner is determined by their address. Those interested in additional information should consult the Pinellas County website for more information.

Members are also likely seeing notices about this in their City of Clearwater utility bill. Clearwater has also changed its rules in response to this declaration. However, Spring Lake subdivision is governed by the county rules, not those from the city.

### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS TOOL**

As we are in the midst of hurricane season, emergency preparedness is likely on many people's minds. I recently found a useful app put out by Pinellas County to assist in the endeavor. If you would like to check it out, search your cell phone's app store for "Ready Pinellas."

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