Norton Hills Estates Recreation Association

Autumn 2005 Newsletter

Shareholders Seek $10 Special Assessment Earmarked for Beach Stairs Replacement

Shareholders voted to hold annual dues steady at $50 for 2006 and sought a $10 special assessment to begin saving money we will need to replace the beach deck and stairs.

It would be the first special assessment on record for NHERA; dues have held steady since at least 1991.

Informal inspections of the beach deck and stairs suggest that nothing needs to be done immediately but that the current structure is nearing the end of its safe and useful life.

Shareholders voted at the annual meeting Sept. 27 to form a committee, chaired by Vice President Joe McNarland, to obtain a formal inspection and timeline and cost estimates for replacing it.

Rather than wait until we might need a much larger assessment later, the 52 residents at the meeting – a 52 percent attendance increase over last year – sought to begin collecting funds for this major project now to spread out the cost over several years.

We thought we approved the special assessment during the meeting. However, the bylaws require balloting of all shareholders to approve special assessments. A ballot is included with this newsletter, and we need your reply within 30 days; replies post-marked after Nov. 1 will be discarded.

Your NHERA Board will discuss the replacement project with Hathaway Court Recreation Association, which shares access rights and maintenance responsibilities for the deck and stairs, in hopes that they also will begin saving now for this major project.

City Officials Very Helpful in Q&A Session

Mayor Nancy Crandall and City Administrator Mark Meyers held a very informative question-and-answer session at NHERA's annual meeting this year.

Topics ranged from the city's cat control ordinance to the "One Muskegon" effort to consolidate government operations across Muskegon County.

Citing declining revenues and tight budgets, Mayor Crandall said, "We know that we have to find a better way to operate. … We're not talking about consolidating into one city; we're talking more about functional consolidation. We hope there will be cost savings, but the primary goal is to operate more efficiently."

Asked about boats and other vehicles parked on terraces, Mayor Crandall said the City Council has voted against prohibitions so far because they would be difficult to enforce. NHERA rules prohibit parking of recreational vehicles, including boats, on terraces.

Mayor Crandall said a city ordinance requires residents to keep cats on their own property or leashed, but acknowledged that cat control is up to the county and said the county's budget does not allow enforcement efforts.

She and Mr. Meyers said the city has expressed safety concerns about the upcoming deer culling at P.J. Hoffmaster State Park and has been assured that residents and park visitors will be protected. Safety zones will be established around homes, and the number of hunters and types of arms will be limited.

"Deer have absolutely overrun that park," Mayor Crandall said to a chorus of "my back yard, too!"

Mayor Crandall, who is stepping down this fall after 12 years as mayor, promoted the revised city charter being presented again to voters in November. The new charter would allow smaller property tax increases than the previous version, which voters rejected last year.

"The average (annual) increase would be less than the cost to fill your gas tank," she said.

Mr. Meyers said he wants to develop a long-term street resurfacing plan "not just on major streets but on local streets – on *your* streets".

He also said Norton Shores has only half the firefighters of the average Michigan city its size. "We really need more firefighters," he said.

If voters reject the new charter again, the city will not have enough money for either project, he said.

NHERA Board Re-elected

All four corporation officers were re-elected, and no election was called for any block chair position, so your NHERA board remains intact for 2005-06.

Stan Miller enters his second year as president (and newsletter writer). Joe McNarland starts his fifth year as vice-president; Treasurer Stacy Sewick and Secretary Barb Miller enter their fourth years in those posts.

Contact information for the officers and for all 10

block chairs can be found in your neighborhood directory. If you did not receive your directory in August, please contact your block chair or Barb Miller at 780-9219 or secretary@nhera.org.

Top Survey Issues: Traffic Safety, Deck Maintenance

Traffic safety concerns and maintenance of the deck and beach stairs were the most important issues in NHERA's first residents' survey since 1999.

Both issues drew a median response of 10 out of 10. Your NHERA Board and resident Herm Zuidema already work hard to keep the deck and stairs in good condition, and the Board is investigating replacing them (see related story on Page 1). As for traffic safety, at our request the city has already installed a speed limit sign for northbound Dunes Parkway just south of South Hilltop Drive; shareholders authorized the Board to try to get stop signs installed at Dunes Parkway and South Hilltop Drive; and we will try to get random police patrols at that intersection to crack down on speeders.

Park and walkway maintenance also ranked highly, drawing a median response of 8. Your Board knows the park and walkways were not adequately maintained early this year, and we apologize. Two lawn care companies failed to show up as promised this year, but finally in early August we secured a deal with Coleman's Lawn Care; they've done a great job so far, and we look forward to many years of good service. And in September, we reclaimed the overgrown path to the park at the end of Bloomfield Court.

Completion of sidewalks and **playground upgrades** were next, with median responses of 7. The protective covenants governing the neighborhood require homeowners to build sidewalks; however, shareholders voted at the annual meeting not to address that issue right now. As for playground upgrades, our bank account is beginning to recover from the major upgrades made in 2003, and we can begin to plan for another round of upgrades depending on the schedule for replacing the deck and stairs.

The annual **Goodwill pickup drive** and **garage sale** drew median responses of 6 and 5 respectively and will be continued.

Annual **trash bin rental** was ranked a 4, and shareholders voted overwhelmingly to discontinue that expense. All three trash haulers serving the neighborhood will pick up almost anything they can lift right at your curb, although some may charge a small fee for heavy items.

An **entry sign** for the south end of Dunes Parkway and the **NHERA Web site** also drew median responses of 4. The Board investigated the cost of an entry sign and learned that one similar to the signs on Norcrest Drive would be prohibitively expensive, but we will explore more modest options. Shareholders voted almost unanimously to continue funding our Web site, www.nhera.org, which will cost only 42 cents per house per year and brings NHERA significant benefits.

By a 37-7 margin, respondents said they would be willing to **switch trash haulers** to save $20 a year and have trash trucks in the neighborhood one day a week instead of three. We're already investigating options.

Finances Through Sept. 27, 2005

Income	
Association Dues	7,685.00
Directory Ad Sales	130.00
Interest	179.22
Total Income	**$7,994.22**
Expenses	
Maintenance	1,602.44
Depreciation	760.00
Insurance	756.00
Activities (Party)	716.82
Taxes	486.90
Professional Fees	462.50
Printing & Repro.	205.07
Filing Fees	200.00
Perm. Improvements	190.79
Postage & Delivery	183.20
Office Supplies	68.23
Web site	67.95
Rent (P.O. Box)	38.00
Advertising	30.00
Total Expenses	**$5,767.90**
Net Income	**$2,226.32**

Beach Access Surveyed

After several questions arose about exactly where our beach access land is, we joined with Hathaway Court Recreation Association, which owns adjoining property, to have the lots surveyed.

The survey revealed that the deck is on NHERA's land but most of the stairs is on Hathaway Court's land. Hathaway Court offered even before the survey to pay part of the maintenance cost we incurred this summer, and shareholders at the annual meeting authorized the NHERA Board to make the best deal possible with our neighbor association.

The survey showed no encroachments on our land but several on Hathaway Court's land. We will leave it to Hathaway Court to address those encroachments as they see fit; President Steve Richardson pledges to maintain the good-neighbor relationship both associations enjoy with the homeowners who have encroached.

Metal rods were driven into the ground at each stake, so future questions about the precise location of the land can be answered with a metal detector.

A copy of the survey drawing is available on our Web site, www.nhera.org.

Please VOTE NOW on the special assessment!