Norton Hills Estates Recreation Association

September 2006 Newsletter

By Stan Miller – president@nhera.org – 780-9219

City Seeks Easement in Park for Sewer Line

The City of Norton Shores has asked for an easement through the neighborhood park to install a new sewer line.

The gravity-fed sewer would allow the city to remove the lift station on upper Norcrest Drive near the park entrance, said David Geyer, water and sewer superintendent. The city must send a crew and a generator to that lift station during every power outage to prevent sewage backups into nearby homes; it's one of more than 40 such lift stations in the city, Mr. Geyer said.

The requested easement would follow the path of the sidewalk into the park from upper Norcrest to the tennis court, then continue straight west across the tennis court and through the woods to the west edge of the park. At that point, it would connect to an existing sewer line, Mr. Geyer said.

Orange stakes in the park indicate roughly the center of the proposed easement. About 25 trees west of the tennis court marked with orange X's would be removed; only six of those trees are larger than a few inches in diameter.

The initial request is for a 20-foot-wide easement. Much of that width is needed to allow equipment to maneuver, and the channel dug for the sewer would be narrower, Mr. Geyer said.

If the easement is granted, work would likely not begin until spring, Mr. Geyer said. The city would restore the park to good condition after the work, including repaving the entire sidewalk and half the tennis court, replacing the concrete pad for the picnic table, and repairing any other damage, he said.

The city also would plant new trees in the woods, but Mr. Geyer acknowledged that they would be small – probably 3- to 4-foot blue spruce, he said.

Residents on the south side of upper Norcrest would be allowed to hook up to the new sewer at their own expense if they want to, but would not be required to do so, he said.

We will discuss the requested easement at our annual meeting Sept. 26.

Board Asks for 'Speed Hump' to Slow Traffic on Dunes

The city took some action this summer to try to make Dunes Parkway safer, but your NHERA Board believes it was not enough.

City workers posted a new sign for northbound Dunes just south of our neighborhood, warning of a curve with an intersecting street. The Board appreciates that sign, but as we expected, it has done little to slow traffic. Workers also changed the yield sign on South Hilltop Drive to a stop sign, a change we opposed.

After the city rejected our second request for a stop sign for Dunes Parkway at South Hilltop, I spoke to the City Council about the problem and asked the council to approve a "speed hump" on Dunes, just south of South Hilltop.

A speed hump is not the same thing as a speed bump like those found in parking lots; traffic can cross a speed hump comfortably at 25 to 27 mph – at or just above the speed limit on Dunes. Much faster than that, though, and it gets uncomfortable.

A study for the Federal Highway Administration found that speed humps reduce speeds by an average of 7 mph, or 20 percent – more than any other measure intended to slow traffic.

The complete text of my remarks to the council is available on our Web site at www.nhera.org/news.

Director of Public Works Gerald Bartoszek has prepared a report for the City Council on speed humps, including some design and siting standards used elsewhere, said City Administrator Mark Meyers.

Mr. Bartoszek's report does not make a recommendation either way on our request, Mr. Meyers said.

The council is expected to discuss the report and our request at its work session on Monday, Sept. 25; the public is invited. It's just one day before our annual meeting, but I'll be there, and I encourage all residents concerned about traffic safety in the neighborhood to attend. The meeting is set for 7 p.m. in the large conference room at City Hall, 4814 Henry St.

Annual Meeting at Topo's

The 2006 NHERA annual meeting will be held at Topo's Italian Pizze Tavern, 2675 Henry St., from 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 26.

We've invited new Norton Shores Mayor Jerry Wiersma and City Administrator Mark Meyers, but we do not know yet whether they will be able to attend.

Dinner begins at 6:30 p.m., and the meeting proper begins at 7:30 p.m. Dinner is free to all homeowners in good standing, along with one free drink per adult resident; a cash bar also will be available.

We will discuss the city's request for an easement through the park (see story above). Also on the agenda: plans for the deck and stairs (see story on Page 2), discussion of changing our fiscal year, and election of officers.

Please RSVP by Sept. 21 to Secretary Barb Miller at 780-9219.

Deck and Beach Stairs Investigation Continues

A committee led by Vice President Joe McNarland continues to investigate options for replacing the deck and beach stairs.

After some very promising informal estimates early on, more formal bids are considerably higher and may require us to wait for 2007 dues to be collected before we can afford the project.

It's unlikely that the project will proceed this fall, but we hope to be able to move forward quickly in spring in cooperation with the Hathaway Court association, which shares ownership of the deck and stairs.

For more details on this project, please come to the annual meeting; see story on page 1.

Current Residents Buy 1 City Lot; Others Available

Current neighborhood residents have purchased the home site on the southeast corner of Dunes Parkway and Norcrest Drive.

They're awaiting closing later this month and asked not to be identified until the sale is final, but we know they'll make that home site look great because their current home looks great! They plan to build a smaller home on their new lot, but may wait a few years to begin.

The two lots on the northwest corner of the intersection remain for sale. One neighbor told the city he would make a "ridiculously low" offer on one lot but has not yet done so, said Community Development Director Dick Maher, adding that the city will consider the offer if it is made.

The city also received one tentative expression of interest from someone outside the neighborhood, but that person did not follow up, Mr. Maher said.

Mr. Maher said he still expects to put "For Sale" signs on those two lots if they don't sell soon.

Your neighborhood association will get $250 from the sale of each lot. The NHERA Board thanks the city and Mr. Maher in particular for ensuring that all three lots were maintained over the summer.

Finances: Jan. 1-Aug. 31, 2006

Income	
Association Dues	7,115.00
Directory Ad Sales	335.00
Interest Income	262.39
Total Income	**7,712.39**
Expenses	
Advertising	39.80
Assoc. Activities	1,038.20
Depreciation	760.00
Maintenance	700.86
Office Supplies	33.90
Post Office Box	40.00
Postage & Delivery	7.80
Printing & Reprod.	273.08
Taxes	501.21
Total Expenses	**$3,394.85**
Net Income	**$4,317.54**

2nd Annual Block Party a Bit Smaller, Still a Success

More than 50 neighborhood children attended the second annual NHERA block party, and a good time was had by all.

Lexi Sandgren and Grace and Emma Piasecki shared first prize in the bike-decorating contest. They each won a ribbon and a gift certificate for ice cream. Rodney Robinson led the bike parade in his dirt-track race car; check out the pictures on our Web site: www.nhera.org/news.

Resident and Mona Shores art teacher Heather Sturr was a huge hit again with her face painting, and the bounce house was popular again this year. A slushy machine helped everyone keep cool on a hot day. Caricaturist Corinne Roberts was pretty popular, too, and the music participation led by Lisa Chorny of Atma Spheres made a good finale.

Thanks to Rachael Ernvall, Sarah McCarthy, Kim Taylor, Stacy Sewick and Barb Miller for organizing everything, to Ryan Mullally for use of his grill and for the golf-cart rides, and to Scott Sewick for grilling the dogs. And thanks to everyone who brought food!

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Lost and found. A large blue salad bowl and a wicker bowl, left at the neighborhood block party. Contact Barb Miller at 780-9219 or secretary@nhera.org.

Vandalism. If you know who threw rocks at our new basketball backboard and broke it, or if you know who dropped a log down the beach stairs for firewood and damaged several steps and a landing, necessitating emergency repairs, please contact a board member. The perpetrators should compensate the association for the costs of responding to these acts of vandalism. Thanks to Vice President Joe McNarland for the emergency repairs to the deck, and to my brother-in-law for helping me replace the backboard.

Please report problems. If you see a problem in the park, on the beach or in any of the common areas that needs attention, please contact a board member so we can take appropriate action. In most cases we can solve problems quickly if we know about them, but please don't assume that we know about them.

Questions or Comments? Contact President Stan Miller at 780-9219 or president@nhera.org,
or see your neighborhood directory or www.nhera.org to reach other officers or your block chair.