Norton Hills Estates Recreation Association

Spring 2008 Newsletter

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

Plum Trees in Neighborhood Nearing End of Life

Many of the flowering plum trees that line streets in the northern section of the neighborhood "are coming to the end of their life cycle", according to Ryan Bose of Bartlett Tree Experts.

"They are a short-lived species, and I believe many of them face the ravages of old age in the form of a weakened immune system," Mr. Bose wrote in a letter to the association. "Many of the plums that I inspected will require yearly care to nurse them along and keep them free of scale insects and wood borers. The alternative will be to consider removal."

Mr. Bose inspected many of the trees along upper Norcrest, Dunecrest and Pleasant Hill drives and Bellaire Court after a resident noted a white scaly substance coating the trunks of several trees.

"I think treatment is still a good option for many plums in the neighborhood, but if you have ever been unhappy with your plum tree for any reason, now would be the time to pull the plug," Mr. Bose wrote.

Bartlett Tree Experts is offering volume discounts on treatment or removal of these trees. The following prices are based on a minimum of 20 trees for any option:

Removal: $64 per tree.

Removal with stump grinding: $81 per tree.

Treatment for scale: $63 per tree for three treatments.

The neighborhood association will not pay for these services, but if you'd like to have your plum trees treated or removed, please contact me by phone or e-mail; I'll compile the responses, and if we get enough I'll arrange for the work. Please be sure to tell me your address, the option you want, and how many trees you want treated or removed.

Mr. Bose also offered to recommend a landscaper who could suggest more diverse species to replant. Let me know if you're interested in that, too.

2008 Budget Includes Insurance Increases

Your neighborhood association board voted unanimously to increase our insurance coverage significantly, especially the property insurance on our newly rebuilt deck and beach stairs.

That property insurance has been limited to $4,000. That's obviously not enough given the $13,742 it cost to rebuild the structure last fall, so we have increased the coverage to $14,000.

The board also voted to increase liability insurance from $500,000 to $1.5 million, and to take out an additional $20,000 of property insurance on our playground equipment. The increases will add $750 to $850 to our annual insurance bill.

The board also voted to spend association funds to add a gate and landing opening onto the dune at the bottom of the uppermost flight of steps. This will once again allow our neighbors to the south to use our stairs, and would provide access to the stairs from a path through the woods if one is built. The old stairs had a gate in this spot, but that gate did not meet code. Redesigning the gate and landing would have meant additional delays in replacing the aging structure, so we proceeded without the gate. We need to talk with the Hathaway Court association, but expect to add the gate this spring.

The legal work approved at our annual meeting in September to investigate our legal rights to use the driveway continues.

An informal estimate for wireless security cameras to monitor the deck and park reached $12,000. The board does not expect to proceed with this without a significantly less expensive option.

We did not budget any funds for traffic calming, such as a speed hump on Dunes Parkway, but will take that up again depending on survey responses (see article at right).

Other budgeted items include $1,500 for association activities, including a block party and annual dinner; $1,000 for maintenance, mostly for keeping the grass cut in the park and on the common walkways; a total of $1,150 for office supplies, printing, postage and rental of our post office box; $550 in taxes; $350 for repairs and our Web site, most of which we do not expect to spend; and $50 for advertising for our garage sales.

We expect income of $10,575 from association dues, $400 in interest, and $150 in directory advertising sales.

The budget includes total spending of $8,520 on anticipated income of $11,125, for an expected net income of $2,605. Unspent funds are saved for future projects.

Make Your Voice Heard

What matters most to you in your neighborhood? Should we build a speed hump on Dunes Parkway? Should we build a path through the woods to the beach stairs? Should we have two garage sales again next year?

You'll find a survey included with this newsletter asking your opinions on those and other topics of interest to Norton Hills Estates residents. Tell us what you think!

Of course you can always contact your block chair or any officer with a concern or suggestion. But the survey will take only a few minutes to complete, and your NHERA Board will use your response to help determine how to spend your dues money. Responses to the last survey in 2005 helped us focus on traffic safety, and we succeeded in getting new speed limit and hidden intersection signs south of the neighborhood and in persuading the city to adopt a policy on traffic calming.

Please take a moment now to fill out your survey and return it in the enclosed envelope.

Finances: Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2007

Income	
Association Dues	10,535.00
Lot Sales Fees	250.00
Directory Ad Sales	95.00
Interest Income	476.20
Total Income	**$11,356.20**
Expenses	
Activities	1,981.99
Depreciation	1,144.00
Filing Fees	20.00
Insurance	657.00
Licenses/Permits	50.00
Maintenance	1,047.68
Post Office Box	40.00
Postage & Delivery	140.01
Printing & Reprod.	404.92
Taxes	525.80
Attorneys Fees	83.00
Total Expenses	**$ 6,094.40**
Net income	**$ 5,261.80**
Current Assets	**$ 7,432.57**
Fixed Assets	**$24,417.72**
TOTAL ASSETS	**$31,850.29**

Your 2008 Board

President: Stan Miller – 780-3219, pres@nhera.org
Vice President: Joe McNarland – 780-4394, veep@nhera.org
Secretary: Barb Miller – 780-9219, secy@nhera.org
Treasurer: Patrick Andress – 740-1928, treas@nhera.org

Block Chairs

Bellaire: Brent McCarthy – 780-0476, Bellaire@nhera.org.
Blissfield: Jenny Opfermann– 780-4786, Blissfield@nhera.org.
Bloomfield: Rachael Ernvall – 780-0207, Bloomfield@nhera.org.
Dunecrest: Barb Miesch – 780-4099, Dunecrest@nhera.org.
Dunes: Sue Schuiteman– 780-5427, Dunes@nhera.org.
Lower Norcrest: Herm Zuidema, 780-2012.
Upper Norcrest: Vacant.
North Hilltop: Fern Anderegg – 780-5101, NorthHilltop@nhera.org.
Pleasant Hill: Ken Taylor – 780-9482, PleasantHill@nhera.org.
South Hilltop: Deb Minner – 780-1182, SouthHilltop@nhera.org.

Need Volunteers for Beach Cleanup, Block Party

Join us for a spring beach cleanup with our neighbors on Hathaway Court! We're working on picking a date; watch for a flyer with more details, and contact me if you'll help.

We also need volunteers to help set up, and especially to help clean up, for the fourth annual block party; the volunteer committee members have been stuck with most of the cleanup work in past years. The date of this year's party is not yet set.

To volunteer, or to make suggestions for this year's party, contact committee chair Rachael Ernvall at Bloomfield@nhera.org or 780-0207; Barb Miller at secy@nhera.org or 780-9219; or Jenny Opfermann at Blissfield@nhera.org or 780-4786.

Upper Norcrest Needs New Block Chair

After seven years on your neighborhood association board, Patty Robinson has resigned as block chair for upper Norcrest Drive. I want to thank Patty for her consistent help over the years; she will be missed.

If you live on upper Norcrest Drive — the portion east of Dunes Parkway — and are willing to take Patty's place, please contact me at pres@nhera.org or 780-9219.

The duties of a block chair are to represent the interests of your block at board meetings, including the annual meeting in September, and to welcome new residents who move onto your block.

Save Yourself Money!

Do you want to save yourself $37.50 or even $75? It's simple: Pay your neighborhood association dues on time.

Dues notices have been mailed to all residents, and your payment of $75 was due March 2. Anyone who hasn't paid by April 30 will owe a 50 percent late fee for a total of $112.50. And anyone who still hasn't paid by May 30 will owe a 100 percent late fee for a total of $150.

I'm sure you have better things to do with that extra $75 than give it to the neighborhood association. Following up on late payers also costs your neighborhood association money, and costs your volunteer board members time, effort and frustration. So please, pay your dues promptly. And to the 80+ people who have paid already, THANK YOU!

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Garage sale is May 17. The first of two neighborhood garage sales is set for Saturday, May 17, starting at 8 a.m. and running until you decide to close your garage door. Goodwill will pick up unwanted items at your curbside on Monday, May 19. The second sale will be Saturday, Aug. 2, followed by a curbside pickup by the St. Vincent De Paul Society. Remember, the association advertises this sale and posts signs about it, and having lots of homes participating on the same day increases customers for everybody — so if you're planning a sale this year, take advantage of the neighborhood sale dates!

Advertise in the directory. Do you run your own business? Do your kids babysit or do yard work for hire? Rates are cheap, starting at just $5 for a business-card-sized ad, and proceeds defray the cost of printing the directory.

New to the neighborhood? Did you get a welcome packet? If not, please contact your block chair or Secretary Barb Miller at secy@nhera.org or 780-9219.