Norton Hills Estates Recreation Association

May 2008 Newsletter

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

Board Appoints Tom Sanocki as New Treasurer

Also Names New Block Chair for Upper Norcrest

Tom Sanocki volunteered to become our neighborhood association treasurer, and the Board of Directors unanimously approved his nomination.

Tom replaces Patrick Andress, who resigned abruptly after six months in office. Tom has already proven a great addition to the Board, working quickly to reestablish a bank account for the association and to eliminate a small backlog of bills that went unpaid while we had no treasurer, and I hope he's willing to continue serving for years to come.

Many residents know Tom as a Realtor with Greenridge Realty, and as the guy who distributes American flags for holiday display on our terraces. You may not know (I didn't until he volunteered for treasurer) that he has an extensive background in accounting.

He has an Associate's Degree in accounting and a Bachelor's in business administration, worked in accounting at Brunswick Bowling and Billiards Corp. for 12 years, and before that was cost accountant and payroll accountant for Emanco Inc. in Spring Lake.

Tom and his wife, Mary Amy, and their four children live at 2301 South Hilltop. You can reach him at treas@nhera.org or 780-5406.

The Board thanks Patrick for his service.

Because Tom just took office in early May, no financial statement is included in this newsletter. The financial statement will return in the next newsletter.

New Block Chair. Deanna Vander Ploeg volunteered to become the new block chair for upper Norcrest, and her nomination also was unanimously approved.

Deanna replaces Patty Robinson, who served the block and the neighborhood well for seven years. I'm grateful to Patty for her work, and to Deanna for stepping up to fill the position.

Deanna and her husband, Charlie, and their four children live at 2241 Norcrest. You can reach her at UpperNorcrest@nhera.org or 780-2072.

Board Amends Bylaws to Provide for Treasurer Vacancy

The resignation of our former treasurer in early April exposed a flaw in our neighborhood association bylaws: With a vacancy at treasurer, no one was authorized to write checks for the association.

The Board of Directors acted quickly to repair that flaw, authorizing the vice-president to act as treasurer when needed. The Board also amended the duties of the treasurer to make filing the association's tax return an explicit duty.

The changes took effect immediately upon their approval on May 14.

We do not plan to republish the bylaws booklet for these changes. The bylaws on our Web site have been updated. Also, a separate page showing all three bylaws changes made since the last complete printing is included with this newsletter; I encourage you to file it with your bylaws booklet.

If you don't have a bylaws booklet and would like one, please contact your block chair or Secretary Barb Miller at secy@nhera.org or 780-9219.

Informal Use of Driveway to Beach Continues

Neighborhood residents should continue to walk on the driveway to reach the deck and beach even though lawyers found no evidence of an official agreement.

Brad Fisher with Scholten Fant attorneys in Grand Haven found that the neighborhood association did grant an easement allowing a gas line to cross our property to supply the lakefront house north of the driveway.

Long neighborhood tradition says that in exchange for that easement, the then-owners of that house granted us and Hathaway Court residents the right to use the driveway, subject to certain restrictions. However, no evidence of that agreement was found.

Mr. Fisher offered the association three options: Do nothing; attempt to formalize the agreement now; or as a last bad option, sue. He recommended trying to formalize the agreement now, saying, "This likely represents the best long-term solution", despite some risk that the current owners of that house could reject any deal.

I tried to persuade the Board of Directors to accept that option, but the Board voted 8-1 to do nothing and hope no trouble arises under the informal agreement. Prevailing sentiment on the Board held that if we are prevented from using the driveway in the future, we could build a path through the woods.

Mr. Fisher also found that the agreement Hathaway Court has is probably not valid because it was executed after the property had changed owners.

Insurance Increase Less than Expected

The increases in our insurance policy cost several hundred dollars less than expected.

Relying on information provided by former treasurer Patrick Andress, I reported in the February newsletter that increasing the property insurance on the deck and stairs, increasing our liability insurance, and ensuring that the playground equipment is covered would add $750 to $800 to our annual insurance bill.

The actual increase will be $376.

Hathaway Court Recreation Association, which jointly owns the deck and stairs, has agreed to pay their proportional share of the cost of replacement insurance. That line of the policy costs us $162.50, so by our cost-sharing formula based on the number of houses in each association, they'll contribute $14.63.

Because our agent does not offer liability insurance in the $1.5 million amount approved by the board, that coverage was increased from $500,000 per incident with one incident covered per year to $1 million per incident with two incidents covered per year. Coverage for a storage building that was removed years ago was transferred to the playground equipment, and coverage on the signs at the lower end of Norcrest was increased.

Your 2007-08 Neighborhood Board of Directors

President
Stan Miller – 780-9219, pres@nhera.org

Vice President
Joe McNarland – 780-4394, veep@nhera.org

Secretary
Barb Miller – 780-9219, secy@nhera.org

Treasurer
Tom Sanocki – 780-5406, 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:** Deanna Vander Ploeg, 780-2072, UpperNorcrest @nhera.org. **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.

Evening Block Party with Movie Night Set For July 12

We'll change things up a bit for the fourth annual neighborhood block party this year, moving the party to the evening and adding movie night.

The party is scheduled Saturday, July 12, on Bloomfield Court.

The children's bike parade returns for a fourth straight year, starting at 5:30 p.m. It'll be led this year by an antique car.

Starting at 6 p.m., we'll have games and face painting, and this year we're adding a scavenger hunt. A potluck dinner will be served, maybe with pizza, and we'll show some family-friendly movies a little later in the evening. We're also soliciting teenagers to take younger children home and babysit as the evening wears on so that adults can stay and socialize.

If you're willing to do that, or to help with the party in any other way, please contact party chair Rachael Ernvall at Bloomfield@nhera.org or 780-0207.

Watch for more details on the party in a flyer as the date gets closer.

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Garage Sale. Twenty-five homes participated in the spring garage sale this year, the most in at least six years. Browsers and buyers were plentiful this year, too. Don't forget the late-summer garage sale on Saturday, Aug. 2.

Beach Cleanup. A dozen intrepid volunteers from Norton Hills Estates and Hathaway Court braved stiff winds May 18 to clean the beach from the water filtration plant to a few houses south of our stairs. We hauled out several bags of trash, three tires, a large iron pipe, a broken section of old snow fence, and a giant broken slab of fiberglass boat cover.

Sidewalk repairs. Emergency repairs to a water main over the winter damaged the sidewalk and nice new curb cuts installed last fall when the lift station at Dunes and Pleasant Hill was upgraded. Thanks to the city for getting out promptly after the weather turned to repair that damage.

Beach stairs repairs. The lowest flight of steps on the beach stairs, which became partially detached from the landing over the winter, have been repaired, and the repair is more secure than the original construction. The stairs are once again solid from top to bottom; thank you for your patience early this spring while repairs were arranged.

Please keep sidewalks clear. In several places around the neighborhood, low tree branches force neighbors to duck or detour, and overgrown bushes block sidewalks in several other places. Please trim your trees and bushes to keep your sidewalk clear. Association rules require this, and those rules will be enforced when complaints are received.

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

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