Norton Hills Estates Recreation Association

August 2008 Newsletter

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

Deck Maintenance Highest Priority in Survey

Traffic Safety Still a Concern, but Little Support for Doing Anything

Maintenance of the neighborhood's deck and beach stairs topped the list again in the 2008 survey of what's important to residents.

Residents were asked to rate each of 10 items in importance on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being most important. The median response on deck and stairs maintenance was 10, unchanged from the previous survey in 2005.

Concern over traffic safety, while down from a median response of 10 in 2005, remains high with a median response of 8 this year. However, when asked specifically whether they would support one or more speed humps on Dunes Parkway to address this concern, a majority of respondents said no.

Opposition to a single speed hump if the neighborhood had to pay the full cost, estimated at $3,000, was 20-7. Installing a single speed hump if the city would pay half the cost was opposed by an only slightly smaller majority, 18-9. Installing a single speed hump if it meant losing the stop signs at Pleasant Hill drew more opposition, 21-6. No one supported installing five speed humps no matter who pays for them.

I'm stumped, folks. I worked hard to get the city to allow us to install a speed hump because you told me you wanted one to slow traffic on Dunes Parkway. Now that it's possible, you don't want it. I won't spend any more time on this issue unless someone brings me another idea.

Maintenance of the park and common walkways and arranging charity pickups after the neighborhood garage sales also drew median responses of 8. Support for the charity pickups was up from 6 in 2005; park and walkway maintenance was unchanged.

Completion of sidewalks and playground updates were next with responses of 7, unchanged from 2005. The block party, garage sales, and repaving the tennis court each drew a median response of 5. No item on the survey got a median response of less than 5.

Residents opposed building a path through the woods to the deck by 14-9, although several residents noted that they would support the idea if our informal use of the driveway were halted.

We received 27 responses to this year's survey, representing about 18 percent of neighborhood homes.

Board Obtains Liens for Unpaid Dues, Lack of Maintenance

I'm sad to report that the Board of Directors has been forced to seek liens against three homes in the neighborhood.

Dues have gone unpaid for 3801 Dunes Parkway and 2312 North Hilltop Drive, despite four mailed dues notices and a personal visit from our treasurer, Tom Sanocki. With late fees, those homeowners owe the association $150 each. At its quarterly meeting July 30, the Board of Directors voted 10-0 with four members absent to obtain liens against those properties for $150 each plus attorney's fees.

The Board also has been working to resolve a maintenance complaint filed by a homeowner this spring about the terrace in front of 2360 Bloomfield Court, which is not maintained. Unfortunately, the owners have not taken action following two conversations and a formal letter requesting they correct the problem. At the July 30 meeting, the Board voted 10-0 to obtain a lien against that property for $690, which was the low bid among three estimates for sodding or seeding the terrace, plus attorney's fees.

The Board understands that many people are struggling in this difficult economy. We also understand the need to protect the neighborhood by ensuring timely dues collections and guarding against declining property values due to poor maintenance. We will not hesitate to pursue the corporation's rights and protect those of other neighborhood residents when people make no effort to pay their dues or respond to maintenance complaints.

Annual Meeting Sept. 24

Please come to the annual meeting on Wednesday, Sept. 24, at House of Chan.

We've invited Mayor Jerry Wiersma and City Manager Mark Myers to attend this year, and we hope they'll come to respond to any questions or concerns you may have for the city.

Dinner and one drink is free to all residents in good standing; a cash bar will be available.

All association offices are up for election. Secretary Barb Miller has decided not to seek a seventh year in office, so we will need a volunteer to fill her shoes. We'll also will establish dues for 2009.

Please RSVP to Secretary Barb Miller by Sept. 19. You can reach Barb at 780-9219 or secy@nhera.org.

Finances Through July 30

Income	
Dues	$10,525.00
Directory Ad Sales	130.00
Interest	71.74
Total Income	**$10,726.74**
Expenses	
Block Party	$ 876.22
Bank Service Charges	22.10
Depreciation	570.00
Insurance	188.00
Licenses and Permits	20.00
Lawn care	390.00
Office Supplies	4.01
Postage	122.00
Printing and Reproduction	564.90
Legal fees	1,636.02
Taxes	158.70
Total Expenses	**$ 4,551.95**
Net Income	**$ 6,174.79**
Cash Balance	**$14,163.13**

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2007-08 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

Tips for Gypsy Moth Control

Monitoring and pesticide-fee techniques can help control gypsy moths, according to the Agricultural Extension Service at Michigan State University.

A neighborhood resident asked whether the association could take any steps to control an outbreak of the pesky moths near her home. The Board decided not to pursue any steps, but to offer some tips homeowners can use to help themselves.

The extension service recommends watering and fertilizing trees and shrubs properly because healthy, vigorous plants are less likely to attract the moths. Also, keep your yard as clean as possible, and be particularly watchful when bringing firewood from infested areas.

Watch for egg masses, which have eggs intertwined with tan hair from the female moth. The eggs generally hatch in May, but the egg masses can be scraped off, sealed in a container like a coffee can and discarded, or can be buried to prevent the eggs from hatching.

Barrier bands around trees can help prevent the caterpillars from moving up and down trees, and nontoxic insecticidal soaps kill the caterpillars. For details, visit http://tinyurl.com/66ebto.

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Thank You to the City Council and especially to Councilman Lowell Kinney, who suggested that the council waive the $50 permit fee for our annual block party. The council had just granted the Coast Guard a fee waiver for an event in the city, and when it took up our request, Mr. Kinney praised the neighborhood for hosting a community-building event and said if the council could waive the fee for the Coast Guard it could certainly do so for its own residents. The council agreed, saving us $50. The Board thanks the council for this consideration, and is pleased to have a friend in Mr. Kinney.

Garage Sale. Only 10 homes participated in the August garage sale, and because of that low turnout, the Board will have to consider whether to continue having two annual sales. If you'd like to have a garage sale next August but think we should avoid the last weekend of the Coast Guard Festival, please let your block chair or me know.

Lost and Found: A potholder, left at the block party. Contact Secretary Barb Miller at 780-9219 or secy@nhera.org.

Stairs Access for Our Neighbor. A gate has been installed at the south end of the topmost landing on our beach stairs, opening onto a small landing on the dune and allowing our neighbors to the south, Mark & Kristi Clark, and their guests to use our stairs to reach the beach. Norton Hills Estates, the Hathaway Court Recreation Association, and the Clarks have signed an agreement granting the Clarks and their guests use of the stairs and granting neighborhood residents normal use of the beach in front of the Clarks' home. You can read the agreement at www.nhera.org/docs.

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.