Norton Hills Estates Recreation Association

Summer 2009 Newsletter

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

Sidewalk Improvements Coming with Dunes Repaving

Responding to a request from your neighborhood board, the City of Norton Shores agreed to install several sidewalk connectors and ramps along Dunes Parkway.

The work will be done in conjunction with the resurfacing of Dunes Parkway this summer, said City Administrator Mark Meyers. According to a letter from Mr. Meyers, the city will install:

- Detectable warning devices on the existing ramps on the southwest corner of Norcrest Drive and Dunes, a ramp on the northwest corner, and a connector and ramp from the sidewalk on the east side of Dunes.
- Ramps on the southeast and northeast corners of Bloomfield Court and Dunes, and a ramp and connector to the sidewalk on the west side Dunes.
- A ramp on the northeast corner of Pleasant Hill Drive and Dunes, and a ramp and connector to the sidewalk on the west side of Dunes. There's already a ramp on the southeast corner.
- Detectable warning devices on the existing ramp on the northeast corner, and a ramp and connector to the sidewalk on the west side of Dunes.

A map showing the planned work is available on our Web site at www.nhera.org/docs/DunesSidewalks.html

"Detectable warning devices" are typically rows of small bumps designed to warn people with disabilities that they are approaching a street. The devices will bring the ramps into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The planned work fulfills all of the board's high-priority requests along Dunes Parkway. We also had asked for ramps at North Hilltop and South Hilltop to connect to future sidewalks, and we hope the city will build those ramps when the sidewalks are built. And we asked for ramps and connectors in a few other places around the neighborhood, work we hope will be done when those streets are resurfaced in the future.

I'm grateful to Mr. Meyers and to Public Works Director Jerry Bartoszek for their work in reviewing our requests, and I'm very pleased to see so many of them approved so promptly.

Board Exploring Possibility of Expanding the Association

Neighbors from just outside the boundaries of Norton Hills Estates have asked to join the association.

Ed and Nancy Spier live at 3709 Norton Hills Road, the house closest to the road on the north side of the driveway we use to get to the beach. They want to get legal access to the beach and to be part of neighborhood events and gatherings.

The Board supports the idea of allowing the Spiers to join the association, and has reason to believe that a few other near neighbors might join us as well if they could. Caution is warranted, however, to ensure that the association can legally expand to include only a few nearby houses; we don't want to inadvertently open a door that would allow anyone to join no matter where they live.

The Board therefore voted to spend up to $260 to obtain legal advice to determine whether and how we can expand. Drafting of any specific requirements was tabled until we obtain that advice, but the Board generally would expect to charge any resident from outside the neighborhood's boundaries a $200 entry fee – the same fee payable to the association upon the original sale of lots in the subdivision from the developer to the first homeowners. We also generally would expect to charge those homeowners the same annual dues as neighborhood residents; those dues are $60 this year. Thus, we capped our legal expenses at the amount we would expect to take in from our first expansion. We budgeted nearly $700 for legal work this year, expecting that we might need to pursue unpaid dues again; everyone paid on time this year, freeing up that money for other work. We currently expect to carry over the rest of that budget line to 2010.

We're working with Scholten Fant attorneys of Grand Haven, the same firm that's done good work for us in recent years on issues related to beach access.

New Block Chair Needed for North Hilltop Drive

After nearly 10 years serving your neighborhood on the board, Fern Anderegg has resigned as block chair for North Hilltop Drive. I'll miss her good ideas and level-headed approach to issues that came before us.

If you live on North Hilltop and are willing to serve as block chair, please contact a board member. Duties of the job are simple: Block chairs represent the interests of their block at board and annual meetings; greet new residents of their block with a welcome packet provided by the board; and ensure that new residents' contact information is provided promptly to the secretary.

Treasurer Seeks Bylaws Change to Shorten Dues Period

Treasurer Tom Sanocki has proposed a bylaws change to shorten the deadlines for paying annual dues and any special assessments.

Although every resident paid 2009's dues before late fees kicked in, Tom had to call and knock on doors in late April to collect from several homeowners. He believes the long deadline contributes to residents putting off or forgetting about the bill.

"My intention is not to collect more money for the association," Tom said. "It is to bring in the payments in a more timely fashion."

Currently, dues and annual assessments are due 30 days after the invoices are sent, but late fees don't begin until 60 days after the due date. For example, dues invoices are mailed by Jan. 31 and due by March 1, but late fees don't begin until May 1. With the current $60 annual dues, residents who haven't paid by May 1 owe $90, those who haven't paid by June 1 owe $120, and those who haven't paid by July 1 – 150 days after the original due date – are delinquent.

Tom proposes adding late fees of one-third of the dues or assessment at 30 days, two-thirds at 60 days, and 100 percent at 90 days, and declaring delinquency at 120 days. With the current annual dues of $60, residents who haven't paid by March 1 would owe $80; by April 1, $100; by May 1, $120; and by June 1 would be delinquent.

The Board will take up the proposal at our next meeting. If you have comments about the proposal, please contact me or any other Board member.

City to Remove 4 Trees in North End of Neighborhood

The City of Norton Shores will remove four dead plum trees in the north end of the neighborhood.

Two of the trees are along Pleasant Hill Drive near the corner of Dunes Parkway, and two are along upper Norcrest Drive, also near the corner of Dunes Parkway.

The trees were killed by scale, said Terry Sladick, streets and drain superintendent for the city, citing a report from a certified arborist.

The arborist's report notes that several other flowering plums, particularly along Pleasant Hill, also are infected by scale, but may be saved with treatment.

The city will pay for removal of the trees, Mr. Sladick said. He expects the work to be completed by early August.

2nd Quarter 2009 Finances

Income	
Dues	$ 8,535.00
Interest	81.69
Total Income	**$ 8,616.69**
Expenses	
Depreciation	$ 570.00
Garage Sale Signs	39.54
Legal fees	-153.00
Maintenance	324.53
Post Office Box rental	42.00
Postage and Delivery	126.00
Printing and Reproduction	17.13
Taxes	174.91
Total Expenses	**$ 1,141.11**
Net Income	**$ 7,475.58**
Cash Balance	**$17,308.37**

No Block Party This Year; Garage Sale Aug. 8

A lack of volunteers and time means there will be no block party this year, but this doesn't have to be the end of this revived tradition. Several residents and Board members said last year that the party should be held every other year anyway, and I hope that means we'll have one again in 2010. If you're interested in helping to plan a block party for next summer, please contact me or any other Board member.

The second neighborhood garage sale of the year will be held **Saturday, Aug. 8**. This is a change from the date published in the directory, and I apologize for any confusion or inconvenience. Moving the sale to Aug. 8 instead of Aug. 1 avoids the Coast Guard Festival, which may have held down participation and turnout last year.

Please contact Secretary Jennifer Christman at 747-7222 or secy@nhera.org if you plan to participate in the Aug. 8 sale to be sure that signs point to your street.

100 Percent On-Time Payment!!

Every single homeowner paid the annual dues for 2009 before late fees kicked in on April 30. That could be a first; it's definitely the first time in the last six years. Thank you to each and every one of you! Paying on time saves money for you and for the association, and saves your volunteer board members time and trouble. And a big thanks to Treasurer Tom Sanocki, who made phone calls and house calls to remind residents about the deadline.