



BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES  
The Villas at the River  
Homeowners Association

**February 24, 2021**

Jackie Seib called the meeting to order at 9:31 AM. Due to COVID concerns and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) guidelines for indoor gatherings, this meeting was held virtually over Zoom. The minutes from the December 9, 2020, meeting were approved as posted. Quorum determined. In attendance were Bob Barrett, Sandi Coons, Charlie Kozup, Sue Langbehn, Jackie Seib, Mark Coons, volunteer interim Business Manager, and Ann Palenske, Assistant Treasurer.

Guests: Patti & Dale Quattrin, Betty Snider, Bill Langbehn, Rick Seib, Kent Werger, Tom & Judy Carson, Earl Misch, Gretchen Rock, Gina Kruck, Joan & Jim Smith, Ed Johnson, Joen Brambilla, Tom Johns, and Don Hettig. Also attending were Paul Heaps and Jill Golden of Real Property Management.

**President's report:**

- **Introduction of Real Property Management (RPM)** - Jackie Seib introduced Paul Heaps and Jill Golden of Real Property Management (RPM). Jill and Paul provided an overview of what they do and a little bit about themselves. RPM is owned and operated locally by Paul and Becky Heaps, and Jill is our new property manager. RPM's start date is March 1, 2021. In the upcoming weeks, Jill will be onsite approximately two (2) half-days a week to meet residents and become familiar with our property. After their introduction, Paul and Jill left the meeting.
- **Property Management Selection Process** - Jackie Seib provided an overview of the property management selection process and our decision to hire RPM. The selection team consisted of Jackie Seib, Bob Barrett, Charlie Kozup, Sandi Coons, Sue Langbehn, Ann Palenske, Mark Coons, and Tom Johns. We initially reached out to seven (7) individuals or businesses and then narrowed it down to four (4) for additional follow-up (McGuire's Professional Construction, Inc., Superior Property Management, Bradley Property Management, and Real Property Management). After that, we narrowed it down to two (2) companies that we felt best suited the Villas needs (McGuire's and Real Property Management). After conducting reference checks and much discussion, it was unanimously decided in favor of RPM. RPM's monthly fee is \$19 per unit which is covered in the 2021 budget with no increase in dues. RPM distinguishes itself by being part of a national franchise with access to best-in-class systems and processes along with a local team possessing the right knowledge and experience to fit our needs. We are excited to welcome RPM and hope you will be too. Jackie Seib thanked Tom Johns who served as advisor to the Board. Tom expressed that the Board did a very thorough job in selecting RPM. Jackie also

thanked Mark Coons for volunteering as interim manager while we searched for a new property management company.

- **Winter icing issues** - As you may recall, the Attic Insulation Project of 2019 and 2020 was expected to reduce ice dams and icicles. Homeowners did experience some benefits from the attic insulation project: needed repairs were made and additional insulation blown-in resulting in some units having lower utility bills and some units with warmer and more uniform heating. But unfortunately, this project did not live up to its hoped-for results to reduce ice dams and icicles as evidenced by this winter's harsh conditions. Nobody expected icing on and around our buildings to continue to be this extreme. This last month highlighted the need to do more. So, where do we go from here?

1. We are addressing the current problem. Second Nature is contracted to provide snow plowing, shoveling, and salting, and we now have three (3) additional people raking roofs, knocking down icicles, and supplementing the salting of sidewalks and garage aprons. Under the Member-At-Large's report will be more detail on our current actions. Jackie thanked Sue Langbehn for being a point person and mobilizing resources, and both Sue & Bill Langbehn for all their hard work helping neighbors address their issues.
2. We reached out to two (2) other Epcon communities, one in Kalamazoo and the other in Mishawaka, to see if they are experiencing similar icing issues. The buildings in both of these communities are similar in design and construction to ours; and, yes, they are seeing the same challenges to keep up with icicles and icing on roofs and gutters. Like us, they have people knocking down icicles and raking roofs. One also puts salt "pucks" on the worst roof areas to try to help melt the ice. One allows heat tape along the gutters (not roof), but only with Board approval, at home owner expense, and it must be professionally installed. And, as we are doing, both communities are talking to experts and seeking suggestions of different things they could do to more permanently fix the problem. In summary, the icing issues are not unique to the Villas; but rather, shared by other Epcon communities located in northern climates. We are all seeking solutions.
3. In the coming months, the Board and RPM will continue seeking expert advice and searching for solutions, but there may not be a 100% fix. More to come on our findings in future updates.

### **Vice-President's report:**

- No new business to report.

### **Treasurer's report:**

- The Financial Reports for January were published to the website on 02/12/21. A big thank you to Ann Palenske for reworking the financial reports into a new business-like format.
- Snow removal expenses were under budget for January primarily because the snowplowing bills for December and January were received too late to pay until February. The invoice from Second Nature Gardens for snow plowing, road salt, and shoveling and salting the sidewalks for 1/31/21 through 2/15/21 was \$15,735.75. Charlie Kozup is now projecting that we will be over budget \$5,500 at the end of the month in this account. We also had two (2) unplanned expenses for a new worker's compensation insurance policy (\$968) and to remediate a sewer issue at building #10 (\$786). Water bills are also running \$400/mo more than what was forecast and the Trash bills are running \$100/mo over the forecast.

- The By-Laws Amendment Committee has decided to wait until June for their next meeting when they hope to be able to meet face-to-face to finalize the wording of the proposed change.
- Ann Palenske is contacting businesses to look at options for conducting this year's annual external financial review.

### **Secretary's report:**

- The Board affirms and communicates the following motions:
  - On January 20, 2021, Sue Langbehn moved and it was seconded to hire Wightman Engineering to bid and oversee the repaving of East Villa Lane with the help of Ron Barrick and Mark Coons for a cost of \$2,500 for bidding and an estimated fee of \$1,800 to \$2,800 for construction administration services. The motion passed unanimously.
  - On January 25, 2021, Sandi Coons moved and it was seconded to hire Real Property Management (RPM) beginning March 1, 2021, to provide property management services to The Villas At The River Homeowners Association. The motion passed unanimously.
  - On February 6, 2021, Bob Barrett moved and it was seconded to approve payment of the invoice from City Plumbing in the amount of \$786 for diagnosing and opening up a clogged sewer pipe at 2851 and 2855 Villa Lane. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Member At Large report:**

- **Fence and Patio Proposal** - At the 12/09/20 board meeting, Sue Langbehn reviewed a proposal for the maintenance, repair and replacement of patios and fences, and it was sent to co-owners on 12/15/20 to build awareness and to give opportunity for co-owner feedback prior to the Board making a decision. An updated version was emailed to co-owners on 2/21/21 prior to today's meeting. This proposal states the intention of the current Board to follow the Master Deed and By-Laws as written despite past precedent where maintenance, repair or replacement have occurred. The current Board seeks a compromise with residents to finish the painting and repair of fences which was started in 2019 and not finished. Fences will be brought up to one standard. Thereafter, as stated in the Master Deed and By-Laws, the homeowner is responsible. The compromise with patios is to seal broken joints to prevent further shifting of slabs due to the freeze thaw cycle. When that project is complete, the homeowner will be responsible for painting, resurfacing, and/or replacement of patios as defined by the Master Deed drawings. At today's meeting, the Board approved the final version which will be sent to co-owners with these Minutes.
- **East Villa Lane Repaving Project** - As mentioned previously under the Secretary's report, the Board passed a motion to hire Wightman Engineering to bid and oversee the East Villa Lane repaving project. Wightman will be bidding out this project to five (5) companies: Michigan Paving and Materials (formerly Klett), Reith Riley, Kalin Construction, Walsh and Kelly, and Arnt Asphalt. The Wightman engineering estimate is approximately \$70,000. We planned for \$86,300; but because we did soil boring tests last year, we now know we have a good base that does not need augmentation.
- **Winter Icing Issues** - During early February, 2021, temperatures started to drop and snow began to fall. Roofs became loaded with snow and ice began to form near gutters. Icicles started to form, sidewalks and garage aprons got icy, and the board started to receive emails from residents. We needed more services to keep up with the ice. In addition to the services from Second Nature, three (3) handymen were brought in to rake roofs, knock down icicles, and to provide additional salting of sidewalks and garage aprons. Sue and Bill Langbehn also did a variety of tasks like helping people get out of their front

doors and setting up salt stations. As of Tuesday, February 23, 2021, the big thaw started and the roof raking started to pay off. Gutters and downspouts started to flow again. We are now waiting to hear if anyone notices interior drywall damage from ice backing up under their shingles. So far so good. Sue Langbehn made the following observations from this challenging 3-week period:

1. The attic insulation project of 2019 and 2020 did not accomplish the hoped-for goal of reducing roof ice damming nor gutter icing.
2. The levels of blown-in insulation in attics during the attic insulation project were often inadequate and not as much as promised.
3. Our problem is still too much heated air reaching roof sheathing and shingles.
4. Heat tape inside the gutter, running on top of the gutter, and running up and down the downspout does work to reduce frozen gutters, icicles, and water turning to ice on pavement.
5. Detaching downspouts from the underground drains along with heat tape allows water to run out onto pavement rather than backing up in gutters and on roofs.
6. Roof raking helps to reduce icicle formation.
7. We need a committee to look for cost effective solutions to our icing problems.
8. We need to educate our new property manager about all aspects of our Villas roofs.

### **Old Business**

- On 2/5/21, the Board made the decision to purchase a worker's compensation policy for the HOA. This policy protects the HOA against the possibility of future worker's compensation liability claims for injuries sustained by any uninsured individual, whether working directly for our HOA or as an employee, agent or sub-contractor of one of our vendors. The administrative cost to the HOA for having this policy is approximately \$200 annually. Any additional cost will be based on whether the HOA has the vendor or contractor's worker's compensation certificate on file. These insurance certificates are subject to an audit by the insurance provider each year. So, it will be incumbent upon our property manager to ask for and retain on file worker's compensation insurance certificates for every person or company we do business with. The Board thanks Jim Smith, our resident insurance expert, for his advice on this matter.

### **New Business**

- Jackie Seib proposed that we adjust the frequency of our Board meetings from monthly to every other month. In checking with other HOAs, we learned that many of them do not meet as often as we do; and it is her thought that we do not need to meet as often now that we have a new property manager. In our contract with Real Property Management (RPM) they are only obligated to attend six (6) meetings per year, so every other month would coincide with that. We retain the flexibility to schedule additional meetings in off months if there is a need for it. Jackie Seib moved and it was seconded to adjust the frequency of our board meetings to every other month. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Volunteer Interim Business Manager report:**

- Snow removal summary: Through 2/16/21, we spent a total of \$25,454 with Second Nature for snow plowing, shoveling and salting. The itemized breakdown is as follows: snow plowing and salting roads and driveways \$7,908; salt for the roads and driveways \$2,398; sidewalk shoveling and salting \$13,793, and sidewalk salt \$1,355. So, \$15,148 (60%) of the charges from Second Nature were spent on shoveling and salting the sidewalks. In

addition, the HOA provided over 4,500 lbs. of additional sidewalk salt at an approximate cost of \$572 and also brought in three handymen to supplement the service provided by Second Nature. The cost to-date for the supplemental labor to salt, rake roofs and shovel is in excess \$2,000.

- On 2/4/21, an emergency sewer drain repair was made at 2851 and 2855 Villa Lane (building #10). It was found that tree roots had compromised the sewer line. The cost to diagnose and unplug the drain was \$786. The repair was temporary, and we will have to hire an excavating company later this year to come in and permanently repair the damaged sewer line.
- Drywall damage from an old vent leak was repaired at 2920 Villa Lane at a cost of \$86.
- The tree trimming agreement with Hurst Tree Service (communicated in the 120920 Board Minutes under the Volunteer Interim Business Manager's report) has been put on hold until spring. Hurst will be trimming and removing trees along the river bank as well as at 2864 Villa Lane.
- The "Villas At The River" sign along Nickerson Avenue has been removed and will be repaired. We should have that sign back up soon.
- Bill Langbehn has been in contact with PLM Lake & Land Management Corp. regarding the weed issue in the small pond. PLM quoted their recommended management program for 2021 which includes 4 algae and 3 weed treatments. The products they use are approved by EGLE (Environment, Great lakes & Energy) and are ecologically safe. Flier's, the authorized distributor and servicer of our fountains, recommends PLM for pond management. Bill did reach out to other companies for competitive bids, but PLM is still the best option. If we take advantage of a 10% discount prepay option by March 1st, the total for the pond treatments will be \$1,143. The \$200 permit fee has already been paid to the State of Michigan.
- We welcome new neighbor Bill Whitlock at 2900 Villa Lane.

### **Co-Owner questions & comments**

Several co-owners asked questions or had comments. We discussed goals for the capital reserve fund, a request to consider stocking ponds with fish or other aquatic life (in lieu of chemicals) to keep the ponds healthy, and a suggestion to look into solar exhaust roof vents as a possible solution to the icing issue.

One co-owner asked about eliminating the fence at their unit. Street-facing units are required to keep the fence to maintain uniformity in appearance from the street, but units facing away from the street may submit an architectural plan and request Board approval.

Another co-owner inquired about cracks in the mortar along the stone facade exterior of the unit. Sue Langbehn answered that filling in mortar cracks with concrete is on the to-do list and in the budget for this year.

The Board received a request regarding reopening the clubhouse great room for use by residents wanting to play mahjong. Subsequent to the meeting, the Board decided that due to COVID concerns and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) guidelines for indoor gatherings, we don't think it is appropriate to open up the great room for game playing at this time. The Board will continue to monitor the situation, following MDHHS and CDC guidelines, as well as what the local senior centers are doing. So, the answer is not yet,

although the Board is hopeful that with vaccine roll-outs the situation will change in the not too distant future.

Next Board Meeting Date: Wednesday, March 24, 2021 at 9:30 AM

Meeting Adjourned at 11:18 AM

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandi Coons  
Board Secretary