



SOCIETY HILL AT  
PISCATAWAY  
CONDOMINIUM  
ASSOCIATION, INC

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### Special points of interest:

- Special Meeting Adjournment
- What to do in a Maintenance Emergency
- Landscaping Overview

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# The Society Hill News

February 2013 Edition

## SPECIAL MEETING ADJOURNED—MAR. 14TH

The Special Meeting of the Association was held on Friday, February 15th at 7PM at the clubhouse. Unfortunately, there were not enough proxies or members present to have a quorum, so the meeting was adjourned to **March 14th at 7PM.**

This meeting will function the same way as an Annual Meeting, with the only difference being that members will be able to vote on specific issues even if those members are not present at the

meeting. **All members may still vote via proxy, as in the Annual Meeting.**

By now, every owner should have received the mailing with information on the Special Meeting items, proxy form, ballot form, and postage-paid envelope.

**THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO DIRECTLY DETERMINE HOW YOUR MONEY WILL BE SPENT,**

**SO IT IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU VOTE!**

All you have to do is check yes or no on each item on the ballot form, fill out the proxy, and send them both back in the postage-paid envelope. So please send in your proxy forms and ballots so that we can have these items resolved before the 2013 Annual Meeting.

## A View of the Landscap(ing)

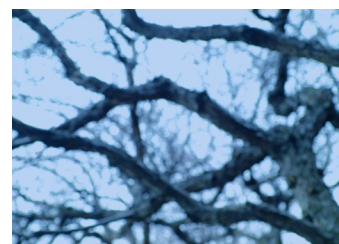
The Association has been working assiduously to better understand and, by that, enhance the landscape in Society Hill. This has been difficult, as the original landscaping done when the development was first built was in some ways rather short-sighted. Many aspects, from the grass and soil quality, to the foundation plantings and trees were poorly planned out and, now almost 30 years later, the community has to deal with some very big problems.

While there are ways of addressing and remedying these problems, they aren't always the ones most obvious to most residents. As such, we wanted to lay out what the most pressing issues are, why they arose, what the science says about the problems, and how we plan to address those problems.

**Turf Grass:** We'll start with the elephant in the room—the turf grass. While we have previously addressed the turf grass

issue in previous newsletters, it's important to reiterate, since not everyone necessarily remembers and a lot of the information can be counterintuitive when not

*(Continued on page 2)*



## What to do in a Maintenance Emergency

It's Saturday at 11PM, and suddenly you hear dripping. Water is leaking from your ceiling onto the floor. Since it's after hours, the management office is closed... what do you do?

Maintenance emergencies can happen at anytime, day or night. If one happens to you, follow the steps below in order to get the problem addressed as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible:

1) Determine if the problem is an emergency. Is your ceiling leaking like a faucet, or is it just damp? Is

the CO detector going off, or is the heater just not working well? If it is an emergency, call the office or, after hours, call the emergency line at 732-648-7780. If it is NOT an emergency, please place a service request via the website or leave a message on the office line.

2) If the problem is an emergency and you are not able to contact someone from the management office either at the office or on the emergency line, contact someone who can address the problem. If you are

having a leak, call a plumber you trust. If you are having a problem with your CO detector going off, check the battery, and if that's not the problem, call PSE&G. If the electricity goes off, please contact the Association's electrician, Bryan McLarnon at 908-420-1961.

3) If you do call someone who has not been referred by the Association, if at all possible, have them diagnose the problem, and then if they can stop the source of the problem, do

*(Continued on page 2)*

## A View of the Landscap(ing) (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)  
taken in context.

The soil upon which the development was built is mostly red New Brunswick clay and shale. This type of soil is nutrient poor, solid, and non-porous. This type of soil presents a number of problems for turf grass. First, it lacks organic matter, so turf grass cannot grow as well as if it were in more nutritive soil. Second, since the soil is solid and non-porous, the grass cannot put down deep roots, and the water from rain and irrigation doesn't soak in and instead runs off. The result is grass that gets more stressed and brown in hot temperatures.

Since the soil is such a problem, what can be done to address it? Well, the most permanent solution is to dig up the soil, mix it with nutrients and compost, and then reseed. However, on a large-scale such as the common areas, this won't happen overnight. We can use this remedy in certain areas with severely damaged grass, however it would be quite a project to tackle the whole common area (which doesn't mean we don't plan on doing it, but it may take a

while). In the short term, the best remedy is fertilization. This introduces nutrients into the soil, though it would have to be done on a regular basis. While this can be an expensive service if contracted out, we are having some of our crew train and get licensed in the application of fertilizer, with the eventual plan being to do it all internally.

As for the watering situation, while it would seem that extra irrigation would be the key, it's basically non-effective, as the water just runs off due to the solid, non-porous soil. So, in effect we just waste water if we irrigate more often. We still plan on irrigating, but every other day, at most (unless in the case of severe drought).

As a final note, we normally have contracted out the pesticide application for the turf grass, however we now have two licensed applicators on staff, who can apply and supervise other crew members' application of pesticide. This should drastically reduce the cost of this service, while simultaneously allowing us to control the amount and kind of pesticide we use to effectively treat (and primarily pre-treat

areas without stressing the grass.

**Trees:** The trees in the development fall into two categories: street trees (those on Chesterfield and Buckingham) and non-street trees. In both cases, however, the problem stems back to improper planting when the development was constructed.

The street trees are zelkovas, a species which is normally used in that capacity. However, when the sidewalks were originally put in during the construction of the development, the size of the grass area between the curb and the sidewalk was not wide enough to accommodate the root structure. Thus as they got larger, many of the zelkovas outgrew their planting area and blew over.

We have attempted to remediate this problem by enlarging the grass area from 4ft wide to 8ft wide—the intended width in the site plan—when we redid the sidewalks. Beyond that, we would like to replace the dead or dying street trees on a rolling basis with new trees, however we have been getting pushback from the

town on this issue, since Chesterfield and Buckingham are township roads.

As for the other trees in the development, many of them were planted too close to buildings and parking spaces, or the burlap covering the root ball was never taken off. The combination of stunted root development and proximity to buildings made many of the common area trees a danger and (as with the fruit trees), a mess to clean up.

For the most part, we have pruned, removed, and/or replaced the dangerous trees, and were vindicated during Hurricane Sandy, when none of the trees that fell damaged any units. This process of pruning is not complete, however, and anyone who has looked outside recently will have noticed that we have been trimming many of the trees to keep them from overhanging parking spots or getting too close to the buildings.

We do the pruning in the winter because during spring, summer, and even fall, trees experience new growth. In order to avoid damaging the plant as it is growing, we wait until the trees go dormant. This also helps us

(Continued on page 3)

## What to do in a Maintenance Emergency (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)  
so. However, if extensive repairs need to be done, please contact the Association. Many plumbers, appliance repairmen, and other service technicians drastically overcharge for services that the Association can provide at much lower cost. And, if the issue arose from something covered by the Association, **you will only be reimbursed for reasonable cost, i.e. the cost of materials and labor the Associa-**

**tion would charge.** So if you have a service technician who comes out to check your unit, and they give you a large estimate, know that you will not necessarily get that fully reimbursed.

4) As soon as possible, let the Association office know what has happened, who you contacted, and what (if anything) was done. If you are not sure whether the issue arose from an Association-covered item or

a unit owner-covered item, ask. We will be more than happy to send our maintenance staff over to do an inspection and let you know. Also, if the issue resulted from an Association-covered item, we can usually repair it at no cost to you.

5) Contact your homeowner's insurance company and file a claim. Unless the problem was caused by a slow leak over time, your insurance company

will usually be willing to cover the cost minus the deductible. If the problem arose from an Association-responsible item, we will need to see proof that a claim was filed in order to consider reimbursement.

6) If the repairs will cost more than \$5000, you can file a claim with the Association's insurance, but again, you should go through your company first, if for no other reason than to get the denial of coverage of claim letter

## A View of the Landscap(ing) (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)  
 identify which branches, exactly, are most at issue, since there are no leaves in the way.

### Foundation Plantings:

While speaking of trimming and pruning, we should also mention foundation plantings. Much like the trees, many of the foundation plantings were placed inappropriately close to the buildings. Shrubs that would have provided privacy or aesthetic improvements

wound up being too big, damaging screens, blocking sun, and allowing algae to grow on the siding.

The solution to this problem is replacing these shrubs with more manageable, more aesthetically pleasing shrubs, flowers, and ornamental grasses. Over the summer, we started replanting, and we have an overall plan for the entire development. We will continue this year with the replacement,

but in the meantime, we are taking the opportunity this winter to prune back those plantings that are the most overgrown. This should reduce the need to trim the shrubs in the summer, helping to avoid the situation of bushes growing into the walkways and making access difficult.

And please keep in mind that, as we prune, we need to temporarily stack the branches by the curbside. All branches will

be dumped off site, though it may take a few days.

In summation, we are working hard to address difficult problems with the intention of making the development a more attractive, welcoming, and easily-maintained place to live. So please be patient with us as we do this, and realize that, although not everything we do may seem obvious, landscaping science does bare out our methods.

## PSE&G to Replace Some Gas Meters

Each year, the Board of Public Utilities selects random houses to have their gas meters replaced. The purpose behind this is to make sure that the utility companies are upgrading their systems to make those systems more accurate, thus leading to fewer instances of overcharging. Recently, the management office was approached by PSE&G to help get the word out about this pro-

gram. To that end, we have hung letters on the doors of the units on Canterbury and Hampshire which have been randomly selected to receive new gas meters. The letter explains the program, which involves shutting off the gas, removing the old meter, replacing it with a new meter, and then turning on the gas and re-lighting any pilot lights in the unit (gas stoves, water heaters,

etc.) While most of this can be done without the unit owner being home, the re-lighting of pilot lights needs to be done while someone is present. As such, PSE&G would like those unit owners selected to contact them to schedule the replacement and the re-lighting. The letter sent out contains the number to call to schedule the appointment. **PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE**

### MANAGEMENT OFFICE

**FOR SCHEDULING!** We do not have any control over this, and are doing it simply as a courtesy to PSE&G. If you have any questions about the program, we suggest you direct those to PSE&G. Incidentally, there will be further replacements in other areas of Society Hill later in the year, so you may still get notification that your meter will be replaced.

## January/February Board Meeting Highlights



The Board of Trustees met on Wednesday, January 21st, 2013 at 7PM for its monthly meeting. The following are highlights from the meeting:

- Management reported on the progress of the maintenance garage, pond project, collections efforts,

and building maintenance.

- The Board moved to amend the current late fee resolution to assess a fee of \$10/month rather than \$25 going forward.
- The Board gave management feedback on the proposed Special Meeting mailing.
- The Board accepted the proposal from James Matthews CPA for 2012 Auditing services and Hua Gao for 2013 Bookkeeping Services.
- The Board evaluated the

requests of two unit owners for property modifications.

The Board of Trustees met on Wednesday, February 18th 2013 at 7PM for its monthly meeting. The following are highlights from the meeting:

- Management reported on the progress of the maintenance garage.
- The Covenants Committee reported on its progress and gave suggestions on items to address.
- The Board passed a revised budget which takes into account new informa-

tion the Association received about projected expenses, specifically workers compensation and employee health insurances, federal and state payroll taxes, and the DCA Inspection certificate.

- The Board moved to contract with Hua Gao for 2012 tax preparation services.

For a more comprehensive description of the meetings, please check the minutes available on the website. The next Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for March 18th, 2013 at 7PM at the clubhouse.

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**Management Office Hours**

M-F 8:00 - 5:00  
Sat, Sun, Holidays Closed

**Board of Trustees**

**Kevin Wine—2014**

President  
345 Lancaster Court

**Atif Nazir—2013**

Vice President  
541 Manchester Court

**Greg Machyowsky—2014**

Treasurer/Secretary  
448 Lancaster Court

**Doug Sanford—2015**

Trustee-at-Large  
44 Canterbury Court

**Carlyle Chan—2015**

Trustee-at-Large  
30 Canterbury Court

**Toyce Collins—2013**

Trustee-at-Large  
218 Hampshire Court

**George Tsacnaris—2015**

Trustee-at-Large  
171 Chippenham Court

**2013 Board Meeting  
Schedule**

**Third Monday of each  
month at the Clubhouse**

**Starting at 7:00 PM**



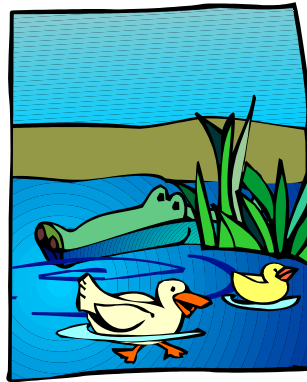
**Pond Project Update**

While it's been a while since we've done a pond update, now that winter is coming to an end, we have some information on the pond project. The engineering firm with which the Association contracted, Greenworks Environmental, has just about finished its talks with the New Jersey DEP on the issues surrounding the detention basin, and assures us that we should be able to start dredging the basin in April or May.

Just to reiterate what we plan to do with the detention basin, we plan to drain it, dredge it, mix the sediment with the soil pile by Lancaster, and incorporate that soil into landscaping features such as a terraced overlook. We would then let the basin fill again and install plant-

ings, a walk, and possibly some benches or picnic areas around the perimeter. The end result should be a beautiful water feature that will increase the aesthetic and property value of the development.

We will keep you updated as the project progresses.



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Landlord plans on updating carpet on first floor and painting.

Tenants pay all utilities, except sewer. Unit can be fully furnished for extra charge.

Available July. Contact Tiffany: TIF-FANYSCHRAMM@GMAIL.COM

**For Sale:** 3 "Dark Tobacco" 4 shelf (Adjustable) bookcases from Target. Excellent condition. Normally sells for \$130. Asking \$75 per bookcase. Must move yourself.

Panasonic TV with built-in VHS/DVD player. Comes with stand (holds DVDs & gaming system). Glass doors. \$75 for the set. Heavy combination. Must move yourself.

Contact [rosenbs1@umdnj.edu](mailto:rosenbs1@umdnj.edu)

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