



**SOCIETY HILL AT
PISCATAWAY
CONDOMINIUM
ASSOCIATION, INC**

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GO GREEN!

If you are a non-resident unit owner, consider going green—contact the management office to start getting the newsletter online!

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The Society Hill News

August 2014 Edition

Association Picnic—August 8th



The Association summer picnic is almost here, and we're expecting a great turnout! Currently, we plan to have lots of food, including hotdogs (regular and halal), hamburgers (regular, halal, and veggie), fried chicken,

samosas, rice, fruit (including the ever-popular watermelon), corn, and ice cream! We'll also have drinks (soda, lemonade, and beers), and music. We MAY be having a raffle again this year, but we'll know a little closer to the actual date.

While the crew will be doing most of the work, we will definitely need help from volunteers in the community. There is a lot of food preparation to do, in-

cluding chopping up fruit and veggies, cooking and serving food, and, helping with cleanup. If anyone is willing to help out in any of these capacities, please contact the management office and we will find a place for you. The picnic will be held on the lawn to the right of building 5 Canterbury Court on Friday, August 8th from 4-8PM (rain date will be Saturday, August 9th from 4-8PM.) We hope to see you there!

We Want to Hear from You!

At the June Board of Trustees meeting, it was voted that any resident who wished to write a letter to be included in the newsletter be allowed to do so, provided the letter was no more than 500 words and avoided defamation of personal attacks. While this has always been the policy of management, our residents may not be aware of it, so we are putting out the call! If you have something you want to say and have your voice heard

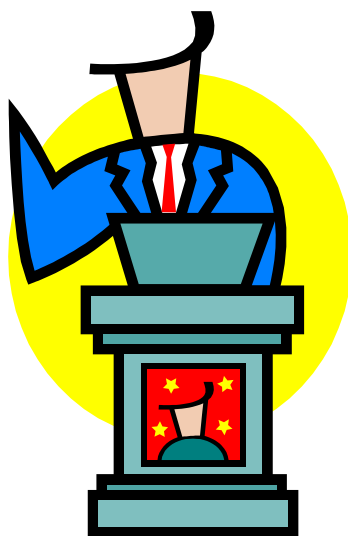
by the residents (and non-resident owners), send in your thoughts; the newsletter is a wonderful forum.

And don't forget, we have a classifieds section where you can advertise items for sale/trade, as well as post rental openings, notices of upcoming events, and services offered. The newsletter goes out to all of the units in the complex, as well as all non-resident unit owners, so



if you have something you want people to know, drop us a line.

Call for Candidates



This is a notice to all unit owners that the terms of two Board of Trustees members—Kevin Wine and Zahid Khan—will be expiring this year. Both are 3-year terms.

As such, there will be an election to take place at the same time as the Annual Meeting—October 27th, 2014. Any unit owner who is interested in running for either of these two spots may do so by submitting their one-page candidate resumes by mail to 555 Chesterfield Drive Piscataway, NJ 08854. All submissions must be

received before 5PM on September 15th, 2014 in order for the candidates to be eligible to run.

For those wondering what a trustee does, the answer is a lot of things! The Board is responsible for everything from approving budgets and projects to voting on contracts and legal matters facing the Association. Serving on the Board of Trustees is one of the best ways to contribute to your community, and as long as you are an owner, you are eligible. So send in your candidate profiles!

Project Update



We've got another project update for everyone. First, we are proud to announce that the building 3 roof is done! We finished putting on the downleaders, and everything is looking good.

The garage project continues to move forward through the township. The Association went before the township zoning board on June 26th for the review of the site plan application. There were a lot of questions that came up, primarily from the township's landscape architect. Of issue to him and a few of the

zoning board members were the height, footprint, and proximity to the property line of the proposed structure. While the Association's attorney and engineer in this matter were able to speak and answer questions, there was not enough time for our architect to fully state our case, nor was there time to get to our planner at all. Thus, we will need to return on August 7th for the adjournment of the meeting, at which point we will have a design that takes into consideration the zoning board member's suggestions and concerns.

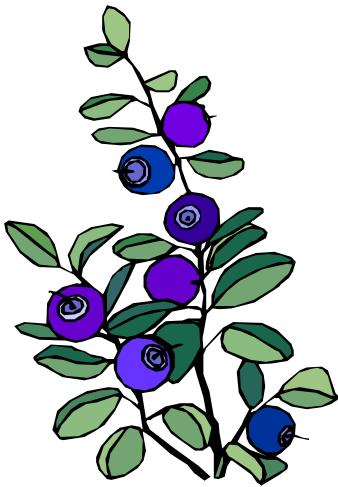
One thing that did stand out, however, was that the landscape architect seemed to really question our self-management system. He had a lot of questions about why we didn't just use contractors instead of doing this all ourselves. We explained that

we have had bad experiences with contractors (management companies, landscaping companies, maintenance companies, etc.) in the past charging a lot of money and providing lackluster service. We found this line of question strange, since it did not seem to have any bearing on the building itself. It is possible that there are those in the township that might be against our self-management style and thus might not want to see this project succeed. While we hope that is not the case, it does raise some troubling possibilities if true.

We are scheduled to go before the zoning board again on August 7th at 7PM to finish presenting our case. If you want to see this project happen, please do your best to attend. In the interim, we would like to urge all our residents to call or write

into the zoning office (<http://www.piscatawaynj.org/engineering-questions>) and let them know your thoughts on this garage. You might want to mention that the maintenance garage is intended to allow us to improve the aesthetics of the community by bringing the vehicles inside, putting the piles of sand, gravel, pavers, salt, etc. under cover or in bins, and getting rid of the gray storage container by the tennis court. You could also mention that the garage would allow us to return the clubhouse to an attractive space for gatherings, and that the garage will allow the Association to do repairs and maintenance more efficiently and cost-effectively. And there is also the fact that the garage would provide the location for the switching equipment allowing us to provide low-cost, high-

Berries, Berries, Everywhere



As many of you who enjoy talking walks or jogs along the new sidewalks know, we've got lots of berries growing. Last year we provided a guide to what was growing where, and when it would ripen, and here it is again.

- **Strawberries (Chesterfield b/w**

Hampshire and Chippenham): The strawberries have already come and gone, unfortunately, but they were quite tasty this year.

- **Blueberries (Chesterfield by bldg. 4 Canterbury & Buckingham b/w Townsend & Vernon):** Most of the blueberries are almost done for the season, though there are still a few that bloom later and so are in the process of ripening now.
- **Blackberries (Chesterfield b/w Abbot and Berkshire):** The Blackberries are ripening now, and are HUGE. Make sure to wait until they turn black, though, as they aren't very sweet until then. Check underneath

the leaves for the ripe ones.

- **Aronias (Chesterfield by bldg. 3 Canterbury):** The Aronias (Chokeberry) are ripening currently, but should be left on the bush for a few weeks before picking. They are used as colorants or to make herbal teas, and while you can eat them, they tend to be bitter.
- **Goji Berries (Buckingham b/w Manchester and Norwich):** These small, bright red berries are ripening now, although some of the bushes seem to be ailing. Goji berries are best dried, as they tend to be very bitter otherwise.
- **Gooseberries (Buckingham by Rt. 18):**

The Gooseberries are mostly ripened and been picked, however if you can find some, they make a great preserve.

- **Currants (Buckingham b/w Sheffield and Norwich):** The currants have also mostly ripened and been picked, however you may still be able to find some. They make nice additions to pastries.
- **Raspberries (Buckingham b/w Vernon and Sheffield):** The raspberries are the latest to ripen in the season, and should start later this month and into August. Make sure to wait until they are fully red, as the whiter they are, the less flavorful they are.

Project Update (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

speed internet to the development. So let your elected representatives hear from you.

The pond project has resumed now that we have the water lowering permit extension, and we are making good progress. We have pumped out the water, hauled away a lot of the debris we found buried around there (concrete, tires, etc.), and finished dredging the bottom. We have also put up the silt fence and started moving the dirt piles and incorporating them into the topsoil. We should be done with the soil

distribution by the end of August and then it will just be a matter of landscaping with ground cover. This will allow us to have to mow less and create a more meadow-like feel around the pond.

We still need to get the site plan approved for the hilltop gathering area, but hope to get that in another couple of months. Once we do, we can start work on the walkway and gathering site which we want to include a gazebo, grill area, and nice seating.

Our landscaping efforts have

been going well. Thanks to some frequent watering from the sprinklers, the new grass has really been coming in well in most of the areas of turf which needed fixing. We continue to weed all the beds and berries, though that is a never-ending task. We are also trimming hedges and mulching/edging beds, so we should have a nicely-landscaped development. We have our summer students here again this year doing a lot of the work, as much of the crew is tied up with the pond project.

Lastly, we have been power-

washing again. We hope to finish all the areas we missed last year and then start again to clean off any buildings where there is still dirt, mud, or algae. We may not get to your unit immediately, but we are trying to get everywhere that needs it before the end of the summer. If you have a particular request for power washing, please let us know, however.

We will keep you updated as to the status of these projects as they develop.

End of Summer Community Yard Sale

As some of you may remember, back in May some of our residents got together to hold a community yard sale. While held on short notice, enough people stopped by that the participants found it financially and socially successful. So, the Association has decided to go

ahead and have another yard sale. All residents are welcome to set up tables, put out blankets, etc. and sell their stuff, whether it's a CD, a crib, or a couch! There will be some tables and chairs available to borrow from the clubhouse, but it will be first-come, first-

serve, so get there early.

The community yard sale will be held to the right of building 5 Canterbury Court, and will run from 10AM-5PM on Saturday, September 6th. Call the management office for further details.



May/June/July Board Meeting Highlights



The Society Hill at Piscataway Board of Trustees met on Monday, May 19th, 2014 at 7:00PM for its monthly meeting. The following are highlights from that meeting:

- The Board voted (5,0,0) to reimburse the unit owner of 414 Lancaster

Court in the amount of \$200 for damages to her unit.

- The Board voted (5,0,0) to invest \$50,000 of the escrow account into a 2.5 yr CD.

The Board of Trustees also met on Monday, June 23rd 2014 at 7PM. The following are highlights of that meeting:

- The Board voted (5,0,0) to allow residents to submit editorials to be printed in the newsletter, as long as they avoid slander and personal attacks and are no more than 500 words.

- The Board voted (4,0,0) to have management solicit a legal opinion on the Mt. Laurel issue for a cost not to exceed \$750.

Lastly, on July 21st, 2014 at 7PM, the Board met for its July meeting. The following are highlights of that meeting:

- The Board voted (,) to adjust the budget based on management's recommendations.
- The Board suggested that management do research into what would be needed to install a flagpole in the development.

- The Board suggested that management do research into new and used vehicles to replace those which are becoming worn out.

- The Board voted (,) to accept the proposal from Charles Whelan III Esq. to file judgments against two delinquent units in the development.

The next Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 18th, 2014 at 7:00PM. All residents and non-resident owners are welcome.

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Management Office Hours

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

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Atif Nazir—2016
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44 Canterbury Court

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30 Canterbury Court

Zahid Khan —2014
Trustee-at-Large
158 Chippenham Court

George Tsacnaris—2015
Trustee-at-Large
171 Chippenham Court

**2014 Board Meeting
Schedule**

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

Starting at 7:00 PM

Visit us on the Web at
www.societyhillpiscataway.com

New Tax Rates for 2015

As many of you may recall, during the summer of 2013, the Township of Piscataway hired a company to reassess all the houses in the township, including all the units in Society Hill. When our residents started receiving the notices of their homes' new assessed values, many got quite a shock—since Society Hill had not been reassessed in a long time, many of the assessed values went up by tens of thousands of dollars. Needless to say, people were worried that their taxes would skyrocket, however our residents were told that the change in tax payments due to the new assessed values would be minimal, and some units would even experience a reduction in

property taxes.

Recently, though, people have been receiving their new tax bills for the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2014 and the change has been staggering. For a lot of the residents that came in to talk with us, their property taxes have gone up hundreds—a few even thousands—of dollars.

To investigate further, we did a search through the online tax records, which revealed that, for a lot of residents, their property taxes went up drastically from 2013 to 2014. We found units which went up anywhere from \$100—\$2000 a year! The most drastic increases we found were to the affordable units. Both numerically and as a percentage,

the affordable units experienced the greatest increases. This makes things especially difficult, as most of the owners of these units have a low income already (hence, why they qualified for an affordable unit). When questioned about this, the Township Tax Assessor's office said that the rate for affordable units is set by the State of New Jersey, and that the Township has nothing to do with it. While some units' property taxes did decrease, these were primarily the two-bedroom town-houses.

Now, if you look at your tax bill that you received, most of you will notice that the Q3 and Q4 of 2014 are more than the Q1 and Q2 of 2015. This could be because the township had to make up the difference between 2013 and 2014. However, whether your property taxes will stay at that level, increase, or decrease is unknown, as nobody can predict the tax rate. Despite this, we are urging all our residents who have questions to go to the Tax Assessor's office and speak with someone there, as we are not the experts. And if you really think you are paying too much, you may always file an appeal either in person or by downloading and mailing in the appeals form. You can reach the Tax Assessor's office at 732-562-2328.



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