



SOCIETY HILL AT
PISCATAWAY
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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!

Inside this issue:

Winter Weather Information	2
New Website Features	3
Piscataway Property Reassessment	3
January/February Board Meeting Update	3
Advertisements and Classifieds	4

The Society Hill News

February 2014 Edition

President's Message



In the previous issue, I went in to some detail on our larger capital improvement projects. In this issue, I wanted to take a step back and share some per-

spective on the higher-level motivations behind them.

Piscataway is a very diverse town, and Society Hill is a reflection of that diversity. I have always been impressed with the stability of that diversity, as it is more the exception than the rule. Part of its success is in the connections between its residents, and building and fostering those connections is one of the motivations behind our various projects.

While things are going pretty well now, Society Hill has not been without its problems over the years, many of which were the indirect result of a lack of connectivity and interaction amongst the residents of the community. For example, the development used to have quite a few drug-related problems, but thanks to a neighborhood watch and keeping the residents informed, we were able to manage the problem better.

(Continued on page 4)

Project Update

The winter weather has put a hold on a lot of things in our area, but it has also given us a chance to focus more of our attention on the big projects coming up.

The garage concept is basically finished, and with a few more tweaks from the architect and engineer, it should be ready to go before the township planning board. We have included a 3-D aerial view of the proposed structure below. The curve in Hampshire Court is to the left, just as you come over the bridge. As you can see, the building would be mostly walled

off from street-level view, obscuring the garage doors and the bins for storing materials such as gravel, leaves, mulch, sand, and road salt. There would also be a partial second story, though whether we can get the township to agree to this or not is still up in the air. The surrounding area will be landscaped with trees, bushes, and flowers, there will be a new sidewalk along the curve of Hampshire Court and over the bridge. Although not fully shown in the rendering below, the architectural elements of Society Hill will be incorporated in to the exterior of the garage. The re-

sult should be a building that fits well into our community, both in terms of size and aesthetics.

Once all the wrinkles have been ironed out, the design will be up to the planning board to either come back to us with their desired changes or approve the building as is. From our preliminary meetings with the town, we have a good sense that their main concern is with the size of the building—garages are usually considered “accessory structures” which limits them to 625 square feet. Our garage would be over 4,000 square feet, and

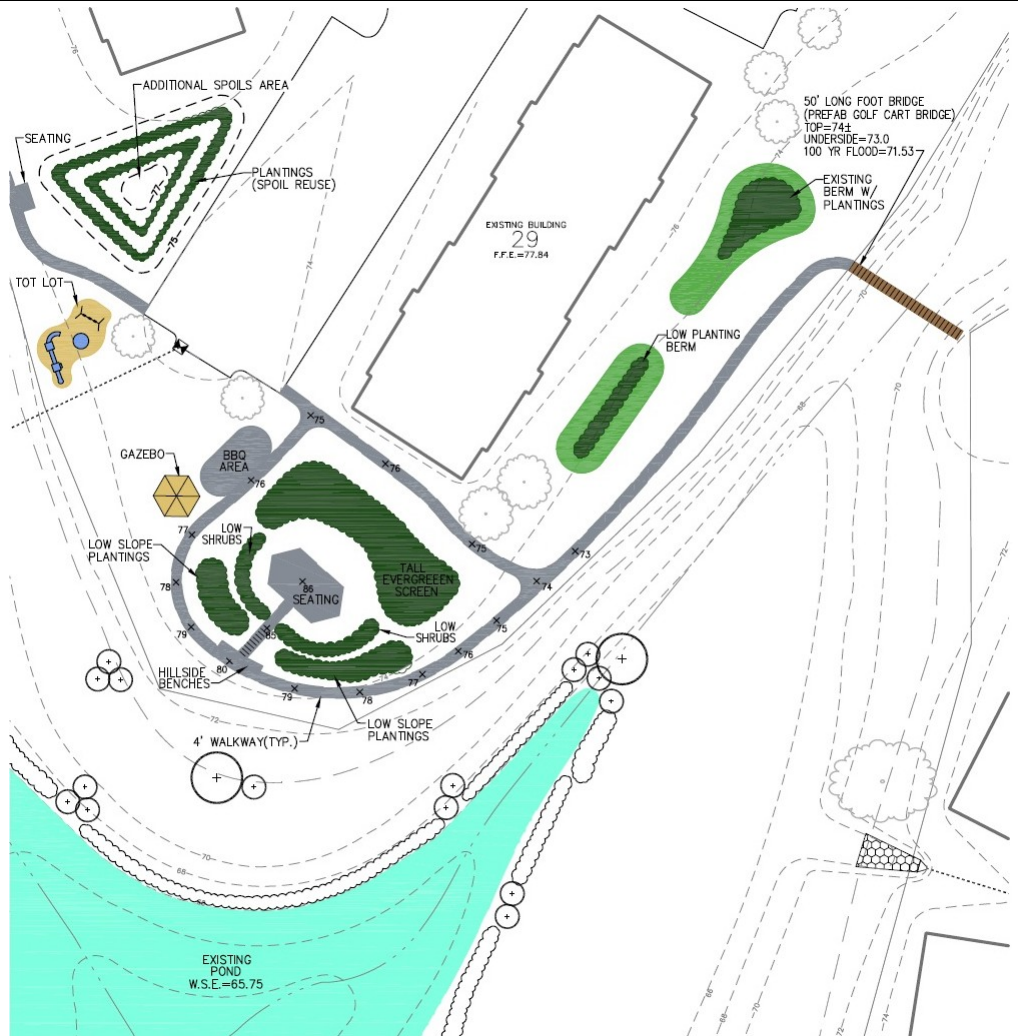
(Continued on page 2)



Project Update (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)
 so we would have to obtain a variance. A second option would be to build in a community space (probably on the second floor), and classify the structure as a "primary use". That would change the size restriction and allow us to get the space we need, though it would trigger some ADA requirements such as a ramp or elevator to the second floor, which could be expensive.

We are also working on the pond project. Due to the weather we aren't able to do anything outside, and we also have to wait for those large piles of dredge spoils to dry out. In the meantime, our engineer has been working on obtaining the final permits the town is requiring. He has also provided some concept sketches of possible designs for the project, one of which is to the right. There will be a nice overlook, barbecue area, and plenty of foliage which will both shield the area from wind and act as a noise barrier for building 29. This hill feature may require a site plan change and planning board approval, much like with the garage.



Winter Weather Information



This winter, the tri-state area has taken a pounding from snow, ice, and frigid temperatures. These factors, while bad on their own, can combine to

create even more damage and even more dangerous conditions. As such, please take to heart these winter weather tips to stay safe and avoid damage to your property.

Pipes: If you are going on vacation, or if your tenants are going on vacation, make sure your heat is set to 55 or above, otherwise there is a good possibility that your pipes could burst. We have already had to deal with one almost catastrophic pipe leak due to this problem, and it could cause tens of thousands of dollars worth of damage.

Skylights. During snowfalls, the snow can build up behind shingles (ice damming), and when it melts, all that water can find its way through the shingles and into your unit through the skylights. This mostly affects old or improperly-installed skylights, and since those skylights are owner responsibility, keep an eye on them and call the office if you notice a leak. We can usually at least stop it temporarily until it can be fixed/replaced.

Ice: During and after snow storms, there is often water which can collect on walkways,

patio steps, and the parking lot. Then, once it gets cold enough, the water freezes and now you've got a sheet of slippery, sometimes invisible ice. While the Association does its best to put down ice melt and remove any ice from walkways, it is technically homeowner responsibility to do so. For that reason, you should always have a bag of ice melt or salt on hand to throw on your walkways. In addition, if you live in the condo buildings, please use the grit buckets provided on the stairs of the buildings to prevent slippage.

(Continued on page 4)

New Website Features

As many of you know, the Association has a website with a wealth of information about the development and useful tools such as online fee payments and service request submission. Recently, in an attempt to increase the functionality and usefulness of the site, we have set up some additional tools and options for owners and tenants.

First, now any unit owner can

retrieve or change his or her password without having to email the management office. Second, owners and tenants can register or update contact information, including name, phone number, and email address. Third, owners and tenants can register new vehicles without going to the office (though you will still need to contact the office for your parking sticker). Finally, owners and tenants can specify what

types of email correspondence they want to receive. They can sign up for emergency updates, community news, and/or newsletter delivery. The plan to only deliver the newsletter electronically to non-resident owners has changed slightly, due to the fact that not all non-resident owners have e-mail. Therefore, non-resident owners will still receive a printed copy unless they choose to “go green” and receive it via email.

All of these features can be accessed on the Profile & Password page at <http://www.societyhillpiscataway.com/Profile/Profile.html> Please note that if you have not submitted an email address to the management office, you will not be able to access these features. So please contact the management office if you have not provided an email address or if your email address has changed.

Piscataway Property Reassessment

Over the last few weeks, residents of Society Hill have been receiving letters from the township regarding the reassessment of the properties in the development. Some of our residents have been calling to ask about the change of valuation and what it means for them. While we can't give an exact answer, since we weren't the ones who did the evaluation, we do know a few things. First, if you have an affordable unit, your valuation probably jumped greatly. This is mostly

due to the long span of time between when the last assessment was done and this one. Many affordable units haven't ever been reassessed, and so those unit owners may see triple or even quadruple increases in value.

As for regular unit owners, some of you may have been comparing your unit's assessed value to that of a neighbor or friend who has the same model, and found that you each are assessed at different values.

This is based on a number of factors—location (for example, end unit vs. middle unit, first floor vs. second floor), exterior features (new windows, brick façade, siding), interior upgrades (wood floor vs. carpet, upgraded vs. original kitchen).

Also, even if your unit has more square footage, if it has two bedrooms it will have a lower assessed value than a smaller unit which has three bedrooms.

Now, what the change in assessed value means for tax rate is still unknown, though you may see slightly higher property taxes if the percentage increase of your property's assessed value is higher than the average. However, we urge all unit owners with questions to call the number listed on the reassessment letter for the best information. In any case, if we find out any more information, we will let you know.

January/February Board Meeting Highlights



The Society Hill at Piscataway Board of Trustees met on Monday, January 20th, 2014 at 7:00PM for its monthly meeting. The following are highlights from that meeting:

- The Board moved to ac-

cept the resolution on election procedures with amendments.

- The Board moved to assess fines to those unit owners who failed the DCA inspection.
- The Board moved to advertise the Board vacancy in anticipation of the February board meeting.
- The Board moved to accept the proposal of Hua Gao for accounting services with some changes.

The Society Hill at Piscataway

Board of Trustees met on Monday, February 17th, 2014 at 7:00PM for its monthly meeting. The following are highlights from that meeting:

- The Board appointed Zahid Khan to finish out the term vacated by Gregory Machyowsky.
- The Board moved to appoint Kevin Wine as President, Atif Nazir as Vice-President, Gregory Machyowsky as Treasurer, and Kathleen Kelly as Secretary.

- The Board moved to con-

tinue sending a hard copy of the newsletter to non-resident unit owners unless those owners specifically opt-out.

- The Board moved to have management contact Charles Whelan III, Esq. to handle a collections matter.

The next Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 17th, 2014 at 7:00PM at the clubhouse. All residents and non-resident owners are welcome to attend.

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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—2016

Vice President

541 Manchester Court

Greg Machyowsky—2016

Treasurer

448 Lancaster Court

Doug Sanford—2015

Trustee-at-Large

44 Canterbury Court

Carlyle Chan—2015

Trustee-at-Large

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

President's Message (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Increasing the connectivity between the residents has always been one of the higher-level challenges, and I think we have made some progress through a variety of methods such as the annual picnic, return of this newsletter, our community e-mail list, tight integration of maintenance services, and community outreach such as part-time summer employment for the kids.

We have also made progress through some less obvious methods such as the sidewalk and bikeway renovation project, which has been successful at increasing interaction by enticing residents out of their houses to use the common walkways and pedestrian rest areas. Building on this, many of the

other upcoming capital improvement projects present us with design opportunities to not only repair what is broken, but also increase resident interaction. Specifically, the pond renovation presents us with the opportunity to construct new social gathering spaces, pedestrian trails, rest and observation areas, and landscaping points-of-interest. Furthermore, the maintenance garage project also presents us with an opportunity – perhaps the last – to build some new common space for community use.

As various stresses continue to fracture and isolate our society, it is important to do what we can to glue it back together. A walkway, a landscape design, or a room might not be the first things that come to mind, but they are

each small parts of that glue. They add to the identity and uniqueness of the community and make it more of a home than just a place to live. They form part of the framework on which the connections are built.

Both of these projects, unfortunately, face considerable obstacles from various approving agencies. I am still hopeful that we will be able to communicate the importance and value of these projects, and that the various parties involved will ultimately find some way to work together, rather than work apart. I am still optimistic that this will happen, however at this point it just feels like it is much more difficult than it should be.

-Kevin Wine, President

Winter Weather Information (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

Parking: During a snow event, it can be difficult to find parking, especially if you are coming home late. However, it is extremely important that you avoid parking in the middle of

the road or along the curb during a snow storm, as it makes it very difficult to plow. You should also avoid parking by dumpsters, as this makes it difficult for the dumpster trucks to get to the dumpsters. And until

Chesterfield and Buckingham have been plowed, avoid parking there, as those are township roads, meaning you can be ticketed by the police.

Snow Removal: The Association has had a lot of experience removing snow over the last five years, and we monitor the situation closely. We have all our own equipment on site, as well as a bunch of crew and helpers we can call up when the snow comes. Despite all that, however, we cannot instantly clear every walkway, road, and parking spot. Usually we have to wait a few hours after snow starts falling in order to start plowing, and we usually (though not always) wait until after the snow stops to shovel the walks. This is a time-intensive process, and while we don't mind residents calling, please realize that we may not be able to get to your house right away.

Potholes: The town is full of holes, and so are we. The asphalt plants are all shut down for the winter. As soon as one is open, we will try to get some material and patch the holes. Usually they are open by mid March or April, depending on the weather.

Learn American Heart BLS CPR



CALL: Karen Sanford

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Cost: 40.00



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