

Tollgate Association Board Meeting

Date and Time: December 8th, 2012 at 9:00 AM

Location: 107 Tollgate Way (Powell residence)

Attending: Ed Hahn, Luke Knittig, Margaret Melhem, Keith Powell, Marie Murray, Bob Donaldson, Garry Sauner, Joe Romer, Steve Lyons, Mark Kaye, and Jim Hogle.

1. Welcome to Joe Romer who, with Rob Ochsendorf, will ascend to the Board on January 1, 2013.
2. Approved the previous meeting minutes:
 - a. <http://tollgateway.org/board/minutes-11-3-12.pdf>
 - b. <http://tollgateway.org/board/minutes-11-18-12.pdf>
3. Treasurer's Report: The entire report is available on-line, though it is now password protected: See New Business Below.
 - Expenses
 - Net Worth
 - Budget

The Association is coming in roughly \$3,000 under budget for 2012, but this includes some funds allocated for trees that still have to be planted for next year. Approximately \$2,000 of savings from current year's budget and any cost savings in the coming year will be rolled into the Association reserves.

4. Committee Reports:

The Board discussed the ongoing need to be frugal with the Association resources. There is always a balance between those Association members who want (and are willing to pay for) additional services with those Members for whom cost is the key concern. The Board expressed great appreciation for the considerable time volunteered by both Board and non-Board members serving in committees that keep Tollgate up to its current high standard.

- Social –

- December Holiday Party – 9 Dec 5-8 PM at Tom & Edie Smolinski (#135).
It was agreed that there would only be white wine and clear soft drinks in order to minimize possible spillage dangers.
- Gazebo decorating is scheduled immediately after the meeting. Gary Sauner decorated the lamp poles with ribbon rather than garland as a cost-saving measure.
- Landscaping –
 - The Committee has taken exceptional care in researching proper landscape requirements and in following the process for obtaining bids and recommending a contractor. In response to Member inquiries and to enlighten all present at the Board Meeting, Marie Murray discussed at length the key elements of concern. She discussed the Scope of Work for the contract and highlighted both the historical and the business need for a detailed Scope of Work to ensure that the Association gets all the services that are necessary and to avoid misunderstandings and lack of service by previous contractors. Since this is a fixed-price bid, it is imperative to lay out clearly the tasks to be included and affords us legal protection if an issue of non-conformance arises.
 - Marie then addressed specific practices:
 - Mowing frequency – The contract is a fixed price contract and sets maximum requirements, which allows for the needs during an optimum growing season. Under ideal growing conditions grass needs mowing every 7-10 days, and will suffer if it is not cut often enough. This is standard landscape practice, recognizing that in most years the need will not reach the maximum 34 times. Alternative activities are delineated so the Association gets work for every visit that is part of the contract. There is always work that needs to be done, and rather than add days and cost, the contractor uses non-mowing visits for these activities.
 - Pesticides – The current Scope of Work calls for six pesticide treatments, and a lime treatment. (Lime is not a pesticide.) . Following the earlier homeowner concerns the Committee obtained the list of chemicals that have been used and cross checked them with accepted and most commonly used lawn chemicals by licensed contractors. The committee also asked our Arborist to review the chemical list to make sure it was appropriate so that it would not damage the trees. The chemicals are all EPA approved. The Committee had the Tollgate soil tested to determine pH and found that lime was necessary for grass growth.

In order to minimize any impact on homeowners, we requested that no pesticides are applied on Fridays. In this most recent round of contract considerations, the Committee has been researching more environmentally friendly options. The Committee met and discussed our needs with a local company, Greenhawk, who has such a “green” approach. One significant option is to apply granular formulas when possible since uptake of granules by pets or humans is negligible even immediately after application. It is important to note that most chemicals applied to lawns are absorbed rapidly and do not linger long on the surface.

- Aeration – Marie did extensive research into this question and found that frequency is set by general standards recommended by Universities with well-respected horticultural departments and standard practices used by commercial service providers. She contacted the experts at Merrifield Garden Center to learn their opinion and what they provide for their customers. Frequency depends primarily on soil type and traffic. Tollgate has highly compacted clay soil and needs aeration at least twice a year to enhance seeding and pesticide/fertilizer effectiveness. Marie also outlined the characteristics to look for to determine if aeration is needed. Many areas of Tollgate exhibit those characteristics.
 - The Committee reported on the extensive discussions with five landscaping companies, including the current contractor, plus an environmentally sensitive lawn treatment company. In the end, for the overall contract, only the current service provider, Ramiro, actually submitted a formal bid. Two companies voiced that they could not do the contract for the money that we had in the budget, one giving a verbal quote of \$35,000. Two other companies did not offer any bids or further information. In addition the environmentally sensitive lawn treatment company, Greenhawk, submitted a bid on the lawn treatment portion of the work.
 - The Committee recommended awarding the bulk of the contract to Ramiro and to try the Greenhawk company for one year. This would provide Tollgate with the services needed, hopefully address some of the concerns and cost less than using just one company for all the work. The recommendation was passed unanimously.
 - Board expressed its appreciation for its diligence and for the huge effort this process has required!
- Trees –

- Two replacement trees are still due to be planted in the Spring. One round of pruning is still due in December. Several trees will need to be reexamined next year for removal/treatment/replacement.
- Architecture –
 - The Committee approved a request from #122 to add Hardy Plank Siding and perform exterior painting.
- Maintenance –
 - The Committee will be seeking new bids for the masonry work on the front wall in the Spring.

5. Old Business:

- Cable proliferation update – Verizon came out to redress visible cables going over walls. Comcast and Cox still need to be contacted. The Landscaping and Maintenance committees will draft for Board comment and action suggested guidelines for a clear cable installation policy. Homeowners can then be made aware of their right to request proper installation. If we can get all cables in use buried, and old surface level, unused cables removed, the exterior property will be safer for residents and easier for the landscape crew.
- At the Annual Meeting the issue was raised about the responsibility of the Association for the outer wall facing Broad Street. Marie Murray checked her copies of the plans on file with the City and found that on those plans there is a clearly marked easement along the front of #100 with a note that says the rail and wall will be maintained by the HOA. After the holidays she will go to City Hall and see if a similar note was made when the plans for #101 were filed (that side of the street was developed later with new plans necessary.) As of now, the assumption is that if we are responsible for one side of the front wall, we are most likely responsible for the other side.

6. New Business:

- In order to enhance both Member and Association privacy, the online Tollgate Directory and the online budget reports are now password protected. The ID and password to access these will be distributed to Association Members.
- The Board will remind the Association at large that Board Meetings are always open and will distribute announcements in advance of the meetings (though they are generally on the first Saturday of each month.)

- The Board will remind Association members on the need for participation in the various committees so as not to place an undue burden on certain committee members. Volunteers are always needed!
 - The Board expressed its appreciation for the service of departing members Jim Hogle and Luke Knittig, particularly for Jim's service as President.
7. The next meeting will be on 5 Jan, 2013 at (#102 - Melhems). The board meeting concluded at 11:05 AM and Board Members met to set up holiday decorations at the gazebo.