

## Wheelwright Cluster Board Meeting Minutes for 8/23/18

- Attendees:
  - Jessica Joyner (President);
  - Kristina Myers (Vice President);
  - Jill Jenkins (Secretary);
  - Michael Pendleton (Director);
  - Easton Warner (Treasurer);
  - Kerry Wingell (Director);
  - Steve Weissman (Resident); and
  - Jeffrey Cai (Resident).

### June Meeting Minutes

- Minutes approved at Board meeting on 8/23/18.

### Resident Business/Tree Work

- Steve and Jeffrey, two victims of the tree that fell at the beginning of August attended to speak with the Board.
- Steve indicated that he originally emailed the Cluster about the issue he was having with a branch touching his residence in March. While this is a problem with one resident, he sees this as also a more general problem, with many branches almost touching residences. He is worried that these are not being addressed more generally, as well as concerned that the branch touching his residence be removed before the workmen come to replace his roof which was damaged when the tree fell. He suggested that either one or more Board member could evaluate these immediately or with the assistance of our arborist (Chip).
- Additionally, Steve requested information about the overall program for evaluating trees in the Cluster and noted that it is not always clear which trees are in the Cluster.
  - Jessica notes that there was a walkthrough with Chip in the fall and another in the spring. The problem with the tree that fell was the rain. It was healthy and wouldn't have fallen without the rain. Chip did an additional walkthrough this week as well. The Board has already spent approximately \$20,000 on trees this year—far more than was originally budgeted, but with the tree falling in early August and the additional tree being thereafter deemed an imminent hazard, the additional expenses were necessary. Anything unsafe comes down first from here on out. There are trees behind Easton's that Chip is concerned about as well, but that will have to be postponed until 2019 as well, as it is not deemed a safety hazard at this time.
- Steve provided an example of a concern he has related to trees being close to houses. Around March, he had a bat on his property and the trapping company noted a large hole that made him wonder whether trees close to buildings make it more likely for animals to get in.
  - Mike noted that raccoons will climb downspouts, so while it might make it more likely, it by no means eliminates the possibility.
- Steve feels that it is the Cluster's job to deal with the branches that are coming close to residences. While the Board would like to be in a position to be more proactive in our tree work

in the future, the budget for trees has been vastly exceeded for the year and branches touching a house cannot reasonably be considered a safety hazard. Chip thought that this type of work could be undertaken along with a couple of smaller trees without blowing the Cluster's budget. The idea of perhaps the work being undertaken privately rather than financed by the Board was briefly considered for projects that were not prioritized or addressed in the timeframe requested by the homeowner.

- Jessica noted the possible difficulty of justifying to the Cluster members at large the cost of removing the branch touching Steve's roof when tree costs in general have been so large this year and there is no hazard associated with it not being immediately removed.
- Steve feels that the Cluster has not done proper tree maintenance for a few years and he is also concerned about the branches that are close to touching residences and would like to see them addressed as well.
- Kerry and Jessica gave some background on how we secured Chip as our arborist. Apparently, working with our last arborist was much slower and less effectual. We actual got Chip through a recommendation from the Reston Association (RA). It is to our benefit because he has the ear of the RA. He has the ability to get approval to *not* replace trees, which was almost impossible with the prior arborist the Board worked with, as RA has a one out/one in policy. Chip is pretty proactive and follows through, where the prior arborist did not.
  
- The Board next moved on to Jeffrey's concerns, with Steve occasionally assisting in his presentation.
- Jeffrey indicated that he is very environmentally conscious and that he was hurt most by the tree that fell in early August—the branches caused a lot of damage.
- He expressed concern about the division of the work between himself and the Cluster. Jessica stated that she had asked Chip to be justifiably generous when he defined the line between the cluster and private property. Steve noted that he saw the workmen working primarily on Cluster property and spending very little time on Jeffrey's property (maybe ½ hour out of 5). (Jessica later remembered a conversation with Chip where he noted that safety also had to be taken into account, so where they actually performed the work may not necessarily be indicative of where the property line should be drawn, but rather where it was safest to perform the work.)
- Steve requested that the Board consider whether there is a better value with tree removal work. Mike noted that this was emergency work which tends to come at a higher price in general.
  
- At this point, Steve and Jeffrey left and the Board proceeded to vote on several issues raised without them present.
  1. Should the Board approve the funds to remove the branch touching Steve's roof in 2018? – The Board voted that given the current cost overrun for tree work, safety needs to be addressed first and tree trimming deferred to spring 2019. (Note: deferred items are listed at the end of the meeting minutes.)
  2. Should the Board consider other tree services? – The Board voted no on this. We are all very pleased with Chip and particularly like how proactive he is and how he is able to expedite things for us with RA.

3. What (if any) steps should the Board take regarding Jeffrey's bill from Tree60? – Mike and Jessica are going to talk to Chip as a start to confirm what work was done.
4. What should the Board do about Easton's trees? – Given the budget overruns, unless a safety concern emerges, these too will be deferred until early 2019.
5. What should the Board do with the tree that was cut down that is currently behind Steve and Jeffrey's houses? – Agreed to wait until 2019 to remove, but Kristina will post to Next Door to see if anyone would like to take some of it for firewood.

○ **Addendum:**

- A dead tree behind 2245 fell in late August damaging their fence and knocking out their Internet. The problem was reported to the then Board four years earlier but was apparently not addressed at that time. Kerry went over shortly after we were notified to evaluate the situation. Kerry reported that there was very little damage from the tree branches, as the tree broke apart on impact. The trunk and the major branches ended up on Cluster property behind their fence and patio (the deck was not involved). The worst damage was a bent barbeque grille that was sitting on a pad behind their fence, and thus on Cluster property. Their fence suffered a small loss of wood at the gate's corner support, so nothing really to worry about, nor to file an insurance claim about. Kerry tossed one four inch branch back into the center woods behind their house and suggested that a few able bodies would be able to move the remainder back into the woods as well. He did not believe that there was a need to call Chip. The residents now have access out their back gate and are aware of the grille damage being a cost they will have to incur. Thankfully, no one was hurt and the damage was minimal. The obvious concern is that this was not addressed four years ago when it was initially raised with the Board. The current Board is making every effort to ensure that things like this do not fall through the cracks, including new items like the deferred list that will appear at the end of each set of meeting minutes from now on.
- In response to the excessive rain in the area that led to the unexpected collapse of a Cluster tree in early August and an additional tree that needed to be removed later the same month, the Board asked Chip to perform a thorough evaluation of the Cluster's trees. A formal letter summarizing that evaluation was provided to the Board. At the time of the walkthrough, he did not see any apparent safety threats, while acknowledging that rain, wind, and decay that cannot be otherwise seen can alter that.
- One (or possibly more) of our Cluster residents have apparently approached RA about using architectural shingles as replacements. According to our RA contact, they have many benefits and many other Clusters have already updated their standard to allow them. Our RA contact noted that it would be a simple application, as she believes the type/color that is in the standard now is available through the same manufacturer, just in a better shingle. So we wouldn't have to choose new colors or manufacturers. There was also some confusion with one specific application where our new Vice President was not

listed as Vice President on the official roster. This has been rectified and our RA contact has been notified of the Board's intent to review the shingle issue and likely submit an application soon.

- We received a request for Chip to take a look at a tree in front of 2243. Chip looked at the tree and said it was very healthy but went into fall a bit earlier than the others. We asked the resident to monitor it and to take pictures if they think it is getting unhealthy to expedite review.

### **Erosion Work**

- The Board reviewed the erosion work and how it is working with all the rain and we all agree that it looks good.
- The Board also reviewed the proposal for Phase 2. While we agree that it looks good, it is just too much money given the amount we have spent already this year, so we want to get it scheduled for March 2019.

### **Handling Deferred Items**

- The Board decided to maintain a running list of deferred items at the end of the meeting minutes from now on, so that there would be a list to start with immediately in 2019 (see last section of this document).

### **Video Surveillance Signs**

- The Board discussed possible locations to place the signs. Want to consider every path that cuts through the Cluster. Specific locations discussed include: the cut through next to Sean's place, near the sledding hill, at the bike path, the tot lot, and near the bus stop. Jessica suggested that we defer the entrance for now because there is so much other signage. Brush has been put down near where Easton lives, so that path is less of an issue now.
- We plan to install them during the Cluster cleanup. Mike has some lumber that can be used to put up the signs.

### **Concrete Work**

- Concrete work set to be performed on 8/24.
  - **Addendum:**
    - The majority of the concrete work was completed on 8/24, but they did some final work on one of the paths on 8/28.

### **Landscaping**

- The landscapers should be pulling weeds between the concrete slabs. Not doing so creates wear and tear on the concrete.
- Kristina has contacted several new firms and has one meeting scheduled for Monday at 10 am.
- American Lawn Brothers' (ALB) billing system is just not working.
- Based on her preliminary interviews, Kristina asked whether the Board would be comfortable separating the landscaping from the snowplowing and we agreed that we would be.

- Jessica is going to talk to Mike Peyton (who works for McLean Landscaping, lives in our community, and used to do the work) about possibly putting in a bid. He does their plowing, which would provide the community with the advantage of being plowed first as well.
  - **Addendum:**
    - The Board noticed that ALB came on 8/24 despite being specifically asked not to because we were having the concrete work performed on that day. We also noted that the weeding done was not very good.
    - Kristina has now met with Blade Runners, which came highly recommended by other Reston HOAs, and expects a bid from them soon.
    - She also met with Professional Grounds and Environmental Enhancements; she thought they both seemed competent, but was particularly impressed with Environmental Enhancements. One thing that the representative from Environmental Enhancements said that Kristina particularly liked was that his crew will not only clean up grass clippings but also pick up leaves, sticks, and other debris around the sidewalks and the curbs inside parking spaces before they leave. It seems like they do a good job of communicating with their customers. For additional projects, they like to design and then present to the board during a board meeting.
    - Nearly everyone commented on how we've been overrun with weeds. Especially in our grassy areas, a lot of the grass isn't grass, but actually weeds. There is no easy way to take care of this, it will likely take many treatments and lots of time, but seems like most of the guys I've interviewed have a solid understanding of proper turf care.
    - Additionally, Perfect Landscapes is set to independently inspect our property and get back to us.

### **Front Doors**

- Deferred the discussion of a new model of door for the community until the annual meeting. (This has been added to the deferred section at the end of the document.)

### **Rentals**

- The Board briefly went over the new Fairfax County rules for short-term rentals. These rules went into effect on 10/1/18 and specific information about the rules can be found at: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-zoning/zoning/short-term-property-rentals>.

### **Wheelwrighter**

- Discussed putting together a new issue, which Kristian agreed to take on. Possible topics include the erosion work (maybe with some pictures), work going on in the Cluster, what we are doing, and what has been deferred.
  - **Addendum:**
    - Kristina drafted the Wheelwrighter, printed, and distributed it on 9/16.

### **Little Free Library**

- Jessica brought up the idea of starting a Little Free Library in our Cluster, where people could drop off a book or take a book. It has apparently been successfully in many other communities. We would need to get RA's approval for this. The Board decided to explore a little more and raise it at the annual meeting. It is listed in the items for that meeting below.
  - **Addendum:**
    - Mike sent a picture to the Board from California noting that these are all over Santa Rosa.

### **Mosquito Control**

- The Board discussed mosquitos, which have been bad this year. The Cluster covers 4.5 acres. We can either pay a set amount for the season or even have a service spot treat just one time. Jessica is going to look into our options so that we will at least know the approximate price based on the various approaches and can make future decisions based on that.

### **Cluster Cleanup**

- Date set for Saturday, October 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Activities on the agenda are: putting up the video surveillance signs, putting out wood chips, cleaning the parking spots, and digging a trench for erosion control.
  - **Addendum:**
    - The backup rain date is Saturday, October 27<sup>th</sup>.
    - Easton has some yellow and black curb paint leftover from refreshing the "RES" signs for the parking spaces which were affected by removal/re-pouring of cement curbing down at his end of the Cluster. Mike suggested adding this to the Cluster cleanup items.

### **Reston Association Guidelines**

- Jessica still intends to go pick up these from the RA office.

### **Off-Leash Dog Area**

- Fairfax seems to be moving along more quickly than we possibly could, so the whole issue may be moot anyway. However, the Board decided to raise the issue at the annual Board meeting to get more input. After some discussion, the consensus was that although the impetus might be well-intentioned, if it were Board-directed, questions would inevitably arise about why this person got assistance and not that person, etc. The conclusion was that this is something better handled privately.

### **Social Committee**

- Some discussion of flea market sale and the possibility of some of the proceeds being allocated into a fund that could be used to help members of the Cluster community that might be in need.

### **Financials**

- Went over financials.

- Discussed the current Cluster dues. We have a lot of work ahead of us keeping up with the erosion in the community and have experienced significant hits with the trees this year (also have some known maintenance work facing us ahead as well). Additionally, we know that we will need to repave the parking lot in the next few years and the cost of that will depend on the price of oil. Easton noted that a small increase in dues would not really help much in an emergency and would cause a lot of heartburn among residents. So this has been deferred to later.
  - **Addendum:**
    - At the Board's request, Easton has put together a draft 2019 budget, rounding up or down on line items and putting in something like \$10K for trees for 2019. The Board can review these, reconcile them with the items we have deferred to 2019 and the amounts we believe will be required for those items and refine the budget at the next couple of monthly meetings.
    - Based on what Kristina is seeing and hearing working on identifying a new landscaper, she believes that we might need to budget some extra money for landscaping next year.

#### **Next Board Meeting**

- It will be held at Jill's (2254) or Jessica's (2205) at 7pm on September 27<sup>th</sup>, depending on whether Jill will be coming back from out of town that day.
  - **Addendum:**
    - Jill had another commitment and could not make the 27<sup>th</sup>, so the meeting was moved to Friday, September 28<sup>th</sup> at Kristina's.
    - Another Board member could not make the 28<sup>th</sup>, so it was moved to Thursday, October 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Items Deferred to Annual Meeting**

1. New front door options.
2. Little Free Library – drop off a book, take a book.
3. Off-leash dog area.
4. Potential increase in dues.

#### **Items Deferred to 2019**

1. General tree trimming, including the branch touching Steve's house and those around Easton's property. Currently planned for spring 2019.
2. Move tree that was felled in August in 2019, possibly by offering it as free firewood.
3. Phase 2 of the erosion project is currently planned for March of 2019.
4. Discussion of potential increase in dues.