

## Wheelwright Cluster Annual Meeting Minutes for 12/6/18

- Attendees:
  - Jessica Joyner (President);
  - Kristina Myers (Vice President);
  - Jill Jenkins (Secretary);
  - Michael Pendleton (Director);
  - Easton Warner (Treasurer);
  - Kerry Wingell (Director);
  - Numerous resident owners attended in person (representing the following units: 2205, 2216, 2218, 2219, 2223, 2226, 2228, 2231, 2233, 2235, 2239, 2242, 2246, 2250, 2254, 2257, 2273, 2275, and 2276); and
  - Ami Pape (Cluster attorney) and Chip Johnson (representative from Tree60) attended via phone.

### Introductions

- The current Board members took a few minutes to introduce themselves.

### 2018 Accomplishments

- Jessica went over what the Board has completed over the past year.
  - Researched and contracted with a new landscaping company, as well as a new snow removal company.
  - We completed concrete work in the Cluster.
  - Two successful Cluster cleanups were undertaken. Work included the installation of bat houses, plantings, mulching, and some erosion help.
  - Erosion work completed. This included drainage work. Additionally, doing work as a community, such as trimming trees to allow grass growth.
  - Hazardous removal of trees.

### Dues

- Details on the need for a dues increase were included as part of the agenda package distributed to attendees (as well as to all resident owners prior to the annual meeting). Additional graphs showing expenditure increases from 2008 to the present were included in the annual meeting agenda package, however.
- With the normal operating expenses plus the bigger emergency expenses this year, we ended up going into the reserves a lot this year and won't have enough in the reserves to deal with the parking lot in 2020 (sealing of the lot) and 2025 (full grind and mill) without an increase in dues.
- The last time a full grind and mill was done, it was \$76,000. It is expected to be at least \$100,000 next time and may well be more expensive.
- There was a question from one of the resident owners about cracks, where they come from, and the need for sealing the lot.
  - Several other community members chimed in to explain about cracks, how they form, sealing and how it works, as well as what a full grind and mill is versus just a sealing of the lot.

- The Board proposes increasing dues by enough to save \$100,000 by 2025 so that we don't need to do a large increase or a special assessment right before the grind and mill.
- The Board did some market research and found that our Cluster's dues are among the lowest (one resident owner noted that there is at least one nearby community with lower dues). The Board also found that the dues of many nearby communities are quite a bit higher. The Board feels that the \$60 increase that we are proposing will be comparable to many of our neighbors.
- One resident owner had a question about whether there was a Virginia law regarding the percentage increase that the dues can be raised in a particular year or quarter.
  - Ami confirmed that there were no Virginia laws regarding this.
- There was a question about what our reserves should be from one of the resident owners.
  - Easton noted that we have historically had from \$150,000 to \$180,000 in reserves.
  - Easton also noted that, as a general rule, you want to have about 2-3 times what you are taking in in income in your reserves.
- There was some general discussion of the potential price of oil and, more specifically, the impossibility of predicting it. In general, however, it was agreed that it is unlikely to be as low as it was the last time the Cluster did a full grind and mill.
- Jessica noted that, while we cannot say in the future what the Cluster's expenses will be, they are unlikely to go down.
- Jessica also noted that the Board realizes that \$60 is not a small deal for some people and that we are not asking for what would be nice, but for what is needed.
- The Board wanted to leave the actual implementation of the increase vague to allow the community to weigh in on that aspect. So, it doesn't need to be all at once when people haven't budgeted for it, unless that is what the community agrees to.
- As we have a quorum, the Board held a series of votes on the dues issue. We need a simple majority for all votes.
  - First, the Board asked whether there were any concerns with the \$60 increase. None were raised and the amount was approved.
  - Second, the Board asked whether the community would prefer the increase in one lump increase. That was approved.
  - Third, the Board asked community members to vote for the preference for when the increase should start. Immediately in the first quarter of 2019 was approved overwhelmingly. In some of the lead-up discussion, the feeling was that that would mean more money put away earlier for the grind and mill in 2025.
  - The dues will now be \$300/quarter and \$1,200/year starting the first quarter of 2019.

### Trees

- Easton noted that \$25,000 of work on trees was done during 2018, all of it necessary. Usually we budget \$5,000 for trimming and \$5,000 for taking down trees (capital costs). He noted that in the last 4 years, \$15,000 of that budget had not been spent or reallocated.
- One of the resident owners noted that these are old trees and we are dealing with global warming and saturated soil.
  - In response, another resident owner noted that the trees are not that old, only about as old as the community itself. He noted that we need to have an arborist looking at the condition of the trees as they get older and that he is particularly concerned about the

trees in the islands because they will be unable to expand their root structures. He mentioned several factors that need to be evaluated for tree health: condition of the tree, condition of the soil, condition of the surroundings, and issues with canopy intrusions.

- Jessica then went over some of the details of what the Board did in 2018.
  - We did an initial walkthrough in February/March with Tree60 who was recommended to the Wheelwright Board by the Reston Association (RA) and has been a great partner from our perspective. There were no leaves out at that point. Several trees were identified as relatively unhealthy and removed; these were under the four inches in diameter RA guidelines and couldn't get enough sunlight due to the other trees in the area, on top of which they would contribute to erosion problems. There is a lot of new sunlight in those areas.
  - In August, we took down a tree that fell onto houses, as well as another tree that was deemed unhealthy.
  - In November, two additional trees that were not thought to be hazardous, but that a community member thought were, were re-reviewed and discovered to have gotten worse and, as a result, taken down. There was some discussion among the attendees as to whether the trees had gotten worse or were just worse than had originally been noticed. Jessica assured the other resident owners that, having personally attended both the before and after walkthroughs, that the fissure noticed in the one tree in November that caused the determination that they needed to be removed were *not* present during the previous walkthrough.
- One resident owner noted that they have been trying for some time to get RA to approve moving their downspout.
  - Another resident owner recommended using rain barrels and noted that RA approves of them.
- One resident owner mentioned the option of leaving downed trees above the stump for wildlife and asked whether this might be a cost-saving option for the Cluster.
  - Jessica noted that in the case of the trees taken down, we felt better about cutting to the stump because the root system was too shaky to rely upon.
  - Chip from Tree60 noted that these trees were also leaning up toward homes and that two trees that had been removed to above the stump like that in another community later had to be taken down completely because they became hazardous. Basically, continuing rot can be a concern if the tree is not far enough into the woods.
- The cleanup work that remains behind Jeffrey Cai's residence after the trees were taken down in August was discussed and Kristina suggested that cleanup work behind Vicki Dreyer's residence should be performed at the same time.
- It was pointed out that in some cases one tree can damage another. Jessica noted that this is true and that is precisely why the Board decided to take down an additional tree that had *not* fallen in August—it had been damaged by the fall of the other tree(s).
- One of the resident owners asked whether it is just our Cluster that it having difficulties or whether it is a wider problem.
  - Chip noted that RA is having a difficult time keeping up with the trees coming down with just their two tree crews, let alone removing them. He noted a white pine tree that was

lying across the tennis courts for two weeks. He also noted that white pine trees don't belong in Reston anyway and have lots of issues. RA has been sent lots of pictures of trees that have fallen or about to fall down and has been unable to keep up.

- Jessica then turned the conversation to work that the Board would like to accomplish in 2019.
  - The Board wants to do pruning work similar to what was done in 2018—removing those under the four inches in diameter that are deemed relatively unhealthy, unable to get enough sunlight to thrive, and which could contribute to erosion problems.
  - Plan to evaluate the trees behind 2240-2242.
  - The pest application to the tree in front of 2216 does not appear to have been successful and the tree needs to be reevaluated.
    - There was significant discussion of this tree, with one of resident owners expressing that they did not feel safe with it in its current condition and did not feel that additional fungal treatments were sufficient. They indicated that another owner (not present) felt similarly.
- A former Board member noted that they used to do preventative pruning area by area, gradually working around the entire cluster \$5,000 at a time, and suggested that this approach be adopted again.
- Later on, one of the community members asked that when we replace trees that we use trees that actually are appropriate to this area.
- Moved to tree proposal, at which point Chip from Tree60 was released from the phone.
- Steve (who presented the petition, which was signed by 39 residents) noted that Chip (the arborist that we use through Tree360) is not a certified tree risk assessor and said that Chip told him that he would recommend getting a tree risk assessor through once a year.
  - Jessica noted that certified tree assessors, when they come out, have to prepare a final written report and cannot do something more informal and certainly not the numerous walkthroughs that Chip has done for us. Additionally, the last time that an assessment was performed by a certified tree assessor, it cost the Cluster \$15,000. And that is without any actual work being done. Jessica also noted that she had asked Chip about how much it would cost to get a certified tree assessor, such as Tree360's owner, to come out. While Chip wasn't certain what the eventual cost would be, he noted that for a tree assessor to just come out, before they did *any* work, would typically cost \$250.
  - Steve and another resident owner noted how responses they had gotten on trees had varied so much from professional to professional until they got a certified tree assessor and how much they (as former tree committee members) learned from that experience and how that helped form the basis of their current proposals.
  - Several resident owners expressed concerns about the potential cost, noting that while they support the idea of a certified tree assessor, they also feel that it needs to be balanced against the cost. Most residents seemed to feel that \$15,000 was too much, but many felt that it was worth exploring the actual cost of a certified tree risk assessor.
    - This led to a discussion of the minimum cost that might be acceptable for resident owners to pay a certified tree risk assessor for an annual inspection. A large majority did not like this approach to the question, but rather wanted to see what the cost would be and then be allowed to make a decision.

- Other resident owners (as well as some Board members) noted that even with a certified tree risk assessor, we might not be able to prevent incidents like the trees that fell in August.
  - Jill noted her concern that focusing on a once a year evaluation by a certified tree assessor should *not* come at the expense of more regular inspections, which in her opinion are more valuable in catching problems like that can lead to falls because they are subject to changing conditions.
  - Kristina said that she would support the rest of the community if a certified assessor made them feel more secure, but she was concerned that they wouldn't prevent everything.
- One of the resident owners asked whether it would be possible to put out on the website which trees are on the list to be dealt with so that it is available to the entire community. That would also be something that any tree committee could work off of.
- Jessica noted that we were running out of time and it was time to move forward with voting and asked whether the group wanted to vote for the proposal as a whole or the items separately. While a few resident owners wanted to vote on the four policy items in their entirety, the majority wanted to take the items individually. It was also noted that because it had been presented at the meeting, it *had* to be voted on at the meeting.
  - Ami noted that to vote someone needs to make a motion and that motion needs to be seconded. What we are going to vote on can also be amended by someone making a proposal and that proposal being seconded and then being voted on by a majority (that is just to get an amendment approved in order to be voted on). Then someone needs to make a motion to vote on the amended proposal and someone needs to second that before a vote on the amended proposal can be held.
  - For the first proposed cluster policy on trees (that an annual inspection of all Cluster trees be conducted by an arborist who is also professionally certified as a qualified tree assessor), based on feedback from the group as a whole, Steve initially proposed amending the policy to have the Board evaluate various assessors and put the bids on the website for the resident owners to evaluate.
    - Ami noted that it is not possible to put bids on the website, as these are proprietary.
  - Given that posting the bids for general evaluation was not an option, Steve proposed amending the first proposal to allow the Board to evaluate the cost and if it deems the cost feasible (i.e., within the budget) to move forward.
    - This amendment was approved to be voted on and then item #1 was voted on with this amendment included. It did not pass.
- There was some disagreement among the attendees as to whether item #2 (The assessor will provide a written report to the Board, to be shared on the Cluster website, and conduct follow-up inspections of potentially dangerous trees.) could be accomplished given that item #1 had not passed, but it was eventually decided that whatever assessor was doing the tree evaluation could provide such materials.
  - Item #2 was voted on and passed.
- Item #3 (Any trees cut down or trimmed shall be promptly disbursed in the woods or otherwise disposed of to prevent blight. In accord with RA guidelines, timely consideration shall be given to

installing replacement trees and/or vegetation.) was voted on and failed. When Steve saw that people were not voting for this item, he wanted to explain it further because he believed that people did not understand the item sufficiently. Jessica noted that the time for discussion had passed and that we had already run over the time we had allotted for the discussion of trees.

- Item #4 (The Board shall re-establish a Tree Committee to assist in its efforts.) passed.
- There was a request from attending resident owners for a copy of the 2009 tree risk assessment.

### **Budget**

- Easton went over the 2018 budget and the planned 2019 budget, which was approved by the attending resident owners. He pointed out that the number presented does not take into account the just approved increase in dues, which would eliminate the loss from the balance sheet.

### **Election of New Board Members**

- Easton, Jessica, and Kerry's positions are all ending. There were three volunteers, all of which were automatically added to the Board without a vote: Jessica (remaining on the Board), Sarah Keally, and Daniel Baldwin.
  - **Addendum:**
    - After some after-meeting discussions via email and text, the Board positions are as follows: Jessica (President), Kristina (Vice President), Sarah (Secretary), Jill (Treasurer), Mike (Director), and Daniel (Director).

### **Design Review Board Applications**

- We have an application for architectural shingles in the pipeline that will be heard on January 22, 2019.
- We had one erosion project approved this year and have another that we are preparing for approval early next year (all this work is with Sunrise).
- We are also interested in applying for additional door styles and ask that community members respond to the on-line survey.

### **Next Board Meeting**

- Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm at 2254 Wheelwright Court.

### **Waste Management Company**

- **Addendum:**
  - Our trash collection provider sold the Wheelwright contract to Bates Trucking, effective January 1, 2019. The Cluster will be notified of any changes in trash collection dates, but as of now has confirmed that there will be none.

### **Items Deferred to 2019**

1. Tree maintenance list (general tree trimming, etc.):
  - Trees around Easton's property (will eventually be a safety hazard and so are discussed below as well, but not as a separate item). Currently planned for spring 2019. In Chip's

latest walkthrough, he noted that Easton's trees could probably wait a couple of years and so we could possibly revisit this date.

- Move tree that was felled in August in 2019, possibly by offering it as free firewood (if we can arrange to get it cut).
  - Additional trees suggested by Steve via email to the Board.
  - Kerry's tree
2. Tree Hazard list
    - Trees behind 2226 need to be taken care of in 2019 (one may have been removed on 11/19); Chip estimates that it will cost approximately \$5,000 or a little more. Easton's trees can be postponed possibly for a couple of years, although it will eventually become a safety concern where some of the other tree work is more discretionary. Given the Board's limited resources and the wide range of demands on those resources, we will probably need to continue to allocate our tree budget carefully in 2019.
  3. Phase 2 of the erosion project is currently planned for March of 2019.
  4. With input from newly elected Board members, work to set up a tree committee.
  5. Consider changing trash removal services because of consistent billing problems.
  6. Flooding around 2231 – have a proposal to try to address using concrete (French drain), but the homeowner is uninterested in this approach and there is some evidence that an erosion approach using Sunrise might be better, so the 2019 Board should address this in early 2019.
  7. Address the water flow behind the row from 2201 – 2215, as it impacts the bus path and could overwhelm the erosion work starting at 2217.

**Items Deferred to 2020**

1. Parking lot sealing.

**Items Deferred to 2025**

1. Parking lot grind and mill.