



# Monthly Board Meeting

**DATE:** February 10, 2021

**LOCATION:** Zoom

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mary Hackett, Susan McCormick, Steve Ward, Jan Sprinkle, Deb Kelsey and Stacy Seapy

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**GUESTS PRESENT:** None

**CALL TO ORDER:** 6:32 p.m.

## **FINANCE SECRETARY:**

(Shared via email)

### **Finance Report**

Third quarter invoices were sent in January, and payments have been coming in steadily. A big THANK YOU to all who pay their dues faithfully – it's much appreciated! As of this writing:

- 56 homeowners or 42% have paid in full
- 74 homeowners or 55% are paying reliably quarterly or monthly
- 4 homeowners or 3% have not made any payments or are seriously behind

Homeowner accounts to watch:

Status	Name	Invoice number	Amount due	Notes
Draft	1475 MD	609	\$3866	Mary to file court action
Partially Paid	1496 LFD	666	\$1369	Began year owing part of last year's dues. Paid \$518 in November. No payments since.
Partially Paid	257 LVD	540	\$1036	Began year owing last year's dues + late fees. Paid \$1,000 in fall but nothing since.
Unpaid (Sent)	261 LVD	542	\$996	Deceased – estate in probate. Exchanged emails with her son who hopes to settle account by Jan/Feb.
Unpaid (Sent)	1505 LFD	633	\$996	Paid last year's dues late – part of the home purchase deal. No payments this year.
Partially Paid	1454 MD	592	\$415	Deceased Feb 2021. Paid monthly; owes ½ year dues.

## **TREASURER:**

- Susie has not yet ordered checks—a review of usage for the past few years suggests we can wait a few more months with plenty to spare. She did learn that we can order checks and deposit slips separately.
- This month she will make our annual payment to the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, but want to first verify the amount with them. Their rules have changed, and she wants to be certain what they are calling is “application” fee is, indeed, a one-time fee. We are billed annually, so it is confusing.
  - Discussion ensued about why we pay for this? – Susie will do more research. We started paying for this at the recommendation of a previous board president.
- She does not recall ever seeing an invoice from the Security firm.

Checking Account Balance: 47,505.64

Savings Account Balance: 32,712.68

## SECRETARY:

- Shared the Handbook electronically for everyone to make comments or edits.
- Continuing to work on a database for homeowners.

## COMMON AREA:

### **Common Areas Report**

In March, the Garden Spot will start a project to replace the plants in the beds around our Four Seasons sign on Four Seasons Drive. A mix of drought-tolerant perennials and evergreen bushes will give a fresh look to the area around the sign and better represent the many improvements homeowners have made to their property.

- Susie asked about whether the plants will need watered in, Steve said we can likely ask Garden Spot to do watering service for the first year until they take hold.

Steve would like to work with the board to identify other common areas that can be improved with the remainder of the maintenance budget. This could mean a series of small projects in multiple common areas that clear invasive plants, install new plants, and address erosion, especially in Area C & E.

Common Area Budget Item 2019-20	Landscaping	Tree Maintenance	Special Projects
<b>Initial Allocation</b>	\$16,800	\$10,000	\$10,500
<b>What's left in budget</b>	\$8,400	\$5,125	\$6,500
<b>Amount Spent So Far</b>	\$8,400	\$4,875	\$4,000
<b>Detail Items</b>			
July: The Grind took down pine tree behind Rena Moon in area F and cut limbs from oak tree in area C		\$1,950	
July: Algieri Landscaping 2 visits	\$1,400		
August: Algieri Landscaping 2 visits	\$1,400		
September: Algieri Landscaping 2 visits	\$1,400		
October: Algieri Landscaping 2 visits	\$1,400		
November: Algieri Landscaping 2 visits	\$1,400		
December: Algieri Landscaping 2 visits	\$1,400		
December: The Grind: George Padaroff's blocked driveway and fallen limbs M and N		\$1,700	
December: The Grind: Fallen tree in area M and fallen limbs next to 316 LFL		\$1,225	
February / March: Garden Spot installs new plants around Four Seasons sign.			\$4,000

## ARCHITECTURE:

- Waiting until weather improves/warms before sending maintenance letters.
- Sent a letter to 316 LFL who had a bunch of clutter in their side yard, waiting to hear back.
- 1452 MD – still has work that needs done, Deb will call her.
- Will be doing another walk through of the neighborhood soon – will reach out to board to see if anyone else can come on the walkaround to help.
- 1449 MD will be installing a shed, considering updating a fence (wanted vinyl, will be told that they can't do white – Board will look into updating the ).

## PRESIDENT REPORT:

1. County Waste
  - a. They bought Time Disposal (our previous waste management company)
  - b. Our contract likely goes through end of June (Deb will call to confirm), we will stay tuned on what this means for us.
  - c. Will ask new company about recycling.
2. Walking Security Patrol
  - a. Security company will periodically walk through the neighborhood.

## OLD BUSINESS:

1. Comcast Contract Survey
  - a. Will send out a week or two after next newsletter.

b. In March Meeting, form a committee to negotiate new contract.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. No new business

**ADJOURN:** 7:22 p.m.

**NEXT MEETING:** Wednesday, March 10, 2021 – Location TBD

**OUT OF MEETING BUSINESS:**

Discussion about GARDEN Spot & Vote via email (Jan 26-Feb 1)

**1. Initial email from Steve:**

I contacted 3 nurseries asking for an estimate to replace the worn-out bushes around our Four Seasons sign. Ivy Nursery only does commercial installations, but Snows and Garden Spot submitted proposals which are attached. We have \$10,500 in this year's budget for common area maintenance and improvements that hasn't been touched. We're half way through the year and for the first time in 4 years, we still have money in the tree budget (\$5,000) and shouldn't need to rob the maintenance budget for tree work. I think it's time to do this.

Apologies for the snapshots of Snow's list. Their proposal was printed and it appears as 3 attached photos. The A,B,C in their proposal refers to the 3 plant beds around the sign. The Garden Spot is just an edit file listing plants - they will arrange them after existing plants are cleared.

A summary of the proposals:

- a. Snows: \$4296; 88 plants. Does NOT include removal. Algieri would have to do that.
- b. Garden Spot: \$3250; 68 plants. Does NOT include removal, but they will perform removal for \$750. They might be better suited at plant removal than Algieri, but I asked them to bid this separately for a like to like comparison with Snow's.

Garden Spot has done work for us before, and since they're close might give us better service, so I'm leaning toward their proposal.

What do you all think? OK to proceed? If we want something done this fiscal year we should probably move now.

**2. Jan:**

I like the idea of being neighborly and hiring The Garden Spot. I don't know the heights of many things that they proposed, but will look them up. I would like to see a few tall things, like Crepe Myrtle trees. Don't know what that would do to their plan; or if anyone else cares.

Crepe myrtle with their interesting shapes and beautiful bark usually look good in all 4 seasons. Same with hollies since they are evergreens. I do love the grasses that grow in clumps and send up great feathery plumes. However, we have to use the chain saw to cut them back after the season. If needed, will Algieri do that? Is GS proposing some type of enclosed beds? Or simply putting the bulbs and seeds into the ground? If there is a sketch of some kind that would be helpful.

Sorry to ask so many questions but if we're spending thousands, we should feel comfortable that we will like the results.

**3. Steve:**

Thanks for the comments. I'll try to respond - let me know if I miss anything or if you have other thoughts.

Neither vendor suggested trees and there are a number of large trees behind the sign providing a lot of shade already. There are 3 small trees in the existing beds and I told them to leave them as they're small. We could swap one out if your heart is set on a crepe myrtle here, or plant trees elsewhere as there will be 1/2 the budget left for improvements in other areas.

The plant suggestions are a mixture of slow growing bushes and perennials. The bushes would remain all year, but the perennials can be cut back to the ground once they're spent and no longer attractive. This would be easy for Algieri to do as appropriate. The current bed only blooms sporadically in early spring. The suggested plant lists bloom through spring and summer into fall, with the evergreen bushes remaining in winter.

They charge money for illustrated plans. Snows charges \$49 for a simple hand drawing that shows where plants will go. I didn't ask Garden Spot, but they probably would do something similar. If having a picture would help everyone, and we don't mind spending the \$49 I could ask for one.

**4. Deb**

I trust in whatever you all decide. Not being well versed in VA horticulture leaves me pretty unqualified to say much. But I do like Crepe Myrtles!

**5. Stacy**

Thanks for getting these quotes, Steve! I vote go for it. I'm more inclined to say go with garden spot too as they're right up the road and cheaper, but I don't know plants really at all to weigh in on comparing the quotes from that end of things.

**6. Susie**

Agree. Garden Spot is the way to go. I get stuff there all the time, and like the small business, neighborhood vibe. Also agree that a smaller species crepe myrtle would be lovely.

One more thought. Assume we are going for low maintenance. Both plant lists include some things that will need cutting back each fall.

**7. Jan:**

Thanks for the explanation. With the small trees staying there, you're right – we probably don't need or have room for crepe myrtles. Glad to know we'll have some blooming things for a longer period. That will make the area look better. It is definitely "tired" now. I'm happy with what you have presented from the Garden Spot. I'm sure it will look much better and I don't really need a sketch. Thanks for getting all this together.

**8. Mary:**

For an expenditure of this size the board needs to have a vote. A motion should be made and seconded, a discussion ensue, then a vote taken. The whole process should be added to either the Jan. or Feb. board meeting notes as an addendum.

**MOTION**

- Steve:** I move we accept the bid from Garden Spot to replace the plantings around our sign.
- Susie:** I second the motion

**DISCUSSION**

**3. Mary:**

I like Snow's suggestion of bulbs. More of them could be put in. I also prefer some of their other suggestions, e.g. using Endless Summer Hydrangea. Snow's seems to be using more flowers than shrubs. I don't like Garden Spot's suggestion for the two Laurels. NC state extension says Otto Luyken laurel has high severity of poison characteristics and is very toxic. We don't need that. Could substitute the hydrangeas. I have some Endless Summer. It's pretty good. Any kind of hydrangea is good. A description on line of Nandina says it needs lots of organic matter. Do we have that up there or will GS add? Description on line of Plumbago says it "can become invasive." Again, something we don't need. The GS suggested Rudbeckia (Black Eyed Susan), which from my experience, can also become very invasive. I had some in the yard several years ago and it was taking over the beds it was in. I dug it all out a few years after that and again the next year and again the next year, etc. It spreads by underground runners and they are very tenacious. I'm still keeping an eye out for it and discovering new volunteers. That Goldflame Spirea is kind of blah. Regular spirea is better looking. The Carnival Heuchera is also pretty blah.

I agree with Susie that whatever is done should be done with an eye to ease of maintenance. I think that's very important. The less needed, the better. We don't need to be paying a big annual upkeep. I don't see that there's anything wrong with the azaleas that are there. Granted the forsythia is a little weedy, but it does last for years. Why not fill in around what's there instead of a scorched earth policy?

And whatever happened to the dog park suggestion?

**4. Jan:**

So I am not a bulb person. The ones I've had, I needed to dig them up to divide them or they died off in a year or two. Flowering shrubs are more appealing to low maintenance in my book. Love Nandina. It doesn't need much tending. It's a nice height and pretty all year. Red berries in winter and white flowers in summer. Hydrangea's are good – big blooms for an extended period. How about some

rhododendrons? They are evergreen and have beautiful lilac-colored blooms. Also, azaleas – get some that bloom spring and fall. They have a wide variety of colors also, so we could have some white, pink and red. Echinacea's don't spread, do they? Mine certainly haven't but I only have a couple. I also like non-blooming red bushes – don't know the names, but there are a couple. And I like spirea – don't know the difference varieties. They usually bloom from spring through early fall. I noticed that there were 2 votes for crepe myrtle, so I'd put that back on the table if there is room where they can get sun.

Can we suggest things to either GS or Snows?

**5. Susie:**

I'm sure our tastes are varied! I would go with Garden Spot, including for removal unless Algieri can give us a super deal. Below are planting some thoughts:

Fewer small plants/bulbs and more medium to large sizes that are sustainable and have more impact, like the hydrangea, nandina (they will prep the soil), perhaps adding burning bush. And crepe myrtle also comes in bush varieties. Grasses are good—just need a haircut once a year.

I think our azaleas are past best life, and our soil is greatly in need of amendment. Let's be certain it won't wash down the hill with the first big rain. Steve, I know you talked about a berm at one point. What if we asked GS for an adjusted quote if we all agree on lower maintenance, greater impact, nothing potentially toxic or invasive?

**6. Steve:**

I gave both vendors parameters of drought tolerance, low maintenance plants. I told them about the problem of existing azaleas and forsythias needing trimming multiple times a year. The bushes they recommend shouldn't require much trimming if at all. The perennials only need to be cut back once a year after they have bloomed, dropped their seeds and dried out. Algieri's crew can easily handle that. We will have to give the new plants TLC until they are established, but after that they should be OK on their own.

I asked Snows and GS about cutting back the existing bushes, but they thought they were spent and it would be better to start with fresh plants as the existing plants wouldn't fit in with the new ones. Also once they did grow back we'd be faced with the same trimming/lollipop problem we have now.

I can ask GS to swap out some plants for a couple crepe myrtle bushes since they are favored by Susie and Jan. What colors do you want in the crepe myrtles?

**7. Susie:**

Whatever they think will fit in best with the other colors. I'm all for no lollipops!

**VOTE**

**1. Susie:** Yes

**2. Mary:** No for the following reasons:

We explained in the September newsletter (and BTW we're due to get another one out ASAP; we're already late) that we were raising the dues 5% this year. In the same newsletter we said we had spent \$6,000 more than budgeted on tree work b/c of falling, aging trees and winter storms. And now we're spending thousands of dollars on a beautification project? I have not heard from any homeowner besides board members Steve and Susie requesting such a project. We got push back in response to the September raise and if we got push back on the raise I'm pretty certain that we'll get push back on this \$5,000 project and I cannot justify to any objectors that we're now spending several thousands on an extensive beautification project. Also, I don't agree that trimming azaleas and forsythia once a year is that big a deal. Granted, the bushes already there are aging and may need replacement. If it has to be done I think we could get away with a much smaller project.

**3. Steve:** Yes for the following reasons:

**01)** The money is in the budget, which we all approved and published in the newsletter. Not spending the money isn't going to save the community any money or change the amount of the dues. When we raised the dues by 5% last year it wasn't just for trees -- that was just the explanation Mary decided to publish in the newsletter. We also allocated \$10,500 for common area maintenance and improvements. We also were able to move money to Savings and create an emergency fund that we haven't had for decades. As I recall, a few people squawked and the overwhelming majority said nothing and paid up. We have excellent compliance in dues paying this year with just a handful of nonpayers --- far fewer nonpayers than when the dues was much less years ago. The squawkers don't really have a financial point - they just like to complain.

**02)** Since this community hasn't spent any money to improve the looks of the common areas in decades I think a lot of folks have given up on the idea. Since I've been working on the common areas the past 4 years a number of folks have remarked to me on the sad state of the grounds, and how much better the community looked when they moved in years ago.

**03)** We should do MORE than just the sign since we have money in the budget to make real improvements to the common areas for the first time in decades. We will still have \$6,500 after paying for the sign project to install new plantings in other areas, improve drainage, etc. We should improve the appearance of the common areas to match the improvements many folks have made to their property in recent years.

A note: The Garden Spot bid is \$4,000 - not \$5,000. I talked w/Algieri and he no longer has a tractor that can extract large plants easily, so we should have GS do the removal as well (plants, material, installation \$3250 + removal \$750).

a. Mary Response to Steve: Nowhere in the September newsletter does it say the dues were raised because of the tree issues. You are misremembering.

**4. Deb:**

OK, I need to think this over but will vote by Sunday night.

I open my blinds everyday and look at that mess of logs and branches down there in the common area and still wonder why, As do my neighbors, why there are no funds to figure out a way of cleaning it up. It affects my property value.

But it's not "all about me", and my neighbors, right?

Yes, I agree, EVERYONE I speak to comments how the community "Used to look". I too agree it looks old, worn and dated with what is left from plantings that were probably done 50 years ago.

I need to read through everything and will get back with you all.

**5. Stacy:**

I vote yes. I think a refresh of such a public space would be a good use of the budgeted funds for common area improvements.

**6. Mary:**

Okay, that's 5 yes, 1 no. Go ahead, Steve.