**B&G Meeting Minutes**

October 9, 2019

Present: Deborah, Nancy, Charles, Gavin, Beth, Claudia, Joanne, Cynthia, Victor, Annabelle

**Budget**: Our records show we have spent 87K for the year, but when compared to CMCs payment records for the landscaping accounts the numbers do not match up (CMC shows 107K spent). Nancy is working to identify the discrepancies so that we can understand what to expect in 2020. Also, a contractor had reported non-payment of an invoice, but he had actually been paid twice. We need to understand the process since we are the POCs for contractors but not the people writing the checks.

**Communications:** News update on fall planting jobs pushed to the website while we were meeting. Deborah worked with board to use Facebook and TownSquare to encourage residents to water small trees and shrubs during drought. Some of the court chairs also pushed watering notice to their courts – we need to do more of this kind of regular communication so everyone understands that watering plants and new grass seed is not a service. We need residents to help and remember that the water is paid for in our condo fees.

New webpage info focusing on FAQs for residents is ready to go, Deborah was just delaying sending to not overload the webmaster. Will send this weekend so it hopefully posts before annual meeting. Thank you to everyone for contributing to the FAQs and reviewing the assorted drafts.

Also co-chairs reached out to Mews Landscaping Committee Chair and have also been introduced to Arbors chair. All villages face common challenge of reminding residents that if we like the look of Fairlington we all have to help keep it green. All committees on the south side met once last year; going to try to make that at periodic way to share info and ideas. For instance, Mews and Arbors have “tagged” all their trees, so they know exactly what they own and where on the property they are and how healthy the trees are. This should help them better plan and budget for tree replacements. Committee likes the idea of maybe trying the same thing here.

Residents are asking about shrub and tree “clear cutting” for the fence replacement. We will remind board to share information on what is being pruned and removed for the new fences – very little is actually slated for removal and many shrubs already provide sufficient clearance for fence builders to work.

**Landscaping contract**: Nancy will be sending to 3 companies for bids in next week after making some last minor edits and checks.

EE will be starting aeration and lawn seeding in the next two weeks. Also will be doing some fall planting as outlined in the news update on the website.

**NVCC seminar on sustainable landscaping solutions recap**: Charles attended and brought back a lot of great information, including a sample landscape contract put together for HOAs by Fairfax County. Some of the highlights were to mow grass high (3-4 inches) and leave clippings on the ground. Reston has gone all in for native plants – getting rid of all small lawn areas. Native plants are heartier than non-native and cheaper to maintain over the long term. They also are good for the native birds and insects and support the local ecosystem.

The presentation offered lots of reasons to minimize green lawns in favor of natives; we see in the Meadows the challenge of growing grass under big trees. We also should look at converting “marginal” lawn areas and replace with native ground covers. Good thing for us to look at in a spring walk-around. We also should look at converting “marginal” lawn areas and replace with native ground covers. Good thing for us to look at in a spring walk-around.

One of their suggestions was to add provisions to contracts that “default to native plants” – look for native plants first. Another message was to avoid planning nandina trees -- the berries contain cyanide and can kill birds and other small animals if not pruned to remove the berries. We have some nandinas in the Meadows, so we should make sure not to add more. There are native alternatives to ornamentals like this. We also need to make sure that neither the contractor nor residents plant anything classified by the state as a “noxious weed”. We should add the link to that list to our webpage so residents know what to avoid in their front and back flower beds.

Late-winter/early spring group activity – walk around and look at all courts to prioritize which need the most work, and while at it look for invasive species that should be removed.

**New trees:** We are getting 2 sweetgums and 1 tulip poplar from the County free native tree give-away. Claudia and Joe will be picking them up the end of the month and Claudia will look for new homes for them on the property. We need resident sponsors who will pick up gator bags and keep them watered as they are baby trees. We also need residents who are near young trees generally to allow sponsors and other volunteers to use their hose hookups to water new plants. Gavin has been taking care of a new tree at the entrance to his court and lugging buckets of water because his hose hookup isn’t close enough is a challenge many tree sponsors may have. Can be a talking point at the annual meeting and the focus of the next B&G news update. Also will use FB, TownSquare and Court Chairs to find sponsors. Would be great to have a B&G rep for every court – we have about 2/3s covered now.

**Issue Log:** There are a couple of items on the list. Two, concerning plants around the pool and tennis courts look like spring questions. A resident identified two dead shrubs behind their unit for removal and a maple tree between courts 12 and 13 needs to be replaced – Nancy will ask EE for a proposal for that work. There is a cherry tree in court 3 that barely produced leaves this season; need AAA to look at it and tell us if maybe it will be ok next year now that the county has removed a giant oak that was over shading it. There is also a tree in court 3 dropping large branches on the roof of a unit – AAA will need to advise on that tree as well. There is a resident in court 4 who would like something added between side windows of unit. Joanne will look at the space and talk to the resident about what they are picturing.

**Other business:** Pruning question – how do we get better control of the overgrown shrubbery in front of windows, especially some of the hollies that have been left to grown without routine pruning. It appears that a lot of pruning has been targeted rather than a general practice. Contract says we should have three prunings per year – Nancy will make sure our 3rd pruning for 2019 happens. New contract will contain more specific language on what we expect from pruning, including on size, shape, and cutting at nodes. We want to get away from needing to do drastic, corrective pruning. Deborah also will talk with other villages to learn how they manage and oversee pruning.

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**Meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.**

**Next meeting:** November 6th, 2019 at the FCC.