Fence construction is here: what you need to know

The Board held a community meeting with fence contractor Kolas Construction on October 29. About 50 residents were in attendance. This article summarizes the key points and questions from the meeting. Construction begins November 12 and is moving forward in three phases to replace all 288 fences in the Meadows. Phase I will be courts 9 through 14 and the part of court 15 that backs up to court 14; phase II: courts 5 through 8 and the rest of court 15; phase III: courts one through four. Kolas will work through the winter, except for a holiday break from Dec. 20-Jan. 6, pending favorable weather and expects the project to last 10 months. Kolas will, in general, work on one court at a time, but may work back-to-back sections of courts at the same time (such as the adjoining parts of court 14 and 15). The dates for when specific courts will begin construction will not be certain until about 2 weeks before construction is to begin on a specific court. Slight modification of the schedule is expected. This accommodation will improve efficiencies in construction, working to reduce the overall time of the project.

Kolas will do its best to minimize the heavy equipment around the Meadows and will store some materials at the basketball court (approximately 50,000 pieces of lumber are being used). Kolas estimates that it will take five days to complete a row of five fence units. Although the fence posts are a little larger than current posts Kolas will try to stay within the same fence and gate width as currently stands.

When surveyed, the community overwhelming preferred the gate latches that most resemble the ones we have currently. Initially we believed we had a choice of a self-closing hinge or a decorative hinge. The self-closing hinge could not support the weight of the gates as constructed. The 10” decorative hinge does not have a self closing feature, but the size of the hinge will help reduce the sagging of gates over time. The gate hinges will generally be on the left, and gates will usually swing outward. However, in some cases, landscape features, utility obstacles, and soil grade may require modification to this approach.

Measured from the inside, the fences will be six feet high for the first 5 ½ feet out from the unit door, and then optimally, five and a half feet high for the remainder of the fence. The demonstration fence construction brought several issues to light for managing the slope of patios and consistent fence height across the entire length of a buildings fence. The goal is to have a consistent height for the stepped down portion of the fence (5 ½ feet ideally). It was pointed out at the fence meeting the height of the boards varied from 5 ½ feet on the demonstration fence. Future fence construction will try to maintain the 5 ½ feet height, however the drop down from the 6 foot section nearest the porch may be greater or less than the optimum of 6 inch drop to the 5 ½ foot fence height depending on the slope. Occasionally, an additional step down will need to be incorporated into the fence length to accommodate excessive slope in patios.

There was a comment at the Kolas/Meadows fence meeting about the use of screws, instead of nails, in the construction of the fence. We investigated the feasibility of using screws, especially in the construction of the gates. The weak point in the construction of the old gates was the use of screws from the back side. Constructing the gates using nails going all the way through the face boards into the gate frame 2x4 is more structurally sound than having screws go through the 2x4 and only ½ inch into the face board. The board decision is to continue as originally agreed to use galvanized nails for all fence construction.

The Meadows board has been in touch with Verizon and Comcast. Most of the cables have been removed from being attached to or woven through the fence. The conduit attached to most fences will be un-attached from the fence and re-attached after the new fence is constructed. Homeowners may bury the cable/conduit, otherwise it will be re-attached to the new fence.

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The new fence lumber is grade “A” for the post and support boards and grade “D” (best grade – small knots) for the fence slats, pressure treated pine and are expected to last at least 20+ years. (Squirrels do not like to eat the pine as they sometimes eat the current cedar fences.) Over time, they will turn a gray color. The board will decide once the project is completed on whether to have UV treatment added to the pressure treated fences. The decision will be based in part on whether the benefits to the fence appearance of spray treating the wood every four years will outweigh the cost - approximately $100,000 to treat all 4.6 miles of fencing (both sides of 2.3 miles of fencing) every 4 years.

Prior to starting work in each court, the contractor, together with Meadows maintenance staff, will do a pre-walk of the court and notify residents of major items that should be removed from against the fence. It is the responsibility of the homeowner to remove all items off and away from the fence (workers need space to work on the fence). Plants may be damaged during construction, you may want to remove them during this time. The plan is for residents to be given a two-week notice to make any prepare for removal of the old fence and installation of their new fence. Residents who will need to move major objects or trim trees were initially notified in the spring 2019. The Meadows bylaws state that patios and pavers should be completed 18” from the fence line. Therefore, the repair of any damage to patios and pavers that are less than 18” from the fence line during construction will be the responsibility of the unit owner. If a resident has a special request for a fence, for example, related to the current location of spigots, or the swing of a gate, they are asked to contact the board asap to make their request.