The Common at Sinnott Farm

Annual Homeowner’s Association Meeting

November 17, 2012

Minutes

Date: November 17, 2011

Place: Room #4 at Sacred Heart Church, 26 Wintonbury Ave, Bloomfield, CT

Board Attendees: Bobby Woods, President

 Ann Hanks, Vice President

 Jeff Olmstead, Treasurer

 Patrick DeLorenzo, Secretary

 Laurie Price, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

Homeowners: There were approximately 20-30 homeowners in attendance

Call to Order:

The Annual Homeowner’s meeting was called to order at 7:06 PM by the President, Bobby Woods.

President Bobby Woods reviewed the meeting purpose (see slide 3 in the presentation deck) and introduced the Board members. Each Board member provided a brief introduction of themselves and their role on the Board of Directors. Mr. Woods also introduced Ms. Leslie Woods as Chairperson of the By-Laws Committee and Ms. Ann Hanks who served on the Committee with Ms. Woods.

Review and Accept 2010 Annual Meeting Minutes

Mr. DeLorenzo asked for any comments on the 2010 Annual Meeting Minutes. Ms. Marie MacDonald of Timothy Lane identified a typo in the minutes as follows:

* Page 1 – remove the “s” from Farms in the sentence that starts “There were 3 re-sales in The….”

Mr. DeLorenzo asked for a motion to approve the 2010 Minutes. Mr. Rob Gibby of Timothy Lane made the motion and it was seconded. The motion carried and the 2010 Annual Meeting Minutes were approved with correction noted.

2011 Highlights

*Mr. Woods reviewed highlights of 2011 (see slide 6 in* the presentation deck) including the following comments:

* A new law firm was hired to represent the Association due to the retirement of the Association’s previous attorney. Mr. Alan Silver of Levy & Droney in Farmington is the Association’s new attorney of record
* Mr. Silver did an extensive review of the Association’s policies and recommended changes based on the Common Interest Ownership Act (CIOA) that became effective on July 1, 2010
* As voiced by many homeowners in a survey, the Board of Directors established and implemented stronger procedures regarding overdue maintenance fees and the Board is making good headway in collecting the fees
* The Board interviewed and selected a Management Company for the Association to start effective 1/1/2012
* There will be a vote on the management firm later during the Budget review portion of the meeting with Mr. Olmstead

Other Notable Activity

Mr. Woods reviewed other notable Board activities (please refer to slide 7 in the presentation deck).

Discussion took place around the work that Russo is doing for the Association. In general, Russo is doing a fine job but some homeowners noted that there were issues around shoveling snow away from mailboxes. It was noted that Russo did do this during the first year of their contract; however clearing snow from the mailboxes is not a provision in their contract. It is up to the homeowner to shovel out their mailbox. This was a nice gesture on the part of Russo that first year. The past winter was exceptional with tremendous amount of snow fall and this extra shoveling was not done.

Other homeowners commented on the fact that the Post Office will not deliver mail if they cannot get their truck close enough to the mail box. Plowing must be done to the curb by Russo. It was also noted that some driveways were blocked by the snow plowing especially in the cu-de-sacs.

Mr. Woods made the decision to table the snow plow discussion so the Board can get on with the rest of the agenda. Mr. DeLorenzo noted this item in the “Parking Lot” (refer to Parking Lot notes at end of these minutes).

By-Laws Amendments (Discussion and Comment)

Mr. Woods asked Ms. Leslie Woods, Chairperson of the By-Laws Committee to present the Amendments for Homeowner review and comment. Ms. Woods introduced the Committee members who helped modify the Amendments. They are Louise Moran, Heidi Kleinman, Dawn McDermott and Ann Hanks.

Ms. Woods stated the purpose for these changes was to clarify and make the By-Laws more reasonable for homeowners to follow. There are several changes. Ms. Woods asked homeowners to keep an open mind when commenting on the amendments. The By-Laws Committee tried to make the amendments better for everyone without meddling or making it difficult to comply.

Examples of some changes – levying of fines, Tag Sales. If the By-law has not worked the Committee took steps to make the By-Law into a more reasonable fit. The By-Laws Committee listened to homeowners and tried to make the best decision.

The next step is for homeowners to provide comments back to the Board. The Board will review the comments and make a final decision.

Following is the discussion around the review of the Preamble and the Amendments:

* Preamble – No comments
* Amendment A-1: Tag Sales – Agree that it is good. Questions – Why is there a time limit? Traffic was the concern around making time limits. Suggestion was made to leave this open and change at a later time if a problem occurs.
* Amendment B-1: Parking Restrictions – This amendment was revised to state when you can park on the street and when you cannot park on the street (question also raised about the number of cars that can be parked in the driveway). The Committee contacted the Town of Bloomfield and determined the By-Law amendment should conform to the Town parking restrictions. Thus overnight parking in the Lanes is restricted between the hours of 2 to 6 AM. Fines and Towing may result if violations occur. Parking of trucks or commercial vehicles is allowed but not motor homes. It was requested that the Board review this Amendment to provide further clarity on the language. Mr. DeLorenzo added this item to the Parking Lot.
* Amendment C-1: Variance and Appeals Process – Not much changed in this Amendment. There are deadlines for submission and how to submit a request. There is an appeal process to request a variance. Comments noted around this Amendment include – subjective to folks reviewing the request (Covenant Committee) – just have the amendment state what the homeowner could have. Why is there a need for a variance request? The purpose of this By-Law is to keep the Community looking good. The changes are to clarify gray areas in the By-Law. A homeowner can be fined up to $25/day for not submitting the proper documentation after receiving warning.
* Amendment D-1: Planting, Landscaping, Outside Structures and Fencing – Typo noted – remove “s” from Farms – no other comments noted
* Amendment E-1: Board Conduct & Communications - It was noted that on Page 5, #3 indicates posting within 10 days but letter “e” states 3. These should be corrected to state the same number of days.
* Amendment F-1: Committees – No comments noted
* Amendment H: General By-Laws Update – Voting for the By-Laws. No votes allowed – it is notice and comment only. The Board decides on the Amendment based on comments received. Need to clarify the number of votes per unit versus the number of people (i.e., one vote per home).

Discussions Regarding Professional Management Companies

Mr. Olmstead presented the Board of Directors decision to choose a Management Company for the Association. Mr. Olmstead provided background information (please refer to slide 10 in the presentation deck):

* Decided to hire a Professional Management Company effective January 1, 2012
* In the best interest of the Community – most associations have management companies
* Initially Sinnott Farm was a smaller community but now has 5 Lanes and there is a lot more to manage
* Formal proposals were requested
* Other considerations in addition to the cost were reviewed prior to coming to this decision
* Advance Property Management (APM) was most willing to work with the Association and provided the most flexibility in meeting the needs of the Community where other companies were not
* References provided by APM were contacted and all three were favorable

Using a Professional Management Company

Mr. Olmstead continued the discussion around the advantages of using a Professional Management Company (please refer to slide 11 in the presentation deck):

* Preparing and mailing invoices is a labor intensive process today and there is opportunity for making mistakes
* Any bills that need to be paid will come before the Board before being paid by the Management Company
* Management of Rules and By-Laws will be handled by the Management Company including the enforcement of those rules (this makes the process more objective)
* Management Company will correct on a timely basis any issues with vendors – including Russo for lawn mowing
* Assist the Community with obtaining providers to perform services for homeowners – example – paving a driveway or getting a list of reputable professional services providers

APM – What You Can Expect

Mr. Olmstead continued the discussion regarding the selection of APM and what homeowners can expect (please see slide 12 in the presentation deck):

* Expect quarterly invoices from APM in a different format than today
* Expect to send payment to a new address – APM does not accept credit cards for payment of Association dues (this was a trade off in choosing APM)
* Expect to have a seasoned property manager from APM assigned to the Sinnott Farm Community
* APM will work closely with the Board

Discussion regarding APM from the homeowners present included the following:

Mr. Myron Stewart stated that he is a Property Manager for another Property Management Firm and made the following suggestions to the Board for finalizing a contract with APM:

* Make sure the contract covers the following or they will be additional fees – Postage, After hours calls, Collections and maintenance
* Post marks on envelopes – add a late fee if past the due date
* Mr. Stewart uses the law firm of London & London and notes that the attorney will not charge the Association for legal costs related to collections but go to the homeowner and the homeowner pays these costs
* Foreclosures – banks will pay the past due fees

Other comments:

* Fees are due on the first of the month in each quarter –late fee applies after the end of the month if not received
* Homeowners should not be making up the difference in the budget for those who are not paying common fees
* CT statutes only assure the Association will receive 6 months worth of past due common fees – pay off includes liens, 6 months common fees, then the remainder owed if any money is left

2011 Planned vs. Actual

Mr. Olmstead reviewed the 2011 planned versus actual budget with the homeowners (please refer to slide 13 in the presentation deck). Mr. Olmstead pointed out that Legal Services exceed the planned budget by $5,000 but that some of this amount would be recoverable in the next year budget as past due amounts are collected. This increase was due to legal expenses associated with maintenance fee delinquencies and review of Association By-Laws by Attorney Silver’s office.

Other notable expenses included the unplanned category cost of $1,125. This cost was to remove a fallen tree on common land due to a storm, cutting grass and picking up other fallen limbs on the vacant property at 10 Quail Run Lane (there was a separate quote received for this work) and purchase of 2 new controllers for the irrigation system.

It was also noted that foreclosure procedures began in October on 4 homes and this will take a minimum of 90-120 days.

Homeowner comments included:

* Cost of water – why did this go up? One homeowner indicated that watering was seen 7 days per week on some common areas – also noted that MDC raised the rates
* Russo – may not be setting up the system correctly – it was noted that there are no sensors to stop watering on a day that it may be raining
* Homeowner asked if it is even necessary to water at all – if so then timers should be used
* Mr. DeLorenzo added this item to the Parking Lot – Water Timers and Zones

Outstanding Maintenance Fees

Mr. Olmstead reviewed the Outstanding Maintenance Fees with the homeowners (please see slide 14 in the presentation deck). Of note:

* New, stronger approach has been taken by the Board to collect overdue fees
* Past due amounts owed were higher in 2011 compared to previous years
* Outstanding fees are not owed by the same 10 people this year as last year (this means homeowners previously not delinquent are having trouble paying association fees)
* There are currently 15% of homeowners who are delinquent

Overdue Maintenance Fee Breakdown

Mr. Olmstead presented the overdue maintenance fee breakdown by Lane (please see slide 15 in the presentation deck).

Current Account Balances

Mr. Olmstead presented the current account balances (please see slide 16 in the presentation deck):

* Operating fund balance is the checking account balance and is sufficient to last until the end of year for paying bills
* Reserve fund is the Association savings account
* Capital Expenditure Fund is the Association savings account and includes CDs. This is money to be used for paving roads and storm drain repairs. The next Lane to be repaved is Spring Hill Lane.
* Clean-up of tree damage due to the storm and legal expenses may come from the reserve fund (unplanned and emergency expenses)
* Proposed increase in fees is not only to cover APM costs but also to contribute to the Association Reserve Funds

2012 Budget Proposal

Mr. Olmstead presented the 2012 Budget Proposal (please see slide 17 in the presentation deck). Of note:

* Management Company Fee is $7,920. This is the gross fee
* Common Area Clean Up (trimming brush along Ryefield Hollow and to brush hog filed adjacent to the Pond) is $3,640 (this is a quote from Russo)
* The 2012 budget contains no proposed expenditures for Infrastructure Maintenance (roads) as road maintenance has been deferred by the Board
* There may be expenditures in 2012 to do just the storm drain repair

Homeowner comments:

* Storm Damage – Town of Bloomfield will not pick up branches from the Lanes. Homeowners pay taxes and believe that these tax dollars should be used to pay for the storm clean-up
* It was noted by Mr. DeLorenzo that the town will pick up if the debris is moved to the entrance of the Lanes as the Town will pick up at the corner of Town roads that intersect with the Lanes
* Question – Where will the money go from the collections (of overdue fees)? This money will go to Roads
* Be sure the Association is aware of how the management company works and if they are accessible 24X7
* Homeowners understand that the Board needs help with managing the Association
* Homeowners are frustrated that taxes continue to rise and do not see where this money is going
* Recommend using money in budget to pay for the first year of the Management company and not raise the quarterly fees
* Homeowners are struggling due to economy and cannot afford the increase

Increase in Maintenance Fees to $240 per Quarter

Mr. Olmstead provided additional explanation for the increase in the Quarterly fees (please see slide 18 in the presentation deck). Items to note from the discussion include:

* First increase in fees since 2007
* Some expenses will be eliminated – such as the Bookkeeper

Homeowner comment:

* Suggested that the Association does not push for a 2 year contract with the Management Company but have a one year contract with the option to renew

Mr. Olmstead asked for a motion to approve the 2012 Budget. A motion was received from the floor and seconded. The 2012 Budget was passed by the majority of homeowners present. There were 4 homeowners opposed to the new budget.

Homeowner Input & Questions

* There was a lot of discussion around the recent storm and clean-up from the storm. Mr. DeLorenzo added this item to the Parking Lot. One homeowner mentioned contacting the Department of Public Works Director about picking up debris on private roads – Mr. Olmstead will take this as an action item to follow-up with the Town and to let the homeowners know the results
* Discussion around Russo – homeowners requested that the Board speak to Russo in advance of this coming winter about poles on streets, cul-de-sacs, getting closer to curbs and mail boxes and cleaning snow from mail boxes
* Homeowner mentioned contacting the Board about a downed tree to determine if this was on Common property or not. It was noted that if the damage is on personal property then it is the homeowners responsibility to clean it up
* Suggestion from homeowner regarding tree removal contractors to see if a better price can be obtained if more than one homeowner does this. The Board noted that it is not up to the Board to seek this type of arrangement for a homeowner. If homeowners want to get together to obtain a better price on tree removal, then the homeowner should do this on their own

Nominations/Accept Volunteers & Election of Board Members

Mr. Woods indicated that there are 3 Board positions open for the 2012-2014 term. The floor was opened for any volunteers to be nominated to the Board. The current nominees are Ann Hanks, Bobby Woods, and Diane Prescod.

Mr. David Moss was nominated but respectfully declined due to other personal commitments.

Mr. DeLorenzo handed out the ballots and reminded each homeowner that only one ballot per household is allowed.

The results of the election are as follows:

Ann Hanks – 13 Votes

Diane Prescod – 14 Votes

Bobby Woods – 14 Votes

Ms. Hanks, Ms. Prescod and Mr. Woods each were elected to a two year term on the Board of Directors for The Common at Sinnott Farm. Transition to the new Board and election of Officers will take place at the December Board meeting.

Parking Lot

The following discussion items were listed in a “Parking Lot” during the Annual meeting of the homeowners for subsequent review by the Board when time permits. The Board will review and take further action as needed. The items are:

1. Snow Plowing – Russo
2. Parking Restriction Amendment
3. Water timers and zones
4. Storm clean-up

 Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn the meeting was received from the floor and seconded. The Annual Meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30.

Respectfully Submitted By:

Patrick DeLorenzo, Secretary

The Common at Sinnott Farm

Approved: DRAFT