

Salt Marsh Cottage Annual Meeting
Thursday, December 7, 2022
Via Video/Teleconference Call

Board members on call: Sue Forrest (VP/ President pro-tem), Jim Didia, Tom Finnie (Secretary/Treasurer), Jeff Eley, Gabriele Hoffmann, Chuck Jesser

Property Manager on call: Danielle Aspinwall-Winter

Scribe on call: Carrie Randall

Cottages present on call: Cottage 102, 105, 106, 109, 110, 113, 114, 117, 120, 123, 126, 127, 129, 133, 136, 140, and 142

Cottages represented by proxy: Cottage 103, 107, 108, 115, 116, 118, 119, 122, 125, 131, and 134

Sue Forrest called the meeting to order at 6PM. She welcomed everyone and introduced herself. Sue assumed the position of regime President in October when Mark Matthews resigned due to moving. She introduced the owners in attendance and each board member, describing their primary role. Sue referred owners to the website as the first place new and current owners should look for information ranging from board policies to approved paint colors.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of 2022 Minutes (Sue Forrest)

There was one modification that needs to be made to the minutes from 2022. The terms of the newly elected board members should read “2023 – 2025” (and not 2023-2026). Gabriele made a motion to approve the minutes with the modification. Renee seconded it. A second motion was made to accept the revised 2022 annual minutes (Jeff) and was seconded by Jim. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurers Report (Chuck Jesser)

Chuck reviewed the balance sheet sent out to all owners prior to the meeting. He reminded owners that building up the capital reserve is a board priority. The contingency budget line item allows money to move into any line-item that might be unexpectedly overbudget.

Discussion. In response to a question about the painting project, it was pointed out that 3 bids were received, and after careful vetting, the board chose the contractor who delivered the best product (quality Sherwin Williams paint, two coats, combination of spraying and hand-painting tough-to-reach areas, etc.) for the significantly best price. A motion was made to accept the financial report (Jeff). It was seconded (Laura). The motion passed unanimously.

Review of Operations/Capital Projects (Danielle Aspinwall-Winter)

Capital Projects. Danielle summarized the two capital projects completed during 2023. Repainting all units was the largest and most expensive project. Jayco, the selected contractor, came in on-budget and on-time, and the board is highly pleased with the job they did. Owners with any places that need touched up were encouraged to get in touch with Danielle. Another major project completed was pier replacement. After a thorough inspection of the piers, a total

of 12 piers were replaced., and it is expected that pier repair/replacement will be an on-going expense to continue to proactively maintain cottage structural stability.

Operations Budget. Danielle reviewed all the other regular maintenance services completed (e.g., roof blowing, roof inspections, pest control, etc.) and noted that we hired a new trash company.

Ground Maintenance Budget. Some of the projects funded from the Ground Maintenance line-item in the budget were 1) a new retaining wall near #126; 2) attention to trees that needed to be trimmed or removed, 3) grinding down tree stumps, 3) improving the common area near #101, 4) fixing draining problems near #109/#110, 5) implementing regular cleaning of the drains, 6) providing supplies for dog stations, and 7) hanging flower baskets and decorations on the shepherd hooks.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Emergency Preparedness Committee. (Tom Finnie, Chair; Carrie Randall & Mark Matthews members). Tom reviewed the material and documents the committee gathered over a nearly 2-year period to help future boards respond quickly to recovery after a major disaster. Hilton Head has a detailed disaster recovery plan for rebuilding after condos are destroyed, but Bluffton does not. After receiving verbal approval from Mr. Cook, the committee modeled our final product after the document he prepared for a condo association on HHI that our insurer directed us to. The committee's goal was to have the document created and preserved both on-site and off-site prior to the 2023 hurricane season, and the goal was met. The board-approved document is in hard copy, as well as in an electronic format, and Moss Creek was given a copy. The expectation is that the document will be updated annually, as needed.

In the course of gathering data for this project, the committee uncovered certain weakness and lack of clarity in the Master Deed, especially regarding insurance distributions in the case of property destruction. A list of questions was generated and sent to our lawyer for response. Our attorney recommended modifying and updating the master deed so that it not only clarifies insurance-related issues, but so that it complies with the current insurance requirements defined by the Horizontal Property Act and the Non-profit Incorporation Act. Updating the Master Deed, in general, will be a priority for the board in 2024. It is seriously out of date, being over 40 years old.

Social Committee (Sue Forrest, Chair; Sue Cromey and Mimi Guest, members). The committee keeps trying to generate new ideas for socializing. Some events are more successful than others. They are planning a Happy Hour at the new clubhouse in January. The committee also plans to revive the old tradition and will post pictures and write-ups of new members on the SMC website.

Garden/Beautification Committee Report (Gabriele Hoffmann, Chair; Sue Forrest, Carrie Randall, Lynda Gillet, and Tom Finnie, members). The committee recommended approval to the board of several owner requests for modification to their landscaping, identified the 12 stumps that needed to be ground down, walked the property regularly, and took responsibility for

holiday decorations and hanging baskets. Hanging baskets are only put in cottage pods where someone is willing to take the responsibility for watering and maintaining the plants. Plants are chosen that are deer- and drought-resistant.

Property Committee (Jeff Eley). Jeff reported that the committee was active this year completing walk-throughs in the fall. Fortunately, there were only minor issues that were noted, and these will be addressed with the owners. The painting project addressed many of the 2022 concerns. Jeff thanked everyone for adhering to the policies of the association.

He reminded everyone that no modifications to the exterior are allowed without receiving prior board approval. The procedure to follow is that all requests to modify the exterior should be channeled to Danielle. She will bring the request to the board for consideration. Modifications *without* prior approval are considered “violations” of board policy, and may incur an owner expense to repair or undo the modification.

New Business (Sue Forrest)

Management Agreement. Sue noted that the board successfully negotiated Danielle’s contract for 2023, and she thanked Danielle for her dedicated service to the board and the homeowners. Accolades from a number of owners followed.

Setting of 2024 Regime Fee/Approval of 2024 Budget. The monthly regime fee was raised to \$650. Nearly all of the increase was due to an increase in 2024 estimated insurance premiums over 2023 rates. It was noted by several owners on the call that our insurance increase is minimal compared to many on HHI. It should be noted that the projected line-item for insurance is only a guesstimate provided by our insurance agent and might need to be adjusted when the final renewal quote is received in April, 2024. Most other line-item expenses have increased, but the board decided to try to absorb them as much as possible, while still fully funding the reserve funds. A motion was made (Jim) to approve the 2024 budget and was seconded (Chuck). The motion passed unanimously.

Election of Board Members. Initially only two 3-year board positions were open, but the unexpired term of Mark Matthews (2 more years) opened a third position. Two individuals with expiring terms agreed to run again (Jim Didia and Tom Finnie), and a new candidate, Sue Cromey, submitted an application to serve. A motion was made to approve election of Jim Didia, Tom Finnie, and Sue Cromey as board members. The motion passed unanimously. Sue was welcomed to the board.

Other Matters/Homeowner questions/Owner Comments.

Installation of Retractable Awnings/Pavers on sidewalks. The owner of #133 asked if the board could explore installing awnings on back decks. This issue was addressed several years ago by the board, and the problems identified far outweighed the benefits and installation was not approved. There was enough enthusiasm from the owners to re-visit this issue in 2024.

There was little enthusiasm for considering pavers over the current “aggregate” used on the walkways.

Distribution of Board Minutes. Sue Cromey suggested that the board consider distribution of meeting minutes much like Moss Creek does.

Appreciation. Jeff thanked Sue Forrest for stepping up to assume the President of the Board position for the past few months.

A motion was made to adjourn promptly at 7PM (Sue Cromey) that was seconded by Renee Picotte Lambrecht. It was approved unanimously.