

SOMERSET ESTATES HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Maximizing Home Values, Quality of Life, Positioning as Premier Community

What's Up #97: June 29, 2024

Board Decides to Make Plans to Rebuild Pond 3

Stream-Only Option No Longer Under Consideration

Based on significant homeowner feedback provided over the last month, the Board is no longer considering plans to convert pond 3 (near the waterfall) into a stream and is commissioning architectural plans that include a new pond. Asher Architects and Engineers, the professional group that is working on a master plan for Outlot D (the common area around the pool, including the waterfall and ponds 2 and 3), will propose one or two conceptual designs that include a pond and a more reliable and cost-effective waterfall recirculation system. The Board has asked Asher to provide us with the conceptual design that they consider to be the optimal design for the area (as long as it includes a substantial pond), as well as a conceptual design that includes a pond that is approximately the same size as the current pond 3 but allowing for spacing for plantings around the sidewalk and back hill and current construction methods. All homeowner concerns about engineering issues, storm drainage, water movement, aesthetics, etc., as well as all the original engineering drawings, have been provided to Asher's landscape architect (Josh McCarn, PLE) and civil engineer (TJ Heupel, PE).

Once we have the conceptual designs, the Asher team will present them to the homeowners and answer questions, prior to a Board decision on how to proceed. Although we had hoped to be ready by August (as expected in What's Up #96) we want the right overall solution for the community, which means not rushing the initial design phase. September is more likely. **We ask for homeowner patience to give the landscape architect and engineer time to**

provide us with conceptual designs for Outlot D that include a new pond
3.

Jon Gillespie-Brown (jongb@SomersetEstates-HOA.com) is the Board member that is leading this project. **Note - we do not expect this to be a major topic of discussion at the July 16th Board meeting.**

History of Maintenance and Upgrades since SEHOA's Inception

When SEHOA was formed in 2018, one of the early ideas was to develop a master plan for the common areas. The community is over 30 years old and was severely underfunded for most of its history. Once SEHOA was its own entity, the Board (which to date has included 14 homeowners) began an extensive look at the existing assets and the funding needed to maintain and update these assets. **Just as homeowners that are updating their homes and yards consider changes in aesthetics and technology, so also the Board's responsibility is to make good decisions about the common areas by considering options for each major project.** The goal of a master plan is a cohesive look and feel throughout the 14 acres of common area. In addition, we are always cognizant of water-related issues in our dry climate.

As it turned out, the budgeted funds for a master plan were not spent in the first few years of SEHOA because all of the bandwidth of volunteer time was taken up with basic repairs, such as replacing the transfer line from pond 1 in SHOA to pond 2 in SEHOA, upgrading the ditch and pond system in SHOA that provides the ditch water to SEHOA, repairing major leaks in the irrigation system, repairing or replacing leaking pond liners, preserving the HOA's fences, repaving pathways, removing overgrown vegetation and dead trees, etc. The Board also had to create and pass governing documents from scratch and deal with significant legal issues relating to property rights and water rights.

In early 2021, the homeowners passed a special assessment of \$5,000 per lot that gave us enough funds to cover these basic projects, but not enough to adequately fund future repairs of all assets. The \$449,000 from this special assessment has been more than spent on capital projects up through 2023, with the rest of the funding coming from annual dues in excess of operating expenses.

In 2023, the Board had enough breathing room to get started on two major projects that involve both function and aesthetics: The entrances at Hwy 52 and

Longview Dr, and Outlot D. As these are two very visible areas in the community, the Board decided not to attempt to create designs "by committee" but returned to the original idea of hiring a qualified landscape architect to give us a cohesive plan that will be attractive, cost-effective to maintain, and water efficient. In the case of water features (ponds, waterfalls, etc.), civil engineering is also required. An extensive search was conducted to find the right help. Professional help is not cheap, but necessary and worthwhile to get a good design and construction plan consistent with the quality of Somerset Estates.

The plan for the Hwy 52 entrance is shown below in schematic form. We have started on some aspects of the project. As explained above, the planning for Outlot D is just getting started. The Board contracted for a feasibility study in 2023 (available by [clicking here](#)) to determine the possibility of replacing pond 3 with a design that would have less evaporative loss and lower maintenance and operating costs. Although the feedback provided at the Annual Meeting in March 2024 was that homeowners were supportive of either a pond or a stream in pond 3's location, the feedback since then has been strongly opposed to removing pond 3. As such, the Board has eliminated the "stream-only" idea from consideration.

Hwy 52 Entrance Update

As noted in What's Up #96, the stucco behind the letters on the monuments at Hwy 52 and Longview Dr is being replaced, the letters polished, and the top of the monument sealed to prevent further damage. We expect this project to be completed in mid-July.

Josh McCarn of Asher prepared the sketch below that was discussed at the June 18 board meeting. (For a larger version, [click here](#).) A few key features of the plan are that all healthy trees will remain, the vegetation will include a mix of deciduous and evergreen shrubs, and the lawn near the corners and along the road edge will be replaced with a mix of groundcover and cobble. Lighting will be combination of wall washers on the monuments, "moonlights" in the crabapple trees in the median, and a new median light. The median light is a strong design element and is still under consideration. Three possibilities were discussed at the last Board meeting and the one below, also shown in the manufacturer's website (available by [clicking here](#)), was by far the favorite.

Homeowner input can be sent to info@somersetstates-hoa.com.



Board Meeting on July 16 at 136C 2nd Ave, Niwot

The next meeting of the Executive Board is on Tuesday, July 16 at 6:30 PM at the office of Somerset Estates homeowner Deborah Read Fowler, Slifer Smith & Frampton, located at 136C 2nd Ave or by Zoom. The agenda will be posted at least one day before the meeting. The draft minutes of the June Board meeting are posted on the website (available by clicking here). **Homeowners are welcome to attend all Board meetings.**

Upcoming Events at a Glance

Please monitor the SEHOA website for any schedule changes:
somersetstates-hoa.com.

Board Meeting -- July 16 at 6:30 PM, 136C 2nd Ave, Niwot.

Somerset Estates Book Club -- The next meeting will be on **August 15 at 4 PM**, hosted by Shari Kalm. The book is *Anita de Monte Laughs Last* by Xochitl Gonzalez. Please let Paula Hemenway know at p.hemenway@comcast.net if you want to be added to the Book Club distribution list.

Monday Mahjong -- Mondays at 3 PM. Contact Diane Jensen at diane-jensen@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Contact SEHOA

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