**Sunset Shores Property Owners Association**

**Spring 2024 Meeting, May 11, 2024**

**New Buffalo Public Library**

**Board members present**: Ron Watson (President), Missy Goldberg (Vice President), Kathy Rohan (Secretary), Sharon Kelly Kenny (Bylaws Committee Chair), Rich Bogusz (Beach Committee Chair)

**Board members absent:** Conrad Rickoff (Past President), Cheryl Istvan (Treasurer), Arlene Pokuta (Park Committee Chair)

**Dues paid property owners present:** Connie Carney, Doug & Jessica Hart, Thomas Krumwiede, Jeff O’Shaughnessey, Cy Rohan, Greg & Marie Pusinelli, Shari Lemonnier, Ed & Nany Oldis, Randall & Kristy Shoemaker, Fred & Gloria Mattioli, Doug & Mary Campbell, Shore Thing Too LLC

**Called to order by Ron Watson at 11:02 am ET.**

**Agenda:** Ron asked if there were any additions to the agenda. There being no edits, the meeting proceeded.

**Secretary Report:** The Spring 2024 meeting minutes were provided on the website and several hard copies were distributed at the meeting.

**DECISION**: Ron Watson made a motion and Sharon Kelly seconded. All in attendance approved so the motion passed.

**Treasurers Report:** In Cheryl’s absence, Kathy provided the printed and oral Treasurers report.

**DECISION**: Kathy Rohan made a motion and Ron Watson seconded. All in attendance approved so the motion passed.

**Creek Update:** Ron reported that the rock revetment that was to be installed between lots 24 and 25 (Salerno and Wormouth properties) has been stopped. Ron added that the current Drain Commissioner was not re-elected so he planned to follow up with the new Commissioner after he is sworn into office. The status of the project is unclear. There as a discussion about what promoted this project, the funding for the project and how it might affect our dedicated walkway. Ron will report back to the group after he meets with the new commissioner.

**New Buffalo Shoreline Alliance and Great Lakes Coalition (GLC) Update:** Although not SSPOA committees, these non-profit organizations work to address the shoreline issues so their work is impactful to our members. Additionally, several of our members are involved in these organizations: Ron Watson is VP, Ted Gryzwacz is President, and Ed Oldis is the Founding Director of the NBSA. Ron Watson is the President and Ed Oldis the Treasurer of the GLC.

The New Buffalo Shoreline alliance (NBSA) is suing the federal government for a takings claim (harbor caused damage to private homeowners) that is based on not only home value loss but also the cost of the shoreline protection devices and any loss of property. The revetments often cost over $200,000 - $300,000 per lot.  
  
The Great Lakes Coalition is a not for-profit group with over 1200 members mostly in the state of Michigan. The Great Lakes Coalition is having a meeting on October 23 with state officials.  
  
The tax revenue from all New Buffalo businesses including public beaches are part of a general fund going to the state with only a small portion being returned to Lakeside communities.  
This is a problem. The city of New Buffalo pays for lifeguards at the public beach. Many large public beaches do not have lifeguards which all agreed is a safety hazard.

**Beach Committee Report:** Rich reported that SSPOA will continue to use the beach flag system to identify property owners. Property owners who do not pay dues will need to purchase a flag for $20. Requests for flags can be directed to Rich.

Kathy explained that every property owner has rights to the beach easements – they do not belong to the SSPOA. She initiated a survey of property owners to measure interest in funding the replacement of the wooden stairs at west beach that were partially destroyed by storm water and partially destroyed by the vendors who installed the revetment reconstruction on lot 1. The response has been positive with only one member responding that this is not important to them. The best long-term plan is to purchase an aluminum staircase that is built in sections. Sections can be removed based on need, e.g. rising water levels, revetment repairs. A permit is not required because the stairs would not be permanent.

Ron reported that having healthy beaches increases the value of property with deeded beach rights by approximately 30%. He also added that SSPOA members represent over half the property owners, however with fewer properties paying dues, it was unclear if SSPOA could contribute to the purchase of replacing the stairs.

There was a discussion about our dedicated walkway and beach easements. Ron shared:

* People can walk on the beach anywhere if they are moving.
* People cannot park themselves on access easements (they are meant for passage)
* People cannot park themselves on someone’s beach if SSPOA doesn’t have an easement.
* Property owners cannot block SSPOA easements. Some owners and the city have put boulders blocking the easements to protect against erosion.
* It was agreed that the letters sent to property owners about SSPOA member rights, and the surveys should be put up on our website.

The group discussed overcrowding at east beach and without a property manager/employee onsite, it is everyone’s responsibility to report incidents to the New Buffalo Police department when they are unable to address the situation personally.

All property owners in Sunset Shores have deeded beach rights, but only those belonging to the SSPOA have ownership of the park.

**Park Committee Report:** In Arlene’s absence, Sharon provided the report. Rubber mulch was replenished on the playground. A new sign was purchased by SSPOA and installed by Ron and Rich to communicate that it is a private park and adult supervision is required. SSPOA has a deed to the park, and it must be kept as a children’s play area. SSPOA pays taxes and insurance on the park. There are limbs hanging down after the storm, in addition to what was hauled away. Ron worked with the grass cutting provider to ensure we only paid for cutting every other week during the drier months.

The effect of property owners choosing to not pay dues was discussed. It effects our ability to pay for maintenance on the park. Technically, only paid members have rights to use the park. It was suggested that we mount a sign with information about how to pay dues for ease, and also as a reminder, be considered. The board agreed this suggestion had merit. The suggestion will be referred to the park committee.

**Membership Update:** Missy shared that SSPO has 176 properties, 20 of which have short-term rental permits. A total of 101 properties paid dues in 2024, 10 of which are short-term rentals. The Facebook page has 218 members, some of whom are not property owners. Everyone agreed that talking to neighbors about what SSPOA does is the best way to increase dues paying members. There was a suggestion that members consider sponsoring neighbors to encourage membership.

**Bylaws Committee:** Sharon Kelly reported that there are no proposed changes to the bylaws.

**Activities:** Kathy provided a report on the first SSPO Garden Walk held on Saturday, August 10th. The event raised $300 in donations, of which $150 was given to the Michiana Humane Society. The feedback was positive from the participants and neighbors gathered in the park following the walk for fellowship. The weather was beautiful. The walk can be expanded and promoted to the public if there is desire.

The group discussed the benefits of continuing the Blessings in a Backpack food drive, however there were no volunteers to organize it this Fall.

**Nominating Committee:** Sharon reported that there were two positions up for renewal: Vice President/Communications and Treasurer.

1. Missy Goldberg was nominated as Vice President/Communications by Sharon Kelly, seconded by Kathy Rohan. Missy was unanimously voted in by all in attendance.
2. Cheryl Istvan was nominated for Treasurer by Kathy Rohan, seconded by Sharon Kelly. Cheryl was unanimously voted in by all in attendance.

Committee chairs were appointed by the President without objection from those present. Ron appointed Rich Bogusz as Beach Chair, Arlene Pokuta as Park Chair, and Sharon Kelly as By-laws Chair.

**Member Feedback/Comments from the Floor:**

* The question was raised about changing SSPOA from a property owners association to a Homeowners association. Ron shared that this was investigated and every property owner would need to agree to this. He has direct knowledge that there are owners opposed to the change.
* It was suggested from the floor that the board raise the dues amount. Ron shared that the Great Lakes Coalition had been successful in increasing their yearly dues modestly, but since adding additional donation options for larger amounts on the invoices they saw an increased overall donation. SSPOA may want to consider adding that option when sending out invoices.

**There being no further business, Ron made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Rich. The meeting was adjourned at 12:31 pm.**