

**Sunset Shores Property Owners Association**  
**Spring 2024 Meeting, May 11, 2024**  
**New Buffalo Public Library**

**Board members present:** Ron Watson, Missy Goldberg, Sharon Kelly Kenny, Cheryl Istvan, Rich Bogusz, Kathy Rohan, Arlene Pokuta

**Board members absent:** Conrad Rickoff

**Members present:** David Anderson, Connie Carney, Dbila Rentals, Val Collins for Christine Everett, Steven and Loretta Friend, Jeanie Gaughan, Ted Grzywacz, Jeff Coyner, Timothy Schultz, Cy Rohan, Greg & Marie Pusinelli

**Called to order by Ron Watson at 11:07 am ET.**

**Presidents Report:**

Welcome New Board: Ron reported that the current board of directors is experienced and committed.

Park Update: Ron feels that the park is looking good, and he would like to see more activities. Ron shared that we need to add more mulch and a sign communicating 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 that may need to be taken down. The grass cutting contract was renewed and we are paying \$97 per cut.

Membership Update: Ron shared that friends talking to friends about what SSPOA does is the best way to increase dues paying members.

Beach Update: Ron said that the east beach is the only usable beach at this time, that west beach is under water. He shared that the Great Lake Coalition is fighting for sand nourishment for beaches. The coalition is attempting to get a state annual budget to do this work but no money has been allocated to date. Their goal is to secure funding for a trust to pay for beach replenishment in perpetuity. The beach is our most valuable asset, and it is currently going in the water. The New Buffalo harbor is being dredged in June through a contract funded by the city and local interests.

The New Buffalo Shoreline alliance is suing the United States (Army Corp of engineers) to restore the shoreline south of the harbor. As part of that lawsuit, the court agreed that the army corp of engineers should do a study to determine the impact of the harbor on erosion to the beaches south of harbor. The cost of such a study is in the neighborhood of over 1 million dollars. The New Buffalo Shoreline Alliance has a strong case and all monies that may come as a result of the lawsuit can only be used for beach nourishment, wave attenuation, and permit/engineering.

The Great Lakes Coalition met with Joey Andrews in May 2023 and was able to obtain \$200,000 to continue a beach nourishment study that was on hold in Saint Joe. That project has been on hold for over two years. The GLC is working with the state to create an annual budget for beach nourishment. There are over 200 miles of eroded beaches in Michigan and the GLC believes the state should address this issue in a proactive act manner. You can learn more at:

[www.greatlakescoalition.org](http://www.greatlakescoalition.org). The long-term average for water levels is predicted to go up 6 to 8 inches before the end of the summer, which is 4 to 7 inches less than last year, but still above the long-term average.

#### **Secretary Report:**

The approval of the Fall 2023 meeting minutes. The minutes are on the website and several hard copies were distributed at the meeting.

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

#### **Creek Update:**

Rich and Ron shared the status on the revetment next to the Wormouth property. Rich Bogusz, Ron Watson, and Bart Goldberg meet with the drain commission and discussed the work. The drain commissioner wants to put a revetment on part of our beach easement. Ron and Bart discussed the work amicably and reached an agreement on the work. When Ron presented a document for them to sign that summarized the work they agreed upon, they refused to sign it.

They did not report the easement or 10-foot dedicated walkway on their EGLE permit which the June 2022 survey clearly shows. They would be placing toe rocks on 3-5 feet of our property; however, the toe rock would be covered with sand. We need to ensure that the work agreed upon is followed. When they are done, we will have steps with a 2:1 slope with better-defined boundaries. However, if the wind blows the sand away or it gets washed away it will no longer cover the toe rock. Ron shared that homeowner surveys show that they own to the middle of the creek, but as the creek narrows and flows, its boundaries change over time.

The installation of the stone revetment at East Beach is currently on hold at the present time. There have been no further updates from the drain commission.

#### **Bylaws Committee:**

The proposed updates to the bylaws were:

1. A member can run for office after being a paid member for 1 year (instead of 2 years), and
2. Paid members can vote by proxy if they assign a paid member as their proxy and communicate the proxy's name to the Board Secretary by USPS or Email at least 1 full day before the meeting, and
3. Unpaid members can attend a general meeting if they are invited, however they do not have voting rights.

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

#### **Membership/Treasurer Report:**

Cheryl Istvan reported that 99 members are paid. She also shared the income/expense report with the group. Cheryl indicated that it is difficult to access the beach from our three entry points and improvements will be needed so that is a future budget consideration. Additionally, there was

discussion about playground fill and the options we have.

#### **Park Update:**

Sharon Kelly thanked Linda Hankus for providing a list of improvements that were needed for the park. All maintenance has been completed: touching up the swing set, replacing the flag and flood lights, and painting the wooden picnic tables.

#### **Beach Update:**

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.

#### **Public Relations:**

Missy Goldberg encouraged everyone to update their emails to save money on stamps. There was an open discussion about membership numbers and Ron asked for input on how to increase paid members. Arlene Pokuta shared that she used the personal touch and approaching neighbors is the best way. Michelle Debella added that she didn't know it was an option when she moved in.

The question was raised about how many rental properties are paying dues. The data on that was not readily available. Ron added that New Buffalo has limited the number of short-term rentals and is no longer issuing new permits. There was an open discussion about the consequences of renting without a permit. Several members shared they have heard of fines being assessed. Everyone is encouraged to call the police and file a report when they are aware of rentals without a permit.

Ron asked if there was interest in doing another food drive. He will ask Rita Watson if she is interested in organizing it.

Another suggestion was to host an SSPOA garage sale. If we did it all on the same day perhaps we would draw a greater response from shoppers and save everyone on advertising. It could be done the same day as Michigan's longest garage sale or another day.

Sharon asked the members to think about volunteering for the nominating committee. The positions of Treasurer and Communications will be up for renewal.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 pm.**