

Meet Your High Meadow Boards

Inside this issue:

Meet Your High Meadow Boards	1
Committee Members Needed	1
Budget Status	1
Reserve Study	2
Our Roads	2
Long Road to Clean Water	3
Budget Snapshot	4
Satisfaction Survey & Handbook Distribution	4

The Boards at High Meadow are made up of unit owner volunteers elected by unit owners at the annual meetings. There are two Boards, the **High Meadow Association** and the **High Meadow Tax District**. Each Board has five members (identified on web site).

The goal of both boards is the same: the preservation and enhancement of the value of the property.

The HMA is responsible for buildings, close-in landscaping, and general administration of the community. The HMTD is responsible for roads, water, sewer, lawn care/landscaping and amenities (clubhouse, pool, tennis, playground).

The tasks of the Boards are

defined by the charters, the Association governing documents and Connecticut statutes. Key tasks of the Boards include:

1. Enforce terms of these documents
2. Establish sound fiscal policy and maintain accurate records
3. Prepare budgets
4. Establish reserve funds
5. Set, communicate and enforce community policy/rules
6. Select an auditor, attorney and insurance agent for the Association.

President – runs the monthly / bi-monthly meetings, signs contracts, approves bills and payments over \$3000, oversees preparation of budgets.

Vice President – substitutes for President if President absent, may lead special projects and coordinates any committees with the Board and Property Manager.

Clerk / Secretary – responsible for maintaining a list of voters, sending notices and arranging for meeting minutes.

Treasurer – responsible for the collection of all monies due and for maintaining a record of disbursements. For the TD the Treasurer has the same powers as the Brookfield Collector of Taxes.

Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!



The heavy accumulation of snow this year has presented new challenges here at High Meadow.

There were not any concerns over collapsing of roofs, however many roofs were shoveled due

ice damming that lead to interior leaks. The Affordable Roofing crew was very busy, but we hope you had your requests addressed in a timely manner.

As a reminder for future reference, with heavy snowfalls, owners are reminded to remove snow and ice from their

decks. Allowing snow to accumulate on your deck will result in leaks through the sliding glass doors. Furthermore, the decks are not designed to handle heavy loads of snow like what has hit this area this year.

All unit owners are responsible for maintaining the sidewalks, steps and porches in the event of melting and re-freezing. The snow removal contract does not include return visits for walkways and porches in

the event of melting and re-freezing. All unit owners should have ice melt or sand available for your own use.

We anticipate flooding of basements as the temperatures warm up and the snow melts. Please keep an eye on your basements and report any leaks to Greenfield immediately at (203) 791-9936.

Committee Members Needed

There is a need for unit owner / renter volunteers to work with Board members in small (3 people) committees to speed up the evaluation and implementation of projects and to share some of the work.

Committees being considered are: **Pool & Playground, Septic Fields, Finance, Lawn Care & Landscaping.**

Interested volunteers are encouraged to contact the Property Manager, a Board member, or submit a message through the website: www.highmeadowhoa.com.

\$ Budget Status \$

The following is our budget status as of January 31, 2011:

	Cash Balance (Operating Account)	Cash Balance (Reserves)	Receivables
HMA	\$5,196.37	\$73,582.88	\$25,151.40
HMTD	\$4,511.84	\$2,992.32	\$34,429.14

Reserve Study—*What is it? Why is it so important?*

A Reserve Study is an analysis of specific itemized major capital spending that will occur over a time frame of one to twenty years. It can be thought of as a long-term maintenance plan. A Reserve Study does not include annual recurring costs like lawn cutting, septic pumping or rotted wood repairs to units. It does include road repaving (12-15 year cycle), roof replacement (20 year cycle) and septic field rebuilding or relocation (15-20 year cycle). The long term plan also factors in estimated inflationary increases year over year.

The Association and Tax District Boards will use the Study to help prepare accurate budgets and to prioritize projects. Budgets need to fund the reserve dollar requirements so monies are available for major expenses when needed. This practice will eliminate the need for special surprise assessments.

We are in the final stage of completing a comprehensive Reserve Study. Mike LoFremento is leading the Study. High Meadow has not had a Study in place and funded for over 10 years. Consequently there is no reserve for the Tax District and little surplus for the HMA. This lapse led to the special assessment of \$35,000 for recent road work. It has also led to many areas having been neglected for far too long. The July 1, 2011 budget will necessarily increase to prudently fund the capital reserve requirements.

A current, adequately funded Reserve is mandatory to allow the preservation of the value of our units and common property. It is identified in the Association Declaration and the Tax District Charter as part of the required budgets. It may be required by financial institutions prior to approving mortgages (FHA currently has a 10% minimum reserve) for prospective buyers or equity loans to existing owners. An adequate Reserve may additionally become part of the State of CT regulations for Community Associations.

Many Associations, HMA included, have opted to artificially keep monthly fees low and adopt special assessments (or forego needed repairs / replacements). An Association cannot spend more than it receives. Adopting a special assessment approach is risky and can lead to reduced property value rather than enhanced values. Special assessments are unwelcome surprises and can cause hardship. "Moreover, they are inherently inequitable because they fall on the people who happen to own at the time payment is due, without regard to length of ownership – a measure of how much an owner 'consumed' the component being repaired."*

We look forward to sharing the results of the Reserve Study with all owners in the coming months.

Our Roads



The High Meadow Tax District (TD), with approval of unit owners, began a three phase

project to repair and resurface our roads. Roads, like buildings, need maintenance to survive. The first two phases (repair and preparation) completed in Fall 2010 were funded by a \$35,000 assessment requested to be paid by all unit owners by October 15, 2010.

Phase 1

Cut and asphalt patching, was completed by A&J Construction at a cost of \$24,518. This phase included repairs for deep cracks, holes and broken, deteriorated paved areas.

Phase 2

Crack sealing was completed by NY Bituminous at a cost of \$9,272 (4906 lbs. of tar-like material). This work sealed numerous small cracks that did not require black top patching but was needed to prevent water and ice damage under the road surface.

Phase 3

The third phase is planned for spring / summer 2011. This phase is a resurfacing, paving, of LedgeWood, Pondview, Westview and Eastview. It appears that there has never been a complete paving of the main roads of HM. The cost for this phase is budgeted at \$95,000 and is a major item in our planned capital expenses (Reserve Plan).

The parking lot area in front of #39 - #45 LedgeWood is not yet part of the resurface plan and budget due to the unknown work required to fix the

septic field flooding problem. Test holes and other digging may be required. Resurfacing will be planned and budgeted once the septic project is defined.

The Phase 3 work may likely be done by NY Bituminous using a continuous paving process called Cape Sealing that paves a layer at the rate of 28 lbs. per square yard. The Town of Brookfield used the same company and process to pave Long Meadow Hill Road (from the Library past the High School).

Whereas the Phase 1 and 2 work allowed car and truck traffic to pass while work was underway, the Phase 3 work will require closing of roads to all traffic from early morning to late afternoon.

All final work will be part of the budget submitted in the May 2011 Annual Meeting of Unit Owners.

The Long Road to Clean Water



In High Meadow and three other condo communities, the water was found to have elevated levels of uranium, radium, barium and other contaminants. Here at High Meadow, we have four wells – 3 near the pool and 1 behind 1 Eastview. The water quality varied by well, and also by the water table height (rainy or dry season). This variability meant that the contaminants were not always found to be above state minimums. However, the worst well was taken off-line due to this problem, but we still needed a plan to obtain a clean water supply.

Water systems are expensive to operate: pumps, booster pumps, maintenance of equipment, routine testing, etc. In addition, the state mandates that we have a "holding" tank capable of holding one day supply of water, which is above the pump house next to the pool.

Here is a brief history of the problems and resolutions to improve our water supply:

Leaks in the piping system caused water shortages in 2006-7. Daily tank truck deliveries were required. In one case, a leak was found beneath one condo that cost \$5M - \$10M that summer for extra valves applied to the storage tank and repairs.

June 4, 2007: Lenard Engineering (Storrs, CT) provided updated costs estimates of approximately \$2.3M for building a water line

August 2007: Water line building studies were underway. Rights were granted to Rural Water.

August 26, 2008: Town voted to approve bond issue for Silvermine Water Project: \$2,830,000. The project was started under the Jerry Murphy, First Selectmen era,

but passed under Bob Silvaggi's one term tenure.

Lenard Engineering's original timeline projections were:

- Plans submitted to CT Dept of Public Health: 12/31/2008
- Start construction: 5/15/2009
- Complete construction: 12/15/2009

Significant delays resulted from challenges in having the water line cross the railroad tracks. The least expensive way was to tunnel under the tracks. Mr. Waidelich, owner of the Christmas tree farm on Silvermine Road near the railroad tracks, did not want the water line crossing his property. A petition was raised with some 50 High Meadow signatures against delays and cost increases. Ultimately, the property owner across the street, through lawyer, proposed giving an easement for a fee of \$50,000. In parallel, the town started the legal proceedings for using the right of eminent domain. This particular obstacle delayed the project from January to April 2009. At the last minute, before the process could start, the State mandated to the Town that all permissions had to be completed within 5 days or there would be loss of funding. They said they did not want Brookfield to use the right of eminent domain, and that they would fund the additional cost of attaching pipes to the underside of the railroad to avoid tunneling and land owners easements. These pipes are insulated and more expensive; they needed to be special ordered, which added further delays to the project.

Earlier delays worked in our favor. The full cost of the project would have been paid by the affected condos. However, because the project had been delayed but was also "shovel ready," it qualified for TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program) federal funding, which paid approximately 56% of the project cost.

"The line turn-on was further delayed from mid-August until October 7, 2010 while biological tests were conducted to determine that the water was 100% safe. You may have seen the running fire hydrants in Ledgewood Condos and on Silvermine. On Friday 10/7/2010 at approximately 3:00pm, while Russ DiGrazia

and Rural Water were turning off the old well line and starting the new public line, and I was in the pump house turning off the old line, I was told on the phone that the water companies were at the DEP offices celebrating and congratulating themselves on what a fine job they had accomplished." -Steve Stuart

Unfortunately, with the new water supply came new problems as well. That first weekend, the new water supply caused water pressure problems in approximately 10 units. Whereas normally 65 psi of pressure is delivered, the new line was pumping as much as 100 psi. Rural Water lowered the pressure, and looked for a solution.

The best solution was to install pressure regulation valves, which required installation of a new line from Ledgewood down to the pump house, installation of the valves in the pump house and then routing of the water back through the old mains. (The wells were disconnected and off-line, never to return.) The cost estimate from Lenard Engineering for this task was \$27,485. (The work was actually completed in three days (10/28/2010) and the new system turned on the following Wednesday. Since then, there have been no problems. The HM Tax Board has been diligently attending Brookfield water meetings in a positive manner, and working cooperatively with Rural Water management. These strong contacts may have contributed to the town's decision to pay for the entire \$25,000 for these regulation valves and not try to charge High Meadow at a rate of approximately \$316 per unit.

(*Note: the water to the top building on Ledgewood does not come through the pressure valves, so it probably has higher pressure.)

The new system has two valves in parallel, so no service interruptions are needed if one valve needs maintenance service. Also, the water through the system is metered in total, so if any breaks happen in the system, it will become obvious from the readings. Water supply should be stable and in good quality now for a long time to come.

Where Does the Money Go?

Both the Association and Tax District are running over budget as of January 31, 2011. The overages are a result of the severe winter causing additional expenses; snow removal from front entrance, roof ice damming, as well as additional pumping for the septic system in front of units 39-45 Ledgewood, and continued delinquencies. The Association and Tax District continue to see increased delinquencies of unit owners. The Tax District has not yet collected approximately \$8000.00 of the road assessment. While late fees and interest is added to these delinquencies, the property operates on a budget that assumes all unit owners are paying their charges in a timely manner.

Many unit owners have inquired about exactly where their tax and common charge dollars are spent. Below is a breakdown of the combined expenses of the Tax District and Association for the month of December 2010, and the expenses per unit to operate the property. We hope this will increase your understanding of the tough decisions faced by both Boards in operating the property. The property is run as a business, and no business can sustain an operating deficit for extended periods of time. The Boards are charged with the challenge of maintaining the property in a safe manner, and sustaining property values, while keeping within the parameters of the operating budget.

We look forward to working with you on next year's budget in the coming weeks and months.

	Income
Common Charge & Tax Fee	\$ 27,459.02
Special Assessment	\$ 655.93
Total Income	\$ 28,114.95

	Expenses	Average Per Unit Cost	Description
Phone	\$ 36.35	\$ 0.46	Pool phone, required by Statute
Postage	\$ 36.24	\$ 0.46	Correspondence, reimbursed at cost
Engineering	\$ 4,600.00	\$ 58.23	DEP-required annual septic inspection
Legal Fees	\$ 650.00	\$ 8.23	Foreclosures on delinquent units
Repairs & Maintenance	\$ 10,037.25	\$ 127.05	Road crack sealing, gutter repairs
Janitorial	\$ 150.00	\$ 1.90	Cleaning clubhouse
Landscape & Grounds	\$ -	\$ -	
Snow Removal	\$ 8,998.67	\$ 113.91	Snow removal from walks, roads
Management	\$ 1,644.44	\$ 20.82	Management fees for both Tax District and Association
Insurance	\$ 10,668.00	\$ 135.04	Deposit on renewal premium, property and liability
Electricity	\$ 584.89	\$ 7.40	Site lights, clubhouse, septic pumps
Water/Sewer	\$ 610.00	\$ 7.72	Septic pumping for leaching field at Units 39-45 Ledgewood
Rubbish Removal	\$ 1,401.36	\$ 17.74	Pick-up of trash (weekly), recycling (every 2 weeks)
Total Expenses	\$ 39,417.20		

Satisfaction Survey

The results of the 2010 Homeowner Satisfaction Survey have been distributed to all unit owners. We appreciate your feedback on critical matters related to the quality of life you have here at High Meadow. We will work to address all areas identified for improvement. We also welcome an on-going open dialogue between all owners and the Boards. Please contact us with any concerns at any time. The website is the best tool to reach all board members most efficiently.

Condominium—It's Not a Building!

What do you own at High Meadow? What do you share as part of the Association with all other unit owners? A "condominium" is a form of ownership - not a type of building. Rather than owning land and building outright, the purchaser owns the airspace bounded by the walls, ceilings and floors, and shares the land on which the unit is built and the property outside the unit with other unit owners. We need to be good neighbors. We need to preserve and enhance the value of the community as a whole. It is each of our responsibility to abide by High Meadow Declaration, Bylaws and Rules (HM Handbook). The grounds and facilities are a valuable asset. Both Boards will continue to work on improving them.

The Homeowners Handbook has also been updated and distributed to all owners. If you have any questions about any of the rules, please contact the Boards.

IMPORTANT: Future newsletters will be distributed by email

- Distributing newsletters by email will help keep costs down. We need to cut back wherever we can, but also want to improve communications through efforts like a quarterly newsletter.
- Please register your email address at www.highmeadowhoa.com/News/news.html.
- If you wish to continue to receive newsletters by mail, please notify the Board via the Requests page on the website.
 - www.highmeadowhoa.com/Requests/requests.php