

LANDMARK MEWS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION MINUTES

Board Meeting August 10, 2005

The August LMCA Board Meeting was called to order at 7:30 P.M. by Board President Lou Wagner at the home of Virginia Addison. Members present: Virginia Addison, Simon Bennett, Suzann Evinger, Dan Ferezan, Eve Holtzman and Bruce Wood. Officers/Committee Members present: Roger Casalengo, Bill Evinger, Annie Foster, Marty McDonald and Carole Trimble. Other homeowners present: Tony and Michele Dropp, Bill Evans, Tim Foster, Maria Ignatio and Brenda Johnson.

1. Minutes

Minutes of the July 13, 2005, meeting were approved unanimously on a motion by Simon Bennett that was seconded by Eve Holtzman. Minutes of the Executive Session held during that meeting also were approved unanimously on a motion by Simon that was seconded by Eve.

2. Financial Report – See report filed with minutes.

Discussion centered on the state of the budget for 2005 and whether any funds would be left at the end of the year to be put into reserves in addition to the \$25 per month in homeowner fees that is earmarked as a special set aside for a major infrastructure reserve fund. Board members also discussed whether allocation had been made in the draft 2006 budget to invest money in reserves.

In response to questions raised by Bruce Wood, Treasurer Marty McDonald said that no provision had been made in either the 2005 or 2006 budgets to add any more money to reserves. Dan Ferezan pointed out that if the Board continues on the spending track indicated for 2005, based on the report prepared by Marty as of July 31, expenditures will exceed the budget by at least \$1,000. Lou stated that it is difficult to anticipate exactly how the budget will balance at the end of the year since some allocations remain unknown factors, such as snow removal. He also said that the \$4,500 settlement received from Pulte Homes puts the budget in the black, at least currently. He added that he was not concerned if expenditures exceeded the budget by a few thousand dollars because there are adequate funds in reserves. According to Lou, the Board could continue spending at current rates for many years before reserves would be exhausted.

Dan emphasized that the Board currently is spending all funds collected from the available \$100 per month of homeownership fees and interest income earned from investments. Bruce stated that in order to cover expenditures, the Board had drawn down reserves by \$16,000 over the past three years. Marty responded that the expenditures were necessary to cover the cost of much needed special projects and that most of the major work that needed to be done was completed. Bruce said that while he had no problem with most of the work that had been done in the community, he thought the Board needed to do a much better job of projecting expenditures for maintenance, repair and improvement projects. He said that the property manager should present the Board with project proposals that had estimated costs attached so that the Board was better able to prioritize, plan and budget appropriately for the work.

Roger Casalengo, Property Manager, said that all the money spent this year in the Other Maintenance and Services fund (“Bucket # 3”) had been for projects approved by the Board in 2004. He said he had spent no money on new projects this year because of the Board’s reluctance to approve any of his proposed projects. He added that the community has plenty in reserves and that the Board needed to move forward.

Bruce responded that the Board certainly was willing to undertake necessary repairs and maintenance projects, but that members first needed to know the costs of these projects. Roger said that he had presented the Board with a list of proposed projects in January, but conceded that not all of the projects had cost estimates attached.

As the Board continued to discuss the prudence of allocating additional funding to reserves and what the appropriate amount of money held in reserves should be, Marty said that he thought there was an accounting error in the reported amount of reserves. The current financial report shows \$138,012 in operating reserves, but Marty said that he thought the auditor had made a \$30,000 error when adjusting the year-end financial reports. According to Marty, the true balance of the operating reserve fund is more in the \$105,000 range. He said he had asked the auditor to check those numbers.

Lou then appointed a special committee to work with Roger and Marty to review the budgets and expenditures of the past few years and make a recommendation of what the appropriate level of operating reserves should be. Committee members are Bruce, Dan, Suzann Evinger, Roger and Marty.

3. Property Manager Report

Among the items reported by Roger were the following.

- Homeowners leaving on vacation had placed luggage on the curb on garbage pick-up day. AAA employees collected the luggage along with the trash. All the bags but one were recovered. AAA has offered a \$50 settlement to the homeowners.
- The groundhog that had taken up residence underneath two houses on Chaucer Lane was captured and relocated in the wild. A black and white feral cat also was captured and released.
- Rats have been sited on Chaucer Lane and traps set. The Board directed that a notice be published in the Mews News and on the web site reminding homeowners not to feed birds and squirrels because the food attracts rats.
- Work continues by Dominion Virginia Power to strengthen the transformers and lay new cable in Landmark Mews. Roger said the work is part of a \$1 million project planned by the power company to resolve all the power problems in the community. He distributed a community map illustrating where power lines run and explained that Dominion Virginia Power said that some of those lines already have been replaced. (See map filed with the minutes.) Roger said he did not believe that was accurate; that there are no records of any line replacement taking place. He promised to contact Dominion Virginia Power about the accuracy of the map and report back to the Board at the next meeting. Roger also informed the Board that, while the power company anticipates there will be power outages during the replacement program, the company hopes to limit these outages to no more than four hours. The 11-hour outage experienced by some

residents the weekend of August 5 and 6 was due to a break in an aging line and was an anomaly.

Roger also provided an update on proposals to repair the brick wall surrounding Landmark Mews. He passed around a new proposal and cost estimate received from T.D. Fraley & Sons, Inc., the brick preservation masons recommended by the City of Alexandria. (*See the proposal filed with the minutes.*) The estimate submitted by this company was \$38,000, compared to bids of \$27,000 and \$30,000 received from other companies. The difference in the bids, according to Roger, was the expertise of Fraley & Sons and the quality of the firm's work. The other firms submitting bids did not have the same level of experience with this type of brick restoration and repair.

The Board asked if there were other firms that specialized in brick preservation. Carole Trimble explained that when she solicited the recommendation from the City of Alexandria, she found on the Internet an association of masons and had provided Roger with the names of other firms that were members of the association. The Board directed Roger to obtain additional estimates from other firms on that list. Brenda Johnson, a homeowner present at the meeting, pointed out that the cost of brickwork has been increasing at a rate of 20 to 30 percent per year and advised that the Board proceed quickly with this project. She also recommended that the Board negotiate a performance-based contract for this expensive project.

Lou asked that a suggestion for homeowners to check the brick on the exterior of their houses be placed in the Mews News and on the web site. He said that the brickwork on some houses is very poor and that problems can be spotted particularly after a rainstorm.

Roger said that Fraley & Sons had projected five weeks to complete the work on the wall. He recommended that the Board begin preparing homeowners for the need to access the backyards of homes along the wall and for the dust the work is expected to generate. Virginia Addison said that the association has the right to enter those backyards after three days notice is provided to homeowners, regardless of whether permission to enter is received from the homeowner. She also said that only 42 or 43 homes have backyards against the wall.

Roger then reported on the results of the investigation of diseased pin oak trees in Landmark Mews. According to Roger, there is no cost-effective solution to saving the trees. He said the life of the diseased trees can be extended by three or four years with careful trimming and thinning and that this information has been shared with homeowners who have diseased trees. He reported that the Army-Navy Club is taking down all of the pin oak trees on its property because of the devastating nature of the disease. He reassured Board members that the disease is not contagious so nothing needs to be done to protect other trees from contracting it other than keeping them clear of ivy, other clinging plants and mulch, and ensuring that they receive adequate water.

Roger asked the Board for permission to use \$2,000 from the Pulte settlement funds to replace seven trees along Stevenson Avenue. Eve Holtzman moved to permit Roger to spend \$2,000 on tree replacement. Virginia seconded the motion. It was passed unanimously.

Drainage in the common area at the side of the first home on the east side of Manchester Way at the corner of Cottingham Place remains a serious problem, according to Roger, who described the spot as a “swamp”. He said the problem is caused by run-off from the homeowner’s sump pump and downspouts, but that it also is related to the drainage problem on the Chaucer View Circle berm. He urged Board members to view the site themselves to see just how bad the problem is. He said the best time to correct such a problem is in the late fall or early spring.

Dan said that the Board had been talking about this problem for a year, that it needed to be resolved, but that Roger had not yet provided a plan for resolving the problem and estimates for the cost of the repair. Roger said the plan would be the same as that used to fix the Brampton Court drainage problem and that he anticipated the cost to be in the \$12,000 to \$14,000 range. Marty added that an attempt to resolve the Chaucer View Circle berm problem in 1998 had cost \$12,000. The Board directed Roger to obtain cost estimates for solving this drainage problem and Lou asked Roger and Marty to set a time for the Board to tour the area.

Simon Bennett asked Roger when he planned to present the Board with a list of projects he wants to undertake in 2006. Roger said he would present the list in January and that he would work with Marty to make sure the projects are in line with budget allocations.

4. Covenants Committee

Covenants Committee Co-Chair Bill Evinger reported that the committee will begin the fall follow-up inspections to the spring inspection reports in September. He said the committee does not anticipate finding many non-compliance issues since the number of discrepancies identified in the spring was way down.

Lou reported that he has appointed a special committee to review the Landmark Mews covenants to determine whether the covenants compliance process can be improved and which architectural standards can and should be updated. Committee members are Dennis Flynn, Tim Foster, Paul Edgell and Bill. The committee is due to report to the Board at the October meeting. Until that report is received, the Board has put on hold any decision about retaining an outside consultant and asked Dan to notify the firms that had responded to his Request for Proposals for an architectural standards review about the project status. Lou said he would be meeting with the special committee on Thursday, August 11, to provide them with instruction about the assignment.

Maria Ignatio, a homeowner present at the meeting, raised the issue of the brown window standards, commenting that she had been collecting estimates for replacing the windows in her home and had been able to identify only one contractor that still provides those windows. Her comments sparked a round of discussion about the window and wood door issues. Lou said that both issues are something that the special committee will examine.

5. Zoning Committee

Annie Foster distributed the Zoning Committee report. (*See report filed with the meeting minutes.*) She reported that a settlement check in the amount of \$4,450 had been received from

Pulte in lieu of replacement plantings in the buffer zone along Brampton Court and Manchester Way. She also updated the Board on the status of the efforts to draw various jurisdictions into the debate over the traffic impact of the proposed plan to redevelop Landmark Mall.

6. Other Business

Lou announced that the LMCA annual meeting would be held from 8 to 10 p.m. on the third Thursday of October, October 20, as specified by the by-laws, at the Samuel Tucker Elementary School in Cameron Station. He said he had appointed Dennis Flynn to head the Election Committee. Dennis is to inform Lou about who the other committee members will be. Lou asked that the news about the annual meeting and open Board seats be published in the Mews News and posted on the web site.

Marty asked if the proposed 2006 budget was approved. Lou asked Dan to organize a meeting with Marty and Simon to review the proposed budget and report back to the Board at the September meeting.

Eve moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:10 p.m. Dan seconded the motion.

The next meeting will be at Lou's home.

Respectfully submitted,

Carole Trimble
LMCA Secretary