

Thatchmont Board Meeting – 11/13/03

Present: Trustees: Neil Golden, Karin Hobman, Deborah Lindeman, Arthur Mattuck;
Management: Larry Sawyer

Approval of Proposed 2004 Budget and Fees

The trustees met briefly just before the annual meeting and approved

1. the proposed budget for 2004
2. the proposed 10 percent increase in condo fees
3. the proposed \$10 increase in the fee for a non-deeded storage bin
4. the proposed fee increases for non-deeded parking spaces (owners: \$25; outsiders: \$50)

The proposals were discussed in the light of the following:

- a) recent rental of the Thatcher St. apt. at \$1450/mo for a year;
- b) questions as to whether possible Federal tax liability on the added income make raising parking lot fees an inefficient way to raise money;
- c) apparent projected year-end deficit for 2003 of \$21,000. (This figure has been since revised downward: see below.)

It was decided to go ahead with the parking lot raises regardless of tax liability, since parking lot fees should in principle be maintained at the going neighborhood rate: too great a discrepancy tempts people to rent a space and then sublet it at a substantial profit.

The raise in condo fees (half to be permanent, half to be reconsidered at budget time next year) was reaffirmed. We need to make up for this year's deficit, and we need to meet the increased cost of insurance, heating oil, and water. The Thatchmont rental will help our reserves, but more is needed.

There was some discussion of the end-of-year balance, and of finding ways to make accurate forecasts and present the figures in the most meaningful ways to the trustees; this will be looked into.

Addendum 11/22/03

Projection of Year-End Balance (Dec. 2003; revision 11/20/03): Comparing with 2003 Budget:

Extra Expenses: \$17,500

Principally reflecting increases this year in insurance and water rates, unexpectedly heavy snow-removal expenses, and repair of the basement rental apartments

Deficit in Income: \$13,200

14 Egmont basement was vacant for the first 3/4 of the year; 15 Thatcher basement was vacant two months this fall.

Budgeted surplus for 2003: \$22,000

This was earmarked for the reserves, but will be applied instead to reducing the deficit.

Projected Year-End Deficit: about \$9,000

In the light of the above, a revised budget for 2004 will be prepared for the Trustees' approval at the December meeting.

Next meeting: Mon. Dec. 15, 2003 7:00 PM 15 Thatcher #3 (Golden)

minutes by Arthur Mattuck

Thatchmont Annual Meeting of Unit-Owners 11/13/03

Present: The trustees and management at the 11/13/03 Board Meeting; unit-owners.

The unit-owners at the meeting (including the trustees) represented 20 units out of 36; there were proxies for several more, but the owners present formed a quorum, and the few votes taken at the meeting were uncontested.

Review of 2003

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Neil Golden (elected in Sept. as replacement for Stephan Deibel, who was Chairman most of the year but had to yield to the demands of work and family), asked the owners present at the meeting to introduce themselves, reviewed the major projects and expenditures of the year, and made some announcements.

New unit-owners.

Present: Richard Yurko (14 Egmont #3)

Not present: Erica and John Thorpe (20 Egmont #2) (new baby)

Change in occupancy: Ken Zaner's unit (26 Egmont #2), formerly occupied by his mother Cynthia, is now occupied by his sons.

Basement apartments. The Egmont St. apartment was renovated at substantial expense; it was vacant most of the year, but finally rented as of October. The Thatcher St. tenant moved out Sept. 1, but the apartment has been rented as of Dec. 1, at market rate.

Snow removal. This was way over budget — about \$15,000 total, part of which went to trucking away the huge pile of mounded snow.

Heating. The temperature is being lowered gradually, but at the same time made more responsive by relocating sensors. This may mean unit owners will have to readjust their small radiator valves — not however the main floor valves at the other end of the radiator, which should always be either entirely open or entirely shut.

The price of heating oil has risen; for this winter season, it has been capped at \$.96/gal, up from \$.86/gal.

Parking Spaces and Storage Bins A list has finally been compiled of their current owners/users/renters; the lines and numbers in the lot were repainted.

Other

a) The **web site** <http://thatchmont.org> created by Stephan Deibel is proving increasingly useful as a repository for current and past information; he has volunteered to continue maintaining it.

b) The **Owner's Manual** has been retouched and brought up to date by Ann Lammers, and is almost ready for distribution.

c) A memo on **water conservation** was distributed.

d) The **fire doors** in the two basements with burners were fixed.

e) The **picnic** in September had good weather, good food, and good attendance — about twenty units were represented, including several new owners.

Budget and Fees (K=\$1000)

Copies of the proposed budget for 2004 were distributed, and Neil Golden made some comments.

1. Major budgeted **increases in expenses for 2004:** heating oil: 5K insurance: 9K water: 4K

2. Major **expenditures/losses in 2003:**

Egmont St. apt refurbishing: 13K; non-rental for 9 months: 11K

Snow removal: 15K (6K over budget)

3. **Fee increases** should net us over 19K in 2004:

- i) Condo fees to be increased next year by 10%: 5% to cover the above increases, 5% to increase reserves (to be reviewed at next budget time in light of apartment rental situation)
- ii) Fee for non-deeded parking space increased 50%; fee for extra storage bin doubled.

4. Our **reserves** are now 50K; if all goes well, they should be 92K at the end of next year.

Discussion by unit owners.

a) The reserve: haven't we traditionally looked at it as funded from rentals? If inadequate for important projects, shouldn't there be a special assessment?

b) Budget information: the way it is presented to owners should be improved, to allow comparison with previous year's budget, to show where previous year's forecasts went awry, to show an end-of-current-year balance so we can see where we stand.

Election of new trustees.

After nominations from the floor, the following unit-owners were elected unanimously to fill vacancies caused by expiring terms and resignations:

14 Egmont: Richard Yurko (new; 2-year term)

20 Egmont: Ellen Frank (new; 2-year term)

26 Egmont: Deborah Lindeman (re-elected to a second 2-year term)

25 Thatcher: Karin Hobman (current replacement trustee, elected to first full 2-year term)

At-large: Martha Recht (1-year term, to fill vacancy caused by resignation of Tom Nelson)

Continuing trustees:

15 Thatcher: Neil Golden (4th year)

19 Thatcher: Arthur Mattuck (2nd year)

Discussion by unit-owners

1. Windows, sills, doors, porticos need **repainting**. Several unit-owners pushed this as a high-priority necessity, to prevent decay. While agreeing that aesthetically this was needed, Stephan said that the masonry pointing last year included extensive caulking to guarantee that decay would not occur.

An **advisory motion** was made, amended, and passed: the 2004 budget should include an outlay for a substantial fraction of this repainting and repair, the rest of the work to be done in the years immediately following.

Trustees were warned not to automatically go with the lowest bidder on this or any major project (we have been burned in the past).

2. The **five-year plan** should be updated to allow for distantly looming projects and the accumulation of funds — in particular, parking lot repair (minimal, standard, or major redesign?)

3. Discussion of **paying for expensive work** – increased fees? the condo takes out a loan? special assessment (with individual owners taking out personal loans as needed)? A unit-owner pointed out that in fairness to all, predictable deterioration should be paid out of reserves, since both deterioration and reserve build-up take place over a long period; repairs should not be solely the financial responsibility of those who happen to be unit-owners at repair-time. This also underscores the need for long-term planning.

4. High-speed DSL **internet connection**: unit-owners reported both RCN and Comcast seem hopeless— after several years, they have not hooked us up satisfactorily; Verizon was also criticized as apparently not available for all units.

Satellite TV is available and would provide many stations, but no internet; it is billed as a fixed amount for the whole condo, shared by each unit that subscribes (it would come to about \$25/month if everyone subscribed, more otherwise)

5. **Pets** generated a long discussion, primarily about dogs that bark when left alone, and heavy scratch

damage in the lobbies. Requests to clarify the by-laws in the Owner's Manual with guidelines on noise or damage, or even possession—does Trustees' permission need to be obtained? Should there be a registry? Security deposits from pet owners? Should carpeting be required to reduce noise? Will the value of our condos decrease if we lose our current informal "pet-friendly" reputation?

Is it better to complain to the owner, or to management? For now: complaints should be made promptly to Sawyer Mgmt, so Larry can maintain a dossier on the offending pets and give us a legal basis for taking action if we have to.

6. A new owner commented that our **Master Deed**, dating from the early 70's, uses language that seems antiquated by current standards, for example on such questions as to what sort of joint occupancy is allowed, the Trustees' "right of first refusal", and the pet policy.

7. A unit owner lodged a vigorous complaint about **weeds, vines, and trees** growing in the parking lot from cracks between the paving and the brick walls. Another unit owner noted that some of these are or bear flowers (zinnia, snapdragon, trumpet vine, crabapple currently; coreopsis previously), and that towns exist where such growth is encouraged.

8. Complaints about banging from **basement heating pipes** in the early morning (25 Thatcher, 20 Egmont).

9. Excessive **parking violations**: tandem parking and overnight center-parking without windshield identification. Some unit-owners advocated militant towing, but Larry suggested that giving warning first would be wiser.

10. General praise for the quality of **daily maintenance and cleaning** by our property cleaner, Victor.

The meeting adjourned after about two hours.

Addenda

Next meeting: Mon. Dec. 15, 2003 7:00 PM 15 Thatcher #3 (Golden)

Owners are encouraged to bring up issues themselves at the Trustees' meetings, and/or to discuss an issue with their Trustee ahead of time, so that any needed facts can be assembled before the Trustees take it up at the meeting.

Reminder: Please fill out the unit-owner form that you received Nov. 14, and put it in the envelope provided in the lobby.

minutes by Arthur Mattuck