

Thatchmont Board Meeting – Nov. 1, 2011

Trustees present: Neil Golden, Andrew Liteplo, Arthur Mattuck, Mona Mowafi, Mike Springer,
Rosemary Trainor, Nick Yoder G&G Mgt.: Sheryl Sarkis

Financial Report

The **2012** budget was approved. The principal change from 2011 was a 32.5K increase in the heating oil item from 80K to 112.5K. This reflects two things: an expected rise in price, and that we have to date overspent by 7.5K this year's oil budget.

Old Business

1. Two proposed **amendments to the by-laws** discussed at previous meetings and by e-mail subsequently were adopted after some further discussion and small changes.

Roof-deck cooking

“The use of electric grills and other no-open-flame cooking appliances is permitted on roof decks provided they are in compliance with all current rules, regulations, and bylaws of the Town of Brookline, and that the unit is supervised by an adult present at all times it is plugged in, and an approved fire extinguisher is on the roof nearby. A protective sheet must be placed under all cooking appliances to insure that the roof membrane is not damaged. Deep-frying is not permitted.

Any damage to the roof as a result of cooking on a deck shall be the responsibility of the unit that operated the appliance. In case the unit operating can not be identified, responsibility lies with the owner of the appliance.”

Parking by contractors and workers

“Day parking (during working hours only), by contractors and workers on projects involving common areas or individual units, is permitted in the middle of the lot over the dashed center line, in a single line only, provided that the owner of the parked vehicle is not working on an extended length project (an overall project expected to last more than two weeks) and is not blocking the dumpster.

Any car parked in the middle must have a paper on the dashboard clearly readable through the windshield indicating the unit and owner, or common area, where they are working, and a telephone number where the vehicle operator can be immediately reached to remove the vehicle. Violators are subject to being towed at the vehicle owner/operator's risk and expense.”

Further questions about the parking amendment were deferred to future meetings or e-mail: warnings and enforcement procedure, responsibility for communicating this information to the parkers, planning for and handling of overcongestion if there are several shorter projects.

2. Lack of building permit for bathroom renovations at 20 Egmont #3.

As reported previously, the contractor failed to obtain the required permit, so it was not inspected; the unit-owner hired an inspector who produced a report that the trustees felt left various questions unanswered. A similar uninspected job a few years ago in another unit led to many problems with hot water in the Egmont buildings, and cost the Trust a lot to get correctly diagnosed and fixed, since the unit-owner responsible had by then moved away.

After discussion, the Board decided to offer the unit-owner three options:

- a) Have the wall opened up and the work inspected and certified, at his expense.
- b) Attach a statement to his deed, giving him or any subsequent owner responsibility for the next ten years for any problems ultimately traceable to this work on his unit.
- c) At the unit-owner's expense, the Board would obtain a second report by a plumber-inspector of their choice, responding to their questions insofar as possible. If satisfying answers could be provided without further work, done; if they could not be, then option a) or b) above would have to be followed.

The discussion pointed up the need for unit-owners to **always make sure contractors have obtained the necessary building permits** and for the Board to include in its form letter of approval for renovation work that **a copy of any required building permit be sent to Sheryl at G&G before work is commenced.**

3. There was a brief report on the **deleading project** a year or so ago. All the interiors have been delead. However for certification, the low-lying exteriors must also be delead, and the basement windows in two of the buildings are still in violation. For certification, they can either be delead, or covered up in some manner. No decision was taken.

4. The **roofing project** on half of 20 Egmont and all of 14 Egmont is completed, replacing the tar-and-gravel roofing (which was found to be leaking during renovations at 20 Egmont) with the rubber membranes that the other roofs have, increasing the insulation to 2", and bringing the penthouses up-to-date (cladding, doors, etc.)

Subsequently small cracks in the ceilings in two rooms at 14 Egmont #6 appeared. It is unclear whether these were caused by the roofing operation, or the beginning of the heating season. It was voted to split the \$600 bill for repairs 50-50 with the roofer.

New Business

1. As a result of recent heavy rainstorms, there was a **roof leak** at 25 Thatcher, apparently the result of a roof drain blocked by debris. There was discussion of repairs and of the need for periodic inspection of roof drains, the latter inconclusive as usual (this is a problem that causes trouble here about every 6-7 years in the writer's experience, requiring a very heavy rain and a lot of seasonally-available floatable debris – generally leaves or oak blossoms).

2. There have been **intercom problems** at 25 Thatcher.

We can replace the intercom there and update the postal boxes for 5K, using the existing wiring which may be faulty. Rewiring would be an additional cost.

The other option is to switch to one of the available telephone systems, which use a box in the lobby with a code number for each unit, and telephone communication with a predetermined number in the unit (landline or cell-phone). The installation cost is around 2-3K per building, including electrical work, plus about \$40-50/month, for the line and calls; all of the Thatcher buildings are included in this monthly charge, which could be \$600/year, or 20K (in 2011 dollars) over 30 years, including installation. (Other Thatcher buildings could be included since they do not increase the monthly charge.)

G&G says they use the telephone system in other condos, and it is satisfactory. An objection raised is that some owners no longer have landlines, and a single cell-phone number is inadequate for couples. Sheryl will look into whether there are systems which can allow more than one number to call.

The meeting had to adjourn at 6:30 to start the annual meeting, whose minutes follow.

Arthur Mattuck
Recording Secretary

Thatchmont Annual Meeting Tues. Nov. 1, 2011

Present: As above: all the 7 current trustees and Sheryl; plus unit owners. In all, 14 units were represented in person; others by proxy.

Financial Picture and Year's Accomplishments

Sheryl presented the budget, with comments about the oil increase and 12 % condo fee increase. Our reserves are now 126K; with the planned contributions in November and December, they should be 142K by year's end.

The 2011 Projects

1. The three remaining tar-and-gravel **half roofs** (one at 20 Egmont, two at 14 Egmont) were replaced this fall by the rubber membranes. The insulation under the roofs was increased to 2" to keep them warmer and save on heating oil. The penthouses were reclad, and their doors made tight to avoid heat loss from the back stairwell.

2. **Asbestos removal** We removed the asbestos basement ceiling at 15 Thatcher St. and replaced it with a double layer of sheetrock board, as per code.

3. The two **basement rental apartments** were renovated – principally 15 Thatcher since there was recent work on the other at 14 Egmont – with new fixtures, painting, carpets (cost 11K).

4. A new **heat control system** was purchased for the boilers on both sides; this fall is its first season of operation. It senses the outside temperature and adjusts the cycle (steam delivery) time accordingly. It also senses the temperature of the condensed steam and delays the on-cycle if the pipes are still warm. (The old system could do neither of these.) It can also sense and respond to indoor temperature, averaging or picking the highest and lowest among several sensors, but we aren't using this function since we do not have any adequate indoor locations that can reliably furnish an overall inside temperature.

It has already produced the most comfortable fall heating in memory.

5. **Fire extinguishers** were replaced with newer models in the back hallways beside each unit and in the basements with furnaces.

6. Still to be done in 2011 – this month we should see some restriping in the **parking lot** (a center line and x-ing of tandem-forbidden spaces), and painting of the **basement floors** between the external and internal back stairwells.

Our Five-Year Plan (Mike Springer)

Mike updated the five-year plan he prepared for the last annual meeting. Its basic purpose is to anticipate our coming capital expenditures over the next five years, build up the reserves to meet them, and in this way avoid special assessments. As mentioned in previous minutes, these not only present financial difficulties for many unit-owners, but cause problems for sellers and buyers of units because banks like to see predictable fees and payments when they decide on mortgages, and special assessments work against this.

Our biggest cost is energy – oil for heat and hot water – and the price keeps rising, about 8% per year. The new heat controllers Mike researched should help by producing a 10-15% increase in efficiency; unit-owners are urged to give feedback to Mike or Neil on any heating problems arising, so adjustments can be made to the controllers.

The rising energy costs and need to build up our reserves require us to play catch-up on condo fees for this initial three-year period of the rolling five-year plan: 2011, 2012, and 2013, with a 12% fee increase each of these years. After that, the fees will revert to normal, dependent we hope primarily on inflation and energy costs.

According to the plan, barring any unforeseen capital expenses, by 2016 – after the planned-for second round of masonry work – our capital expenditures should be 70-100% fully funded from the reserves.

Other Topics, Questions, Discussion

1. At Neil's request, Sheryl gave a brief presentation about some aspects of our **condo master insurance policy**. The policy does cover the fixed built-in portion of unit interiors in the event of disaster (fire for example), but there is a 5K deductible for each incident, for which the unit-owner (via his policy) would be responsible – or unit-owners, if several units were affected, with a formula to determine what fraction of the burden fell on each. Unit-owners should check with their insurance agents about coverage.

To substantiate claims, unit-owners should record and keep somewhere (off the premises!) records and photos of significant improvements to their units (e.g. major kitchen and bathroom renovations).

Other insurance matters were mentioned, rather rapidly; some are on the G&G Thatchmont website, the others could be added to make this a source for concerned unit-owners.

2. Neil spoke briefly, reminding unit owners to increase their comfort and **help with our oil costs** by shutting windows and weatherstripping them to prevent leaks; to use their radiator valves correctly (floor valves fully open or fully closed; air valves at the other end properly adjusted, or replaced with the larger cylindrical valves which give better control); and to avoid wasting hot water (low-flow shower-heads, showers vs. tubs; dishwashers fully-loaded; efficient sink-washing).

3. A unit owner asked about **motion sensors** for lighting the basement when someone enters.

With the energy-efficient lights we now use, we would have to compare the cost of a sensor system with the possible energy savings. (On the other hand, there are both esthetic and practical reasons for not having the contents of our basements visible from the sidewalks at night.)

4. A unit-owner requested **recycling pickup** at the back door of each unit along with the usual twice-weekly trash pickup; or a recycling barrel in the parking lot at each outside back double stairwell.

Elections

Andrew Liteplo and Nicholas Yoder were elected by the trustees two months ago to fill out the terms of Lifei Guo (14 Egmont) and Abe Recht (at large) who resigned this past summer. Lifei's term expired in 2011 as did those of Mike and Rosemary; Abe's term expires in 2012.

Andrew Liteplo (14), Mike Springer (20), and Rosemary Trainor (26) were re-elected unanimously by those present.

Rosemary is not expecting to serve out the full term; a replacement from 26 Egmont would have first dibs; others from 14, or 25, 19, or 15 would be welcome (20 Egmont already is supplying two trustees).

Next meeting. To be announced.

Arthur Mattuck
Recording Secretary