

## Thatchmont Trustees Meeting – Jan. 13, 2014

Present: Neil Golden, Jennifer Havlicek, Arthur Mattuck, Stuart Rubinow; Sheryl Sarkis, Mgmt.; also (initially *de facto*) Andrew Liteplo, Nick Yoder. Absent: Mike Springer

### Elections

At the Annual Meeting in November, three trustees' terms expired:

Andrew Liteplo (14 Egmont), Mike Springer (20 Egmont), Nick Yoder (At-Large).

Elections to fill the three vacancies could not be held, due to the lack of a quorum at the meeting. During the thirty-day waiting period prescribed by the by-laws and the following three weeks until this meeting, the above three trustees continued to serve.

At this meeting they were unanimously re-elected (by vote of the four remaining trustees).

Since technically they are replacement trustees chosen by the Board, their terms expire in November, at the same time as the terms of the four continuing trustees. So at the next Annual Meeting, all seven positions will be up for election by the unit-owners or their proxies.

The Board being thus reconstituted, the six members present re-elected the current officers:

President: Neil Golden Treasurer: Mike Springer Recording Secretary: Arthur Mattuck

### Financial

Sheryl reported that our two accounts currently stand at: Reserves: 289K Operating: 59K. She recommended moving 15K from Operating to Reserves for the interest, which the trustees approved.

**Conversion to gas heat:** Total expenses: 105K (might ultimately be < 5K higher) Am't still owed: 28K (will lower reserve to 261K)

The main unforeseen item was 10.5K for installing a new basement door for 14 Egmont and for 15 Thatcher to accommodate the new equipment.

Our budget for the conversion was 150K, so we did pretty well with < 110K.

**Snow removal:** No bill yet. If needed, a bobcat will clear the remaining central line of snow.

**Five-year plan:** now posted on our website; it includes the gas conversion and is currently on track.

### Old and New Business

1. **Heating** A brief description of how the heating system works is separately printed on the last page of these minutes – you should read and save it so you will know what “normal” heating should be like, and can decide whether it's out of line in your unit.

Typical problems so far are complaints of no heat in some units or entire buildings, or of weak heat and low indoor temperatures. On the Thatcher side, this seems to be now largely fixed (see item 2 below). On the Egmont side, there are still balance problems, with the 14 Egmont units hotter than the 26 units; this is being worked on, and may take some time.

It's important to e-mail heating problems to Mike and Neil, who are working with Dean at Industrial Boiler (the installers) during this period of making adjustments to the system:

michael.springer@hms.harvard.edu, neil@goldenfamily.us

The basics of fixing heating problems are (in order of doing):

#### Inside your unit:

A. In cold windy weather, check for drafts around the windows: apply weather stripping, use crumpled newspaper or plastic bags to stuff sash-cord-counterweight holes and other drafty gaps.

B. When a heat cycle starts, all radiators in use should for a while become too hot to touch comfortably; if not, check that the floor handles are completely open, then check that the airvents (simple ones or automatic ones) are completely open (they can be partially closed later after it's confirmed they work).

#### Outside your unit

The main problem is imbalance – steam flows in the pipes, but some units get too much, others too little. This is currently being fixed by adding airvents to the basement steam pipes and replacing defective

vents – these control the amount of steam that goes to each unit.

During the conversion, it has been found that a number of unit owners have defective heating equipment (steam floor valves and airvents on the radiators) within their unit. Hot water issues (see 3 below) can also be caused by defective valves within units. Owners are reminded that equipment in their unit is their responsibility; if it's the Association that has to identify the defective equipment, it will have to bill the unit-owner for the cost of the diagnosis.

2. **Temperature sensor** The amount of heat delivered depends on the outside temperature sensors. The sensor for the Thatcher side was just discovered to be defective and was replaced two days later; the system now seems to be working properly.

3. **Hot water** There were many problems earlier about no hot water, but these have been largely fixed. Current problems being looked into are:

- excessively hot (150 F) water in some Thatcher kitchens
- in an Egmont shower (20 #6), hot water very slow in coming, with undiagnosed sharp fluctuations in water temperature (this last might be a defective mixing valve in the unit).

4. **Central Overnight Parking** In one case it blocked the snow plowing. Several blessed vigilantes place warning notices on the offending cars in the early morning, and recording their license numbers. This has been very effective in eliminating repeat violations. In the works is use of online Dropbox or something similar so the complete list of offending license plates is maintained in one place accessible to all of us.

5. **Lighting in front halls and basement** The front hall chandeliers (on timers) average about 12 hours on; most basement lights are on 24 hours. There was a discussion of possible ways to save:

(i) Basement lights use **CF** (compact fluorescent) bulbs, more expensive than incandescent, but 1/4 the wattage and last 10 times as long, if not turned on and off frequently.

**LED** bulbs are similar, but long life is not reduced by frequent turning on and off. Two are being tested in the 14 Egmont chandelier.

(ii) **Motion sensors** for the basement could be used to turn cheap incandescents on, and off after ten minutes, say. Or there could be a **wall switch** at each basement entrance to turn lights on and off.

Cons: motion sensors use batteries which have to be replaced; they are not 100% reliable.

A wall switch and wiring costs about \$150; people turn them on, but not off.

After some discussion, the trustees voted to continue as now with the basement CF lights, on all the time, but replace the incandescent chandelier lights with low-watt long-burning good-looking LED's.

6. **Illegal snow-dumping** by a shoveling Amory tandem-parker on the sides of our dumpster – blocking access – and on the tops of our recycling barrels. Sheryl has written to the building manager.

7. **A roof deck proposal** by the new owner of 26 Egmont #6 was discussed by e-mail, and ultimately approved. Controversial features were its exceptionally large area, covering most of the roof, and its covering of the roof drain. The area was reduced somewhat, a liftable hatch provides access for clearing the drain, and the unit-owner is aware that he is responsible for having it dismantled when the roof membrane has to be replaced.

8. **New Unit-Owners** Welcome to:

26 Egmont #4: Yifan Xu and Libin Sun

26 Egmont #6: Philip (“P.T.”) Vineburgh

9. **Next meeting** TBA

Arthur Mattuck

Recording Secretary

## Description of the Heating System

Please read and save for future reference

The Egmont and Thatcher sides have separate systems.

**A steam cycle:** On each side, a gas-fired furnace in the lowest building (14 Egmont, 15 Thatcher) heats water in a boiler until it steams; the steam travels at 25 mph through wide horizontal insulated basement pipes with vertical narrower branch pipes leading up to the radiators in each unit.

The condensed steam (i.e., water) flows back as hot water through the same basement pipes (steam traps keep the outgoing steam from blocking the returning water).

This continues for a length of time depending only on the outside temperature, as measured by a sensor on the north-facing sides of the 14 Egmont and 15 Thatcher buildings.

In principle, this steam cycle is repeated an hour later. However it is delayed if the returning water is too hot, since this indicates overheating of the radiators and rooms. When the returning water temperature drops sufficiently in the pipes, the system waits for an hour, and the next steam cycle starts.

**The High and Low periods:** To economize on fuel and avoid overheating the units, the 24-hour day is divided into four time periods:

1. High: 5:30 AM - 11:30 AM (Egmont) 5:30 AM - 10:30 AM (Thatcher)
2. Low: in between period: late morning to late afternoon
3. High: 4:30 PM - 11:30 PM (both sides)
4. Low: 11:30 PM - 5:30 AM

In both periods, the successive steam cycles occur as described previously. The difference between the High and Low periods is:

High period: the steam cycle will start when the outside temperature is  $< 60^{\circ}$  F ;

Low period: As above, but  $< 40^{\circ}$  F .

### Additional information and cautions

1. The High period starting times of 5:30 AM and 4:30 PM are when the furnace turns on. It takes about a half hour to heat the water to boiling, so the radiators will not start warming up until around 6 AM and 5PM; once the steam starts, it travels quickly, but there may be some starting difference between the units depending on their distance from the furnace building. The two High starting times (when radiators feel hot) may differ by unit, but should remain the same for a given unit. These are therefore the best and most reliable times for observing whether your radiators are functioning correctly.

2. The first steam cycle in a High period has an increased time length, since the unit has cooled down during the Low period; after that, the time length depends on the outside temperature, as described at the beginning.

3. When the outside temperature is hovering around 60 or around 40, but the day is overcast or windy (no sun to warm you or there's a window draft to cool you – common spring and fall weather), you may feel cold, but the steam cycle may not start. There's no easy fix for this except a sweater.

4. **Remember to report heating problems during this initial period when the steam delivery is being balanced. If problems arise later on, of course they can be reported, but now is the time when help is readily available.**