

## Thatchmont Trustees Meeting January 3, 2017

**Present:** Susan Gilman, Neil Golden, Liz Leeds, Stu Rubinow, Mike Springer  
Sheryl Sarkis for G&G

**Absent:** Vincent Froncek, Sandeep Ghael

**Financials:** Sheryl reported that as of 12/31/16 the reserve fund was at \$399,800 and the operating account as of today is \$21,000. Both these numbers are what we planned for and expected.

### Old Business

**Great North:** Several of the Trustees and Sheryl met on September 8<sup>th</sup> with Lou and Justin Gargiulo of Great North, the management company that acquired G&G. The purpose of the meeting was to get to know them face-to-face, to understand better how they operate, and to let them know how this Association is run.

Lou explained that the trend in condo management these days is toward very large companies that manage hundreds of associations, many (or most) of them geographically distant from where the management company is located. He feels this does not provide prompt service to the associations and ends up being expensive for them. Great North's approach is for associations to have a local manager, with work done as needed by local contractors; this approach, he feels, is quickly responsive to an association's needs and is cost-effective. Great North is a large regional management company, though they are small by national standards.

We also talked with him about record-keeping and tracking repair requests, both to follow resolution of specific issues and to get a better sense of aggregated problems over time. Lou said that their current systems for handling this are in flux – he's not entirely satisfied with them and they will be improved in the near future.

### Security grates:

1. The Brookline Building Dept. says that bedroom grates may be installed on the exterior of a building if they are openable without a key and are hinged to swing out. This gives easy egress in case of fire but appears to provide little safety.
2. Paul Bruno, the mason who has been doing maintenance on the building exterior, says exterior grates should only be attached by drilling into mortar, not the brickwork itself.
3. After discussion the Trustees agreed unanimously on a new policy for security grates:
  - a. Only owners of first-floor units may install security grates.
  - b. Owners wishing to install grates must get design approval in advance from the Trustees.
  - c. From now on grates may be installed only into window frames, not into the building brickwork or mortar.
  - d. There may be situations where the window frames are not strong enough to support security grates but are otherwise sound; that is, are not rotting or leaking water or air. In that situation the Association will replace the frames with stronger ones, and will bill the owner for one half the cost of replacing them.
4. One first-floor owner presents a special case, and the Trustees modified the above policy slightly to accommodate their situation.

## New Business

- 1. Fire alarm system:** Our system needs to be replaced; it does not meet current code and there have been a couple of malfunctions in the last two years. Replacement of the system will be complex and will involve re-wiring and hiring a monitoring company. This may cost around \$120,000, plus the cost of restoring the hallways to hide the system's cables. Sheryl will start to work on getting an accurate estimate to do the work. There was a feeling that we should have it done soon, before the code requirements change again and make it an even more complicated project.
- 2. Dry wells:** Several of the dry wells outside basement doors flood in heavy rains. We do not know the size or shape of the wells, and finding out is not an easy matter; the original 1920's architectural drawings for the buildings have long disappeared. It is not clear whether the wells are clogged from accumulation of organic material over time or by sand from the parking area - those might have different solutions. We are trying to figure out the cost for opening one well for research, and the cost for replacing either the flooding ones or all wells.
- 3. Routine maintenance:** Drains have occasionally produced water in basements. A company comes quarterly to snake the drains down from the roof, but they need also to do sink drains in building cellars. Also, on the topic of routine maintenance, water traps in the heating system should be replaced on a regular basis. Ditto for common area lights and smoke detector batteries.
- 4. Problem tracking:** For issues like the ones just mentioned, and similar ones, we will be using the Great North job ticket system to track the status of repairs and generate summary statistics over time. Sheryl expressed some frustration that the current GN system doesn't allow writing notes about an issue, but an improved and more flexible system should be in place soon.
- 5. Masonry:** There is still masonry work to be done, but the most pressing maintenance has been completed. We estimate having a 3 to 5 year window for finishing the project.
- 6. Heat:** Some owners have complained about uneven heating at times. This can have multiple causes: 1) gas pressure fluctuations from the street; 2) the way our system is configured, and the distance heat has to travel, if owners on the end units suddenly open up the heat it can affect other units connected to the same furnace; 3) occasionally owners have mis-set their radiator valves - an easy fix. If you are having heat issues notify Neil Golden for the Thatchmont building or Mike Springer for Egmont.

Stu Rubinow  
Recording Secretary