

January-February 2012



Briarcliffe Lakes Manor Homes Homeowners' Association

President's Message

Winter is in full swing in our community, and we have already seen our plowing service in action. Please keep in mind if there is more than two inches of snow on the ground, move your vehicle off the street so that it does not inhibit our plowing service from clearing our streets.

Buckets containing "snow and ice melt" can be found in your garage, and application is our residents' responsibility, so if you're running low, please contact our management company for refills. Please remember that snow melt is only to be used in authorized areas, which include sidewalks and driveways. Use in any areas other than those is a rule violation and can be very detrimental to our landscaping. Please refrain from doing so.

---Sean LaFortune

Management Report - Census

Census Time!...It is time once again for the annual Briarcliffe Lakes census forms to be filled out and returned to management along with your personal condominium insurance declaration page. The census is important because it helps keep our records updated regarding residents and vehicle information. The insurance declaration page can usually be sent in directly from your insurance provider, you just need to give them a call and tell them where to send it. Some owner's policies are automatically sent to management each time it renews, if you think yours may be in this category, management will be happy to see if it has already come in. Once again please take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed census form and have your insurance declaration page sent in before the April 30th deadline. Any forms not turned in after that date will receive a 30-day notice prior to fines being placed on the account. **DO NOT SEND THIS INFORMATION TO THE P.O. BOX**, it must be faxed in to management at telephone 630-495-4468, or mailed to or dropped off at 412 Eisenhower Lane N. , Lombard, IL 60148. You may also e-mail a pdf file copy of the information to mmiller@gd-pm.com.

---Mark Miller

A Typical Winter Scene!



Prepositioned Snow Removal Equipment



Briarcliffe Lakes Manor Homes Homeowners' Association

Director Reports

❖ Landscape Report

Brrr! With the arrival of the winter season, landscaping is suspended but we are in planning mode for 2012 and the board did renew the landscaping contract.

Landscaping and the care of our trees is considered to be a normal part of the board's duty of maintaining our property. We have about 15 acres of turf and hundreds of mature trees and shrubs on our extensive grounds. You have purchased a residence in a unique property and maintaining these grounds is a step to preserve the investment of our owners.

Your association uses several commercial firms, including ISA-certified arborists for the care of the association's trees. That care includes inspections, trimming and preventative measures. Even so, we did lose several trees last year. There are a variety of "stressors" which can damage or kill our trees. These includes weather factors such as drought and extremes, but even a milder winter can cause premature budding and allow insects and other pests to survive. Insects, blights and mites are all stressors, and we treat for many of these.

We have several species of Ash Trees on the property. These trees are common throughout the area, and about 20% of the trees lining the streets of nearby communities are reputedly Ash trees.

Ash trees are under attack by the Emerald Ash Borer or simply the "EAB." This insect has killed millions of ash trees in Michigan, and Illinois law stipulates DuPage County be under EAB quarantine. The EAB is a metallic green beetle native to Asia. It was first found in the USA in Michigan in 2002, but is suspected to have been established in the Detroit area many years earlier.

At Briarcliffe Lakes Manor Homes we are using several approaches to control this destructive insect. Unfortunately, many nearby residences and communities are not applying pro-active treatments, and these pests are spreading. However, we remain optimistic.

Our choices are to treat and attempt to keep our mature and beautiful trees healthy, or to allow them to die. Replacement will be costly, and so treatment seems to be a worthwhile effort.

--John Scudder

Resources:

- Illinois Department of Agriculture EAB site:
<http://www.agr.state.il.us/eab/>
- Regional EAB resource:
<http://www.emeraldashborer.info/>
- USDA:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/emerald_ash_b/gallery.shtml

❖ Treasurer's Report

Well, we've made it through 2011 in fairly good shape.

1. We came in very close to budget. This is in part due to our austerity program and the new reserve study which told us where to concentrate our spending and savings for the future. We will continue to use this reserve study for reference.
2. We must plan on water rates increasing which was announced after we adopted our 2012 budget, These rate increases will also impact our personal water bills.
3. This year we got off easy on water main breaks and hydrant replacements. In 2011, we had 2 main breaks and 1 hydrant replacement which cost the association \$34,624.
4. Past due assessments remain high in my opinion. The board is working very hard to bring these numbers down. Every dollar we don't receive is a dollar we cannot use in an other way. If at all possible, pay your fees on time. I have seen cases where the legal fees are more than 1/2 the total owed the association. Also, I want to remind everyone that we must legally treat everyone the same. We have procedures and are accepting some payment plans, but we cannot waive any of the late fees. Remember the forcible entry and detainer option is still open to the Association as a means of collecting monies owed to all of us.

In closing, we are trying very hard to keep the fee increases to a minimum without decreasing services.

--Sheryl Bailey, Treasurer

❖ Welcoming Report

The Welcome Packet has been an ongoing work in progress, and is in printing and will be distributed to new unit owners. It will also be on the website.

A Quick Start guide has been compiled, which is a handy reference guide to provide all unit owners with important information in brief to answer many of the common questions that arise. A copy of the Quick Start guide can be obtained by going online to BLMH.org. A copy of the Quick Start guide can also be requested from our management company.

As you are aware, the real estate market has been hit hard by the tough economic downturn, and BLMH is no exception. For those not attending the annual meeting, I gave a report on sales for 2010 and 2011. In brief, there were 8 units sold in 2010 - six (6) A units; one (1) B unit; one (1) D unit. In 2011 there were 13 units sold - four (4) A units; three (3) B units; five (5) C units; one (1) D unit. There was an increase in sales from 2010 through 2011 of five units. Lets think positive, and hope for an even larger increase in sales in 2012.

--Sondra Seery

Briarcliffe Lakes Manor Homes Homeowners' Association

Directors Reports - cont'd

❖ Rules and Regulations

➤ Pets and Droppings

The association has specific rules about pets. Owners are requested to familiarize themselves with the rules and to clean up their pet droppings. "Waste must be removed per city of Wheaton ordinance."

➤ Vehicles on the Premises

Our rules state that "Any vehicle parked in one location on the street for 72 hours or more shall be considered stored and in violation..." If you leave your vehicle for 72 hours for any reason you must notify management "in advance and in writing." Please comply with this and the other rules pertaining to vehicles on the property.

➤ Use of Lakes, Streams, Ponds

"There is no playing allowed in an around waterfalls, gazebos, creeks and ponds....and each parent is responsible for the conduct and damage caused by their child." Further, "Because of insurance liability, the lakes shall not be used for any purpose..." Playing in or on the streams, ponds and lakes including skating in winter is dangerous and **is prohibited**.

--*Brian Collins*

❖ Architecture & Maintenance

➤ Snow Plows on Site

It's normal to have plows on site and ready for the next snowfall.

➤ Additional Winter Maintenance Tips

The tips were issued with the previous newsletter, but here's one that didn't make the official list: Maintenance has requested that owners **do not** put water or liquids into the "snow melt" bins in the garages. This results in a heavy, solid mass. A lot of time was spent this fall preparing some of the bins. That's a wasteful use of association money, which can be avoided.

➤ Maintenance Funding 2012

The board made an adjustment to owner fees this year. Inflation returned in 2011 and we face a water rate increase of 30%. We have numerous programs underway. These can only occur with your fees.

➤ Roofing Project 2012

We'll probably do six this year. The goal is to complete all roofs in a timely manner. The board has a list of roofs inspected in 2010, leak reports of 2011 and I'm building a file of leaks in 2012. From these lists the roofs for 2012 will be selected. Preparatory attic inspections will begin earlier this year, and **before final selection**. We'll notify owners by mail.

Please – It's been policy that the B-unit owner in each re-roofed building replace the dormer window at the time of the roofing project with installation by the association roofer. The goal is to achieve a leak free installation for 30 years. Any "B" unit owner considering window replacement is asked to delay the dormer. Contact management if there is a concern.

➤ Other Projects, cont'd

Miscellaneous projects include resumption of replacement of brick window sills with limestone and the review of concrete patios and walks. Concrete stoops and narrow walks which were approved in 2011 will be installed along one edge of certain driveways. Additional driveway seal coating and some replacements are planned.

➤ Painting 2012

The exterior painting list will be adjusted for 2012, as we shift from a 5-year to a 6-year cycle. Owners may recall that the old cycle resulted in anywhere from 12 to 21 buildings in a single year. The new approach, approved by the board, will complete 14 buildings each and every year. This will smooth finances.

We've been asked about touch-up painting, etc. Patios do experience wear and tear, and owners can request that their patio wood components be painted more frequently. This however, will be at cost to the owner who requests the painting. Send a note to management if you would like an estimate as part of 2012 exterior painting.

Some of our wood trim is cedar which is used because of its many benefits. Cedar is hygroscopic. This means it will absorb or discharge moisture to attain equilibrium with the surrounding atmosphere. It is a soft wood, which means it will gouge easily. Cedar is considered to be a naturally durable species and the heartwood has natural decay resistance. Where wood is in contact with the ground or can absorb water, there is a possibility of decay. Paint will sometimes flake. The association does not normally do touch up on trim with minor gouging or flaking. This is a judgment call. When woodpecker holes are repaired, or decaying or damaged wood is replaced, the association applies primer and a finish coat of paint. The wood can tolerate some exposure to the elements, and with 42 buildings, most of our owners appreciate that the association balances appearance and cost.

Drainage

We'll continue drainage issues in 2012. Buildings which receive new roofs and relocated gutter downspouts will be reviewed with landscaping and we'll also get opinion from our arborist. Methods include cutting swales, removing soil and replacing it with stone and new drains. Water may then flow away from the buildings and toward the street. Modifications of 2011 will be inspected for effectiveness, and minimize or prevent the flow against buildings.

Owner Unit Modifications

Owners are reminded that certain modifications or additions require association approval. This includes Satellite Dish antennas, wooden floors for B and C units, window and patio door replacement, fireplaces, exterior air conditioning compressors, etc. No modifications of **ANY** kind to load bearing walls are permitted! Attics are not part of your unit! If you are planning remodeling, contact management. Owners must also obtain all City of Wheaton required permits and any modifications must meet city codes.

--*Norm Retzke, Vice President*

Briarcliffe Lakes Manor Homes Homeowners' Association

Additional Information ---

❖ **CAI Annual Conference**

This association is a member of the Community Associations Institute. The CAI held its annual conference in Arlington Heights on February 3 and 4. Three BLMH board members were able to attend this year, as they did last year. Management also attended. The conference includes "Education Session Tracks" which are educational sessions oriented toward homeowners, boards and managers. The board attended the following educational sessions:

- **Homeowner Forum:**

Ask Questions to a Panel of Experts. "The panel of experts is prepared to answer all of your most pressing questions. With years of combined experience in all facets of community management and living, you are assured to leave with answers."

- **Property Values and Paying Assessments:**

The presentation shall have a four part discussion which addresses legal, building insurance and landscaping issues. Learn: How to effectively budget for your association and oversee contracts and expenditures; ways to avoid special assessments by proactively detecting potential repairs; insurance protection for delinquent association assessments; and how landscaping adds financial value to your real estate investment.

- **Legal Update:**

The Legal Update provides updates on association case law, recent local legislation, and more.

❖ **Committees**

The association has a volunteer Board of Directors/Managers comprised of owners who donate their time and talents to the betterment of your association. They agree to operate as fiduciaries, put aside personal agendas, and operate the association as a business in a fair and uniform manner in which all owners are equally represented.

This is without doubt a difficult task, made more difficult by the extreme economic situation which began with the recession in 2007. The board performs a variety of tasks, including the preparation of this newsletter and the association website.

Owners are encouraged to support the board in performing its fiduciary duties. Owners may assist as members of the committees, which include finance, welcoming, maintenance, landscaping, architecture and rules enforcement. Anyone wishing to join the committee, and make a contribution to the association and to your neighbors, please contact management or the President.

Board of Directors

Sean LaFortune

President

1703-D Lakecliffe

Sheryl Bailey

Treasurer

1777-D Gloucester

Norman Retzke

Vice President, Architecture & Maintenance

1733-B Harrow Court (630) 800-8208

NormAtBLMH@earthlink.net

Brian Collins

Rules and Regulations Director

1773-A Gloucester

Sondra Seery

Welcoming Director

1777-A Gloucester

John Scudder

Landscape Director

1713-B Lakecliffe Drive

(630) 935-8489

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Management

G&D Property Management (formerly First
United) -----Mark Miller

412 Eisenhower Lane North / Lombard, IL 60148-5706

Phone: (630) 495-4466 / Fax: (630) 495-4468

Email: mmiller@gd-pm.com

After-Hours Emergency Number

If serious conditions, such as water leaks in your unit or garage, warrant prompt attention after 5 p.m. on weekdays or during the weekend, you should call the after-hours emergency number:

(847) 923-6060

You may also call the management office number and stay on the line for the recorded message to give you the emergency number.