

Pond Meadows Condominium Association, Inc.

Mahwah, NJ 07430

Newsletter December 2014

The Winter Solstice



The winter solstice (December 21st) is an *astronomical* event for people of the northern hemisphere marked by the Sun reaching its southernmost point (the Tropic of Capricorn) on its annual ecliptical path. The winter solstice has historically signified the death of the Sun in the midst of darkness and cold, but people of the north knew that the Sun would return and be resurrected in the Spring (the vernal equinox). They considered the winter solstice the day when the Sun both “died” and was “born” (the birth of the unconquerable Sun). That is why gods, particularly “Sun gods,” were assigned birthdates on or near the solstice – Dionysus (Greece), Mithra (India), Sokar (Egypt), Amaterasu (Japan), and even Christ (Greek/Roman). Their divine births were considered harbingers of an eternal cycle of death and rebirth.

In short, hope always resides in the seemingly bleak dark and cold, best and simply put in a poem by Oliver Herford (1863-1935):

I Heard a Bird Sing

I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December
A magical thing
And sweet to remember

“We are nearer to Spring
Than we were in September,”
I heard a bird sing
In the dark of December

Notes and Reminders

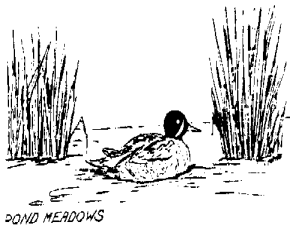
Winterizing your unit: Be reminded that it is the responsibility of the unit owner to prepare for the cold by turning off the internal valve (in the utility room) to the outside faucet and by draining the feed pipe to the faucet. That pipe runs down the outside wall and is subject to a freeze (and bursting) during a prolonged cold spell. Nelson Gurrero (201-388-0598) is available for hire for a *very nominal fee* to locate and to shut off the internal valve and to drain the faucet feed pipe.



Clubhouse rental fee: The Clubhouse rental fee has been raised from \$75.00 to \$100.00 to cover the actual cost of cleaning and paper supplies. It is still a bargain. Please contact Rosemarie Locorotondo (22 Eakens Court), who coordinates clubhouse rentals, for more information about renting the facility for family events or other social functions.

Pond Meadows Website: Reminders have been made in almost every publication about the use of the Pond Meadows Condominium website, <http://www.arthuredwardsinc.com/PondMeadows>. These reminders are occasioned by the operational plan to reduce costs by reducing the number of paper notices distributed by conventional mail. Postage and reproduction expenses have become burdensome. All documents are posted on the website – all minutes, audits, governing documents, notices, newsletters, and other timely and relevant materials. Copies can be made directly from the site. It is legally sufficient for the documents to be published on the site, so it would surely be to your benefit to “Login” and to gain access just to be informed and up to date.





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Landscaping Contractor: The Board has decided to change landscaping contractors beginning in January, 2015. Classic Landscaping of Suffern, NY, has long served the needs of the community, but the decision was made to give Red Robin Landscaping of Ramsey, NJ, (<http://www.redrobinlandscaping.com/>) the contract for next year. Red Robin, as you are probably aware, has been our snow removal contractor for almost a decade and has performed exceptionally every year. We look forward to the same high standard of service for our grounds, and to working with Mark Robinson in this new venture.

Vehicle Registration: A reminder that all lawful residents of Pond Meadows must register their vehicles with Arthur Edwards to be eligible to park in the lots. Unregistered or unidentified vehicles will be given notice to vacate or be towed. Enforcement rules are set forth clearly on the signs posted at the entrances to the lots and grounds. Hang tags should be properly displayed on all parked vehicles. Be advised, thank you.

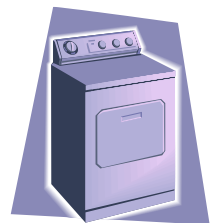


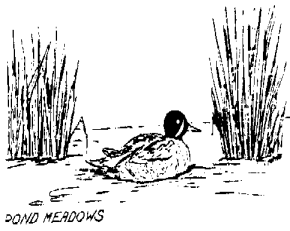
Recycling Shed: The new recycling shed is, aesthetically, a welcome addition to the complex. Thanks to all of the residents who have taken the time to insure that it is kept clean and debris free. It also serves to store seasonal materials and containers. Keys to the facility were distributed several months ago. New residents who need a key either to the shed or to the clubhouse should contact Rosemarie Locorotondo (22 Eakens Ct.), who will provide one upon a proper showing of identification and proof of residency.

Landscape Architecture Plan: The presentation by John P. Williams of MKW & Associates at the October 13th Annual Meeting was well received. The questions asked were on point and there seemed a general understanding that this was to be a long term project to revitalize the grounds and to prepare for the future. More cost elements of the proposal plan are expected in the next months, but discussions of the plan shall be ongoing at Board meetings throughout the next year. There is quite a distance to travel from initial proposals and preliminary recommendations to the actual prioritizing and operationalizing of projects based on a sound financing plan. Be advised that the Board shall be very measured in its deliberations and will welcome suggestions from the membership as it proceeds.

Dryer Duct/Vent Cleaning

Dryer ducts should be professionally cleaned periodically by licensed and experienced contractors using the proper equipment. Accumulated lint in the duct may pose a fire hazard, and it can retard the air flow from your dryer resulting in inefficient or incomplete drying cycles. At Pond Meadows there are to be found three different types of ducts: for upper units, the duct runs from the dryer through the floor some 25 feet to the vent on the outer back wall; for lower units, the duct runs from the dryer up the utility room wall and through the ceiling some 35 feet to the vent on the outer back wall; and for the end units, the duct runs directly from the dryer some 5 feet to the vent on the outer wall. In all cases, the lint accumulated in the duct closest to the dryer should be evacuated. This should be particularly the case for dryer ducts in lower units.





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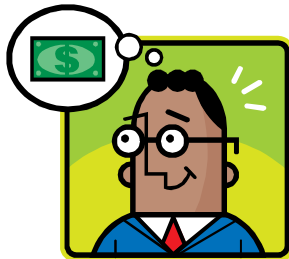
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We have received and approved a proposal by Associated Cleaning Systems, Inc. of Teaneck, NJ, (<http://www.associatedcleaning.com/Cleaning-Company-Contact-Teaneck-NJ.html>) to provide this service for under \$80/unit.

Please call Elizio from Associated Cleaning Systems at 201-530-9197, to schedule an appointment for service during the week of January 5 – 9. Payment is to be made *on site* by the unit owner *directly* to Associated Cleaning Systems, Inc. after the service is completed.

2015 Budget

The November 10th meeting, at which the proposed 2015 budget was discussed in detail in regards to its intent and in its design, was well attended by close to thirty (30) members/owners. Specific questions were posed and answered. It was explained then, and in the November 21st letter distributed with copies of the budget, that the primary goal of restructuring the budget was to secure a greater financial security and stability for the Association. The operational line items were not significantly increased, and many were decreased. However, the need to replace diminished reserves and to create a fund for deferred maintenance, like eventual roof replacements, was considered imperative.



The budget was accordingly increased by \$44,500 to fund just those two line items. Another \$5,400 was budgeted to meet the increased cost of municipal utilities – electricity, water, and sewer. The budget was thus increased for 2015 by over \$50,000, resulting in an increase in monthly fees of \$60/month.

Despite the increase, the maintenance fee of \$262/month scheduled for 2015 yet falls among the lowest third of fees in communities located just in Mahwah. Those range from \$200/month up to \$670/month. The calculation of the new monthly fee was directly tied to the need for present and future financial security and to meet the increased cost of services.

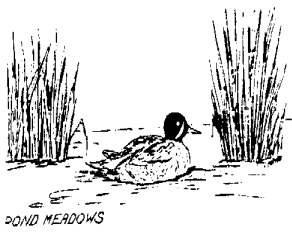
People may have gotten used to the minimal monthly fee charged at Pond Meadows over the years, but it turned out to be unrealistically too low to fund major projects, to meet the costs of ongoing buildings maintenance, and to lay a foundation for a more fiscally secure future. The 2015 does NOT provide for any funding of projects which may be recommended by the landscape architectural plan.

Proposed Amendments to the By-Laws

The “By-Laws of the Pond Meadows Condominium Association, Inc.” governs the operations of the Association, which is a non-profit corporation, and its Board of Trustees. The “Master Deed” is a wholly different document which governs the title and use of the land on which Pond Meadows, A Condominium, is situated. Owners are “members” of the Association by virtue of their ownership. But their ownership and use of their units and the common elements is restricted by applicable provisions of the Master Deed.

The “Master Deed” and its restrictions on owners’ titles and uses can only be amended by a vote of 67% of the owners AND of 51% of mortgage holders. Any amendment thereafter has to be approved by the Mahwah Planning Board (Master Deed, Paragraph 18).

The By-Laws, on the other hand, can be amended by a 51% vote of the owners at a special meeting



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called for the specific purpose of amending the By-Laws (Article IX, Amendments).



The Board has passed a motion (at the December 8th meeting) to hold such a **special meeting before the regularly scheduled business meeting on February 9, 2015 to present for vote two amendments to the By-Laws:**

THE FIRST AMENDMENT would add to the provisions on the election and terms of Board of Trustees members a TERM/SERVICE LIMIT of no more than two (2) consecutive three(3)years terms and/or no more than six(6) years of service on the Board within a nine (9) year period (Article III, Sections 2 and 3).

At present the election cycle consists of 1-2-2 seats, meaning that one seat's term will end in October, 2015, two more will end in November, 2016, and two more will end in 2017, and then the cycle will repeat. In each instance the amendment proposes that seated members cannot seek re-election after serving for six (6) consecutive years or six (6) years within a nine (9) year period.

Such term limits will allow a greater flexibility on the Board and a greater diversity of interests to be represented by it. It will also promote an invitation for Association members to participate in the administration of the community by increasing their opportunities to sit on the Board. It also forecloses the possibility that control will be reserved to one or two long serving Board members who may refuse to entertain reasonable calls for reforms by other owners. A recent article in The Record (December 5, 2014) recounts the

victorious suit of an aggrieved owner in a Co-op in Fort Lee against a Co-op Board whose President had sat for twenty-five (25) years and who refused to entertain any novel ideas which were not his own. Change arrived with his death. Six new members of the Board were elected almost immediately. This amendment intends to prevent any similar circumstance from existing at Pond Meadows in the future.

THE SECOND AMENDMENT would bring the language of Article VIII, Section 2, (Enforcement) up to date to conform to the requirements of contemporary state and federal laws. The By-Laws, after all, were written over thirty (30) years ago. The amendment would provide that "no fine shall be unreasonable...and shall be designed to enforce compliance with the provisions of the Master Deed or any other rule, regulation, or policy, and not to install penalties for non-compliance.."

Full texts of the amendments will be circulated with the notices of the meeting, with proxies, and other materials in January in anticipation of the special meeting on February 9, 2015.



*The Pond Meadows Condominium
Board of Trustees
thanks you for your continuing
support and cooperation*

NEIGHBOR, n. One whom we are commanded to love as ourselves and who does all he knows how to make us disobedient.

– Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (1906)