ON BUDGET FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Every year the Brighton Board creates an annual budget with the goal of matching revenues with expected costs, as well as making sure the reserve account is adequately funded to cover any major projects in the future. This year the budget reflects major cost increases in maintenance and professional services. One major ongoing cost is related to the street trees that lend beauty to the neighborhood but as they mature require a program of regular trimming and fertilization to remain healthy. To address this need, a “Street Tree Maintenance” line item has been added to the 2017 budget.

The street trees also present problems with sidewalk heaving and root entanglement with underground services. Because of an obligation to the City we cannot simply remove trees that present problems, so we work with the City to mitigate issues by means such as shaving sidewalks. Only in an extreme case will the City allow a tree to be removed and not replaced. If you have any issues with trees near your lot, please contact Washington Business Services.

Brighton has several native growth tracts that are part of the HOA’s responsibility. These are a source of expenses that are difficult to predict. These areas serve as buffers and water retention and are becoming overgrown. During this past year a number of “hazard trees” had to be removed after they fell or were leaning over fences. To address the issue a second line item “Storm Water and NGPA Maintenance” was added to the budget.

The 2017 budget reflects a significant increase in cost for Washington Business Services (WBS).

WBS informed the board this year that the current payment structure did not cover their costs and requested an increase. The board solicited bids from other management companies and made a proposal back to WBS that was in line with what other companies charge for similar services. WBS accepted the board’s proposal. Going forward we foresee Management fees increasing with the rate of inflation but the size of this year’s increase is an anomaly.

ESTABLISHING NEW LINES OF COMMUNICATION

In the latter part of the year the board has worked to increase the methods of communication between the board and community members with a goal to become more approachable, open, and show advocacy for the community members. It’s an effort that we hope will promote community members to approach the board well before projects start and to not hesitate to ask questions.

The first step to improve communication was a complete overhaul of the website to give residents a better-quality tool when referencing the governing documents and understand what the board and community maybe asking from you when enforcement to compliance is requested. The website is also a location where to find announcements, dates of meetings, or specific deadlines such as when assessment payments are due. The second step was to bring back the newsletter and to start utilizing postcards for small seasonal reminders to help keep items top-of-mind. The newsletters will be quarterly and starting in 2017 will be sent electronically to the members that we have email addresses for. The board has a goal of getting to be 100% digital with delivery of newsletters and announcements beginning with the July newsletter. This will help us greatly reduce costs and allow us to be more frequent with announcements. Contact us or WBS to be sure we have the most current email address for you so you don’t miss out on any information going forward.
Lastly, we have implemented a new violation notification process that supports the Enforcement and Fine Policy when a community or board member is requesting compliance to. It’s purposely structured to give multiple opportunities to the homeowner to contact the board or management if there are questions or if there is a need to establish a timeline for correction.

A NEW PROCESS AND Transition FOR ENFORCEMENT

In early 2016 the board ratified the Enforcement and Fine Policy to help maintain uniform neighborhood standards for structures and yard maintenance. It was realized that each owner in our neighborhood relies on our neighbors to help maintain property values for each other. As our neighborhood ages, enforcing these standards becomes more important to everyone in the neighborhood. During 2016 the board had many discussions about the best way of continuing to enforce the covenants as they relate to maintenance for each property. In the past, notification of violations fell as a neighbor-to-neighbor responsibility. The board decided that if we wanted to get uniform enforcement of violations throughout the neighborhood, surveys by board members would be a better way to enforce the violations.

This past year, the board was striving to use fines as a last resort to resolve compliance issues. We decided to use the door hangars to notify the homeowner of violations, and ensure three notices were given before fines were assessed. We wanted to make sure the homeowner and board had open lines of communication to help resolve issues and avoid fines, while still maintaining uniform standards in the neighborhood. In 2016 the response to the violation door hangars was outstanding, as many compliance issues are minor issues, and small alignments from neighbor to neighbor make a huge difference in the neighborhood appearance. It is a great sign that the neighborhood does a great job of complying with our covenants.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2017 the board will be conducting bi-annual surveys of the community to identify violations. The survey will happen in March and the second will happen in July. This should lead to consistent notification of violations and uniform standards for the entire neighborhood. We encourage anyone that has questions to contact the board and WBS, and we are happy to work through any comments/suggestions that you may have to help make this new process work better.

We will also be looking for additional ways to reduce costs without compromising quality work, create new programs to encourage community connection, and create additional policies to further support the desires of the community.