

The Woods Garden Club Meeting Minutes

Wednesday December 20, 2023—6:00 PM

I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order a bit early, by President Donna Dozier, at 5:56 p.m., since everyone was accounted for who was attending. The board members in attendance were Ken Wheeler, Jr., Ron Stutes, Richard Patteson, Troy Mills and Jon Stone. Chris Petty was absent. Also present was our Certified Property Manager, Dawn Smith, with East Texas Community Management. There were no visitors present for the meeting.

A resident who had asked to speak to the board could not attend this meeting as he had requested. Donna reported that he plans to come speak to the board at the January regular meeting.

II. Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes for November 15, 2023, were approved by email and provided to our webmaster for publication on our website.

III. Property Management Report

Dawn began her property management report by informing the board that Edwards Lawn did work on the joints surrounding the pool area, and had charged us half as much as our lowest bid from other bidders. The board saw a photo Donna displayed, showing some of the work that was done. Ken detailed some of the work Kenneth Edwards performed, and explained the attention to detail and care that went into the repair. Ken said the cost was quite good compared to other bids, and that it looks much better.

There are still four residents who owe dues for both 2022 and 2023. There are 21 residents who owe dues for this current year of 2023.

Dawn said that we have an appointment for several board members to attend a first meeting with a new attorney, since the attorney we've had for several years passed away recently. The meeting with the new potential legal representative will be December 29.

Dawn said she paid well over a thousand dollars to copy and mail the dues letters, which now must include a copy of the Enforcement Policy, as required by the State of Texas. Dawn said she has already received payment of next years' dues from a couple of residents. Half of the dues letters have been mailed; the other half will be mailed as soon as the envelopes are stuffed and ready to go.

Dawn presented the violations log, including the most recent violations witnessed in a recent drive-through. Follow-ups are to be done in accordance with our covenants.

IV. Financial Report

Our Operating account, as of November 30, 2023, had a total of \$14,340.35. The Savings account had a total of \$74,296.58, for a total of \$88,637.03.

Again, the tree budget is by far the biggest problem. The budget for trees was \$10,000 this year, but we have spent \$24,000, due to the continued problem of terribly icy winters for two years in a row, as well as two summers of extreme heat and drought. The extremes have caused distress in our trees, and we are having to pay to have these diseased and distressed trees removed.

V. Old Business

Donna reported that we have a deal with Tyler Tabernacle to have our Annual Meeting there this January 30 at no cost. Donna

asked Dawn to deliver a \$100 donation to the church for the use of their premises and the electricity we will use, and to make sure they're aware of what we will need for that meeting, including the screen for the Power Point Donna hopes to prepare, as well as tables, chairs, etc. Dawn will make sure this is all requested of our hosts.

Again, it was mentioned that our attorney's health had improved enough that he could return to work, but sadly, he died suddenly. Dawn has attempted to contact his office to not only offer condolences, but to learn how to get our paperwork returned. She has had no luck with a return call.

VI. New Business

Donna asked if anyone objected to giving gift cards to our pool committee. It was unanimously approved that we give them the \$25 gift card as a small token of our appreciation for their work and dedication to keeping the pool safe for everyone. These are valuable volunteers and we wanted to thank them for their time.

Dawn printed the budget Ron had prepared, and asked her to provide for everyone. The board discussed the steep costs we've had to pay for all the many trees we've had to remove because of dead or diseased trees. Ron made the motion that this budget be approved, and Ken seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously to adopt the new budget for 2024.

Donna began a discussion about a post on Facebook from an anonymous member, which asked the members to think about raising the dues. The person who posted wanted to talk about the idea of increasing the dues for the first time in the history of our HOA's existence. There were quite a lot of responses to that Facebook post, most all of which were not a "discussion" response, but an outright statement of "no."

The board discussed how our budget is balanced, providing everyone pays for their dues, but so far 21 people have not paid for this current year of 2023. (That means we have \$6,300 less to work with.) Since the tree budget went over by \$14,000 this season, we had to dip into the reserves to pay for these necessary expenditures. Our Reserve Study said we should have \$100,000 on hand, at any given time for emergencies, but we currently do not. There was no extra money to put into the Reserve Fund for the 2023 or 2024 budget.

It was noted that the dues have never been increased in 30-plus years, and that we have the lowest fees of any HOA in Tyler, and we are told, in all of the entire county.

The board discussed that we've tried money-saving things like having the community help us plant flowers, for additional color and landscaping, but no one shows up to help do it. Richard said he's conservative and doesn't want to raise dues, but it just may be time. Donna agreed that she is also very conservative, and given our costs, she sees the need, but also sees that many people can't afford yet another increase in costs.

The board wondered if a special assessment for replenishing the tree fund would be best. There was a discussion of that idea, as well as Donna's emphasis that 112 people told her personally, as well as on the Facebook group, that they did not want an increase in dues. Many seemed to believe that because we have about \$80,000 as "surplus," we have plenty of money. But, if we don't plan for the future, and we keep dipping into that fund to cover our normal operating costs, it will be depleted, and we will not have that either.

The board agreed it's time to talk to the membership about the idea of a special assessment or a raise in dues. This will be a discussion for the annual meeting, to let the members have their say about how to cover our costs and still provide the expected

services to keep our neighborhood one of Tyler's premier properties.

Donna pointed out that we've had to file a police report about the missing special street signs in and around the Ridge area. Big Oak and Cripple Creek, as well as Westbluff and Ridgebluff and Lazy Creek signs have been broken off and stolen. The entire sign post was stolen at Cripple Creek and Lazy Creek intersection. Dawn said she will look into repairs.

V. Miscellaneous Non-Action Items

Donna asked the board to check their calendars for a change in the meeting date for January 17th, and see if everyone is available to meet on January the 24th. Everyone agreed that would work, so Donna said she would send that information to our webmaster for posting on our website.

VI. Adjournment

Ron made the motion that we adjourn. Richard seconded the motion. All agreed, and we were adjourned at 6:59 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald D. Stutes