

MEETING MINUTES

THE WOODS GARDEN CLUB HOA

Date: Monday, May 13, 2024

Time: 6:00 PM

Meeting called to order by: Donna Dozier

1 IN ATTENDANCE

Those in attendance were Ken Wheeler, Jr., Richard Patteson, Ron Stutes, Troy Mills, and Chris Petty. Jon Stone was absent. Also present was our Certified Property Manager, Dawn Smith, with East Texas Community Management. There was one visitor present: Michelle Thedford.

2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The meeting minutes for April 17, 2024 were approved by email and provided to our webmaster for publication on our website.

3 THE RESIDENT WHO REQUESTED TO SPEAK DID NOT ATTEND

4 PROPERTY MANAGEMENT REPORT

Dawn began her report by telling the board that the pool was opened on Friday the 10th, after the phone had its "insides replaced," and software updated. She has not received the bill for this service visit and repair yet. Once the emergency phone was fixed, we could open the pool.

Dawn said the cleaning company did a good job of cleaning our storage room, and they also put together the new shelving to replace the old, worn-out shelves we had in there.

Dawn reported that the men's urinal was repaired by the plumber, but no cost was given on that yet. James worked on repairing the pool's playground equipment, which totaled \$1,500. He had to replace lumber, and level it, and fix several problems, and he also added a new rope. Donna reminded Dawn that the pool committee asked for a certain type of new chemicals they need, and Dawn said she was going to get it.

Dawn said she had finally talked to the person at Texas Metal Industries who could tell her something about our specialized sign posts. The lady quoted Dawn a price just over \$1700 to replace one powder-coated special post and four arms that hold the signs showing the street name. Dawn said the price includes shipping to us from Florida.

The board also discussed our insurance costs, which Dawn reports will go up \$500 this year. Dawn said all her HOAs have seen their insurance go up, and that ours actually increased less than some. The board agreed that everyone's insurance has gone up and that we were lucky to have the rate we have. It was agreed that we would accept that increase.

Dawn said 11 owners owe 2023 and 2024 dues; 43 homeowners still owe for 2024. Dawn also explained that 4 people owe dues for three years. These accounts are with the attorney, and they will be receiving demand letters.

Dawn discussed the violation log with the board, and explained the various violations, and answered questions about specific problems. Ken also noted that he is concerned about one new resident's fence, which is not in compliance, and asked that the owner be notified of that fact.

5 FINANCIAL REPORT

Our operating account had a total of \$33,768.38. The savings account was at \$124,177.71, for a total of \$158,946.09. Dawn said she would be moving some money out of the savings account soon, and into the checking account for some big bills that will be coming in.

Dawn mentioned that we're about where we are supposed to be, but already our tree budget is way up there, and more costs are coming in to cover some that have been approved.

The board mentioned how tight the budget is, even though costs continue to accrue, like the need for a new water heater for over \$400 at the pool, which we are required to have by NET Health.

6 OLD BUSINESS

Donna asked for an attorney update, and Dawn read from an email she had received just today, at the close of business and right before our meeting. Dawn said she would follow up with a phone call for more details.

Donna asked if there were any last thoughts to discuss about the recent Special Meeting. She asked Dawn if she had sent our donation of \$100 for our meeting space, and Dawn confirmed she had sent it right after the meeting.

7 NEW BUSINESS

Donna introduced the Stonebrook entrance problem. Ken and Troy had looked at it extensively earlier in the day. Ken said the biggest thing to increase the property values over there is to get the residents living in that area to follow the covenants. He explained that they need to take care of their yards, stop parking in the street, and perform general maintenance and upkeep of their properties. He said trash cans are a problem there as well. Residents there must abide by deed restrictions, and we need to step up and do a better job of enforcing these deed restrictions that are being violated. Ken said it's just not right that people won't utilize their garages for their vehicles.

Dawn mentioned that there are five of the eleven homes in our entire membership that owe dues for 2023 and 2024 live in Stonebrook. She said a large number of violations that are sent out are for problems within Stonebrook. Ken said to retain property values, we need to stay on top of these violations.

Ken continued, saying what he saw as a plan to go forward: He has asked an expert's advice in choosing plants for the median, so we can get that area replanted, and have mulch put in. He discussed the streets and the area in general, and the history of the sign that was destroyed by the City when Old Omen was widened. It was mentioned that the lowest bid we'd gotten on a replacement sign was \$11,000, which was several years ago, and would undoubtedly be higher now. Troy asked which of our current signs that was comparable to, and Donna said the Ridge Hill sign was the general comparison size.

It was discussed that we had to cut our seasonal budget in half this year, to squeeze more out of our money, and there was roughly \$200 left in this year's budget for any plants for any entrance.

Ken mentioned the costs within Stonebrook are not budgeted separately. All entrances, he said, fall under the same budget for seasonal color and / or plants. He said we pay more for that area than we receive in dues from them (even if everyone was paid up and current in their dues-paying.)

Ken said when Wheeler Development wrote the deed restrictions, all those years ago, it was things like improper maintenance, cars parked on the streets and visible trash cans that they noticed brought neighborhood property values down, and caused general decline for a neighborhood. We need to honor the covenants and stop that decline from happening in the Stonebrook area, he said.

Ken said we planted ornamental grass and Japanese boxwoods in a "v" formation, going down the median, and we lost much of that to previous winters' ice storms. He said also, the irrigation issues we've spent so much money and time to work on in that area has been a factor too.

Ken said we have at least a 35-foot buffer between the residential properties and Old Omen. He said the City's decision to widen those streets took out our very nice stone wall there. Ken said he would like to see trees planted on either side of the entrance. He said we have a big greenbelt area there, with irrigation, so it would be a good place. And despite us fixing the retaining wall's keystone block over and over, people keep running into it.

Ken said the single oak tree at the entrance has had mistletoe in it and it is pretty distressed. He's surprised it's still living.

Ken said his opinion is that we don't need to worry about a sign right now. The expense is a major factor. He would rather see great landscaping and enforcement of the current deed restrictions, which people agreed to follow when they moved into our HOA.

In February, Ken said, the Tyler Trees Committee does the seedling giveaway, and we could plant some at that time, not that we won't do something sooner than that, he added. He said getting the median up to par is a good first step.

Ken noted that the street sign at the entrance is damaged, and he wants to get that repaired.

Ken said we need to be thinking about repainting street signs and lampposts, maybe for next year, but we need to keep that in mind. Richard said he noticed that there are a lot of mailboxes in need of paint. Ken suggested perhaps a painting contractor would be willing to offer his services for that, and maybe even at a discount for a group rate, to let residents hire that done. Dawn said she will ask a painter at another of her HOAs, and see if he would be willing to offer that service for us. Richard said maybe they'd quote a price for a time frame that could work. Dawn said she will check into it.

Ron asked, "What is the process for Stonebrook to leave the Woods Garden Club?" Ken said people bought into the neighborhood, with the expectation of property values being kept higher because they were part of an HOA. This is a contractual agreement that everyone agreed to. He said he would have a tough time agreeing to any change and saying, "Okay, you're on your own," because those folks bought into it. Ron said, "But what is the process?" Ken said he was not sure, but Wheeler Development would have to agree to it, and Ken said he sees nothing so far that he would feel comfortable saying "Yeah, let's do that."

Chris said, "Even if those people affected by it wanted it?" Ken said it would require 100% of the people to agree, and he did not believe that would happen.

Ken said we've done the math, and we know we spend more money on maintaining property than we take in from those 34 homes. That is not in question, he said. That's another reason we need to step up the enforcement, he said, of trash cans, parking, and yard maintenance in that area, and we will do our part as well. Once we have the budget to work on the entrance, Richard said, it will inspire people to maintain their property.

Dawn said she sent out a letter to all homes in Stonebrook (and Brighton Creek) to remind them about yard maintenance, and that she did see improvement in the last drive-through she did. She said there are always exceptions, and it's typically the same people who are continuing to violate the rules.

Ken said his observation is that it's a recurring problem over the last several years, and we need to step up enforcement. Dawn said she thinks that our residents see the other people who are not in our HOA parking in the street all the time, and they follow what those people are doing.

At this time, our visitor, Michelle Thedford, said she didn't know if she was allowed to talk, and Donna said we would recognize her and let her interject. Michelle said the houses she stares at all day, across from her house, are not in the HOA. She said luckily, they do a better job of

parking their cars than most people who are in the HOA. She said they can do whatever they want to and there's nothing anyone can do about it, since they have no HOA rules to follow. She says the first five houses on her side of the street are in the HOA, but down from her home, the rest of the block of homes are not in our HOA, and can do whatever they want.

Dawn said a good example of that is a few years ago, she was getting complaints about a trampoline in the greenbelt behind the homes that are not in our HOA. All the kids would gather to play on the trampoline and parents were afraid of an accident and would call her to enforce the rules, but there was nothing she could do because it was not our property.

The board discussed that it is hard, especially for people who don't even realize there is a difference and that we only have a few of those homes in that area. Even people who live in our HOA are not aware that all of those homes are not under our care. Ken said we need to be the example for those not in our HOA to live up to, and enforce the rules against violators.

Ron told Dawn that what she might do is send a letter to the people with all the cars in the driveway and street and let them know we understand there may be a special reason for them to be parked that way, and all they have to do is call and let her know what that reason is. He said it should not be done in an accusatory way, but as a way to encourage them to comply if they can, or explain why they cannot.

Ken said at one time, the area was supposed to be a hike and bike trail, where it would all join and people could have ridden their bikes or hiked all the way to the pool, but the developer involved with Wheeler Development did not follow through with that and it did not happen. He said they parted ways with that developer.

Ken reiterated that we will get the entrance looking better, but the big thing is to get people to comply with the deed restrictions and we need to do a better job of enforcement.

Troy said he wanted to add that maybe we should plan to leave a footprint for a future sign, and not plant anything that would eventually have to be torn out to make room for it. He also said the electric outlet there could be extended further down in the median as well, so that would be ready and done for a future sign. He believes it makes sense to make a long-term plan that would get all the digging done, then not have to do it over again, or dig up plants in the future, to make room for a sign.

Ken said another problem is that people keep running into the keystone that we have repeatedly replaced and repaired. He mentioned maybe putting a reflector on it. He said he just doesn't know how to keep people from hitting it.

Ken said he believes a sign is way down the road, and right now, he wants to get our focus on landscaping and trees.

Richard asked what our seasonal color budget is right now. Donna said the entire year's budget is \$500, slashed from \$1,000 last year. Donna said there's about \$200 left, and that we don't specify for each entrance. That amount is for ALL entrances.

The board discussed the size of the median at Stonebrook. Ron displayed a satellite view of it. Ken and Troy estimated the size. Troy said he had measured it but lost the exact measurements he'd taken earlier in the day.

At this time the board moved on to the next item which is Splash Party plans. Donna said that Crutcher and Hartley are part of the Children's Miracle Network and that they've invited ten or so Miracle Children to our Splash Party, along with their parents. Donna said we would be honored to help host them and that the plans for pulled pork, chips and water have been confirmed, as well as free Kona Ice and the giant water slide, for June 15th from 11:00 to 2:00.

Donna also informed the board that our meeting place was not available for our next scheduled meeting, and she would let them know if that changed. The date of the next meeting, at this time, is up in the air, and is TBD.

8 MISCELLANEOUS NON-ACTION ITEMS

Ken said we have trees that we are going to have to take down on the greenbelt in the Ridge area between the houses that back up to the railroad track and the track itself. There's a big dead pine tree that has been priced and approved for removal. There are some others that, in order to save money, we are going to have our tree guy "limb up and top out," and just leave there in that natural area to let the termites have. Our tree guy believes that will work just fine, and it will save us some money to do it that way. Ken said he also got a very steep bid to grind a large number of stumps around the pool area and is trying to negotiate that price down, while also waiting on another bid for that job.

Ken said he has made two code enforcement reports about the Rosewood Villas complex on Calloway. They have not maintained their right of way as they're supposed to do, and right now, the case is still open. They have removed their silt fence. They don't have to maintain areas they did not develop, but Ken has questions on that and is trying to get answers from the City. Ken said he wants it to look nice because so many think it's our area, even though it belongs to the POA and not us.

He also reported the Brookdale Senior Living place for the lengthy problem of having the temporary stairs visible and siding falling off their building. Code enforcement told Ken to call the building department. He has been told someone will call him back about it. Ken said it's just ridiculous that this problem has been going on for so long.

Ken said the rain has been wonderful, and that normally, he would have run through all the irrigation systems, but at least we've saved some on watering so far. He said he knows there will be areas that have sprinkler heads that are not functioning and will need replacement. He said there's always some that have valves that stick and won't come on. Checking throughout the neighborhood on all those systems will have to be done.

9 VISITOR COMMENTS

Donna asked if our visitor would like to make any comments and if so, now is the time to do it.

Michelle Thedford said she is one of the disgruntled Stonebrook people. Ken asked her what was the biggest thing that made her disgruntled? She replied, ". . . The Woods Garden Club

has an obligation to our community the same way that y'all have an obligation to The Woods. It's stated in our covenants that y'all are obligated to maintain our common areas and take care of our stuff, and as long as I'm paying in money, I'm going to expect that that's happening."

Ken said he understood, and Donna said it was nothing but fair to expect that. Michelle said, "To me, our community gets one thing from you guys and that's the pool, but I can go to any pool; I don't need that pool." Ken said, "Well the enforcement of the deed restrictions is a big thing to help your area maintain the property values." There was a discussion about needing approval to fix drainage and fence posts, and that their neighbor's dog had burst through their fence and was in their back yard. Ken said if you just contact him, he might be able to be there the next day, but he can't do anything about what he doesn't know about.

Ken said he's been doing the Architectural Control stuff for 30 years. He said he and Troy are available, and just need to know about it, and they try to be very responsive.

Michelle said only 34 homes are part of the HOA in Stonebrook, and there are only 2 entrances. Ken said the other entrance is not ours, and she said she knew, and she knows people not in our HOA come in our entrance. She said she's not mad about that. Ken said it's a public street, and she agreed. She discussed the parking issue as well. Ken said it's not set up to be oppressive, the point is to maintain the property values. Ken said when we, meaning Wheeler Development, wrote the deed restrictions, they took all the parking issues and other requirements into consideration for the best possible property values.

Ken said he's glad to have the feedback. Michelle said her neighbors said they were in the association at one time, but are no longer in our HOA. Ken said, "So they moved out of the area?" Michelle replied, "No, the houses across from us used to be part of the HOA when it was originally built." She said they were told by their realtor that there was an "... exodus that happened." That was news to all of the board members. Ken would know because Wheeler Development has been part of this since day one. Donna said she'd never heard that before, and Ken was stumped about that. He said to his knowledge, that was not right. No one has ever left the HOA.

Michelle said she was told that the asphalt change indicates those in our HOA, but that's not correct because people across from her are not in our HOA and are in the same type of asphalt as those who are. Ken said it could be a website problem, and it should be checked. Ken said that could be a technical glitch.

Michelle said Debbie Hill was their realtor and she is the person who told her about this "exodus" that Ken has never heard of before now. Ken said, "There was never anybody we let out of the HOA." He can't explain why she would have been told that rumor.

Ken said that the short version of the back story is that Wheeler Development was in partnership with a guy in Stonebrook Units 1 and 2, and they parted ways years ago. Ken said he did not know of any exception for houses across the road. "Just look at the plat," he said.

Dawn said she knew of a couple of places where the mailbox was in the other asphalt area, which is odd, but she is not aware of this question about houses in front of Michelle's home. Ken said he couldn't recollect exactly, but it seemed to him it was a clean break across the street. Ken said whatever the reason, we'll need to check.

Donna asked Michelle if she felt as if she had a chance to say everything she wanted to say, and she agreed she had. Donna and Ken thanked her and told her of their appreciation for letting us know her thoughts.

Then Michelle said she wished she could see how their area costs more than they pay in for Stonebrook. Ken said our contract with our landscaping company is for the entire neighborhood. She said the City mows their greenbelt anyway, and Ken said, No, they don't. Our landscaper mows it and maintains all of the greenbelts in Stonebrook.

Ken said, "So in terms of your dues, in small part, it's to enforce the deed restrictions and maintain these common areas and greenbelts." He said we also pay for all the watering that's done in Stonebrook as well as maintaining all the extensive irrigation systems within that area, and the electricity there as well. Taxes and insurance are paid, too. He said there is also turf-grass management from TruGreen—that company also applies seven treatments per year in that area, including pre-emergent, fertilizer, fungicide, etc. Besides the mowing, there are also decorations at Christmas that figure into the costs. We also maintain the specialized street signs in that area, which are not cheap to purchase. Ken described where all the greenbelts are in Stonebrook, and mentioned that the irrigation systems go in that greenbelt area as well.

Ken said there's no doubt we need to do a better job with enforcing the deed restrictions as well as getting the median looking better.

Michelle said she wondered why wasn't their entrance budgeted in with all the other entrances? Ken said there is only one budget for ALL entrances. None are singled out or separated from the others. Dawn said, "We budgeted overall for all seasonal color at all entrances." She said there was only \$500 for the entire neighborhood, and right now, about \$200 is all that is left. We had to cut our budget from \$1000 to \$500 last year because of our finances being so very tight. Dawn said a resident in the Ridge donates the labor costs and does the seasonal color at the Southwood entrance herself after we pay the cost for the plants. Michelle said she was sure her neighbors would do that too, if they didn't have to pay dues!

Donna asked if there was anything else? It was agreed that was all.

10 ADJOURNMENT

Ken made the motion to adjourn; Chris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald D. Stutes
Secretary