

## Excelsior Grounds Committee Meeting Minutes: Approved 2/20/2024

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**Location:** 6263 Midnight Pass Road Sarasota, FL 34242 Community Room  
**Date:** 2/14/2024  
**Time:** Called to order: 10:10 AM Adjourned: 12:15 PM  
**Next Meeting:** TBD

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### Attendance

Bruce Ketcham, Chair

Committee Members Present: Lynne Brown, Denise Baum, Patricia Ketcham, Jim London

Committee Members Unable to Attend: Judy Wittmus

Patricia Ketcham volunteered to take minutes for this meeting

### Purpose of Meeting

1. Old Business
  - a. Review of status of projects discussed at the last meeting.
2. New Business
  - a. Review of progress on Action Items identified in last meeting
  - b. Discussion of future planning for Grounds projects with committee input.

### Old Business

1. Approved minutes from January 9, 2024 meeting posted on Excelsior website on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Notice of today's committee meeting was sent to Dan on February 8<sup>th</sup> for posting. Reminders provided. The notice was not posted.
2. The landscape enhancements to the bayside entrance completed in January.
3. Trial to improve the appearance of the grass, BioFlex Fluvic and nitrogen was applied to the grass at the SE corner of Building 2 by Tropical Gardens at no cost to Excelsior. The committee agreed no improvement of the grass has been observed to date.
4. PowerPoint presentation of the information from the Board tour of properties maintained by Tropical Gardens presented at February 1, 2024 Board meeting. Committee commented that it was helpful to see the slides and discussed differences in properties.
5. Seventeen new table chairs and 24 refurbished lounge chairs placed at the pools and beach in January. In response to committee member question of why chairs were part of the Grounds responsibility, Bruce explained that beach and pool chairs fall under a line item in the Grounds budget, Grounds Equipment, and that the committee assumed responsibility several years ago to

ensure that the appearance and condition of the chairs was maintained within the available budget.

6. The trimming of bayside mangroves and seagrapes and gulfside seagrapes and beach palms completed in January.
7. The 2024 tree trimming plan was presented to the Board during the February 1, 2024 Board meeting. It was noted that the estimate cost for trimming the trees by our current contractor was approximately \$61K, \$26K over budget. Further discussion and action found in new business.
8. The condition of the bayside fountains, pumps, and ponds was discussed with the Board during the February 1, 2024 Board meeting. The grounds committee assumed responsibility for coordinating the repair and maintenance of the bayside lagoons at this meeting. The committee considered this a positive for the community.

## **New Business**

### **Action Items from January 9, 2024 Meeting**

1. Tree Trimming: A quote for trimming the trees obtained from a new contractor, SavATree. Quote was approximately \$20K less than the estimate from our current contractor. A meeting to review the quote was held on February 5<sup>th</sup> with the SavATree branch manager, Dan, Terry, and Bruce. Following the meeting, Dan and Terry decided to proceed with SavATree for future tree trimming. A SavATree brochure was reviewed by members and discussion ensued. The company is a national corporation. All local branches are company owned, not franchise operations. SavATree was recommended by Tropical Gardens.
  - a. The current Board approved tree trimming budget is \$35K.
  - b. Approximately \$17.5K has been spent to date.
  - c. With SavATree completing the planned work, approximately \$48.5K will be spent this year. The planned work will exceed the budget by approximately \$13.5K.
  - d. The committee agreed that tree trimming is important and the Board should be requested to increase the budget.
2. Fountains/Pumps/Ponds: On January 26<sup>th</sup> a new pump contractor, Thompson Welling Drilling, did an initial inspection of the property looking at the equipment at both wells, the ejector pump on the gulfside property, and the lagoon pumps and fountains on the bayside property. A meeting to review the inspection findings and recommendations was held with the owner of Thompson Welling Drilling, the owner of our irrigation contractor, Florida Irrigation Contractor, Dan, Terry, and myself on February 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - a. No repairs or improvements were recommended for the gulfside well equipment or ejector pump at this time.
  - b. Improvements to the bayside well equipment were recommended with installation of a digital clock, new pressure tank, and relocation of the pressure transducer.
  - c. Initial inspection of the current bayside lagoon fountains indicated that they likely could be restored to proper operation. A more detailed inspection was recommended.

Terry and Dan approved the recommendations. Improvements to the bayside well equipment and the detailed inspection of the lagoon fountains were completed on February 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Recommendations for repair of the lagoon fountains were received and approved on February 12<sup>th</sup>. Thompson Welling Drilling also recommended that an electrician make additional improvements to the electrical components and wiring that provide power to the bayside well. Discussion focused on the type of pumps and enclosure of the equipment. This will be discussed further when the pump equipment is installed. There was also concern about the safety of the electrical equipment and need to explore this further.

3. Landscaping Restoration: Committee members participated in a walkaround of the bayside property with Tropical Gardens on January 26 to review landscape restoration needs. Tropical Gardens recommended that the restoration begin with the replacement of drought damaged / missing plants prior to the restoration of grass areas. Their proposal for plant replacement was received on February 1<sup>st</sup> with a quoted cost of approximately \$15K, leaving only \$5K from the budget for grass restoration. Discussion followed about the budget and competing needs of plant replacement, application of mulch in the fall, and grass restoration. Members expressed concern about the poor condition of the grass in many places on property and identified this as a priority to consider, although the cost would exceed the current budget. For the initial work, it was decided to request a proposal, not to exceed, \$5K, to install plants around buildings 2 and 4 with the plan to proceed with the installation in March. It was also decided to request proposal from Tropical Gardens to estimate the cost to repair or replace the damaged grass areas and present the plan and total plant and grass restoration cost at the next Board meeting. Ideas for how the proposal should be presented were discussed and all agreed that a united, vocal committee was necessary. The suggestion that the Real Estate Corporation Board be asked to contribute funds to Grounds and landscaping was seen a possible approach to fund needed projects that benefitted owners and renters.

## Other

4. The following owner requests were discussed:
  - a. Plant a palm tree to replace one removed by the northeast stairway of building 5. Owner requested this at the Excelsior Condominium Association meeting.
  - b. Removal of 2 distressed trees by the north entrance to building 4.
  - c. Develop plan for the woodchip filled hole by building 1.

Following lengthy discussion, it was agreed that recommendations related to the above items would be requested by the committee from Tropical Gardens. The committee would then have the necessary information, based on feasibility and cost, to decide and then be back in touch with the owners with a response. Any future individual requests, within reason and particularly requests that will impact other owners or the community, will be managed in the same manner.

## Action Items

1. Follow up on the recommendation of Thompson Well Drilling that an electrician make additional improvements to the electrical components and wiring that provide power to the bayside well.

2. Request the following from Tropical Gardens:
  - a. Proposal for installation of plants around buildings 2 and 4
  - b. Proposal for repair or restoration of damaged grass areas
  - c. Recommendations for owner requests.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Ketcham