

Excelsior Grounds Committee Meeting Minutes: Approved 4/1/2024

Location: 6263 Midnight Pass Road Sarasota, FL 34242 Community Room

Date: 3/28/2024

Time: Called to order: 10:05 AM Adjourned: 11:50 PM

Next Meeting: TBD

Attendance

Bruce Ketcham, Chair

Committee Members Present: Lynne Brown, Denise Baum, Patricia Ketcham, Jim London, 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. Minutes
 - a. Approved minutes from February 14, 2024 meeting posted on Excelsior website on February 20th. Notice of today's committee meeting was sent to Dan and posted on the building lobby bulletin boards on March 26th.
2. BioFlex Trial
 - a. No cost trial to improve the appearance of the grass with BioFlex Fluvic and nitrogen at the SE corner of Building 2 by Tropical Gardens concluded with the committee agreeing that there was no noticeable improvement of the grass and it would not recommend purchasing a treatment plan.
3. Tree Trimming
 - a. SavATree, Excelsior's new tree trimming contractor, trimmed all the hardwood, Cedar trees, and Schefflera during the week of March 11th. The committee discussed that positive comments were shared by many owners. Concern about how some Schefflera were trimmed was expressed and Bruce reported that the arborist doing the trimming and

the managing SavATree arborist agreed they were cut correctly leaving some new growth on the trees.

4. Well Pump

- a. Thompson Well Drilling, the new pump contractor, completed the recommended installation of a digital clock, new pressure tank, and relocation of the pressure transducer at the bayside well on February 6th.

5. Lagoon Fountains

- a. Thompson Well Drilling installed a new pump for the Building 2 lagoon fountain and the cleaned and repaired the Building 3 and Bridge lagoon fountains on February 20th. Numerous positive comments and emails were received about the restoration of the fountains. Discussion ensued regarding the height of the water spray. Bruce explained that while the new commercial pump at Building 2 pond is adjustable, the older swimming pool pump at Building 3 is not and that spray is at full height. Thus, pond 2 was adjusted to match pond 3. The committee suggestion was that when pond 3 pump fails, it should be replaced with the commercial fountain pump. Tropical Gardens recommended that Bottlebrush bushes could be planted to screen the pump locations and the committee will consider this in the future.

Action Items from February 14, 2024 Meeting

1. Landscape Restoration

- a. The initial \$5K proposal for the installation of replacement plants around Building 1, the center entrance to the North Villa, and a portion of Building 4 was received from Tropical Gardens and approved by Dan on February 27th. The work was completed on March 28th. The balance of the replacement plants around Building 4 and plants in the pool area are planned to be installed in the next \$5K phase in May.
- b. An estimate was received from Tropical Gardens for replacement of the grass areas damaged by last summer's irrigation outage and drought on February 20th. They estimated that approximately 22K square feet of grass needed to be replaced at a cost of approximately \$54K (plus any necessary irrigation revisions). This information was provided to Terry, Janet, and Dan. The committee unanimously agreed that grass replacement for all damaged areas was a priority. Budget constraints are a prohibitive factor. Committee members agreed that a request for funding be made to the Association Board. Once Bruce is informed that monies are available for sod and any required irrigation revisions, he will seek additional proposals for sod installation. Seeking proposals from vendors prior to funding being approved leads to outdated cost estimates and reluctance by vendors to provide quotes in the future.

2. Owner Requests

- a. Plant a palm tree to replace one removed by the northeast stair of Building 5.
 - i. Tropical Gardens did not believe that it was necessary to replace the Crown Palm as the appearance of the area would not be improved with that plant. Jim London reported that the palm was removed due to it touching walls and windows of the

building. Several committee members inspected the area in question. The committee unanimously agreed that it would not recommend the replacement of the palm.

- b. Removal of two distressed Holy trees by the north entrance to Building 4.
 - i. Tropical Gardens recommended removing the trees and not replacing them. A survey of committee members concurred with the recommendation. An email notice of the decision was prepared for Dan to send advise Building 4 owners. The email was not forwarded to the owners. In lieu of the email, Bruce posted a copy of the email in the Building 4 lobby. The trees were removed on March 12, 2024.
 - c. Develop plan for woodchip filled tree well on the southeast corner of Building 1.
 - i. Tropical Gardens recommended removing the wood chips and 4x4 timbers, filling the tree well with fill dirt topped with top soil, and covering with sod. The cost to complete the work was \$3.7K. A second proposal was received from an independent landscaper for \$3.5K. Discussion about additional plantings to screen the nearby high voltage transformer was discussed and will be considered further in future landscape projects.
3. Bruce Ketcham and Jim London met with John Chappel, electrician and owner of Southern Electric Services and Ron Weaver, owner of Thompson Well Drilling, on February 22nd to discuss additional improvements to the electrical components and wiring that provide power to the bayside well. A wrap up meeting was held with Bruce, Jim, Dan, Terry, John, and Ron. A proposal was requested from John and Ron, but not received to date.

New Business

1. Seasonal Flower Update

Tropical Gardens replaced the Vincas that were planted by the Gulfside entrance sign last year on February 27th. Dragon Wing Begonias were selected and planted by Jim London in the flower boxes at the entrance to the atrium. Two red Salvia were planted in the atrium to add a pop of color by the fountain urn.

2. Fountain Issues

a. Blocked Fountain Intake Screens:

- i. After repair of the bridge lagoon fountain, the height of the fountain gradually decreased. Thompson Well Drilling cleaned the intake screens of accumulated algae and organic material at no cost. Several weeks after cleaning, the fountain height decreased again likely due to accumulated oak leaf debris on the intake screens. The pump was shut down to prevent any damage. The fountains were restarted on March 25th after the leaf debris had apparently decomposed. It is likely that the intake screens will require frequent cleaning until the algae and organic material in the water is better controlled.

b. Broken Fountain Intake Line:

- i. The Building 3 lagoon fountain stopped running on March 20th. Thompson repaired the fountain on March 25th by extending the intake line and tightening the pipe coupling at no cost to Excelsior. At Dan's request, they also showed Rick how to remove the intake lines from the lagoons and clean the intake screens.

3. Pond Management

Three pond management contractors were contacted to provide proposals for treatment of the water in the three lagoons with EPA registered and labeled appropriate and safe for use in lakes and ponds. Bruce Ketcham and Denise Baum walked the property and discussed the issues with two of the contractors. Dan contacted the third contractor and walked the property with him. It is hoped that all proposals will be received during the week of March 25th.

4. Bees' Nest

SavATree uncovered a honey bees' nest in a hollow of the Oak tree by the bridge. At Dan's request, Bruce contacted a bee keeper capable of removing the nest and provided the contact information for Dan for his action.

5. Benches

Committee members noted that benches were not replaced on the main walkways on the east side of the atrium and it was unanimously agreed that these benches were used by the community and should be replaced. A Work Order Request to purchase new benches was submitted to Dan on March 29th.

6. Damage to Plants and Vehicles from Foot Traffic

Complaints received about individuals cutting through the plantings along building garages causing harm to plants and potential damage to parked vehicles. This occurs specifically at Buildings 2, 3, 4 and 5. Past emails to owners has not been effective. A workable solution has not been found and the committee welcomes constructive ideas to address the issue.

7. Beach Chair Shortage

A shortage of beach chairs was reported to the office during the past 2-3 weeks of spring break season. Bruce was told by staff that 6 chairs were removed from the bayside pool and 4 removed from the beachside pool and placed on the beach. In addition, he was informed by Dan that 15 additional chairs were just ordered for estimated delivery in mid to late April. Discussion ensued about the role of the Grounds Committee in this process and management of beach chairs.

8. Well Water

At Terry's request, the well water was tested for salt content, at no cost to Excelsior, by Thompson Well Drilling on March 8th. Both salt measurements, 280 ppm for the bayside well and 140 ppm for the gulfside well, were well under the 1200 ppm level for concern.

Action Items

1. Contact the Association Board members to convey the committee's opinion that grass replacement for all damaged areas was a priority. Budget constraints are a prohibitive factor. Committee members agreed that a request for funding be made to the Association Board as soon as possible. Bruce stated that he had asked Dan just before meeting if he had an idea of when the Board meeting would be and he said he did not. Committee members agreed that they would attend the next meeting to support the request for additional funding.
2. Follow up on the prior request for proposal from Southern Electric Services and Thompson Well Drilling on the recommend improvements to the electrical components and wiring that provide power to the bayside well.
3. Tropical Gardens was requested to submit a proposal to continue the planned replacement plants around Building 4 and the pool area for Dan's approval. Florida Irrigation Contractors was requested to review irrigation in area where the plants will be installed to determine if any irrigation revisions are necessary.

Information on Budget

1. Tree Trimming - Current Budget \$35K

With SavATree completing the planned tree trimming work, approximately \$48.5K will be spent this year. The currently planned work will exceed the \$35K budget by approximately \$13.5 K.

2. Flowers / Plants / Mulch - Current budget \$40K

Completed and planned plant replacement will cost approximately \$17.6K. \$17K has been reserved for mulch installation in October. The cost to remove the woodchips from the tree well by Building 1 and fill with dirt and cover with sod will cost approximately \$3.7K. It is expected that the remaining \$1.7K of the \$40K budget will be spent on minor plants and repairs. To remain within the budget, no sod replacement, other than covering the area over the tree well, is currently planned for this year.

3. Irrigation - Current Budget \$15K

Completed irrigation repairs include approximately \$0.8K in monthly inspection repairs, \$4.1K for repair of a mainline break and a valve replacement, and \$3.6K in revisions prior to installing new plants and sod. Bruce noted the both the mainline break and the valve replacement occurred where prior substandard repairs had been made by prior contractors. Costs to date total approximately \$8.5K against the budget of \$15K. While it is not possible to fully project future repair costs, it is expected that the irrigation repairs for the year will likely exceed the budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Ketcham