

Buffalo Stage HOA

Annual Meeting Minutes – November 9, 2021

Location:

Edgerton Elementary School Cafeteria

In Attendance:

Board: Katy Brimhall (President), Erik Fisher (Vice President), Katie Dalton (Secretary/Treasurer), Kim Johnson (Ad Hoc), Carmen Hemmer (Ad Hoc), Judy Stack (Ad Hoc)

Members: Allen, Clark, DeMaris, Franks, Hargis, Lingle, Matthews, Schatz, Shehan, Ward

Introduction

Katy Brimhall called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Katy thanked everyone for joining the meeting.

Katy introduced the Board Members.

A representative from Western Mountain Property Management (WMPM) is unable to attend this evening. However, they did prepare the packets of information. The Board will be meeting with WMPM later on to discuss the meeting minutes.

School District 5 is also requiring a facility use waiver, please sign that if you have not already.

Katy called for a review of the 2020 meeting minutes. Meeting minutes are also available on the website for further review.

Katy called for a motion to approve the 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion for approval provided. **2020 Annual Meeting Minutes approved.**

Old Business

Lawn Care: The Board decided to keep AAA lawn care for the upcoming 2022 season. The company is competitively priced, easy to work with, and have continued to provide satisfactory work during the last 2 years.

Reflection Posts & Mailboxes: Erik placed reflective posts around storm drains and fire hydrants.

1. Please continue to help clear snow and debris from fire hydrants and mailboxes during the winter.
2. The post office will not deliver mail if there are not at least 10 horizontal feet clear of snow on each side of the mailbox for their vehicles and drivers. We must also do our part to ensure our elderly neighbors have easy access to the mailboxes. If you have a snowblower and a few extra minutes, please help out.

Covenant Infractions & Violations: The updated fine schedule approved during the 2020 Annual Meeting will remain the same for this next year. The fine schedule is:

1st letter: Notice of violation

2nd letter: Notice of violation and the 3rd violation will result in a \$50 fine.

3rd letter: Notice of violation and \$50 fine and the 4th violation will result in a \$75 fine.

4th letter: Notice of violation and \$75 fine and subsequent violations will result in \$100 fine.

1. Homeowner Discussion & Questions:

- a. A homeowner expressed concern over a neighbor renting rooms out. The neighbor also had a camper being lived in on their property. Renters created lots of noise and are disruptive. Concerned about their school aged children. Homeowner indicated they contacted WMPM and was told there was nothing that could be done. The fines and lien do not appear to do anything.
- b. A homeowner indicated we live in the City and we are bound by city codes. Unfortunately, there isn't anything that can be done.
- c. The Board indicated there isn't anything that can be done regarding the VRBO rentals. If there is a noise disruption or a safety concern, call the non-emergency dispatch line. There is also a Municipal Code 27.20.095 that requires a permit if a rental is less than 30 days. Keep an eye on the tenants and report violations to the City. As a Board, we can only fine violations and place liens on homes.
- d. A homeowner will contact Chad Graham to determine if there is anything else that can be done. Homeowner will report findings back to the Board.
- e. A homeowner expressed frustration that campers behind fences are still visible and are not screened. Homeowner requested a change to the covenants preventing campers completely. Fines and liens do not seem to do enough.
- f. Katy said to change Covenants, a 75% approval of Homeowners is required. Any Covenant changes need to be brought forth by the Homeowners, not the Board. Another factor is the cost associated with an attorney and filing fees to amend the Covenants.
- g. The Board indicated there would be significant legal fees associated with amending the covenants. Additionally, many homeowners' own campers and a ban on campers may not be viewed favorably. Homeowners who continue to park boats or campers in their driveway will continue to be fined. The Board welcomes suggestions on preventing covenant violations and collection of fines.

Annual Garage Sale: The 2020 Annual Garage sale was again a success. It was the third year and approximately 24 homes participated.

1. Many homes began their sale the Friday before. Homeowners are encouraged to continue to participate on either Friday or Saturday but the Board will only advertise for Saturday's sale.
2. The 2022 annual garage sale will take place Saturday, August 13, 2022.
3. Homeowners are welcome to host garage sales independent of the annual sale. The Board asks that you limit your sales to no more than 2 per year, to respect your neighbors and overall aesthetics of the neighborhood.

Financials: Katie Dalton briefly reviewed the HOA financial situation

1. Katie asked homeowners to please take a look at the profit and loss statement in the packet. There was a -\$1,228 balance as of the end of September. The major Accounts Receivable balance is largely due to the annual dues being sent out early.

2. Since 2018, dues have been sent out earlier in the year because the HOA is running out of funds earlier on in the year.
3. The Board continues to look for every way possible to cut costs. They limited certain lawn services and even perform certain tasks on their own to save on cost. Despite cutting costs, finances are still coming up short.
4. We live in an aging neighborhood. Major expenses such as repair to the sprinkler system or fixing the aging signs could come up at any moment and we are not financial prepared to cover those expenses.
5. It is no secret that the cost of goods and services have increased over the past couple of years. Looking at the Consumer Price Index shows just how much the cost of average goods and services are increasing. The Board will be proposing dues increase later on in the meeting.
6. As of 10/25/2021, the Accounts Receivables are:
 - a. 1-30 days past due: \$5,425
 - b. 61-90 days past due: \$117
 - c. 90+ days past due: \$1,722
 - d. The Board asks that all homeowners pay their dues and fines as soon as possible. Failure to pay is making the financial situation worse and may lead to the increase of dues again in the future. This is not fair to your neighbors who are paying their dues timely.
7. Homeowner Discussion & Questions:
 - a. A homeowner asked if it is mostly rental properties violating the covenants and not paying the fines.
 - b. The Board indicated there are more rentals now when compared to years past. It is a mixture of rentals and permanent homeowners who are not paying their dues. It seems like it is the same handful of homeowners who are not paying.
 - c. A homeowner asked if there was more that could be done to collect outstanding dues and fines. Possibilities to consider include small claims court or turning them over to a collections agency so their credit scores are impacted.
 - d. A homeowner asked if there was more the property management company could do to collect the outstanding dues and fines.
 - e. A homeowner asked if the property management company was sending out enough violation letters. Are these letters being followed up with?
 - f. A homeowner asked if the interest rate on outstanding dues and fines can be increased. They would like more information on how this rate is assigned.
 - g. A homeowner asked if the management company can be here next time to answer these questions.
 - h. A homeowner asked if enough liens were being placed on properties.
 - i. A homeowner asked for a breakdown in expenses. Specifically, why is postage so high.
 - j. The Board indicated they will consider all suggestions and will discuss these questions in further detail with WMPM to come up with a plan to become more aggressive in collecting outstanding dues and fines from repeat offenders.

Katy called for a motion to approve the 2020 Financials. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion for approval provided. 3rd motion for approval provided. **2020 Financials approved.**

Motion and 2nd motion for approval of old business.

New Business

Email and Online: Katie discussed the best way to reach the Board and the HOA online presence.

1. Please contact the Board at buffalostageboard@gmail.com
2. If you are contacting WMPM, please CC the Board
3. The HOA also maintains a Facebook page: Buffalo State HOA. Please like and follow our page.
4. The HOA website is: buffalostagehoa.com

HOA Dues: Despite the increase of HOA Dues in 2019 to \$175, there remains limited cash flow as discussed previously.

1. The HOA continues to experience increasing expenses, such as fuel for lawn care, electrical and water usage, irrigation system repairs, fertilization, weed killer, tree trimming or branch removal, postage and copy costs, while maintaining a cash reserve for emergency repair situations.
2. There are a fair number of homeowners not paying their dues. We ask that homeowners pay their outstanding dues and fines as soon as possible. After \$500 of unpaid dues or fines, a lien is placed against the home.
3. The Board is proposing an increase in annual dues to \$250. The increase would be retroactive, so a bill for the additional \$75 will be sent out in the coming weeks, if approved.
4. Discussion & Questions:
 - a. A homeowner asked if the addresses of those not paying their dues can be posted publicly.
 - b. A homeowner asked if WMPM would leave more notices on the homes of those not paying.
 - c. A homeowner asked if those not paying can be turned into collections.
 - d. A homeowner asked if notices can be hand delivered to those not paying.
 - e. A homeowner asked if we can become more aggressive in collecting outstanding dues and fines.
 - f. Homeowners expressed frustration if dues are being increased due to homeowners not paying. They are happy to pay more dues since expenses in general are increasing, but it is frustrating that everyone is not paying their fair share.
 - g. A homeowner asked for a higher interest rate on past due bills.
 - h. A homeowner discussed a period of time where they had limited funding and could not pay their dues or fines. However, they have since paid them in full and are caught up. They requested a more friendly and mindful approach to collecting dues. Sometimes people are going through tough times. Homeowner indicated when they reached out to WMPM, they were extremely rude during the conversation.
 - i. A homeowner indicated there should be more communication if someone is going through tough times. Rather than just ignoring the notices, reach out to the Board or WMPM.
 - j. Homeowners discussed what other HOA's are paying and \$250/year is very low compared to others.
 - k. The Board asked homeowners to consider both \$250 and \$300, to account for future expenses.
 - l. A homeowner asked for the Board's plan to collect dues.
 - m. The Board indicated they need to have a meeting with WMPM first. They will discuss the ideas brought up during this meeting, phone calls, letters, a tracking spreadsheet, etc.
 - n. A homeowner expressed that WMPM used to be more involved with the neighborhood.
 - o. After much discussion on the topic, the majority of homeowners agreed to \$250 annual dues, a retroactive bill of \$75, and if an emergency arises, a special meeting will be called to consider increasing the dues to \$300 per year.

- p. Katy called for a motion to approve an annual dues increase to \$250 per year and a retroactive bill of \$75 sent out in the next couple weeks. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion made for approval. **Annual dues increase approved.**
 - i. Katy also called for a Yes or No count. 1 homeowner opposed.

Dog Poop Issue at Edgerton: WMPM and the Board was contacted by the principal of Edgerton Elementary School on September 24th regarding an excessive amount of dog poop being left on their property and an issue of unleased dogs.

1. This is creating a major hygiene and safety issue for students and staff.
2. City code requires dogs to be leashed and cleaned up after.
3. In a follow-up email from the principal on October 28, the dog poop issue had improved somewhat, but was still a problem. The principal also stated this was happening during school hours as well.
4. This is completely unacceptable. Edgerton is part of our neighborhood and needs to be respected.
5. If the issue continues, the principal will be turning over camera footage to the police/animal control and they will begin issuing citations to offenders.
6. All homeowners and renters are responsible for understanding the rules within the community. Landlords are responsible for sharing this information with their tenants.
7. Discussion and questions:
 - a. A homeowner stated they will be calling animal control and ask for more frequent patrol of the neighborhood to help curb the issue.
 - b. A homeowner stated there is also lots of traffic/use of Edgerton from surrounding neighborhoods and it is not just our neighborhood.
 - c. A homeowner stated they also have issues of dog poop in their yard.
 - d. A homeowner asked if dog poop bag dispensers could be installed at the school.
 - i. The Board had previously asked the school if this was a possibility. Finances and management of the stations are preventing them from doing this.
 - e. If you see someone not cleaning up after their pets, please call them in to the non-emergency line or call them out on it, if you are comfortable.

Frontages: They have improved this year.

1. Every week there are letters going out to homeowners for any violations.
2. There have been a couple instances of sheds or fences that were not approved by the architectural review committee. Please email these requests to the Board prior to beginning construction.
3. Some homeowners have purchased extra vehicles to rent out on Turo. There is nothing in the covenants preventing them from doing this. However, please be mindful of where you are parking extra vehicles, out of respect for your neighbors.
4. Unsightly median/island
 - a. Homeowner responsible for watering this section turned off the water this summer, which resulted in the grass dying. The Board discussed the issue with the homeowner, and it was resolved. Erik fertilized the grass and fixed several sprinkler heads. Next summer it will be watered for 10 minutes a day. This should resolve the issue.
 - b. HOA owns the median/island. It was grandfathered in when the subdivision was built. However, the City dictates what can be done with it. We cannot remove it or place rock/bark in it because it can fall out onto the roadway.

Campaign Signs: Please be aware of campaign sign rules.

1. Per the 2015 Montana state law regarding placement of political signs, HOAs can only regulate the sign size and number of signs placed per yard.
2. The Buffalo Stage HOA revised their Rules and Regulations in February 2016 to state only 1 small political sign is allowed per yard and is only allowed to be placed for 30 days. It must be removed within one week of an election.

Current Board:

1. The current Board members are: Katy Brimhall, President. Erik Fisher, Vice President. Katie Dalton, Secretary/Treasurer. Judy Stack, Ad Hoc. Kim Johnson, Ad Hoc. Carmen Hemmer, Ad Hoc.
2. Please remember that we are a volunteer-based board and are fellow neighbors. We want the best for our community and are not the rule enforcers. That's why we pay for a property management company.
3. Some Board members have received typed complaint letters with no return address. Aside from being a little disturbing, we cannot communicate what is being done to correct the issue being written about.
4. The Board also does not endorse any online neighborhood programs, apps, or groups. All communications from the Board come from WMPM or the Board email.
5. Katy called for a motion to retain the current Board members. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion made for approval. **Board members approved.**

Motion and 2nd motion to approve new business.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM