

Buffalo Stage HOA

Annual Meeting Minutes – November 8, 2023

Location: Edgerton Elementary School Cafeteria (Moved to School Library at 7:15pm)

In Attendance:

Board: Katy Brimhall (President), Erik Fisher (Vice President), Carmen Hemmer (Ad Hoc), Judy Stack (Ad Hoc)

Western Mountains Property Management (WMPM): Dave Roberts

Members: Brimhall, Fisher, Freckleton, Fromm (proxy), Hailstone, Hanson, Harris, Hemmer, Hollo/Drury, Jones, Lingle (Proxy), Matthews/Valentine, Mills (Proxy), Franks (Mountain Park, LLC), Mower, Schatz, Schipper, Shehan, Sorensen, Stack

Introduction

Katy Brimhall called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. She introduced Erik Fisher as who would lead the 2023 Annual Meeting and she would act as HOA Secretary due to that Board position being vacant.

Erik Fisher thanked everyone for joining the meeting. He introduced the Board Members in attendance and Dave Roberts from WMPM. Dave and his company prepared the packets of information and we are grateful for their continued support of our Board and the Buffalo Stage HOA. School District 5 requires a facility use waiver to be signed for those in attendance.

Erik called for a review of the 2022 annual meeting minutes. Along with the October letter from WMPM, were last year's Financials, and all homeowners were notified the minutes, Covenants, and Bylaws were available for review at our website buffalostagehoa.org

Erik called for a motion to approve the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion for approval provided. **2022 Annual Meeting Minutes approved.**

Old Business

Lawn Care

The Board is keeping AAA Lawn Care for the upcoming 2023/24 season. The company is competitively priced, easy to work with, and have continued to provide satisfactory work during the last 2 years. They currently mow along Whitefish Stage, Granrud, and the water retention pond. They also spray and fertilize once or twice a year.

Homeowner Question: How much is lawn care per year? Board Response: about \$12,000 per year.

Homeowner Comment: The drainage area needs to be mowed once a month, not twice a year due to weeds. WMPM Response: It can be mowed monthly. Board Response: We can weed and feed the whole area a couple times during the mowing season to cut down on weeds. The Board will meet after the new year to discuss pros and cons and the financial impacts of increasing AAA's attention to that area.

Reflection Posts & Mailboxes

The reflective posts were placed around storm drains and fire hydrants in the neighborhood. Erik requested all homeowners continue to help clear snow and debris from fire hydrants, sewer drainages, and mailboxes during the winter. He also reminded all homeowners that 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.

After \$500 in unpaid fines are incurred, a lien is placed against the house.

Homeowner Question: What are infractions that incur fines? Board Response: some examples are garbage cans not put away/out of sight. A parked camper or boat longer than 24 hours. Erik also noted if you are doing repairs or moving, to contact the HOA Board via email or call WMPM to be granted extra parking time privileges.

Homeowner Comment: parked cars are an issue, especially on blind corners or curved areas of our subdivision. Board Response: the HOA doesn't have authority to have the vehicles moved. However, it is against City code for a vehicle to be left unattended / parked for more than 72 hours. Homeowners should call the non-emergency police department number to report the vehicles, especially as winter approaches and our streets begin to get icy and will be plowed. When calling, be sure to have the location, license plate number, make, and model of the vehicle.

**** Meeting paused to move to library at 7:15pm due to noise in the gym****

****Meeting resumed at 7:18pm****

Dave stated that WMPM does rounds of our subdivision once per week. Dawn from WMPM will call the City about parked vehicles if she notices it's there from her last round. Dave Roberts offered for homeowners to call WMPM about parked vehicles or infractions, and Dawn will contact the owner. Luckily our HOA doesn't have many serious issues and WMPM follows the policies and procedures as set up by the Board. WMPM's number is 406.257.1302. Dave's number is 406.253.2840 or you can email them at Dawn@westernmountains.com or droberts@westernmountains.com. The Board's email is buffalostageboard@gmail.com.

Erik opened the meeting to any questions or comments.

Homeowner Comment: The City states you're responsible for plowing the sidewalks and fire hydrant areas.

Homeowner Comment: The City will send a bill if you request they clean the hydrant of snow or foliage. However, you can take a picture with your phone and go to the City office and let them know of the problem.

Homeowner Comment: The City will pick up leaves every Wednesday through November 17, 2023. Board Response: The leaves need to be 1-2 feet out of the gutter and there can be no garbage or other lawn debris mixed into the leaves.

Board Contact

The best way to reach the Board is at buffalostageboard@gmail.com and our website is buffalostagehoa.com. As a reminder, if you are contacting WMPM via email, please CC the Board.

The HOA does not have a Facebook page. All information is shared via email or through mailings. Dave requested that homeowners keep current emails on file with WMPM and passed around the sign-in sheet for homeowners to write emails down.

Annual Garage Sale

The 2023 Annual Garage sale was again a success. It was the fourth year and approximately 31 homes participated. On average we have had 30 homes participating each year, some for multiple days surrounding the HOA sponsored day.

The 2024 annual garage sale will take place Saturday, August 10, 2024. The Board plans on keeping the annual HOA garage sales on the second Saturday of August. 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.

Homeowner Question: Do we have to register to join in the garage sale? Board Response: No. You can set up your items or not at your discretion.

Homeowner Question: Should we invite food trucks? Homeowner Comments: Would there be liability issues? Would it block traffic? What about the kids who are selling snack and beverage items; Would it take away from their profits? Board Response: The

Board will discuss this issue but at this point we are leaning towards not having outside food trucks at the annual garage sales.

Financials

At the 2021 Annual Meeting, the annual dues were increased from \$175 per year to \$250. The Board believes there is no need to raise the dues at this time. Therefore the annual dues for 2024 will remain at \$250. Erik reminded homeowners to pay their outstanding dues and fines as soon as possible. However, as the subdivision ages, there may be an increase of dues to provide money for repairs, maintenance, and reserve monies on hand.

Homeowner Question: Does the Board currently have any upcoming projects? Board Response: Nothing is scheduled for 2024.

Homeowner Question: Does the HOA help with sidewalk repairs? Board Response: No, but the City will split costs 50/50.

Homeowner Question: What repairs or maintenance projects is the HOA considering within the next 5 years? WMPM Response: repair for the mailbox kiosks, entrance signs, landscaping at the entrances.

Erik called for any additional comments or questions. None received.

Erik called for a motion to approve the Old Business matters. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion for approval provided. **All old business topics approved.**

New Business

Financials

Presented by Dave Roberts. For the financial year October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023, the Quickbooks Balance Sheet shows \$25,623 cash in the bank and a negative accounts receivable of \$15,000. We have a liability because homeowners paid dues before due next fiscal year. The HOA has \$10,000 in reserves at the end of the last fiscal year. \$4,000 in undeposited funds. There was \$14,000 in the bank at the end of the last fiscal year.

Homeowner Comment: We need to show separate lines for reserved funds because "Negative Accounts Receivable" is not an accurate term. We should show assets and dues already paid. Retained earnings is a dividend to a shareholder, not something an HOA has. We need to rework how the financials are presented. Dave's explanation makes sense but the Quickbook terms do not / are inaccurate for an HOA.

Homeowner Comment: We should begin using the \$10,000 in reserves towards maintenance projects. Why are we holding on to it? Board Response: With the new and unknown cost of snow removal and undetermined spring maintenance projects, we voted to wait on spending reserves on maintenance projects at this time.

Homeowner Comment: We should plan for projects each year that cost a couple thousand dollars so it doesn't look like the HOA is trying to make money. WMPM Response: Dave stated a CPA looks at our tax filings each year and didn't see any issues with our reserves. To note, \$50 is paid to the State of Montana for our tax filing and \$180 is paid for outside accounting fees per year.

Homeowner Comment: Perhaps the CPA could give a quick explanation of the financial statements and Quickbook terms along with the financials that are mailed out each year.

Homeowner Question: Are fines and annual dues payable via CC? Board Response per Dawn at WMPM: "Payment options currently are bill pay or check. However, if the HOA would like to add Credit/Debit Card processing we can do this but it would cost the person that wanted to pay with this method a 4% fee or a flat \$3.00 fee if they paid using bank routing and account number. (This does not cost the HOA anything; all fees are billed to Owner when making their payment)."

Dave continued with the Profit and Loss. \$39,575 in HOA annual dues. \$450 infraction income. \$150 in late fees billed. Total income was \$40,175 and \$29,182 in expenses. There have been no issues collecting fees and dues this year. Lawn care is the majority of expenses. Lawn care, landscaping, irrigation are all separate fees. The Board approves the landscaping before it is done. Items during the last fiscal year that were over and above contracted work was irrigation from Rainmaker needed to replace sprinkler heads as well as branch trimming and removal from a couple storms. Landscaping fees are incurred April through October.

Homeowner Question: Is the Board happy with the services WMPM is providing? Board Response: Yes. We pay \$6,000 in fees, which have not been raised in over 12 years. They take care of the infraction letters, maintenance contracts, filing taxes, mailing and postage fees, signage for the garage sale / annual meeting, and basic management of the subdivision that we, as a volunteer Board, don't have time for. The Board should not be in charge of maintaining and policing our neighbors as that could create a difficult living situation for Board members and would lead to less homeowners being willing to join the Board.

Homeowner Question: What does our insurance cover? Do we have to have it? Board Response: Yes it's a requirement. Insurance covers basic liability, directors and officers insurance, common area injuries, etc.

Erik called for a motion to approve the 2022 Financials. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion for approval provided. **2022 Financials approved.**

Vehicles for Sale

As covered in the Old Business portion of our meeting, we've had an issue of vehicles remaining on streets for long periods of time, whether they are for sale or just being parked. This is especially a concern on curved sections of our neighborhoods or near mailboxes and as winter approaches. City regulations state vehicles are not allowed to stay in one place on the city street longer than 72 hours. With leaf pickup / snow

plowing / winter road conditions, we need to be more aware of this City regulation. Again, we can contact WMPM or the City.

Snow Removal

The HOA Board is accepting bids for snow removal along Whitefish Stage and Granrud. The Board is considering two bids. Both are for plowing only with the additional cost of ice melt and are around \$200 per occurrence. The Board offers the homeowners an opportunity to offer a bid for consideration. If you are interested in submitting a snow plowing bid, please contact WMPM or the Board. Please note, you would need to be properly insured / licensed. We have budgeted \$5,000 for snow removal, but are expecting to spend half that amount.

Homeowner Comment: Saw an ad in the Mountain Trader. Board Response: We will look into it. Also a reminder that sidewalks are Homeowner responsibility. If you are having issues with the snow plows piling snow or blocking driveways, hydrants, mailboxes, etc. please contact the City or let WMPM know so they can call.

Homeowner Comment: [Snow removal along Whitefish Stage] appears this was poorly thought out and executed by the City and creates liability on the subdivision and businesses along Whitefish Stage. Who plowed the walking path before? Board Response: It appeared the County or City did the plowing intermittently. Sometimes it was homeowners and sometimes Edgerton Elementary custodial staff in certain areas.

Homeowner Question: If a homeowner doesn't shovel their sidewalk, is that an infraction? Board Response: There is not currently an HOA fine in place for not shoveling a sidewalk, but it is a City requirement. Contact the City if an issue persists.

Homeowner Question: How many inches will trigger the snow plowing? Board Response: We have discussed a 2 inch trigger.

Campaign Signs

Please be aware of campaign sign rules. Per the 2015 Montana state law regarding placement of political signs, HOAs can regulate the sign size, number of signs placed per yard, and length of time. 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 prior to an election. It must be removed within one week of an election. No campaign signs are allowed in the common areas.

Current Board

The current Board members are: Katy Brimhall, President. Erik Fisher, Vice President. Judy Stack, Ad Hoc. Kim Johnson, Ad Hoc. Carmen Hemmer, Ad Hoc. As stated before, we are still in need of a Secretary/Treasurer. Please speak with Erik or Katy if interested or if you know of someone we can contact regarding the secretary position or joining the Board in an Ad Hoc position.

The HOA Board is 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. The Board does not endorse any online neighborhood programs, apps, or groups. All communications from the Board come from WMPM or the Board in the forms of email or USPS Mailings.

Homeowner Question: If we have a treasurer, what will they do that WMPM doesn't already take care of? Board Response: They would double check WMPM financials, clear up any misunderstanding or Quickbook categorizations prior to the annual meeting. To be clear, it's more of a secretary position with the treasurer title connected to it.

Homeowner Question: How often does the Board meet outside of the annual meeting? Board Response: Two to three times a year as a whole board. The President and Vice President meet with homeowners over various issues and work with WMPM more than the rest of the Board or any Ad Hoc members. The majority of the work is done over email.

Erik called for a motion to approve and retain the current Board members. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion for approval provided. Current Board members **retained and approved.**

Erik called for any final items of business to address.

Homeowner Comment: Could we do something with the water retention pond area? Have a dog park or other amenities. Board Response: No, due to liability and high insurance costs. The pond typically is full of water. Maintenance fees and getting it to a usable and safe space are far and beyond the scope and ability of the current HOA.

Homeowner Comment: The water retention pond is usually full of water and has snakes. It wouldn't be safe for families and children especially to use and be in that area.

Homeowner Comment: We should consider raising the annual dues to \$275 or \$300. We don't have a large amount in reserves if snow plowing charges eat into that. We could plan for maintenance projects and subdivision upgrades now rather than waiting for reserves to grow or a problem to occur. Board Response: At this time, we are going to hold on increasing dues but we will discuss that as a possibility for the next annual meeting depending on snow removal costs and unforeseen costs this season. The annual due increases need to be approved and voted on at the annual meetings.

Homeowner Question: Do liens accrue interest? WMPM Response: Yes at 10% per year. Homeowner Follow up Comment: Liens are invalidated if Chapter 7 Bankruptcy is filed. Board Response: True. However, we have not faced that situation yet.

Homeowner Comment: We should consider implementing transfer fees for sales of homes. Board Response: That is a great point and we will discuss with WMPM to vote on and implement that policy.

Homeowner Comment: The HOA should set goals or targets for upcoming projects. Board Response: We are always open to receiving comments and suggestions to address areas for improvement or maintenance. Please email WMPM and the Board for our review.

Erik called for any additional comments or questions. None received.

Erik called for a motion to approve the 2023 New Business. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion for approval provided. **2023 New Business approved.**

Erik called for a motion to adjourn the 2023 Annual Meeting. 1st motion made for approval. Second motion for approval provided. **2023 Annual Meeting adjourned.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:24 PM