

## Breezy Knoll Minutes 8/23/14

1. Welcome from President. All homes present or represented by proxy with the exception of Berger who gave a proxy to Hershman and Hyner who had to leave early and gave his proxy to Maddox.
2. Minutes from 6/14 meeting approved without changes.
3. President Julie thanks membership for all their participation in the community this summer and mentions that the meeting procedure process has been straightened out from last year.
4. Secretary Joanne W. makes a plea for historical BK documents citing that it is part of the secretary's role to be a repository for important records. The current investigation of BK's role as a water utility has pointed out the need for better record keeping.
5. Vice President Liz discusses the new BK website, hands out an information sheet and asks members to check the accuracy of their email addresses. Requests that members use the groups that have been created to contact committees including the Board and reminds people to target their emails to the appropriate address.
6. **Committee Reports**
  - a. **Treasurer(Judith):** 2014 dues have been collected from all members. No unusual expenditures to date. On budget for the year. We have collected a record \$900 in water payments from non BK members.
  - b. **Sanitation(Hank):** Budgeted \$1000 for 2015. Garbage collection costs \$50 per dumpster pickup. Very pleased with provider. Likely that our actual expenses will be \$300 to \$400 less than the budget.
  - c. **Tennis(Hank):** 1 to 2 percent increase in expenses anticipated for next year. The court opens in May depending on weather conditions. Reminds the community that Roundup is used along the perimeter of the fence for weed control. The quantity applied is no more than ½ gallon of the diluted concentrate per year. Weeds are much better in check due to this application and the use of a flame cane. The replacement of the adjustable portable basketball pole remains unfinished. The committee examined options for replacement of the pole and pursued the attachment of an adjustable fixed basket on the handball wall. Opinions were received from 2 different contractors. One felt that the wall may not support a backboard and basket. Discussion ensued with Bob M. mentioning that the handball wall is reinforced with steel poles and that we may need to examine the replacement of some of the plywood covering the wall. Ron and Bob discuss the pros and cons of an adjustable and fixed hoop and Julie suggests that the committee make a decision and get back to the Board.
  - d. **Electric Car Charger(Ken H.):** Ken mentions that the inclusion of an electric car charging station in the North parking area would require an updating of the electrical box in the shed due to insufficient amperage. The job would require 1 to 2 days and the installed station would allow 2 cars to be charged at the same time. Metering of the station is not possible at this time. To install the station in the Shed would cost \$2200 and installing in a designated area of the parking lot would cost \$3750 because of additional trenching. Julie says that the Board will consider the proposal and to submit questions if interested.
  - e. **Water(Mark H.):** Water, which was previously monitored once a month, is now checked every week. The cost, which no longer includes the phone system, is now \$83 per month. Ron Black is unable to get us quotes for a backup generator citing that the job is too small. Mark comments that the state of CT has been in no hurry to enforce the generator requirement and that he will continue to follow up on the matter. He states that after investigation that a community wide water softener is not a viable option. People can filter their own water on an as needs basis. Mark is exploring a filtration system in his own home to remove sand, sediment and color and will report back on its effectiveness to the community(does not affect water hardness). He reminds the community that we are required to flush out our system twice a year and to please turn on outdoor faucets for 45 minutes after the meeting.

- f. **Utility Status(Jim G.):** Jim states that he has asked a colleague to look into this matter but requires additional foundational documents to further the research. Mark mentions that we have been a utility since at least 2001 and may have had that status since the 1960's. More research is required.
- g. **Legal(Julie for Michael L.):** Nothing to report.
- h. **Playground(Judy):** New swings and removable poly coated chains have been ordered. The big issue is trying to remove the current chains which Michael L. will attempt to manage in the spring. Karen K. volunteers to take over as Playground chair.
- i. **Rules and Bylaws Taskforce(Joan):** Shirley and Joan are heading up the effort and have conducted an initial meeting to set priorities. The committee will meet through the winter and hopefully have recommendations in the spring.
- j. **Trees(Rani):** A big thank you to Michael S. who has resigned as chairman after many years of service. Julie thanks Liz who has worked tirelessly over the last 2 years on a new Tree Guideline policy which was distributed to the community 2 weeks ago via e-mail. The new chairman, Rani, mentions that a tree adjacent to Mark H.'s house has been infected with Dutch Elm disease and will be removed on 8/25. The cost will be \$500 bringing the remaining available tree maintenance budget to \$2.2k. Projects remaining for 2014 will need to be prioritized. These include pruning and removal of dead trees near Auerbach and Siegmund. It is hoped that since several of these trees are near power lines that our provider can get CL&P to take them down. Other priorities include the trimming of the arborvitae near the tennis court and the hemlock hedge near the pump house as well as grinding the ash stump near Judy. Please send an email to the committee [trees@breezyknoll.org](mailto:trees@breezyknoll.org) if you see tree problems including spotty leaves and creeping vines. Rani went on to talk about the planting of new trees. A visual plan will be created and sent to the Board including lost trees and suggestions for new placements with prices and names by the end of the year. It will then be forwarded to the community. Possible tree placement flags will be positioned in the spring. The Board will try to solve planting disputes. Judith makes a plea for civil discussions. Joanne W. and Bart S. asked that trees not be planted near sewer and water lines and that those lines be marked on the tree map. Bob M. asked to correct the budget document which indicated that no new trees have been planted in 2013 and 2014. He noted that 2 trees had been planted by the Behar's just this year. Bob M. asked about the capital expense for trees and wondered whether the current request met the requirement outlined in the bylaws and cited the stated need in that document for a "definitive" purpose of a capital expense. He also stated that while there may be a general consensus for new trees the specific application may be a bit more contentious. Julie and Rani talk about all the layers of checks and balances that are being developed to avoid such controversy. Liz says that no tree will be planted that is too controversial. Mark H. says that he won't vote unless there is a specific plan. David S. asked for some clarity on the process. Rani says that June is the best time to plant trees because members will be available to care for the plantings. Karen H. talks about prioritizing member's input based on "spheres of influence" and that compromise will be needed. Bob asks how will the Board mediate disputes and suggests that a higher than straight majority vote should be required. He goes on to mention a criteria of "line of sight" which may be a better metric than "spheres of influence" and should be included in the guidelines. He also states that trees will last for hundreds of years and that we need to take a long term view. Liz comments that we left the mediation aspect vague and that there is no reason to vote on non controversial trees. She also mentions that it has been understood that the criteria for affected parties is "line of sight". Stefanie reminds the community that it is tempting but unrealistic to vote on every tree and reminds everyone that trees serve multiple purposes. David S. says that the issue at hand is to provide more reassurance that a firm procedure is in hand to protect the homeowner in case of serious objection and if mediation by the Board is not able to solve the conflict then the issue should be taken to the community. Ron E. says that anyone can raise an objection and wonders if it is a simple majority that resolves the dispute. Julie reiterates that nothing that is controversial will be planted in 2015 and to please let the new committee have a chance.

- k. **Shed/Waterfront(Bob for Brian):** Shed is status quo. Repairs to the boat deck were completed this summer. The railings were made code compliant by adding balusters and raising the rails. In addition the rails were brought closer to the removable stairs to prevent injury and the deck bed was strengthened. Reexamination of the swim dock deck revealed further deterioration in the lakeside support columns. In consultation with the contractors, the committee and the Board it was decided that the deck was unsafe, needed to be replaced and it was closed for the season. To date the committee has received 2 bids for replacement from licensed contractors. Both bids are in the \$8k range. Building permits and wetland commission approval will be required to move forward with the project. A problem with the current design is that the lake side columns rest on rocks and need to be more securely placed on land. The placement of the lake side columns can not be fully known until the current deck is removed. It is hoped that the footprint of the new deck will extend over the lake as far as the current setup. The plan is to build a code compliant pressure treated pine deck with dimensions of 12 x 14 feet(the current deck is approximately 10 x 10) and include handicap access at grade. Patty S. has provided design ideas and a final positioning of the benches has not yet been determined. The committee is currently recommending that the contract be awarded to Rick Bette who has reassured us that as long as we stay within our current footprint vis a vis lakeside projection that building department approval will be forthcoming. Fall/winter projects include the readjustment of the bottom beach stone step which moved due to ice heave over last winter. The cement slab at the boat dock requires a similar adjustment. Waldron has suggested the placement of some boulders near these vulnerable spots to mitigate future ice heave. In addition, 2 granite steps will be added on the left side of the cement slab at the base of the boat deck to improve access to the lake. The capital request for the boat dock end cap is included in this year's budget again. The purpose of the end cap is to provide stability to the long finger upon which kayaks and motor boats are tied. The cost for this improvement is \$1k. A plea for volunteers to participate in dock removal was made. The water laden pieces are extremely heavy and some added hands are needed. Last winter some of the saw horses supporting the dock pieces collapsed under the heavy weight of the snow. New saw horses will be purchased to prevent this from happening again. Mark H. asks for the possibility of including monies in the budget for mid summer dock adjustments. Bob M. queried the community on interest in a paddle board storage unit which the committee has been researching. At present 3, possibly 4, families have an interest in such an asset.
- l. **Fire Department Access(Karen H.):** Karen talks about a walk around with representatives of the Bantam and Morris fire departments and Mark H.'s daughter Melissa and son in law Matt. A primary issue was access points to the property with some houses more difficult to get to than others. The possibility of installing stand pipes(makeshift hydrants) was discussed. Seasonal issues were discussed such as the difficulty of accessing the property in the winter. A map will be put together noting where all homes are located along with their access points. A walk through and trial run will be conducted in the fall. The chiefs have identified 4 access points which will be labeled A through D and we will have to trim around those areas to keep the property accessible. Karen makes a plea that all homes have functional smoke detectors on all levels. Questions were raised at the last meeting by individual homeowners about liability insurance price increases. The fire chiefs will work out a revised letter indicating accessibility for all homes albeit some with less timely access.
- m. **Grounds(Karen H.):** We started an organic program 6 years ago with Kodiak to eliminate our grub problem and create a greener, thicker lawn. We achieved our objective but last year were asked to reevaluate the program. With the help of Amy H., we identified 4 potential lawn care providers with only 2 actually submitting a proposal including Kodiak. Most lawn care providers feel uncomfortable splitting lawn mowing from treatment as they want to take ownership of the total lawn care. Kodiak and Oak Hills submitted similar organic proposals. Kodiak is larger but farther away and not very responsive. Oak Hills is a newer company located in Litchfield. The owner trained in turf care at Uconn and seems very knowledgeable. Karen has been testing Oak Hills with

perimeter cuttings and finds them responsive, reliable and communicative. Karen recommends using Oak Hill for both lawn mowing and treatment. The company was asked to reevaluate our treatment program in light of our location next to the lake. The protocol will be as follows: to soil test once a year and to base the treatment program on the results of that test. \$7.7k of the grounds budget will only be tapped if the soil test indicates deficiencies. Karen went on to discuss lawn mowing and cleanup along with her recommendation to replace Bill Woodington. She explained that Bill's main lawn mower broke several years ago and has not been replaced. His remaining equipment is not up to standard. It leaves oil residue on the lawn, does not mulch, leaves gashes in the ground, smokes and is noisy. In addition, she has requested that he sharpen his blades so as not to harm the grass and he has ignored this request. Karen reiterates that Bill has been loyal but that his services do not meet best practice standards. His costs have increased so that his previous below market prices are now at market. She stated an interest in being fair to Bill who has contracted with BK for around 30 years and suggests a 1 year working severance at which point Oak Hills would be awarded the entire contract. Karen also suggested the scenario that Bill finishes 2014 work, is given a gratuity and Oak Hills starts Spring 2015. Hank states that working for another year is hardly severance. Judy says that 6 years ago she asked for Woodington to be replaced and Karen championed him at that time and the fact that she is now recommending his firing is significant. Ron G. asks for a better breakout of the costs and if the \$17k line item reflects Oak Hills mowing cost. Bob M. suggests that the right thing to do is to give Bill a hearing with Karen and representatives of the Board to present a list of grievances to hopefully come to an amicable resolution. Bob also states that Mark H. feels the same way. Karen says that she has spoken to Bill repeatedly and he has been dismissive. In addition it takes Bill at least 3 days to do the job while Oak Hills can do the same in less than a day. Donna S. mentions that it is a comfort to have someone we know and trust on the property and that it is concerning to have a strange crew on the grounds. Karen says that we would be a major client of Oak Hills and that the 2 man team will include the owner. Phyllis states that we need to take care of Bill. Hank says that it is common for a new vendor to low ball to get the business. Karen replies that she has discussed pricing with Oak Hill and that they have no intention of increasing prices for 3 to 4 years ex increases in raw material costs. Julie calls to terminate the discussion and asks for a vote from the membership on whether we should terminate Woodington's service after this season. 16 of the 20 members voted not to renew the contract with Bill. Discussion ensues on how to provide a monetary severance to Woodington. Some members stated that Bill was a contractor and not a full time employee and thus deserves no severance. Karen K. started with a recommendation of \$5K. Joanne S. suggests \$8.5k which is half of the annual cost of mowing. Judith corrected that Mr. Woodington has been paid an average of \$13-\$14K over the past several years. Discussion ensues about how to pay for this payment with some suggesting a volunteer contribution. Bob M. asks whether the payment will be part of the regular dues or a special assessment and whether it requires a 4/5<sup>th</sup> vote. Leo G. states that it is not relevant and that we are just collecting money for someone who has served our community for 30 years. Ron G. and Phyllis B. ask those who supported giving a meeting to Bill what level they would be comfortable with. Bart S. expressed his displeasure with the 'firing' of Bill and supported a \$10k level. It was finally suggested that we vote on 2 different amount levels. \$10k or \$7.5k The \$10k amount passed with 11 votes out of 19 (abstention for Hyner who had left meeting and given his proxy to Bob M.). Karen went on to discuss the remaining work for 2014 including filling sink holes, dealing with tree stumps, grass seeding, and perimeter cutting. She noted that the compost piles have been pushed back and that Donna S. has been kind enough to make signs indicating where to dump your debris and that there is excellent soil at the bottom of the piles.

- n. **Budget(Judith):** Judith notes that the community has the latest draft of the 2014 budget/expense report and states no new defibrillator classes have been scheduled for 2015. She also reiterates that the \$7.7k for Grounds composting/fertilizing is the most that will be spent and that the dues may be adjusted downward if this work is not needed.

Total expenses for 2015 are \$69,650. There was a surplus in 2013 of \$6711 that will be rolled into the 2015 budget. Operating and maintenance dues for 2015 currently stand at \$3147. Judith states that she will send out a separate bill of \$500 per house for the Woodington severance. A vote is called on the budget which passes unanimously. There are 3 capital/optional expense items on the agenda. The first is \$1k for the boat dock end cap. A vote is called and it passes unopposed. The second is \$8k for the swim dock deck which also passes unopposed. Julie notes that there will be 2 separate votes at the \$5k and \$3k level for 2015 tree planting capital expense. A vote is called for the \$5k level and it does not reach the required 80 percent threshold(5 houses opposed). A second vote is called at \$3k level and it passes unanimously. The dues for the capital/optional portion of the budget will be \$600. Total 2015 dues will be \$3747 plus \$500 for the severance.

6. Julie asks for volunteers for the Labor Party on 8/31. Steve F. volunteers to buy the ice cream. Please contact Steve to help with planning and serving.
  
6. Joan G. represents the nominating committee recommendation for the 2015 board. Judy L. for President, Liz S. for Vice President, Joanne W. for Secretary, Judith K. for Treasurer, Mike H. for the 2 year Director position, Amy H. for the 1 year Director position and Joan G. will serve out her remaining year. A vote is called and the slate passes unanimously.
7. The community gives a big shout out to Julie S. for her tireless efforts as President. Bart S. and Karen H. are also thanked for their service on the Board.

Meeting adjourned.