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THE Villager



May 2024

myriverwoods.org

BOARD CORNER

Welcome to Spring at River Woods HOA

There are lots of outside things happening in River Woods this time of year that all of you need to be aware of. Not only are things turning green, but SPRING WALK THROUGHs have begun. Those of you who are in the paint cycle — units 190-229 — need to arrange to have any repairs done **before** the painters start. Please refer to our April *Villager*.

Maintenance requests need to be into the office by April 30.

Our **ACC committee** will be starting its walk-about as well. ACC members will be following up on last year's completions and this year's requests. Remember that requests need to be submitted to the office **BEFORE** you work on your unit **NOT AFTER**. The committee is always looking for more members. Please think about joining the ACC Committee. It is a great group of people and a nice way to learn about your community.

The **Welcome Committee** had a blast last year and look forward to doing some fun events again this year. If you would like to join this committee, please contact Anna at annariverwoodshoa@gmail.com.

Insurance Issues

THERE IS A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF! The costs of insurance for HOAs are rising dramatically. This is affecting ALL HOAs in Minnesota, as well as other states. If you have not been putting money away for your share of the **Master Insurance Policy**, either into an escrow account with River Woods HOA or into your own savings account for this year's upcoming insurance, you may have sticker shock when you get your insurance statement from Kraus Anderson Insurance this year. Rates have gone up from double digits to triple digits in some associations. Please read the following article about our meeting with the HOA Leadership Network. This is a serious issue, and you need to be aware of it.

Our **Annual Meeting** is at the Burnsville Library on Tuesday, June 18 at 6 p.m. We will have a presentation at the meeting to let you know the state of the insurance industry. I can't stress how important this issue is. Please plan on attending this meeting! Please remember to bring your ballot with you as well unless you drop it by the office beforehand.

I look forward to seeing you in June!

Anna Goyette, River Woods President

Insurance Rates up Yet Again?

The short answer is, almost certainly.

Based on conversations with our insurance brokers and experts in HOA insurance at a recent local seminar for board members of the HOA Leadership Network we attended, it's clear that townhouse insurance rates for master plans are going up for all townhouses in

May Dates to Remember

The **Board** meets on May 21 at 5:30 in the HOA office.

The **ACC** meets on May 28 at 5:30 in the HOA office.

HOA office will be closed May 6–10, May 27 and May 29.

2024, by double-digit amounts at least. At least one local association reported not being able to get insurance at all.

There were approximately 50 townhouse HOAs represented at the meeting (out of 3,600 in the Twin Cities area). Without exception, every board member said their HOA's primary concern was rising insurance rates for master plans. All said their rates had risen this year by at least double-digit percentages. Two HOAs reported their rates had increased almost 400%. Most reported increases in the 20%-50% range. A couple reported they couldn't find anyone to insure them and had to go to individual insurance policies (which means they'll never know which homes are insured and which aren't).

What's Ahead for River Woods?

It's difficult to predict what the rise in River Woods' insurance rates will be. Two years ago, our increase was 60%. Last year it was 13%. This year, who knows? (We'll all find out in August/September when the billing comes.)

The unpleasant reality is that townhouse associations are not appealing customers for insurance companies. Why? Because they concentrate a lot of value in a small area, so a single incident can cause claims from a lot of homes, all paid by a single insurance company.

The Insurance Industry Situation

Insurance companies are in business to make money. They need to collect more in premiums than they pay out in claims. Lately that hasn't been happening. Hurricanes in Florida and wildfires in California have cost insurance companies far more than they collect in premiums and they are increasing premiums everywhere to make up for it. Even in Minnesota many insurance companies are not making a profit. For example, for every \$1.00 insurance companies were paid in premiums in Minnesota last year, insurance companies paid out \$1.44 in townhouse claims for wind/hail damage.

Only a few years ago, River Woods was able to pick the lowest among several bids from insurance companies. In contrast, last year our broker sent out 22 requests for bids from companies known to insure townhouses and condos. Only four responded, and none would insure our Association for its full value. Our broker, Kraus Anderson Insurance, devised a creative plan that divided up coverage among the four, so we are completely covered this year.

River Woods is one of the largest townhouse associations in Minnesota. And one of the oldest, incorporat-

ed in 1972. That makes us even less desirable to insure than most of the other townhouse/condo associations in the Twin Cities area, as we have more value in one spot and our homes are older.

Requests for bids will go out shortly, and we're crossing our fingers that the rate increase won't be too high, and that we'll get more bids this year than last year.

Grilling on Decks to Be Banned?

Several HOAs at the meeting reported that their insurance carriers refused to insure them unless they prohibited all grilling on wooden decks — by any kind of grill. So far, our insurance carriers have not issued such prohibitions for us, but our broker has warned us that this is a trend in the industry. So, enjoy grilling out on your decks this summer. (But be sure it's only with propane or electric grills — charcoal grills on decks are prohibited.) It's possible this could be the last summer you'll be able to do so on your decks. Let's hope that's not the case; we'll find out when the bids come in later this year.



HO-6 Policies Are Scarcer

Several River Woods homeowners have reported they've been informed by their insurance companies that their HO-6 policies won't be renewed. It appears several companies are pulling out of the HO-6 insurance market. Fortunately, some insurers are still issuing HO-6 policies. But don't be surprised if you have to find a new carrier for your HO-6 coverage next year.

Towing Is up: Park Thoughtfully

Our Grounds Manager reports that he towed 12 vehicles in the last 12 months, and tagged many more for parking violations. Some were towed because they blocked fire lanes or encroached on neighbors' parking. Others because they parked permanently in guest parking. Guest parking, which is very limited in River Woods, is restricted to guests only, and for short-term parking only. Residents who park their cars in guest parking will soon find them tagged and/or towed.

Ground Fire Pits Now Prohibited

The Board last month permanently prohibited in-ground fire pits, to reduce fire danger (and anticipate expected insurance company requirements). We don't have many such fire pits in River Woods, but they do cause a fire hazard, so any on common grounds will be

Association Notes...

removed. Portable fire pits are still permitted, but they have to conform with Burnsville ordinances, i.e., they have to be at least 25 feet from any flammable structure and cannot be closer than 15 feet from the River Woods property line.

Watch Out for Donation Scams

A River Woods homeowner reported that a young girl, perhaps 6 or 7, knocked on their door on a recent Sunday evening. The little girl was holding an empty box and claimed she was collecting for “cancer research” for a church that the homeowner had never heard of. She had no authorization to present and there was no adult in sight.

This might have been legitimate, but mostly likely was not. Children soliciting money for legitimate organizations normally have an adult — usually a parent— along and have some ID showing who they are collecting for.

Remember, anyone soliciting door-to-door in River Woods — except for political door knockers — is violating city ordinances unless the solicitor has been licensed by the City of Burnsville.

Deeding Your River Woods Home?

Some homeowners at River Woods are deeding their property to children or another person. There’s no problem with that except that there are a number of steps you have to go through when deeding a town-house property. If you’re planning to deed your property to someone, please call the River Woods office to review the steps you’ll need to go through.

Grounds Manager Loren Poehler renewed his state arborist license last month. We are fortunate to have a licensed, experienced arborist working for us, as maintaining and removing trees is a major expense in River Woods. By doing tree trimming and maintenance with our own crew, we save literally many thousands of dollars annually, compared to hiring a commercial arborist firm to do the work.

Exterior lights on garages should be on from dusk to dawn, not just motion-activated, for safety reasons.

Updated contact information on residents is recommended. It might prevent your door being forcibly opened by police if a neighbor is concerned about not seeing you and calls the police for a welfare check. If we have an emergency contact on file, we can contact them, or give the information to the police to avoid a forcible entry that would damage the door. If you don’t have emergency contact information on file with the HOA office, or if it has changed since you filed it, please update it. This form is on the HOA’s website.

A walking group is being formed this spring in River Woods. For information on how to join marchers for healthy walks around River Woods, send an email to annariverwoodshoa@gmail.com.