

Dear Homeowners:

On behalf of the Executive Committee, it is with pride and pleasure that I present you with this proposed 2024 budget and by-law meeting packet.

All Homeowners were invited to make suggestions.

The budget was compiled by Kathy Murri, with help from Michael Pancione and Peter Russell and me.

Thank you to the Executive Committee: Peter Russell, Lauren Anderson, Aaron Bissell, Wilfred Morin, Kathy Murri and Andrew Lehman. Thanks also to Michael Pancione.

The proposed budget shows a \$20/month fee increase. You will see that while some costs have gone up which is no surprise. But there are others which have gone down. We have worked hard this year to find ways to keep fees low without sacrificing services.

The proposed bylaw changes fall into three main categories:

- Proposed rule changes—lots of debate happened here.
- Proposed document changes to reflect how we operate in actual practice.
- The suggestion that dollar amounts be adjusted for inflation.

The proposed rule changes regarding fires and trash removal invite us to consider where we stand on preserving the rights of an individual homeowner vs preventing a negative impact, either directly or indirectly, on the community.

Over time, the way we do things changes. New technology, systems and ideas have been adopted in efforts to streamline workflow for The Committee and improve its level of service to the homeowners. The bulk of the proposed changes would update the current By-Law language to reflect the systems and policies we actually already have in place. For example, the EC's use of email to communicate with homeowners and our recent agreement with Laurel Park Association, which grants them authority over use of common buildings.

One small change, suggested by HALP's attorney, would be to the location of the Clerk's signature.

One proposed change would improve the readability and comprehension of the document for the majority of us, who don't have legal experience.

Proposals to adjust dollar amounts to reflect inflation: The cumulative rate of inflation since 2006—when the fees were set—is approximately 51%. The suggested increase to our maximum

allowable fines for by-law infractions from \$500 to \$750 invites us to answer the question: should we keep the fines level in terms of dollar amounts or in terms of their actual value? Do you think we should stay with the current amount,-accepting that it's only  $\frac{2}{3}$  as powerful as originally intended-or raise the dollar amount to equal the value it held in 2006 which would be \$750 today.

Most everyone agrees: avoid having to bring in lawyers. The current fine of \$500 and \$50/day is not a powerful enough deterrent for someone who might want to ignore the bylaw and build anyway.

When deterrence fails, the EC is supposed to act to defend the common land. If the homeowner refuses to remove the structure, then the law is the law is our only recourse. Legal bills pile up; lawsuits take a long time; a ruling in HALP's favor is not guaranteed; fees may not be recouped. HALP's attorney considers \$5,000 per instance and \$500/day to be a reasonable deterrent to willful encroachment. The amount is a limit; the EC may level a lesser fine but it cannot level a greater one.

Thank you for your kind consideration of these proposals.

The annual Budget and Bylaw meeting will take place on Saturday, September 23 at 9:30 am, via zoom. The link will be sent to the entire homeowner list.

Very Sincerely Yours,

Ruth Anne Lundeberg #64  
President, HALP Executive Committee