



Lawrenceville Today

The Society Hill at Lawrenceville Community Newsletter

Inside:

What You Can Do to Help Keep This a Great Community With Reasonable Fees 2

Keeping Up with the Trees 3

Dealing with Ants 4

Running a Home Business..... 4

Rentals 5

Disposal of Electronic Equipment.. 5

Safe Parking 5

Annual Election Meeting 7

Board Meeting Schedule 7

...and more!



Clubhouse on a late summer eve. Society Hill is a nice place to live!

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

James Alexander Jr.... President

Lynn Bovier Vice President

Diane Guvenis..... Treasurer

Beth Beckett..... Secretary

Jeff Guelcher..... Trustee

Bernard Smukler Trustee

Marilyn Ofner Trustee

Association Site Management Office:

Matt Lubas, *Property Manager*

Laurie Rupp, *Property Administrator*

Signature Property Group

Society Hill at Lawrenceville
Condominium Association
1 Society Way
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
Ph. (609)896-9346
Fax (609) 896-4942
Email: info@SHLtoday.org

WEBSITE:
shltoday.org

Life presents many challenges. Here at Society Hill at Lawrenceville, we’re constantly trying to balance the cost of meeting real needs with the fact that some people – for various reasons – don’t want to pay the cost of those services. The impact of weather extremes ranging from drought to heavy snows to drenching rains affecting our property, coupled with the pressures of a sagging national economy makes this an even greater balancing act. Fortunately, we’ve planned ahead so that many of the costs associated with our now being over twenty five years old can be handled.

Much of what your Board of Trustees does is mandated by our Governing Documents such as the Master Deed that was created in the mid eighties, but working within that, our aim continues to be to provide good services with a maintenance fee that’s better than other comparable places. The chart provided in the last newsletter shows that we compare quite favorably.

Our lead article on page two describes how unit owners can help their neighbors keep these costs down. In fact, it’s not just what the Trustees do, it’s what YOU do that impacts our bottom line.

We welcome your constructive thoughts, and continue to believe that: Our great residents make Society Hill a great community!

This newsletter and previous issues are available in color on the Association web site at SHLtoday.org. Visit the web site for detailed information on many topics.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP KEEP THIS A GREAT COMMUNITY WITH REASONABLE FEES

As we said on page one, Society Hill's livability and financial success depend heavily on the actions of its owners and residents! Let's take a look at some of the situations that affect our budget and services.

1. Pay on Time: Not Everybody Does

Let's face it. This is not unique to us. Municipal governments who collect over 90 percent of their tax levies consider themselves lucky, even in good economic times. Collection rates most places have sagged during this economic turn-down, although we're told that we're in better shape than some other associations.

At the time this is written, unit owners owe the Association about \$75,000. This is a cumulative figure which includes unpaid fees from previous years. We're not talking about people who are a couple of weeks behind, these are chronic or repeat delinquents. Roughly half of this amount is to cover expenses for court and legal collection fees that we've had to advance so as to pursue payment.

When we finally do collect, those who caused these costs to be incurred generally have to pay them, but in the meantime, the responsible owners are bearing the burden. If money we expected to receive in any year's budget does not get paid, we either have to curtail services, dip into surplus, or raise the maintenance fees higher. We have tried to economize through actions such as contract rebidding and careful management. We don't have that much surplus, since we've consciously spent it down to avoid higher fees.

Who are these delinquents? Much as we'd be inclined to publish a list, we've been advised by counsel that we should not, lest we incur liability and additional legal fees in this litigious world. Suffice it to say that there are a couple of bankruptcies, a small handful of habitual non-payers, a couple who try to "play the game," and a few who may have fallen on hard times. The highest amount owed is around \$14,000, and we have that individual's wages garnished; frankly we think that situation is inexcusable.

We continue to aggressively pursue all amounts owed us. Fines are levied, collection and court fees are added, due dates of assessment payments are accelerated, court judgments obtained, amenity access restricted, and it's not a happy scene. On top of all this, management and the Trustees spend an inordinate amount of time monitoring these accounts each month.

2. Observe Association Rules

While maintaining normal surveillance of the property is part of keeping it properly maintained, those who ignore

rules add to the costs that everybody must pay. For instance, while the squirrels or crows may be pesky, those who simply don't put their garbage out properly bagged, or on the wrong days, cost us money to clean up the mess. Those who park in the wrong place, put things on the common elements they shouldn't, dump the wrong things in the recycling bins, don't pick up after their dogs, etc. cost us money.

3. Understand the Association's Role

While we welcome and value our obligation to provide attentive, friendly service, a small handful of residents make it a habit to call repeatedly and make frequent visits to the clubhouse, typically on minor matters, or to discuss their personal lives. We want to serve our residents well, but when repeated daily visits come to be part of a resident's personal routine, everybody else is paying for that time. The Association simply can't spend its resources on social services.

Likewise, it can't provide referee services for disputes between residents that adults and neighbors should be able to deal with themselves. Such situations can consume a disproportionate amount of time! (Certain "housing related" disputes, as defined by state law, may qualify for Alternative Dispute Resolution, in which the parties share the cost of a mediator attempting to find a resolution. See our web site for ADR procedures.)

4. Understand the Costs of Responding to "safety" complaints.

When a resident claims that some safety issue exists, we take that as a high priority. We often have to bring in our consulting engineer or our attorney to make sure we're responding properly. When such claims turn out to be unfounded, or the residents do not cooperate in examining the issues, or the complaints turn out to represent feuds between residents, we've had to spend your money making sure we're doing the right thing.

Any safety issue should be freely and promptly presented to the Association, but in a few instances complaints have not necessarily been made in good faith and have turned out to not be safety issues. The Association is, of course, always willing to be responsible for matters which are its obligation under the Governing Documents.

5. Where's the good news in all this?

It's simple. The vast majority of our owners and residents are responsible, wonderful to work with, and are great neighbors!

WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE IN A CONDO

Did you know that sixty million Americans live in community associations like ours? There are 300,000 association-governed communities in the US, with a total homes value of four trillion dollars! Condominium and other similar living arrangements are increasing, as a way to keep living costs down and provide reasonable community settings. They can take the form of high-rise apartments, townhomes, garden apartments, and even free-standing domiciles. Regardless of physical format, it's the ownership arrangement that makes them condominiums.

To be sure, living in a condominium is not the same as owning a single home on its own lot. Typically, as is the case here at Society Hill, a person owns the inside of the residential unit, and is also a proportionate owner of the structure, grounds, and amenities. For instance, each Society Hill unit owner also owns an undivided 1/440th interest in the common elements. Condominiums have covenants, restrictions, and other rules that govern how the individual unit owners are to share the space.

Builders create new communities with this ownership arrangement, sell the units, and then hand the administration of the common elements over to an Association. That's where your Board of Trustees comes in. Everything is governed by the terms of the 1984 Master Deed and By Laws that were drafted by the builder, and any amendments that were duly adopted by the members of the Association. The Trustees don't "own the property," rather they, as volunteers, administer it, and don't have the same free hand that a profit-making organization might. They are required by the Governing Documents (master deed, bylaws, and regulations) to protect the property in the interests of the totality of the owners, and do other required things, on occasion even if a particular action is not what they'd personally prefer. As trustees, they exercise a fiduciary responsibility to the Association, and unlike members of a corporate board of direc-

tors, do not get paid for their service.

To meet its responsibilities, the Board frequently consults its attorneys, making sure that it exercises its powers in a legal and responsible manner. And it engages contractors, most important of which is the association management firm. For many years, we have utilized Signature Property Group, which even after a recent formal comparison with other such firms, was found to provide the most appropriate and affordable service for us.

One of Signature's strong points is its promotion of its site managers to seek professional certification. We're pleased to recognize that our manager, Matt Lubas, has earned his CMCA credential – Certified Manager of Community Associations. This required initial studies and experience, passing an examination, and continued annual studies. Administering a condominium can be a complex task!

Complementing Matt's talents, along with those of property administrator Laurie Rupp, your Board of Trustees represents an array of talents and experiences ranging from government administration to purchasing, computer systems, real estate, accounting, non-profit management and other professional skills. Trustees bring their abilities to a table at which all are respected and all valued.



KEEPING UP WITH THE TREES

When a weakened tree in the adjacent woods decided to fall against one of our buildings, the results weren't pretty, but the response was heartening. When this old tree succumbed, it hit one of our buildings, causing roof damage. The good news was that within an hour, our contractors were mobilized and on the scene: Sav A Tree brought in equipment to carefully remove the limbs, Rezkom acted to stabilize the roof, and our engineer VanNote Harvey responded to assure no structural damage had occurred.

We appreciate that our current group of contractors are responsive and efficient! But as we've mentioned before, the Society Hill property is just covered with hundreds and hundreds of trees, and they're an ongoing challenge to maintain. In consideration of your limited funds, the Association carefully practices a program of prioritizing tree thinning, removal and replacement. Actually, in many cases no replacement is needed, as adjacent trees, now more mature, fill in the space.



In mid-summer, we obtained competitive prices for dealing with some of the most acute dead or dying tree issues, including some stump removal. We expended about \$6,000 to:

- Remove 39 stumps in lawn areas, grind them out, and replace with topsoil and seed.
- Remove 21 stumps in mulch beds, grind to grade.
- Take down 22 dead or declining trees.

By seeking competitive bids, we saved about \$4,000! In late July, we developed a program to thin out limbs on our pear trees, to reduce the possibility of their falling in the face of snow loads or high winds. We did this a few years ago, with good results. We also included dealing with a few other problematic

Continues on page 4.



Continues on page 4.

Keeping up with the Trees...

from page 3



trees. Seeking competitive prices once again, we saved another \$3,000!

Did this work actually address every need? Do you see something you think needs attention? Let us know. If we don't seem to act immediately, it's an ongoing matter of balancing priorities of need for safety and appearance with the goal of maintaining reasonable maintenance fees.

PODS



Big or small, they aren't allowed. Neither is overnight parking of moving vehicles of any type.

After seeing a bunch of them appear on site last spring, some staying around for a while, and having received some complaints, the Board reviewed the matter with our attorney. We understand they may be helpful, but given the parking area issues here at Society Hill, as well as at many other similar communities, a regulation was enacted to prohibit them or similar types of transfer or storage devices.

They're typically big, compete for limited parking space, have advertising, present the potential for damage to Condominium common elements or resident property, and would be a difficult thing to try regulating. A major motivation in banning them was to avoid their interfering with neighbors' rights, plus traffic safety, limited parking space, and liability and community livability issues. Moving vans and U-hauls are fine if not left unattended on the property, nor any longer than the immediate move on the moving day – never overnight! Owners must advise all current or incoming tenants about this rule! A \$250 daily fine for violations will be assessed against the unit owner!

The full regulation on this subject, along with many others, may be viewed at our web site.

DEALING WITH ANTS

Ants can be helpful, aerating the soil and warding off termites. But when they get into your kitchen, you may draw the line. Except in the case of some major infestation, the Association can't send in our exterminator to deal with the odd ant. You can purchase ant traps in local stores, but we recommend a natural approach using boric acid which is quite effective.

Remember, the best way to deal with insect pests is to understand how they live. Ants live in colonies of thousands, with a queen buried deep down, providing a steady supply of new colony members. So the trick is to wipe out the queen, and you can't do this with quick-acting poisons that kill the workers in their tracks. Instead, place small bait stations with low-dose boric acid. The workers will take it back to the colony, and since it takes a few days to work, they'll keep bringing it in before realizing that it's going to clobber them! One such product suggested by our lawn consultant Mike McGrath may be found here: <http://www.gardensalive.com/product.asp?pn=8695&sid=140643>

By placing the boric acid in a special bait holder, the ants get to it and other beneficial insects won't. For large colonies, leave the bait in place for several months if necessary, checking it periodically to refill.

RUNNING A HOME BUSINESS

We've been asked about any rules governing operating a business in a unit.

The Association By-laws state: "All units shall be utilized for residential purposes only." The Association interprets that to allow certain "home office" functions, something not envisioned at the time of the Association's creation when the Internet was not in place as we know it today. Certainly, computer and research functions may be performed in a residential unit with no visual or practical impact on the community, and that seems consistent with contemporary "residential purposes." Such an operation, if it were to involve regular visitors, sales, pickups, deliveries, production or processing of physical items, etc. would be another matter.

By way of information, Lawrence Township has a requirement that home occupations register the use with the Zoning Office by submitting a request form available at <http://www.lawrencetwp.com/documents/HomeOccuApplic2010.doc>. While this is separate and apart from the Association's requirements, some of the limitations provided in the township application are instructive as to the municipal intention that said occupations not be intrusive on neighbors or impact the nature of the community. In addition to Association regulations, township zoning regulations are applicable.

The municipal regulation notwithstanding, any commercial functions within the condominium that involve building, creating, or preparing, or processing physical things for sale, and more importantly the regular transport of such items or raw materials in and out and any vehicular traffic into residential courts related thereto, or the regular coming and going of customers or recipients, constitutes a prohibited non-residential use.

RENTALS

Like most condominium associations, there are limitations in our Governing Documents about rentals. These are designed to protect the character of the community and protect the rights of its 440 owners. All leases must include an Association Rider to Lease that spells out responsibilities of tenants and their landlord regarding the Association. All leases and extensions must be filed with the Association, failure to do so triggers an automatic monthly fine.

Landlords are required to provide their tenants with the Association's rules. Landlords are responsible for any violations due to the actions of their tenants.

Rentals must be for a minimum of 180 days and not for hotel or transient occupancy. Portions of a unit may not be leased out, and subleases are prohibited. Cutting through any common walls so as to create larger units is not allowed, as this would create firewall problems, and affect the common elements, and lead to other impacts on the community.

The Governing Documents do not establish any limit on the total number of units that can be rented, although the Board of Trustees recognizes that an excessive number of rentals might change the nature of the community. Currently, about 28% of the units are rented. The percentage of rental units at some point could affect the availability of mortgages insured by the FHA or purchased by Fannie Mae.

DISPOSAL OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

Don't put electronic devices out at the curb for disposal, either separately or in your garbage bags – it's the law! Our garbage contractor is no longer allowed to pick up the following, which must be recycled at designated off-site locations:

Computers, laptops, hard drives, uninterrupted power supplies, ballasts, tapes, CDs, mice, monitors, cables, TVs, PDAs, handheld electronics, printers, stereos, VCRs, video equipment, scanners, radios, flat panel displays, video game players, copiers, FAX machines, phones, cell phones, answering machines, tape recorders, medical electronics, surveillance equipment, toasters, microwaves, DVD players.

That's quite a list, and we didn't make it up! THEY MAY NOT BE DROPPED AT THE ASSOCIATION RECYCLING FACILITY, which is not authorized to process such things. Persons attempting to do so are subject to a hefty fine. Rather, under government regulations, there are two places you can deliver them to:

Lawrence Township Public Works Facility at 240 Bakers Basin Road, currently every Wednesday between 7 AM and 3 PM. For assistance, visit the front office at the Public Works site. You should confirm times and obtain other information by calling (609) 587-1894.



Designated disposal events conducted by the Mercer County Improvement Authority. These are typically held at the Dempsey Fire Center on Bakers Basin Road, at the Sun Bank Center in Trenton, or other designated locations. Watch the newspaper for ads announcing these opportunities. For more information, call (609) 278-8086.

SAFE PARKING

We've noticed a few new cases of people parking their cars in the roadway instead of in marked parking spaces. This is a violation because it can hamper emergency or service vehicles, create traffic hazards, and is just plain inconsiderate of neighbors. Avoid getting a fine and incurring the animosity of your neighbors!



While parking in some courts may be a bit tight, there are typically free spaces available just a few feet away.

And, commercial vehicles are not allowed on the property except when performing authorized jobs, and never overnight.

POWER WASHING

Power washing of building siding should be well near completion when you read this. Continuing our recent practice, Starlyn Castro, our very capable property maintenance contract worker provided by Rezkom, performs this work as part of his regular duties, thus saving us money we otherwise would have had to pay to a separate contractor. Doing fifty buildings takes several months.



When the old spray machine gave up the ghost after years of being patched up, we were happy to invest in a new machine, that coupled with Starlyn's energies, does a fast and efficient job. No, we don't do windows, balconies or patios – that's a unit owner responsibility!

**TO ADVERTISE
CALL 609-655-2000
or Visit:**

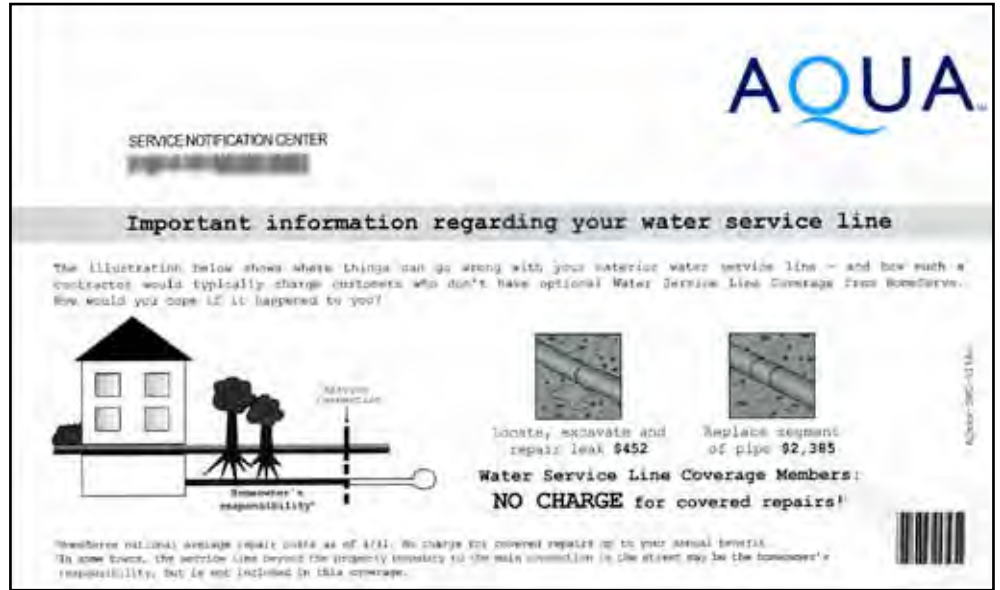
www.BrainerdCommunications.com

SAVE YOUR MONEY!

AQUA, our new water company, offers a water line maintenance service agreement, and our residents have received several mailings from their contractor offering this service. We've received a number of inquiries as to whether this is necessary.

Simply put, you aren't responsible for the outside water lines, the Association is. Our responsibility is to get water service to your unit. The piping inside the building leading to your water meter is normally the Association's responsibility too; the piping downstream from the meter within your unit is your responsibility, but that's not covered by this insurance. In fact, their fine print says that no multiple-dwellings are covered, and that's what we are!

To be sure, there may be the occasional legal fine point about responsibility, but we suggest you



throw these solicitations in the trash! You, of course, should check with your attorney

and/or insurance agent, if you have questions.

GARBAGE ALERT

There will be no garbage pickup on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 24th. The holiday recovery date is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, November 26th. Notification will be posted on the Association web site. Please put your secured garbage in heavy duty trash bags at the curb after 5:00am on the holiday recovery day. Please be prepared; garbage collection can begin as early as 7:00am. Any trash placed curbside after pick up, must be removed from the curb. Bulk items should be placed curbside with regular garbage on Thursdays, i.e. furniture, carpeting, etc. Carpeting must be cut into sections not wider than five (5) feet and tied with twine or tape. Arrangements can be made for collection of appliances and metal items by calling Lawrence Township Public Works at 587-1894.

ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFER

If you are planning on selling your home and you have signed up for electronic funds transfer (EFT) with Signature Property Group to pay the quarterly maintenance payments, please be sure to discontinue EFT at least 1 month before the scheduled closing. Due to strict banking laws, Signature Property Group cannot stop the transfer of funds after the bills have been sent. The current owner must send discontinuation in writing to the corporate office by the 10th of the month for the following month at the following address: Signature Property Group, Attn: Celeste Tortorici, 140 Sylvan Avenue, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS & PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE TIPS

- All outside spigots should be winterized by shutting off the inside valve and draining the remaining water from the outside, to prevent freezing during the cold winter months. The outside valve should be left open during the winter.
- In order to provide personal security and safety within the community, dryer vents should be inspected and cleaned on a regular basis.
- Checking all of your appliances and plumbing, i.e., hot water heater, washing machine, dishwasher, shower, toilet, etc. is a small price to pay compared to the damage that could be caused by a leaking appliance or a plumbing leak.
- The water supply to your washing machine should be turned off when not in use, and the washer hoses should be checked for signs of wear. Replace hoses with steel reinforced ones.
- Heating systems should be checked annually by a qualified serviceman. Replacing filters regularly will help to ensure the system runs efficiently.
- Smoke detectors should be tested, batteries changed, and fire extinguishers should be charged.
- A fire escape plan should be implemented and/or reviewed with all members of the household.

ANNUAL ELECTION MEETING

The Annual Election Meeting is scheduled for **Monday, October 17, 2011 at 6:00pm**. The purpose of the meeting is to elect two (2) homeowners to the Board of Trustees.

The Annual Election meeting package is scheduled to be mailed to all homeowners September 2011. Although we would like to have as many homeowners as possible attend the meeting, if you are unable to attend, please complete the Official Absentee Proxy Ballot by indicating your vote(s) and signing your name where required. **Please take a few minutes to review the biographies, complete the ballot and return it to the Association office no later than September 30, 2011. If time does not allow you to review the entire Annual Election package, please return your signed ballot to the Association office; a signed ballot without a vote still counts towards quorum.**

PLEASE COMPLETE AND MAIL THE OFFICIAL ABSENTEE PROXY BALLOT TODAY!

RESIDENT REMINDERS

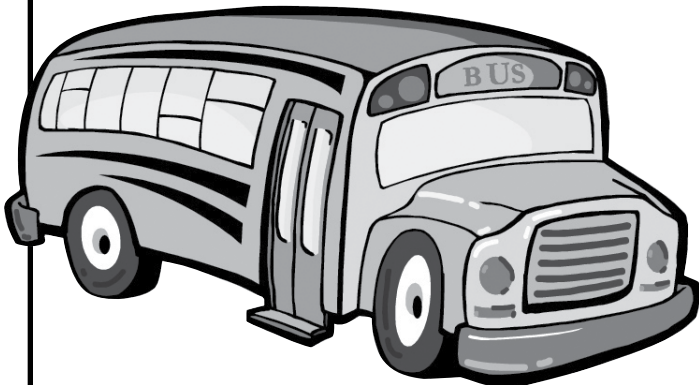
Pool Passes:

Please remember pool passes **DO NOT NEED TO BE RETURNED** to the Association office. New pool passes will be issued next spring.

Tennis Courts:

No skating, skateboarding or bicycle riding is allowed on the tennis courts. The courts are not intended to be used for anything but playing tennis.

SCHOOL IS BACK IN SESSION...



Please drive with extra caution through the community and remember to slow down when approaching the speed humps.

2011 BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

Society Hill at Lawrenceville Board Meetings are scheduled for the third Monday of every month, commencing at 6:00pm at the community clubhouse on Society Way. The remaining dates for the 2011 Board Meetings are as follows:

**September 19
October 17**

**November 21
December 19**

Business must be on the agenda to be considered, although there is a 15-20 minute period for general public participation. If you are unable to attend and are interested in learning more about Association issues, projects, financials, etc., please feel free to stop by the Association office to review the Minutes. We welcome your comments and urge you to attend the Board meetings as often as possible in order to support the decision making process.

IMPORTANT DATES AND SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

OCTOBER 2011

GARBAGE COLLECTION DATES:

Mondays & Thursdays, October 3, 6, 10, 13, 17, 20, 24, 27, 31

PEST CONTROL SERVICES:

Wednesdays, October 5, 12, 19, 26

BOARD MEETING:

Monday, October 17, at 6:00 p.m. located in the Association Clubhouse

NOVEMBER 2011

GARBAGE COLLECTION DATES:

Mondays & Thursdays November 3, 7, 10, 14, 17, 21, 28

NO GARBAGE COLLECTION:

Thursday, November 24, 2011 pick up date Saturday, November 26, 2011

OFFICE CLOSED:

Thursday, November 24, and Friday, November 25, 2011 in Observance of Thanksgiving

PEST CONTROL SERVICES:

Wednesdays, November 2, 9, 16, 23

BOARD MEETING:

Monday, November 21, at 6:00 p.m. located in the Association Clubhouse

DECEMBER 2011

GARBAGE COLLECTION DATES:

Mondays & Thursdays December 1, 5, 8, 12, 15, 19, 22, 26, 29

PEST CONTROL SERVICES:

Wednesdays, December 7, 14, 21, 28

OFFICE CLOSED:

Monday, December 26, in Observance of Christmas Day

BOARD MEETING:

Monday, December 19, at 6:00 p.m. located in the Association Clubhouse