

**MEADOWS AT SHAWNEE HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, INC.
P.O. BOX 475, MILFORD, DE 19963**

**SIXTEENTH ANNUAL COMMUNITY MEETING
June 19, 2024 – 7:00 PM
Milford Police Department, 401 NE Front Street, Milford, DE**

Board Member Attendees: Mike Boyle, Robert Sheats, Dan Marabello, Linda Steiner, Tom Chilton, Dave Markowitz, Bob Shinholt, and Taylor Shunk

OPENING REMARKS:

Board President, Mike Boyle, opened the meeting promptly at 7:00 P.M. and thanked all homeowners that were present for attending this year's annual meeting. **He announced that a quorum had been achieved with 83 lots represented by homeowners in attendance and by proxy. The 55-lot requirement (30%) was met as stipulated in the By-Laws and the meeting can proceed.**

President Boyle also thanked the Milford Police Department for making the Community Room available for our 2024 Annual HOA meeting. The room was designed to accommodate a variety of community gatherings like this meeting, conferences for state and local government use, and educational programs. The use of the room is at no cost to residents.

Tonight, we will be electing eight (8) homeowners to serve on the HOA's Board of Directors for a one-year term of office and we will also vote on the HOA's Fiscal Year 2025 operating budget. There will be presentations from the HOA President, the Treasurer, plus the Chairpersons from the Architectural, Grounds, and Neighborhood Watch Committees. There will also be a Question & Answer period.

HOA PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

- President Boyle reported that during the HOA's current Fiscal Year which ends on June 30, 2024, the Board of Directors has dealt with many matters affecting the normal operation of the association challenging the Board to stay within the FY-2024's operating budget. The HOA has faced operational constraints due to increased costs for contracted services and supplies in its daily activities. To cut the HOA's operational costs, the Board has made a few changes: 1) We have ceased printing and mailing the Spring and Fall Newsletters and opted instead to publish the Newsletters online on the HOA website; 2) We have entered into multi-year contracts for routine grounds and retention ponds maintenance services; and 3) refurbished the landscaping of the community's front entrance to greatly reduce maintenance costs.

- Because our overall retention pond maintenance program has been successful, we are able to defer a major rip-rap replacement of the large pond for at least another year avoiding up to an estimated \$20,000 expenditure. The Sussex County Conservation District comes once a year to inspect the ponds and the HOA will continue to follow their recommendations to guide our pond maintenance plan.

- The Meadows at Shawnee Homeowners Association's financial posture is sound and Fiscal Year 2024 which ends on June 30, 2024 will end on budget, but with no excess carry over.

- There will be no increase to our current annual assessment rate of \$160.00 for Fiscal Year 2025 which begins on July 1, 2024. However, our long-range analysis of anticipated future operating expenses for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027 most likely will necessitate annual increases. Our HOA Treasurer, Dan Marabello, will provide an explanation of our current financial status and the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2025.

- Taylor Shunk, the HOA Grounds Committee Chairperson, will address the status of the HOA's grounds maintenance and the need for homeowner participation. Taylor will also provide an update on the HOA's Newsletter publications in her report.

- We will also be hearing from Tom Chilton, the Architectural Committee Chairperson and Dave Markowitz, the Neighborhood Watch Committee Chair.

- This year, Ellen Miller resigned from our HOA Board of Directors. Ellen was a member of the Board since it was organized and her presence and dedicated service to the community was always welcome. Additionally, Dave Markowitz, who was appointed to complete Ellen's term of office is not seeking reelection to the Board, but will continue to help supervise the Neighborhood Watch.

- We will vote to elect the HOA Board of Directors for one-year terms. You will see a new name on the printed ballot for election to the Board of Directors -- Jacob Feist. Jacob and his wife, Elizabeth, have been living in the Meadows at Shawnee for about 2 years and wish to be involved in our community's activities. In addition to those names on the printed ballot, any homeowner wishing to place their name on the ballot for consideration for election to the Board, will be given the opportunity to address the membership.

- On a serious matter of increasing importance, I have routinely expressed a strong desire to see more homeowners volunteer to become engaged in the operation of the HOA. Some suggestions would be considering a run for a seat on the Board of Directors, participating in our bi-annual cleanups, helping to maintain the common grounds including the front entrance, or joining the Neighborhood Watch. Our current ability to initiate more HOA activities is limited by a lack of resident involvement. You don't have to be on the Board of Directors to help organize events and activities for the community.

- If there comes a time when not enough homeowners step up to assume a role in managing the HOA, the impact on its functioning would be major. HOA's do not run themselves and they require homeowner participation, commitment, and ideally, experience. If anyone is considering becoming a member of the Board of Directors in the future, the Board offers you an opportunity to attend one of our scheduled Board of Directors' meetings to gain an understanding of how the HOA operates, to learn about the governing documents and the state of Delaware statutes (**Title 25, Chapter 81**) that provide guidance and set the rules for governing common interest communities like HOAs.

- The Neighborhood Watch Committee is comprised of residents who periodically patrol the community on a daily basis looking for unusual activities and reporting them to the police. Many of the volunteers on the Committee have been serving for ten (10) or more years and may soon be resigning. This is now a looming problem and there will be a critical need for new members to join the Neighborhood Watch. Residents interested in joining will receive training from the community or the Milford Police Department, if necessary. Members do not get into confrontational situations, but serve only as "eyes" for the police, especially after dark.

Simply put, if residents do not step up to get involved in HOA's activities, there will come a time when the Meadows at Shawnee will begin to slide from the best residential community in Milford to one that has seen better days. Ride around Milford and take a hard look at other existing HOA communities and compare their appearance to ours to better understand the benefit of a fully functioning and active HOA, versus one with little or no active HOA. This is a matter of working to ensure your investment in your house is an investment with rising market value and positive returns, rather than a losing investment with stagnant and declining house values.

- Mold, mildew and algae growing on the siding of houses is a constant issue we face. It not only looks bad, but could detract from neighborhood values. Please read the insert "Mold on Vinyl Siding" that was mailed with the Annual Meeting packet and view references mentioned in the article.

- There have been recent incidents in the community involving dogs that were running loose or not properly leashed. The dogs displayed very aggressive behavior and in one recent incident, bit another resident. The state law regarding animal control can be found in the Delaware State Code Title 16 Chapter 30f. Animal Welfare §3048F, Dogs running at large. The City of Milford law can be found in the Municipal Code, Chapter 79, §79-4 – Leash required; exceptions - which reads, in part, as follows: "No animal shall be permitted in or upon any public street, sidewalk, alley, park, parkway or other public place in the city ... unless said animal is on a leash and is under the complete control of the person owning or, at the time, in possession of said animal."

- The recent increase in overnight street parking and the parking of prohibited vehicles on lots by residents has led the Board of Directors to reassess the objectives behind the parking and prohibited vehicle limitations as specified in **Section 7** of the MAS's Declaration of Restrictions.

- The Meadows at Shawnee Homeowners Association is a common interest community created under Delaware Code **Title 25, Chapter 81**, Delaware Uniform Common Interest Ownership Act. The authority granted to, and the limitations stated in this act, apply to all common interest communities.

- The Board has reviewed **Title 25, Chapter 81** and asked the opinions of the Milford City Clerk, the City Solicitor, the Carlisle Fire Chief and the HOA's attorney. Based upon their responses, the HOA Board of Directors again reaffirms its position that the limitations contained in **Article VI, Section 7** of the Meadows at Shawnee Declaration of Restrictions regarding parking or maintaining prohibited vehicles on any lot or driveway remains in effect.

- A detailed memo will shortly be posted on the HOA Website and sent with future initial violation notifications, after a review by the HOA's attorney.

- We will now proceed with the next item on tonight's agenda, the nomination of homeowners seeking a seat on the Board of Directors.

Nominations from the Floor and Election of Board of Directors

President Boyle referred all members to the packet given to them at the door which included a ballot sheet with the names of eight (8) homeowners running for a seat on the Board. He asked if any members in the audience would like to add their name to the Ballot as a nominee, but there were no nominations from the floor. At this time, homeowner Mike Zaremba made a motion that the eight (8) people on the ballot be elected to the Board of Directors and it was seconded by homeowner, William O'Shea. There was a majority of hands in favor of the motion and none were opposed.

The following homeowners were elected to the Board of Directors for Fiscal Year 2025:

Michael Boyle, Thomas Chilton, Jacob Feist, Dan Marabello, Bob Sheats, Bob Shinholt, Taylor Shunk and Linda Steiner.

President Boyle then turned over the podium to Treasurer, Dan Marabello, to give his financial report.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Dan Marabello referred all members to the financial report included in the annual meeting packet. The total cash, including the checking account and CD's, projected as of June 30, 2024, is \$110,000.00. All funds are secured by a Dishonesty Bond for \$100,000.00. Total accounts receivable due from homeowners is \$400.00.

Dan then reported on the actual income and expenses for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2024 as follows:

FY2024 ACTUAL INCOME

The total assessment fee income collected this fiscal year was \$29,280.00 which represents \$160 collected from 183 lots. The interest earned from money in reserves in the CD's was \$3,407 and delinquency fees in the sum of \$214 were collected this past year. **Total income: \$32,901.00.**

FY2024 ACTUAL EXPENSES

Grounds maintenance and tree removal - \$10,874; Front entrance landscaping - \$4,820; retention ponds maintenance - \$11,548; Insurance - \$3,214; Office and postage - \$806; annual meeting expense - \$600; Miscellaneous general administration - \$383; Newsletter - \$122; Neighborhood Watch - \$150; Federal tax and DE Franchise tax - \$1,017; Reserve for future pond maintenance expenses – earned interest income of \$2,415. **Total Expenses: \$35,949.00.** The amount of income under expenses is <\$3,048>. The underage allocated to unrestricted net assets \$3,048.

Dan then reported on the proposed budget for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2025 as follows:

FY2025 PROPOSED INCOME

Homeowner assessment fees for FY2025 - 183 lots x \$160 per year = \$29,280; retention pond reserve interest income - \$3,000; delinquency fees - \$300. **Total income - \$32,580.00.**

FY2025 PROPOSED EXPENSES

Grounds maintenance and tree removal - \$11,250; front entrance landscaping - \$500; Retention ponds maintenance - \$3,720; Insurance - \$3,400; Office and postage - \$850; Annual meeting expense - \$600; Miscellaneous general administration - \$800; Newsletter - \$165; Neighborhood watch expense - \$150; Professional fees - \$500; Contingency - \$1,000; Federal tax and DE Franchise Tax - \$895; Reserve for future ponds maintenance - \$8,750; (annual allocation of \$6,650 plus earned interest of \$2,100). **Total expenses - \$32,580.00.**

A homeowner from Meadow Lark Drive commented that there should be at least \$110,000 of insurance to cover the amount of the total cash held by the HOA.

Another homeowner from East Bullrush Drive asked why \$600 was being budgeted as an expense for the Annual Meeting. Dan explained that the \$600 covers the cost of paper and printing of the annual meeting documents plus the cost of postage for the mailing to all homeowners. Also, refreshments are purchased for the meeting.

A homeowner from West Bullrush Drive asked Dan if there were any plans for a signal light to be installed at the front entrance due to the increased traffic flow. Dan said that there is a highway improvement plan and a study in progress for a traffic circle on Business 1. He will look into this and get back to the homeowner.

Another homeowner from Big Pond Drive commented about the cars that come speeding off the ramp from Route 1. He suggested that the Meadows at Shawnee, Shawnee Acres, and the new Southern Delaware Golf Course should petition for a traffic light to be installed on Rehoboth Boulevard to slow cars down.

At this time, all homeowners in the audience were asked to fill out the green ballot forms in their packets and cast their votes for the approval of the proposed budget of **\$32,580.00** for Fiscal Year 2025 and the annual assessment of **\$160.00** per lot. The ballots were tallied and the total count was 50 “YES” votes approving the budget and 4 “NO” votes. Letters will be sent to all 183 lot owners in the Meadows at Shawnee by the end of June notifying them that the annual assessment of **\$160.00** will be due by **July 31, 2024.**

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Architectural Committee

Tom Chilton reported that he has served as the Architectural Committee Chairperson for the past five (5) years, during which time approximately 80 architectural requests have been reviewed and approved. He has had the pleasure of working with the following five (5) members of the

committee who, along with himself, are responsible for the review of all architectural requests: Mike Boyle, Kent Del Rossi, Robert Sheats, Robert Rodenberg and Robert Shinholt. Tom thanked all and recognized them for their work. He also was pleased to announce that a new member from the community has joined the committee -- Elizabeth Cavallaro-Feist.

Tom explained what the Architectural Committee does. The committee provides advice to the Board of Directors concerning the compatibility and compliance of any Architectural Request form submitted by a homeowner to make modification, on any lot, subject to the Declaration of Restrictive Covenants. The committee is charged to base all of its recommendations upon a just and equitable application of the HOA's restrictions.

Tom explained the preparation of an Architectural Request. Applicants should get all their information together such as the name of project, architectural drawings, if necessary, colors, pictures, and a plot plan showing the location of the project. The By-Laws and Restrictions should be reviewed to make sure the project meets those restrictions. The application can be submitted by either completing it online and e-mailing it directly to Tom or by printing out the application, filling it out, and hand delivering it to his home at 38 Meadow Lark Drive. It can also be mailed to the HOA but that will slow down the process. If applications are properly completed with no additional information needed, the turnaround time for approval or disapproval should only take 2 to 3 days. Architectural approvals should be saved by homeowners and kept with their important house papers.

The MAS website includes not only the HOA Architectural Request Form but also the City of Milford Codes and Permit Application forms. Completing this online will make the process much smoother and save a lot of time. Please remember that in most instances where a City of Milford permit is required, the city will require an approval letter from the HOA.

Grounds Committee

Chairwoman Taylor Shunk reported that the landscaping at the front entrance is finally completed. Since the river rocks were added to the two (2) beds and center island, there is less maintenance and watering needed now. There is still periodic weeding and trimming to be done. Volunteers are always needed and welcomed to help with the weeding during the Spring, Summer and Fall. Taylor gave special thanks to Tom Chilton and Dan Marabello for always being so helpful at the front entrance.

The two ponds are looking very good due to the monthly maintenance by Coastal Tributaries, LLC. After the big storm that happened this past March, Armstrong's Lawn Service was hired to clean up all the debris that had covered the rocks and drainage grates in the Little Pond. The Big Pond will need work eventually but that date is to be determined.

The Spring Cleanup that was held on Saturday, April 6, 2024, was successful and there were a few new volunteers that joined in the event with the Grounds Committee members.

On April 1, 2024, the Spring 2024 Newsletter was posted on the HOA website for the first time. In the past, Newsletters were mailed to all homeowners. Taylor will be working on the Fall

Newsletter in September and any residents who would like to add topics or pictures to the publication can email her at: taylorshunk@gmail.com.

Taylor has been searching for a new ice cream truck vendor to come into the development during the summer months. Unfortunately, she has not been able to find a vendor that does not charge a fee.

Neighborhood Watch Committee

Chairman Dave Markowitz asked all homeowners in the audience if they knew the Milford Police Department's phone number. He encouraged everyone to have the number in their phone and readily available at home. The general phone number for the Milford Police is **302-422-8081** and for emergencies, residents should call **911**.

Dave reported that the Neighborhood Watch is in need of more volunteers and interested residents can add their name on the sign-up sheets in the lobby. Volunteers can patrol one day or night out of every four weeks and "Neighborhood Watch" magnetic signs are provided to post on the cars. Interested residents can also call Dave at 302-422-8003 for more information and he can sign you up. During the months of May and June, there was an increase in unlocked cars being entered. Residents are encouraged to lock their cars at all times during the day and night when they are parked in the driveway.

OTHER BUSINESS: Q & A and Comments from Homeowners in the Audience:

One homeowner complained about a neighbor's dogs and asked if a privacy fence could be installed in the rear of their property. Architectural Committee Chairman, Tom Chilton, responded that 6-foot privacy fences in the rear yard are only permitted on those properties that back up to Rehoboth Boulevard or Kirby Road.

Another homeowner asked if they could have an ice cream truck vendor come into the community in the Fall and park on Kirby Road. Mike suggested that the owner check with Taylor.

A homeowner asked if the HOA had heard anything about the Sussex County assessment. A resident in the audience replied that homeowners should be getting letters in September from Tyler Technologies.

After the "Question & Answer" session was finished, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

A transition meeting with the newly elected Board Members immediately followed at the end of the annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:

Linda Steiner, Board Secretary