



Autumn Lakes Gazette

Established 9/85

November

XXXVII No 6

Board of Directors

Shah Smith 314-960-6620 *President*
Laura Farkas 314-770-9442 *Vice President*
Jennifer Morgan 314-344-2928 *Secretary*
Richard Ornberg 817-357-2633 *Trustee*
Laura Farkas 314-770-9442 *Gazette editor*

Social Committee Chair: *Shah Smith*

Architecture committee: *Richard Ornberg, Shah Smith*

Landscaping committee: *Laura Farkas, Andrea Crouch, Retta Morcom, Cheryl Eggert*

AMC Management

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Autumn Lakes Meeting

11/17/2021



Association Meeting: The November Association meeting was held in person at the Clubhouse. Dick Ornberg was on vacation. All other trustees and Norm Rhea, city councilman, were present.

Board Reports

Change of Management Company: Beginning on January 1, 2022, the management of Autumn Lakes will move from AMC Management to Smith Management Group (SMG). A letter from the Board was sent out earlier in the week to highlight why the change is being made and how this new approach will best serve Autumn Lakes. Owners will receive a letter from SMG in December introducing some of the changes in communication as well as where to send Association fees for 2022.

Some of the changes SMG brings include online tracking of work orders for all residents, and moving the maintenance of the lakes, pool and landscaping to licensed professional vendors. The Board also took a look at the current work order system to determine how the current groundsmen are spending their time and to evaluate the need to have two full time workers. With the structure of the new management company's maintenance program, it was determined that Autumn Lakes would move to a part-time worker on property three times a week, with many work orders being handled by the SMG Maintenance/Repair team. The Board will continue to re-evaluate work orders to determine if more or less onsite assistance is needed.

The contract is a one year contract and the board will be evaluating how things are going during this year. A decision can be made in the first quarter if we want to lock in the rate for the next three years.

Budget: The Board is currently finalizing the 2022 budget. We're anticipating a 10% increase due to costs we have little control over, regardless of which management company we use:

- American Water is forecasting a \$22,000 increase
- Metropolitan Sewer District is increasing by \$4,000
- The Master Policy for the Autumn Lakes Association and Condominiums is going to increase by \$24,000. For now, we are keeping the AMC negotiated insurance policy.

The budget also includes a \$15,000 increase in painting and siding repairs, a \$5,000 increase for tree removal/replacement and approximately a \$17,000 increase for fertilization and lawn treatments to improve the lawn condition. A significant decrease in expenses was achieved by eliminating the use of two full time onsite

groundsmen. Shah pointed out that Autumn Lakes has one of the lowest condo fees in the area. The Board has always worked to meet expenses and keep up with maintenance and improvements with the lowest fees possible.

Coupon & Online Payment of Fees: Paper/labor costs are increasing everywhere. To decrease costs, we are encouraging owners to use electronic bill pay or auto pay through their banks. Online payment changes need to be made in December to make sure your January payment is received correctly. Those who choose to continue to use coupon books will need to request them from SMG. The cost for coupon books will be billed to the homeowner. All of the payment information will be in the Welcome Package along with the 2022 Budget and HOA fee schedule.

Insurance Deductible Change: In addition to the increased cost for insurance, the insurance deductible for the Association will be raised from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Unit owners should be talking with their personal insurance brokers about the change in coverage. Copies of the Certificate of Insurance for this policy are available online on the Autumn Lakes' website at <http://www.autumnlakesstl.com/> and will be in the SMG Welcome packet.

AT&T Fiber Optic Installation – Laura spoke to the construction team and was informed that the installation for the AT&T final fiber optic cabling is now in progress. The construction company hopes to wrap up the project by the end of the month. Once they complete their work, AT&T will have a few steps to complete and then they'll reach out to residents to see who might be interested in their new services.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Landscaping - Laura reported that the committee performed several walk arounds throughout the community common grounds to review the condition of the trees and make a list of which need to be trimmed or removed. They will also determine where trees need to be replaced in front of condos and which of the Maryland Heights' trees should be replaced.

The committee will be working with SMG to review the new bids for lawn care and make recommendations for tree replacements. The committee will also look at some of the builder bushes, as well as the perennial and annual plantings at the front of the neighborhood.

Architectural – Shah reminded owners that the Autumn Lakes Architectural Committee can provide recommendations on contractors or projects if owners have questions. All exterior work must be approved by the committee including decks, patios, windows, doors, storm doors, garage doors, exterior lighting, and awnings. Decks can now be composite, and railing can be squared aluminum posts. Front doors can now have a single, decorative window pane, and colors of the door need to match one of the approved choices.

Social Committee – There are no social activities planned for the rest of 2021, but the Social Committee is working on plans for 2022. If you or anyone you know would like to volunteer on the Social committee, please contact Shah Smith.

MANAGEMENT REPORT by Keith McCracken:

Autumn Lakes Association, as of 10/31/2021, was \$783 over budget in income and \$15,759 under budget in expenses. Autumn Lakes Condominiums, as of 10/31/2021, was \$8,160 over budget on income and \$46,801 under budget on expenses.

Our maintenance staff has been busy cleaning gutters, trimming trees, removing and storing the lake fountains and completing work orders. Dave is coordinating the fall gutter cleaning with the leaf clean-up in November.

We had four buildings painted this year:

12151-12161 Autumn Lakes Drive

All 3 buildings on Autumn Lakes Court

10 asphalt driveways were replaced this year. These were identified in our 2020 fall inspection. Two newly paved parking lots on Autumn Trace Drive were sealed on October 7.

We completed replacement of 6 sidewalks, 2 concrete driveways and 1 porch which were identified in our 2020 inspection.

We have Masonite siding in stock for repairs. The painter replaces siding as needed on the buildings when painted. All other repairs are being handled via work orders which he is still working on.

Our first fall leaf clean-up was rescheduled for the week of November 22. The second clean-up will be scheduled later (pending rate of the leaf fall). The 18 single family houses may place leaves at the curb on Monday of these weeks for pick-up.

Owners are reminded that trash totes are not to be stored outside. Totes may be placed at the curb after 5 pm the day before trash service day and should be returned to the garage as soon as possible the day of pick-up. Yard waste is picked up on Mondays. Trash and recycling service is on Tuesday.

Residents are allowed to put out two large bulk items on the last trash pick-up day of the month (last Tuesday of the month) for free. For other bulk items, please contact Republic Services to arrange for pick up for a fee. Large items for bulk pick-up should not be placed at the curb until arrangements have been made with Republic Waste. Once arrangements have been made, items should not be placed at the curb until the day of pick-up.

Decks, patios, and porches are not to be used for general storage. Only well maintained furniture, planters and barbecue grills are allowed on patios or decks.

Check with the City of Maryland Heights to be sure your contractor has all required permits for any work being done on your unit. Contact the management company to obtain Board approval prior to replacing or modifying decks, windows, doors, storm doors, awnings, garage doors, exterior lighting or patios. Permits must be displayed in/on the front window or door.

Autumn Lakes has an RV Lot for residents. Spaces are limited and must be reserved through the Management office. Contact the management company if you have an interest in reserving a space. Trailers, boats and RV's are not to be stored in the driveways or on the street.

As always please call 314-291-1450 if you have a work request, questions or concerns or email me at keith@amcassociation.com **through the end of December.**

Illegal or Suspicious Activities: Have a noise complaint? Or have you seen illegal or suspicious activity? Please note, residents should **contact the Maryland Heights Police FIRST** for concerns about noise complaints, illegal or suspicious activities or other legal problems. **You can let the trustees know after the fact.** If the police file a report, let the management company know. After the second police report, the management company will fine the offenders. Fines will be assessed whenever there is a police report after the first one. Board can't really handle legal offenses so you need to contact the police when they occur.

NextDoor App: Just a reminder that the NextDoor App is a great tool to hear about what's going on around us, but is not the official communication of the management company or the Board. Please contact the management company office if you have repairs that need to be made or concerns.

Residents Questions & Comments

Question: Is there a reason the board made the decision to change management companies without first notifying owners?

Answer: Within the scope of the indentures, the Board is elected to make decisions for owners on contracts and budgets. While some associations' indentures require owner approval for management company changes or even fee increases, that is not how Autumn Lakes' indentures are written. The notice of the change of management company may have seemed like short notice to owners, however the full board unanimously agreed in early August to begin reviewing possibilities. During the next two months, one board member resigned, but the remainder did their due diligence in talking to several management companies prior to making the decision in late September. With access to all of the facts, the Board was solely responsible for making the decision per our indentures. There is not typically a long-term public discussion during this decision-making time to prevent a decrease of service from the current company. The announcement letter went out from the board as soon as an estimate about the 2022 budget could be determined. The final budget information and HOA fee changes have always been and will continue to be sent to owners in early December.

Comment: An owner commented that in 30 years as an owner in Autumn Lakes they had only good experiences working with AMC.

Question: An owner was concerned about the part-time groundsman working alone on work orders as some projects require two person teams for safety.

Answer: The new property management company, SMG, has a group of maintenance staff so for those projects which require more than one person, they would have multiple people work on projects together. SMG is aware of the size and scope of our neighborhood and will plan accordingly.

Question: An owner expressed concern about the 10% increase and how this was being assessed against the square footage of the unit. The owner also expressed concern that they rarely use the amenities in Autumn Lakes.

Answer: As noted during the reports, the significant budget increase would have occurred, regardless of which management company was selected for 2022. How assessments are assigned was part of how the community was established in their indentures with St Louis County. The board is considering looking into re-balancing fee assessment against the square footage of the unit. Management of 44+ acres of common grounds, the pool, clubhouse, sport courts, lakes and parking lots are reflected in the Autumn Lakes HOA fees. Whether an owner uses these amenities or not, they contribute to the desirability and property values of Autumn Lakes.

Comment: Several owners thanked AMC for their work over the years.

Question: How are owners' voices heard when it comes to issues?

Answer: Owners can call the management company, call anyone on the Board, and/or attend Association meetings. Most importantly, all owners in good standing are invited to run for trustee (elections are held in May). If you're interested in learning more about becoming a trustee, please contact one of the trustees for more information.

Question: Who decides which landscaping company is selected?

Answer: The Board has final approval on contracts. With the new management company, there will be more transparency in contracting as there will be input from the Landscaping Committee, and Board members will discuss contract bids during board meetings.

Question: Will residents need new keys for the swimming pool this year?

Answer: No, residents will not need to get new pool keys this year. The Board and SMG will continue with the process of turning on keys during the season. New residents can arrange for keys with SMG or Shah Smith in the spring. Keys are always available at the May Association meeting.

Question: Is everyone checked when entering the pool area? Is the pickleball area monitored the same way? Several owners expressed that they thought that there are a lot of non-residents using the court and parking is becoming a problem.

Answer: All owners are required to fill out an annual Owner Information form in order to determine who should have access to the clubhouse, pool and tennis court/pickleball courts. Due to past problems with some owners 'sharing' their pool access cards, several years ago pool monitors were engaged to check that all pool users were legal residents in good standing, following the guest rules. This has worked very well. When there are questions about who is listed as a resident on the form, Shah Smith follows up with owners to insure those listed over 18 are in fact legal residents. There are actually quite a few every year who have listed non-residents on the form (i.e grandchildren, adult children who visit occasionally, etc.). Each unit is allowed to have up to six guests at the pool as long as they are accompanied by a legal resident. This is more than most condo associations, but has proved manageable. Use of the pool by clubhouse rentals is limited to the later hours in order to not adversely impact other pool users.

Unlike the pool, the pickleball/tennis court uses a padlock system. An owner can obtain a key by calling the office. The court was not heavily used until the advent of pickleball. We do not have a way to monitor if a legal resident is present when a group is using the tennis court/pickleball court. However, with the advent of pickleball, larger groups have become a thing. Just adding a card system like we have on the pool was determined to be very expensive. We will be looking into other ways of monitoring access. Autumn Lakes has no control over parking on Autumn Shores. No more parking restrictions can be added. However, Maryland Heights has been using a speed monitor device that will be moved around to various points to remind residents to slow down.

Question: If we have questions about landscaping, who do we contact?

Answer: You can email your question to the website or to the office, or contact the Landscaping chair, Laura Farkas, or any member of the committee.

Question: Was there supposed to be another fountain installed in the third lake this year?

Answer: No, the much smaller third lake had a new bubbler system installed to help maintain the lake's health.

Question: An owner expressed concern about the erosion in a specific area of the common grounds near his unit. Are there any plans to re-level the area and install a retaining wall?

Answer: The Landscaping Committee is trying to identify areas of erosion and will look at this area.

Question: Will the tree stumps be removed after Maryland Heights and Autumn Lakes cut down trees?

Answer: Yes, the plan is to remove those tree stumps. Typically, the tree stumps are ground down a few weeks after a tree has been removed. Both Maryland Heights and Autumn Lakes will be working to do this over the next few months.

Question: An owner inherited bamboo and other plantings that a previous owner installed without approval. Whose responsibility is it to take care of these items? How does a new owner find out?

Answer: When it comes to landscaping, if the items were installed by the Association, or the builder then the Association takes care of them. If the plantings were installed by a past or current owner, then future owners are responsible for the care of those items. This is why it is important to go through the Landscaping committee so they can ensure that the plantings are non-invasive and will not cause issues in the future. The Property Management company does maintain a list of approved owner changes. If you have any questions on whether or not the plantings are the owner's responsibility, please call them.

Question: Are there consequences if a owner doesn't get committee approval on a project?

Answer: Yes, there are consequences imposed by the Board. Depending on the project and how big of a violation/hazard the project poses, the owner could receive a letter, a fine or be told that the project must be removed/replaced. Maryland Heights code enforcement may impose their own consequences.

Thank You!

Thank You, AMC Management

The Board and residents wish to thank Keith, Dave, Lois, Joel and everyone at AMC for their support and work with Autumn Lakes over the past 20+ years in managing our property.

A big *Thank You* to Christine Melton for all her work on the Autumn Lakes Gazette since May 2015. Christine has decided to step down at this time. We wish her well with her other pursuits.

Dick and Judy Ornberg would like to thank those who attended and helped with the celebration of life party for their daughter Thea.

Holiday Trash Pick Up – There are no anticipated changes in our trash pickup schedule with the holiday season. Christmas tree pick up will be the first January Monday: 1/3/2022.

If you have any questions about trash pickup, please see the Republic Services website at: www.republicservices.com.

Utility Tax Rebates for Seniors:

If you didn't get to Maryland Heights yet to submit your utility taxes for a refund, you need to email Jennifer at jvandyke@marylandheights.com to make an appointment.

Qualifying residents (62+) should bring all their utility bills (gas, and electric) for AL) and one phone bill (landline or cellular) dated November 1, 2020-October 18, 2021.

The next Autumn Lakes Association meeting is scheduled for 1/19/22 at 7 pm.



**May you enjoy the Peace
and Joy of the season.**