

**HICKORY CLUSTER ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**November 20, 2024, MEETING MINUTES**  
Virtual (Board hosted Zoom)

FINAL

**DIRECTORS PRESENT:** Jennifer Rekas, Silvia Merrill, Kathryn Fay, Fred Swartzendruber, Stan Peabody, Daniel Cassidy

**DIRECTORS ABSENT:** Lauri Swift

**TWC STAFF:** N/A

**I. PROCEDURAL ITEMS**

- **CALL TO ORDER:** President Silvia Merrill called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM and established that a quorum of the Board was present.
- **OPENING REMARKS:** None
- **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The Board approved HCA October 2024 Meeting minutes.

**II. MEMBER FORUM**

**11508 Maple Ridge** - Area behind Block 1 - when will it be cleaned up? The remaining stalks are possibly a hazard for people walking around in them. Observed the Green Earth vendor throwing branches into the Common Area instead of throwing them away.

**11504 Maple Ridge** - If it's too difficult to remove the stubs - may need to put up some no trespassing signs.

**11557 Maple Ridge** - Tree debris - was not part of the original design for the neighborhood. It does not look good.

**IV. FINANCIAL REPORT REVIEW**

Board accepted financial report from October.

**V. ACTION ITEMS**

NEW BUSINESS

- **Survey on Member Communication Platform**  
**DECISION:** Use WhatsApp for fast communications, nextdoor platform for longer discussions where history is maintained. Monitor for usage and discontinue what is not being used.  
**ACTION:** Rekas - **configure the platforms for member use, send announcements, add members who self-select to join.**

IN PROGRESS BUSINESS

- **Board reviewed FY25 proposed annual budget**  
Need budget approved by the end of the month.  
Board decided to keep the power washing event at twice a year.  
Concern about lack of overarching landscape/ecological design for the cluster - what's the best way to focus on this medium term? Could we start "re-wilding" some aspects of the neighborhood, to reduce the cost/effort of maintenance?

**Questions for TCA:**

- How much of the assessment goes into reserves vs the other budget line items?

**DECISION:** Accepted the proposed budget for 2025.

**ACTION:** Fred Swartzendruber - Reach out to local county, etc. resources for re-wilding recommendations.

- **HVAC Standards**

Board discussed HVAC standards DRB decision.

**DECISION:** Approved updated HVAC standards to include sound dampening recommendation (item "I" in the HVAC standards).

- **POST-BAMBOO REMOVAL CLEANUP**

Patch #2 removal completed in October.

**DECISION:** Board approved Growing Earth proposal to cleanup the cleared area behind Block 1

**ACTION:** TWC - reach out to TriPoint to see what they will be planting along the property border? What is the woodchip path on the HCA common area?

- **Landscaping in Hickory Cluster**

List of landscaping needs captured. Board reviewed list.

- **APRON CONCRETE GRINDING - Fay/Peabody**

This project is next priority after getting tree removal settled. Areas with ½" are of concern.

**ACTION:** When effort re-engages, Peabody to work with Fay on project.

- **Collections of Assessments - NOT DISCUSSED**

**DECISION:** Send draft policy back to TWC that the default acceleration policy is in line with the coupon books. If not, work with legal counsel to get them aligned. If the coupon book is not in order (for legal or etc. reasons), please advise the board.

**ACTION:** Kathryn - Work with TWC to get this in order.

- **Landscaping Vendor Discussion**

Dissatisfaction about handling of leaf blowing and disposal in particular from current landscaping vendor.

**ACTION:** Swartzendruber to engage landscaping committee to make the scope and sequence, find alternatives for more environmentally friendly or native plants, esp. ones that absorb moisture/help with erosion.

**ACTION:** TWC - Provide feedback to the current landscaping vendor on issues, here is the list of issues:

- Leaf blowing is not removing the leaves - seems to just be blowing it into grass or beds - want leaves vacuumed.
- Too much mulch is being around the trees.
- Some actual plantings in beds are being destroyed/removed, ex. Liriope (a ground cover) is being mowed down, removal of actual flower plantings or other intended plants - this is pervasive across the cluster.

- **BLOCK 2 STREET LIGHTS ARE OUT**

Poles out on Maple Ridge - Dominion Energy and contractors looking for the issue physically in the Maple Ridge common areas.

**ACTION:** TWC - What is status of fixes for the two lamps out in Block 2? We observed Dominion Energy doing some activity, but it doesn't seem done - the lights are still out.

- **Deteriorating Benches - NOT DISCUSSED**  
Existing benches are not repairable.  
**ACTION:** TWC to look into full replacements for board to consider at a future session.
- **Swingset Replacement Behind Block 3 - NOT DISCUSSED**  
TWC acquiring updated playground proposal.
- **Review Board Code of Conduct - NOT DISCUSSED**  
Board to review code of conduct in a board meeting - prefer all board members present.
- **Mail installations and numbers - NOT DISCUSSED**  
Board did spot checking to identify homes with mailboxes that do not meet cluster standards. Initial list has been identified.
- **Hickory Cluster Logo Contest - NOT DISCUSSED**  
**DECISION:** Standup committee to design long term Hickory Cluster logo  
**ACTION:** Swift - Organize committee for long term logo
- **Neighborhood Cleanup Day**  
Need to provide guidelines on what the intent of items suitable for common area.  
**DECISION:** Board would like to have a Neighborhood Cleanup Day  
**ACTION:** Board - Seek host for the event from the neighborhood with input from the landscaping committee on what the efforts needed are
- **Retaining Wall that FEA Recommends Be Replaced**  
**ACTION:** Fay (engaging other members as needed) - Review proposals from HEMAX and Cornerstone Engineering, will have meeting with the vendors as needed.
- **ANNUAL FEA RESERVE STUDY - BOARD**  
**ACTION:** Board - Study reserve study for the recommendations. Need to prioritize the board activities with this in mind - anticipate January prioritization event. Further discussion will occur at future board meetings.

#### BACKLOG

- **Request to remove bush behind 11509 Maple Ridge on common property - NOT DISCUSSED**  
**DECISION:** Request to be put on hold pending landscaping committee plan.
- **Hickory Cluster Registry of Historic Places - NOT DISCUSSED**
- **NEW STREET SIGN FONT SIZE REQUIREMENTS - NOT DISCUSSED**

Sign fonts must be 4" tall due to recent Fairfax County mandate. HC Covenants advisor provided prototype signs from Webb sign vendor. Board discussed options. Board to investigate estimate of bulk purchase/installation for neighborhood, not decided how to seek reimbursement from members or not. Discussion of likely making the sign choice a design standard.

**ACTION: Cassidy - Seek prototypes samples from Webb signs and make recommendations at next board meeting or the following.**

- **Covenants Cluster & Condo Directory - Rekas - NOT DISCUSSED**

How would HCA like the Association's contact information listed in Reston Association's Cluster and Condominium Association Directory?

- External management company contact information listed only - **Board chose this option**
- Dedicated Association email address only
- Individual board member contact information listed
- 397 Herndon Pkwy Suite 100 Herndon 20170 - Amanda's email

- **STORAGE DOORS IN BLOCK 3 - NOT DISCUSSED**

- **SOIL EROSION in BLOCK 3 - TBD - NOT DISCUSSED**

This is likely related to the problem with the trench drainage.

**ACTION: Review past studies completed regarding this change and follow up.**

**V. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

**VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**VII. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned 9:28 p.m.

Next board meeting scheduled for January 15, 2025, at 7:30 PM on board-hosted Zoom.

//ENDS