

Calendar of Events

January 28, 2020 **Open Board Meeting – 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., Clague Middle School, Media Center, 2616 Nixon Road. All neighbors are encouraged to attend this open session!**

Appointment of Arbor Hills Board Members

Regrettably, despite our best efforts to communicate and encourage everyone to attend our annual neighborhood association meeting at Clague Middle School on October 24, 2019, we did not have enough people present and/or proxies on hand to achieve a quorum. This was quite a disappointment; however, those in attendance unanimously endorsed (by show of hands) the two (2) candidates listed on the ballot for reappointment to the Board – Dennis Stom and Thomas Edwards. Out of courtesy for those in attendance at the meeting, our president, Dennis Stom, provided an overview of Board activities and our Treasurer, Steve Hadrill, presented an overview of 2020 budget items.

Since the meeting, Andy Kaczmarczyk, President of Casa Bella Property Management, advised the Board it is not unusual for neighborhood associations to experience low turnout at annual meetings. In these cases, it is common and acceptable for existing Board members to be reappointed and have their terms of office extended until the next, scheduled annual meeting. In addition, if someone resigns from the Board, the remaining Board members may appoint someone to fill the vacancy. In view of costs associated with rescheduling our 2019 annual meeting (approximately \$500 for room rental and printing/ mailing costs), and the fact that we can't guarantee achievement of a quorum the second time around, we are moving forward to appoint the following Board members to serve Arbor Hills for the coming year:

Dennis Stom – President (Reappointed)
Ig Justyna – Vice President (Appointed following David Wang's resignation)
Sherri Fountain – Secretary (Standing Member)
Steve Hadrill – Treasurer (Standing Member)
Thomas Edwards – Member at Large (Reappointed)

Many thanks to these folks for volunteering their time and energy to serve on our Board. If you have any questions or suggestions for improving our neighborhood, please contact the Board at: board@arbor-hills.org.

Let's Talk about Dues

At our annual meeting there was discussion about whether there may be a need to increase our association dues, which have remained at \$365 every six (6) months for several years. For now, the dues will not increase; however, this could change in the future. Traditionally, every five (5) years, Arbor Hills retains an expert to conduct a "Reserve Study" to determine whether we are on track to fund future maintenance and improvement projects. For example, completing a "Reserve Study" should help us determine whether we will have enough money in reserve to fund pavement rehab and/or replacement in the future. We need to do our best to accurately budget for annual operating expenses and predict and pay for future expected, *and unexpected*, projects.

Our Board takes its job very seriously. It's important to collect and manage our dues to avoid the need to charge Arbor Hills residents costly "special assessments" in the future. Therefore, the Board will arrange for the 5-year "Reserve Study" to take place in the spring of 2020 and, if judged appropriate, may also engage technical professionals to buttress the findings of the "Reserve Study." Following completion of the Reserve Study, a determination will be made about whether it is prudent and necessary to change the amount of our dues.

We're careful with your money! Board members diligently screen multiple contractors before hiring them to perform paving, grounds maintenance, tree/brush removal, pond maintenance, street lighting and drain repair-related work, etc. Occasionally, we have the good fortune to have a few dedicated volunteers and others with engineering or technical expertise right here in our neighborhood! This has saved us all a lot of money!

A Reminder about January Dues and Penalty Fees for Late Payment

Association fees are due from each Arbor Hills household every six (6) months -- by January 1 and July 1. Payment invoices/coupons (in the amount of \$365) have been mailed by Casa Bella for fees due by January 1, 2020. ***Fees which were due by July 1, 2019 (in the amount of \$365.00 per household), which have not been paid, are now way overdue (in arrears).*** Residents who have not paid their homeowners' association fees within a 30-day grace period following the due date, incur an additional \$25 ***per month*** late/penalty fee until all outstanding fees are paid in full. These late fees can add up quickly! Unfortunately, we have to engage an attorney to handle collections and, in some cases, arrange to garnish wages or place liens on homes in order to collect overdue fees. ***Applicable attorney fees are charged back to residents who are in arrears.*** We hate this, but have a duty to collect homeowners' association fees to cover budgeted expenses to maintain Arbor Hills on behalf of all our residents! If you did not receive your fees invoice or have a question about your dues, contact Alex at Casa Bella immediately.

A Friendly Tax Tip - Read the Fine Print on your Winter Tax Bill

The City of Ann Arbor recently mailed winter tax bills to city residents. Just a heads up: Winter taxes are payable December 1 through December 31, 2019 without interest or penalty. If your winter taxes have not been paid by January 1, 2020, but you pay them by February 1, 2020, you'll pay a 1% penalty. **But, here's what you have to watch out for: If you have not paid your winter taxes by January 1, 2020, you will be required to pay an additional 6% penalty on your summer taxes! If you have not paid your winter taxes by February 1, 2020, but you pay them by March 1, 2020, you'll pay a 2% penalty. But, if you have not paid your winter taxes by February 1, 2020, you will be required to pay an additional 7% penalty on your summer taxes.** That's a lot of money! Be sure to read the fine print on your winter tax bill for additional information and deadlines.

Mother Nature Interrupts Scheduled Street Maintenance

Winter blustered into Ann Arbor a few weeks ago and caught us all off guard! Fortunately, we were able to get the potholes in Buckhorn Court and Aldwych Circle, as well as two (2) other areas of severely distressed pavement, repaired before the storm hit. Unfortunately, heavy snow, wet weather and freezing temperatures prevented the pavement services contractor from completing crack filling throughout the neighborhood this winter. Therefore, the Board voted unanimously to postpone crack filling until late spring/early summer 2020.

For Safety's Sake, Please Clear Snow and Ice!

Our children, dog walkers, and fellow neighbors appreciate your efforts to maintain and clear your sidewalks and driveway! Homeowners (or renters) are responsible for clearing snow accumulation of one (1) inch or more on sidewalks within 24 hours. In addition, ice must be removed and icy areas must be treated with sand or a salt-free substance designed to melt ice (e.g. "Safe Step" ice melting granules). To protect our sensitive wetland and wildlife areas, it is not permissible to use salt on driveways or sidewalks (per Ann Arbor City Code, Chapter 49). ***If you use a snow blower or contract with someone to clear your driveway and sidewalks, please don't blow the snow into unplowed or plowed streets. Cleared snow must go into your yard.***

If you neglect to clear your sidewalk and driveway in a timely manner, the association may have to hire a contractor to remove snow and/or ice at your property at your expense. You may also be subject to fines. Sidewalks are inspected on a regular basis. Please help keep our children, other residents and pets safe!

Make Way for Budd's -- our Snow Plowing Company

Please keep an eye on weather reports for anticipated snowfall that may exceed two (2) inches or more. Budd's Lawn Care & Landscaping generally arrives within two (2) hours of each two (2) inch accumulation of snow. Plowing may be delayed when the weather is really severe, so please be patient. ***It's your responsibility to make sure your vehicles are removed from our streets to accommodate Budd's and help ensure all roadways are thoroughly cleared. Failure to comply with this request may result in your (or your guests') vehicles being towed at your expense.*** And remember: Homeowners/renters are responsible for clearing their own sidewalks and driveways, not Budd's.

Budd's also has been retained to salt our street intersections when needed. (Regular “full-street” salting is not possible because of our sensitive wetlands and conservation easements.) We need your help! Budd's is not always aware of slippery, icy conditions. If you have concerns about street plowing or identify icy conditions in our intersections, please notify Alex at Casa Bella and the Arbor Hills Board at: board@arbor-hills.org. We want to address these concerns as quickly as possible.

Update on our Neighborhood Inspection

Casa Bella and Board members recently completed our neighborhood inspection. Don't worry! We realize everyone is busy this time of year and budgets are tight because of the holidays. We do not expect our residents to address home maintenance and repair problems right away. **If, however, your home is out of compliance with the Arbor Hills bylaws and/or mandated City of Ann Arbor ordinances, you will receive a letter from Casa Bella shortly after mid-January 2020. This initial letter will request and encourage you to address identified areas of concern by August 31, 2020.** It will include information specific to your property and a list of contractors who may be able to assist you with door/trim repairs and painting, power washing, tree trimming, sidewalk repairs, etc.

Trouble spots identified during the recent inspection include: green/black algae (which resembles mold), growing on vinyl siding on the north-facing side of homes; trees that need trimming; vegetation growing out of gutters; doors or trim in need of repair or painting; broken windows; grass and weeds that are too high; old pots, refuse/broken items on porches or in yards; sidewalks and driveways in need of “concrete lifts” or replacement; illegally dumped yard waste or other items in common areas behind homes; failure to store garbage and recycling bins inside garages. Many of these issues can be addressed without having to hire a contractor.

If you have not resolved identified areas of concern by August 31, 2020, you may receive a second letter from Casa Bella and further action, including fines, may be taken to ensure compliance with our bylaws. Please take steps now to address trouble spots on your home. Reputable contractors are in demand and super busy! We encourage you to line them up in early 2020.

Focus on Sidewalk Safety: Check those Slab Elevations

Arbor Hills, the City of Ann Arbor and federal law require that residents maintain their sidewalks in good order with no elevation offsets of greater than ½ inch. **Anything greater than ½ inch creates a trip hazard.** If you have sidewalk sections in front of your yard and driveway, it is your responsibility to maintain them. We don't want anyone to be fined by the City! Also, if you notice an elevated section of sidewalk in a common area, please contact Casa Bella right away. **Sidewalk problems were identified during our recent neighborhood inspection and will be communicated to affected residents.**

Completion of Tree Evaluation by Certified Arborist

On Friday, October 18, 2019, a certified arborist from Guardian Tree Service visited Arbor Hills to evaluate trees in our common areas to determine whether they might create a potential hazard to people or property. He was accompanied by two (2) Board members. Following a thorough neighborhood walkover, the arborist advised the Board that the eight (8) pear trees at our entrance need to be removed due to “Pear Trellis Rust” – a nasty fungus. No other trees in the common areas require removal by the Arbor Hills Homeowners' Association at this time. Leather straps fastened to two (2) large, red oak trees in the common area adjacent to Ashburnam Court are scheduled to be removed.

Sadly, many of our residents also have flowering pear trees that have been affected by “Pear Trellis Rust.” The leaves on affected trees become speckled with bright orange spots, then prematurely turn brown or black and fall off. **If you have a diseased or dead tree on your property or on the street in front of your home, you are responsible for caring for it or, if needed, removing and replacing it.**

Living in Arbor Hills allows us to enjoy a lot of natural beauty right at our doorsteps, deck rails and property lines. If tree limbs and/or native vegetation are encroaching on your property (over your property line from a common area), you have permission to trim or remove it at your own expense. The Board is fine with this. Also, we need our residents to remove small tree limbs and branches that may land on their property from common areas. This is not the responsibility of the homeowners' association. If, however, you believe a tree located in a common area

threatens to injure someone or damage property, please notify Casa Bella and the Board right away. **Please note: Certified arborists advised us that, due to risk of disease, there are only certain times of the year when it is prudent to cut down or trim trees (e.g., red oaks). We don't want to run the risk of "infecting" and killing healthy trees by cutting down or trimming trees at the wrong time of the year.** The City of Ann Arbor is responsible for caring for trees in our city parks. If you see a diseased or dead tree in our parks, notify Casa Bella.

What's the Right Height for Trees Hanging over Sidewalks and Streets?

We don't want anyone to get hurt while using our sidewalks. Arbor Hills follows the City of Ann Arbor ordinance regarding acceptable street tree height. It is your responsibility to **ensure trees located near your sidewalk are trimmed to allow for at least a 6-foot clearance above the sidewalk.** It also has brought to our attention that drivers of snow plows, large delivery trucks and garbage trucks are having trouble avoiding tree limbs that are hanging too low over our roadways. Therefore, **we request that you trim your street trees to ensure at least an 8-foot clearance above the street. This will help protect snow plow and other drivers; reduce the chance of damage to your trees; and help ensure Budd's can access all areas of our roads and clear snow to the curb.**

Time to Remove Hornets' Nests!

Thank you to the residents who reported the presence of hornets' nests in Kilburn Park this past summer. The City recently removed them. Unfortunately, some of our residents have large, gray, round hornets' nests in their trees. If you do, please remove them as soon as possible (during the cold winter months), to help ensure the safety of our children and fellow neighbors. The nests are dormant now, so you won't run the risk of getting stung. **Removing the nests will discourage hornets from returning to their old homes to take up residence again next summer.**

Before You Start Home Repair/Improvement Projects ...

You must complete and submit a ***"Request for Modification" approval form in advance if you wish to make a change*** from established color standards (e.g., trim, roof shingles, front doors, siding, etc.); garage door or window pane design (e.g. muntin/grid versus plain glass); or outdoor structural components (retaining walls, decks, fences, etc.). This form is available on the Arbor Hills website and from Casa Bella Property Management.

It is also the ***responsibility of homeowners to ensure appropriate building permits are obtained*** (either by themselves or hired contractors), prior to initiating electrical, mechanical, heating and cooling, plumbing, and/or renovation or construction projects. This also applies to roofing, window replacement, deck replacement/construction, fence construction, basement refinishing, and other home improvement or large landscaping projects. For your own protection, verify contractors are properly licensed and insured to do the work. And, don't forget you are legally required to contact "MISS DIG" to identify/flag underground utilities before you or your contractors begin any excavation project (e.g., planting shrubs and trees)!

Register On-Line to Receive Important Communications

Each of our adult residents needs to establish an Arbor Hills Account through Casa Bella Property Management to ensure receipt of email communications (newsletters and announcements) about our community. These communications are distributed by Casa Bella on behalf of Arbor Hills. To set up your account, go to: www.casabellamanagement.com; click on CREATE ACCOUNT; complete your information; including the unit number for your property (Lot #); click CONTINUE. Within 1-2 business days, your account will be established with Casa Bella! **You can pay your association fees online once you establish an account with Casa Bella. You may also mail your association fees to Casa Bella at the address listed at the bottom of this newsletter.**

Staying in Touch with our Residents

We recognize Arbor Hills residents have established Facebook and Google Group accounts for those who wish to informally participate in sharing information about our neighborhood. ***Please be advised, however, the official and exclusive source of approved information for Arbor Hills residents is the Arbor Hills website: www.arbor-hills.org.*** If you have registered with Casa Bella, you can also tap into their website to review Arbor Hills information. Visit arbor-hills.org, to read newsletters, meeting minutes and various announcements, and to learn about our upcoming events, budget items, bylaws, policies and more. Various forms are available on this website.

If you identify a safety issue that affects our residents, please contact the Arbor Hills Board of Directors at: Board@Arbor-Hills.org. If you observe a fire or suspected criminal activity, immediately call police at 911.

Wishing Everyone Happy and Safe Holidays!

Contacts

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Arbor Hills Website: www.arbor-hills.org

Dennis Stom -- President

Ig Justyna --Vice President

Sherri Fountain -- Secretary

Steve Haddrill --Treasurer

Thomas Edwards -- Member at Large

**We welcome your suggestions for improving
our neighborhood! Let us hear from you!**