

Bluebonnet Highlands

December 20, 2018 Council Meeting

Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm. Present were the following Council members: David Bencaz, Uwe Gruening, and Caroline Bond. Council member Jane St. Amant was absent. Erin Simonson (HOA Administrator) was present. Kate Cook (HOA Representative) and Daniel Williams (HOA Accountant) were absent.

Erin informed the Council that she will send the Council an HIR about a fence via email.

Request to Address the Council – Jan Riddle – Since Ms. Riddle was not present at the meeting, the Council did not address her request.

David informed the Council that he met with an architect about creating a proposal for a master plan for the neighborhood.

Uwe stated that he is a beekeeper and can remove bee colonies if anyone needs him to.

A homeowner present at the meeting asked if there is a way to protest new development around BBH. David suggested that he look for a Notice of Public Hearing and attend the hearing to state his concerns.

A homeowner present at the meeting asked why there have not been any improvements to the cluster mailboxes in Springlake. She is concerned about the condition of her box and would like a new mailbox that is protected from the rain. The Council informed her that it is looking into improving/upgrading the cluster mailboxes or replacing the cluster mailboxes with individual mailboxes outside of each home. To pay for the individual mailboxes, a special assessment would be imposed on the Springlake homes. This project has not moved forward because BBH has had difficulty getting prices from mailbox vendors.

A homeowner present at the meeting asked whether BBH had a plan to fill the potholes in the neighborhood. The Council stated that potholes are technically the responsibility of the City/Parish, and the City/Parish plans to resurface many of our streets in the coming months.

A lively discussion was held among the Council and homeowners present at the meeting about a possible dues increase:

- The proposed dues increase is \$400 annually (up from \$360 annually), beginning in January of 2020. This amounts to an increase of \$3.33/month.
- David presented a PowerPoint presentation about the need for a dues increase.
 - BBH's dues have not increased since 2007.
 - BBH's income has increased 37% from 2007 to 2017; yet, its expenses have increased 122%.
 - Increased expenses are due to an increased price of services (e.g. pool maintenance and lawn care), as well as increased services and amenities provided by BBH (e.g. increased Sheriff's patrols and pool security during the summer).

- Without a dues increase, it will difficult (and eventually impossible) to provide the same level of services and amenities currently provided by BBH.
- David also presented list compiled by Kate of other area homeowners' associations or civic associations and their dues/fees and amenities offered.
- One homeowner expressed concerned that a \$40 annual increase may be too much for retired persons, especially those that do not use the pool, tennis court, playground, etc.
- One homeowner asked to see a copy of BBH's budget, which is available online at www.bluebonnethighlands.org.
- One homeowner pointed out that Lexington Estates is \$1100/year, and homeowners are required to pay more to use the clubhouse facilities.
 - BBH is currently \$360/year, and access to Clubhouse amenities are included in the dues.
- One homeowner suggested a two-tiered dues system – one dues amount for homeowners who would like to use the Clubhouse amenities and a lesser dues amount for homeowners who do not want to use the amenities.
 - This would be controlled through the gatecard system – only higher dues-paying homeowners would have gatecards. This would likely be an administrative nightmare for BBH.
 - It was pointed out that dues pay for more than just Clubhouse amenities and that the amenities add value to every home, even if the homeowners do not personally use the amenities.
 - One homeowner reiterated that the amenities are for the benefit of everyone in the neighborhood.
 - This homeowner further stated that if the HOA were to move to a two-tiered dues system, why shouldn't lake lot owners pay more dues? The lakes are expensive to maintain, and most homeowners do not live on the lakes.
- One homeowner suggested a dues increase over two years – A \$20 increase in 2020 to \$380 and a \$20 increase in 2021 to \$400.
- One homeowner asked if BBH attempted to decrease its expenses by scaling back on lawn care services in the winter. The Council informed him that BBH does scale back in the winter.
- One homeowner voiced support for the dues increase by stating that better amenities would help increase BBH's property values, which is important given the competition from our neighbors, like Harveston. We do not want to fall behind in our level of amenities, which could lead to lower property values.
 - The ability to provide new and better amenities will not be possible without a dues increase.
- David stated that the Council has considered ways to reduce its expenses. One idea is to convert BBH's empty land on Bluebonnet into a BREC pocket park. This would save the HOA money because it would be maintained by BREC. There are no immediate plans to convert this land into a BREC park.
- One homeowner expressed concern that most homeowners were not aware that the Council was considering a dues increase and have not had the opportunity to voice their opinions.

- The Council pointed out that today's meeting, and the fact that a possible dues increase would be discussed, had been advertised in the weekly email for several weeks.
- However, the Council recognizes that some homeowners may not have email. Therefore, the Council is willing to survey the neighborhood about the idea of a dues increase. The survey will be included in the annual mailer to ensure that it reaches all homeowners.

The next meeting will be the Annual Meeting on February 19, 2019 at 6:30 pm.