



# DUNBARTON PINES



## Homeowner Association Newsletter December 2019

### President's Message

Fred Schlemmer

Your Board has been hard at work addressing the key agenda items for this year. We have an improvement plan for the Main Commons Area, thanks to a committee of volunteers. We also have the results of the Main Commons Area survey, conducted by Boss Engineering, which identified some limited encroachment by a few homeowners, continued improvement in the use of the Association software, and continued communications to the Association homeowners, as witnessed by this newsletter.

### Main Commons Area Strategy Group

Rod Harris

Six homeowners along with three Board members volunteered to develop a commons area improvement strategy. Three members reside on the commons. The group agreed on a vision for the commons area and identified constraints to achieving that vision. The vision included: open access for homeowners, somewhere to go with family, entryways well-marked and inviting, groomed pathways, borders that are well-defined and encourage use while minimizing trespassing, a map depicting key pathways and select benches for use by hikers. Key constraints included: entryways difficult to find, overgrown paths difficult to walk on, inner commons not well marked so hikers know where they should and shouldn't walk, hikers feeling like they are trespassing on homeowner property, and communication on location, access and appropriate use. After walking the main commons the group agreed on improvement recommendations for consideration by the Board (see separate article in this newsletter).

### Main Commons Area Encroachment

Fred Schlemmer

The recent survey conducted by Boss Engineering confirmed that most homeowners on the commons have been good custodians of the Association's property! However, the survey did identify several homeowners encroaching on commons area property. This encroachment includes incorrect fence, trampoline, and swing set/playhouse placement and unauthorized landscaping. Affected homeowners were notified of their encroachment in a mailing this week. We expect the affected homeowners will timely address their encroachment issues and that no legal action will be required. The Association Covenants, Agreements and Restrictions are quite clear that all homeowners share ownership of the commons and that the Association is responsible for overseeing the interests of all subdivision homeowners. By now all homeowners should be aware that the Association will vigorously defend their interests against any homeowner encroachment.

## DUNBARTON PINES Homeowners' Association

The Dunbarton Pines Homeowners' Association (DPHA) is a non-profit corporation created in 1979 and composed of 341 homes governed by the Declaration of Covenants, Agreements and Restrictions (1979) and Bylaws (1980). These documents are available on our website:

<http://www.dunbartonpinesofnovi.com>

The Association has the duty and responsibility to maintain the open spaces, retention ponds, storm sewer system, common areas and entry way monuments for the benefit of the subdivision and the members of the Association. Annual dues are \$170 payable September 1<sup>st</sup>.

### DPHA board members:

**Fred Schlemmer, President.** Fred is in his first year as President and fourth year on the Board.

**Andy Randall, V.P. Landscaping.** Andy has participated on the Board for some 12 years and is responsible for landscaping maintenance and improvements.

**Karen Harris, Treasurer.** Karen continues her fourth year on the Board as Treasurer.

**Rod Harris, Secretary.** Rod assumes the role of Secretary after having been President for the last three years.

**Deepa Elangainathan, Webmaster**

Please send all correspondence to:  
[dunbartonpines@outlook.com](mailto:dunbartonpines@outlook.com)

## Landscaping Maintenance and Improvements

Andy Randall

Since our last newsletter, the remaining two cul-de-sacs were updated as planned. These were: Courtview Trail North and Plaisance. It looks like our strategy to wait until fall has again paid off – as the updates look like they took hold nicely.

Our improvement work next year will focus on addressing the recommendations of the Commons Area Improvement Committee. These recommendations include making changes to one of the major pathways and clearing the walkways of some of the existing paths (see next article). Depending upon our budget, we also plan on making select upgrades to plant life in the cul-de-sacs and entryways.

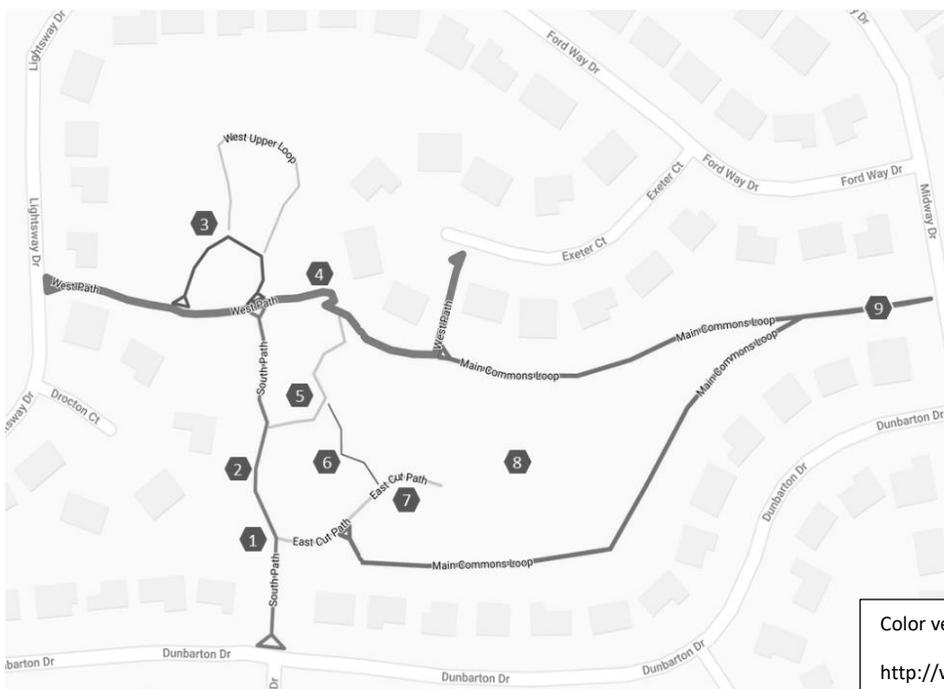
Meanwhile, if you have concerns about dead or dying trees in an area maintained by the subdivision, please contact me. We will be glad to review and schedule maintenance as appropriate.

Finally, while this may be a bit late, a reminder about leaves and leaf cleanup. Novi ordinances restrict what can be placed in our subdivision streets – and these restrictions include leaves. As the City of Novi has no specific leaf collection facility, it is up to each homeowner to collect and bag their leaves for collection by our existing weekly trash collection. Leaves left unaddressed can blow into neighbors' yards as well as clog our storm sewer drains.

## Commons Area Strategy Group Walkthrough Findings

Fred Schlemmer

After group members conducted a walkthrough of the main commons area, the group met to discuss their findings. These included: the West Path ends abruptly in the backyard of a homeowner on Exeter Ct (item 4, below). This path needs to be rerouted southerly to provide access into the main commons without trespassing homeowner property. Entry to the southern end of the Main Commons Loop can only be made by walking very near a homeowner's backyard on Dunbarton Dr. A pathway needs to be created that cuts through current underbrush to provide easier access without the potential to trespass homeowner property. The South Path from Dunbarton Drive to the West Path crossroads needs to be cleaned up (item 2). Entryways to the main commons area need to be marked (current thinking is to paint the curbs at each entryway – Dunbarton Drive, Lightsway Drive, Exeter Court, and Midway Drive). Plantings need to be made at the northern and southern entrance of Midway Drive (see item 9) to provide a block for homeowners as entryway maintenance is performed.



Ref	Findings
1	Potential archway and benches
2	Requires clearing
3	Requires clearing
4	West Path ends at property backyard – needs to be rerouted into main commons area
5	Initial path from West Path has been groomed, deteriorates as path approaches South Path
6	Needs clearing and grooming
7	Needs expanding
8	Potential pavilion site
9	Underbrush needs clearing; plantings may be need to north and south of entrance

Color version posted on:

<http://www.dunbartonpinesofnovi.com/>

**Treasurer's Report**

Karen Harris

We anticipate a shortfall against our budget for the 2019 year. Costs of addressing encroachment into the main commons area is the primary reason for the shortfall, which was not anticipated in our annual budget.

We believe this shortfall is manageable due to our strong reserves position. As you know, reserves are maintained to address unanticipated events, and our strong reserves position has served us well this year. Moreover, we believe we can make adjustments to our 2020 budget to recoup some of this year's anticipated shortfall. For example, some savings are anticipated since we have completed our multi-year cul-de-sac improvement work.

The current HOA association dues payment deadline was September 1. As of this writing, 12 homeowners still have not paid their dues. Three homeowners have more than one year's dues outstanding. Reminder notices have been sent monthly since September, and we will be initiating liens on delinquent homeowners early next year. Please contact me if you are behind in dues.

Our new TOPS [ONE] new system has met the request of many homeowners for additional payment options other than a check. Many homeowners used

the ACH payment option which withdrew the dues payment from their specified bank account at the end of August. Several more accessed the PAY NOW option, using a credit card or a bank account. We are thrilled that all payment options worked as expected with no issues.

Early in 2020 we will be developing a budget that seeks to recoup some of the shortfall anticipated for 2019 but at the same time address key recommendations from the commons area strategy group. We will also be reviewing the performance of our landscaping maintenance vendor to improve on our service levels.

**Income and Expense YTD  
Dunbarton Pines Homeowners' Association  
Period: 1/1/2019 - 12/8/2019**

<b>Dues and Receipts</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Variance</b>
6010 Dues and Other Receipts	\$58,881.00	\$57,970.00	\$911.00
<b>Expenses</b>			
7010 Landscaping - Maintenance	\$49,898.86	\$35,000.00	(\$14,898.86)
7020 Landscaping - Improvements	\$0.00	\$10,770.00	\$10,770.00
8010 Fees and Insurance	\$8,654.96	\$2,500.00	(\$6,154.96)
8020 Water	\$2,358.85	\$2,200.00	(\$158.85)
8030 Electric	\$1,062.94	\$1,200.00	\$137.06
8040 Communications	\$3,956.10	\$2,450.00	(\$1,506.10)
8050 Enterprise Software	\$4,039.00	\$3,850.00	(\$189.00)
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$69,970.71</b>	<b>\$57,970.00</b>	<b>(\$12,000.71)</b>
<b>Net Receipts Against Expenses</b>	<b>(11,089.71)</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>(11,089.71)</b>
6110 Dues (2020 Year)*	\$56,413.61	\$57,970.00	(1,556.39)
Estimated Reserves	27,084.94		
Balances in Bank:			
Checking	4,810.90		
Money Market	78,704.65		
	<u>\$83,515.55</u>		

\*12 homes outstanding, 3 homes > 2 yrs overdue

**Homeowner Contact Information**

Karen Harris

We continue our goal of using email as a secondary means of Association communications. To do so, we need to have homeowners submit their email to the Association and to register on the Owner's Portal. We must have a valid email address on file in order to initiate the registration process and to maintain communications during the billing cycle.

**All email and phone information will remain strictly confidential.** To request an email invitation to register on the Owner's Portal, or if you have any concerns about your contact information, please reach out to verify what we have on file at [dunbartonpines@outlook.com](mailto:dunbartonpines@outlook.com)

Once registered on the Owner's Portal, you have the ability to process payment for your annual dues!



## **TOPS [20] Association Software**

Rod Harris

By now you should be aware the Association is using new software. From a Homeowner perspective, the software provides a web portal for owners to maintain their contact information (phone numbers, email addresses), setup or process payments for annual dues, and access documents related to the subdivision and City of Novi. From a Board perspective, the software provides full financial processing and reporting, including billing, accounts receivable and accounts payable. It also has interfaces to third party providers to assist in mailings for annual dues and ongoing homeowner communications. Over time, it will enable us to become “paperless” as we invoice, pay, and communicate to Homeowners electronically. Finally, it provides the capability to define recurring Board activities so that the work of the Board becomes codified for use by the Board as members change over time.

## **Push or Pull? New payment options with TOPS [ONE]**

Karen Harris

One of the reasons we selected our new Association software was for the flexibility it provided homeowners in paying their annual dues. The new software uses a third-party payment provider (PayLease) that accepts multiple forms of payment – ACH, Debit or Credit. In addition, the software provides for two approaches for making your payment: Push or Pull. The Push method provides for a homeowner to “Pay Now” from their Owner Portal, entering ACH, Credit or Debit card information to make payment. This method has a fee associated with it, presented to the homeowner at the time of payment (ACH fee is \$2.95 and Credit card fee is 3.5% of amount). The Push method provides for the homeowner to determine the method, amount and timing of the payment. The Pull method provides for homeowners to set up a payment method in advance, which can be ACH or Credit Card. An ACH payment is free, while a credit card payment has a fee associated with it (3.5% of amount). The Pull method provides for the Association to charge dues at a time selected by the Association. Only one Pull is made by the Association for annual dues, which is in the third week of August. An email notification is sent prior to initiating the Pull to ensure enough funds are available in the designated account. Owners who want to use the Pull payment approach must be registered before that time. Otherwise only Push or payment by check can be made.

## **TOPS [ONE] Homeowner Portal Registration and Payment Usage**

Karen Harris

Of our 341 homeowners, 112 have registered on the Owner Portal. This process confirms the homeowner email address and provides access to Association documents and payment methods. Another 182 have been invited to register, using the email address we have on file. This set has not completed the registration process. Some 47 homeowners remain unregistered, primarily due to a lack of an email address on file. As a reminder, all it takes to be able to register is to send a request for an invitation to [dunbartonpines@outlook.com](mailto:dunbartonpines@outlook.com) .

Many of our homeowners are taking advantage of the new payment facility offered by our Association software TOPS [ONE]. Of our 341 homeowners, 19 have enabled “autopay” (our subdivision software) to make their annual payments using either ACH or a debit/credit card. “Autopay” is a “pull” payment method (see article above, on this page). An additional three homeowners have elected to register a payment method using the “push” approach, where the homeowner elects the timing and amount of the payment (also see above). This “push” payment method could be using ACH or debit/credit.

## **Update from your Postal Carrier**

Andy Randall

As winter goes into full swing, our local postal carrier wants the Board to remind all homeowners that the areas around our mailboxes need to be kept clear and free of obstructions. The requirements, we are told, are to have 30 feet overall clearance around each mailbox cluster – meaning 15 feet before and 15 feet after each mailbox. It is up to the homeowners to maintain the mailbox areas. Most of us are diligent about clearing our drives – let us take a bit of extra time and clear our neighboring mailboxes!