

**CABOTS POINT CLUSTER ASSOCIATION**  
**Annual Cluster Meeting**  
**Draft Minutes**  
**March 16, 2013**

The Annual Meeting of the Cabots Point Cluster Association was called to order by President John Norton at 10:10 AM at the Glade Room. Board Members John Norton, Gary Caley, Steve Cristofar, Mike Norvell and John Hills were present. 18 properties in Cabots Point were represented by at least one homeowner; 5 others were represented by proxy. A quorum (at least 16 homeowners) was present.

The agenda for this meeting was as follows:

**OPENING REMARKS BY PRESIDENT**

**OLD BUSINESS**

- Approval of minutes from Annual Meeting of March 24, 2012.
- Treasurer's Report
- Ground Supervisors Report
- Other Old Business

**NEW BUSINESS**

- Election of 1 Board members
- Approval of the Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2014 (April 2013 to March 2014)
- Cluster Cleanup—April 20, 2013
- Other new business

**Adjournment**

**OPENING REMARKS BY PRESIDENT—**

- Announcements – Everyone was asked to please sign in and update any information on the sign-in and phone directory, including email addresses.
- John Norton, President, introduced the Board Members and welcomed the newest residents to Cabots Point – Bill Brindley and Lisa Lilienfield in 2129, James Clippinger in 2163, and Courtney Ullrich in 2107. John introduced the Board members including himself, Gary Caley - VP, Mike Norvell - Grounds, John Hills - Secretary, and Steve Cristofar - Treasurer.
- John stated that the Board position held by John Hills is expiring. John Hills is willing to run again; John N. asked all present if anyone else would like to run for either of these seats.
- John mentioned that the Board is always looking for help from other residents. The Grounds Committee could use some help and our roads and sidewalks can use regular oversight. The needs of the Cluster don't demand a great deal of time, effort, or attention.

If residents have a little spare time and an interest, please speak to one of us today or email any Board member if you are willing to help out or have ideas on how we can improve the appearance of the Cluster.

- Highlights of the Past Year – The one major area of effort the Board addresses each and every year is Cabots Points’ grounds – our landscaping and tree care. Under Mike’s leadership, we have trimmed and cut down trees as needed and begun a review of the entire Cluster’s needs.
- Also, we’d like to thank those individuals who have helped out on particular issues:
  - Mike Savage has continued to update our web site which includes most of the available information about our Cluster, including the Handbook, the by-laws, and the Board minutes. Please take a look at the cluster website at <http://www.cabotspoint.org>. Comments on the information available are appreciated.
  - Sue and Gary Caley have continued to lead the Social Committee which has organized dock parties and progressive dinners for the Cluster this past year as in prior years. Thanks to Sue and Gary.
- Just a reminder: All members are responsible for complying with the rules and standards in the Cluster Handbook. The standards govern the appearance of the outsides of your homes. They are contained in the Cluster Handbook which is available on the Cluster website. Please do not begin any work on your house until you understand what the standards require. Virtually any change needs Board approval and probably RA approval – one of the facts of life of living in Reston. If you have any questions, please contact a Board member.
- We have availability in the canoe / kayak storage rack; it is \$25 per year beginning April first.
- We have a mini-dock that is available for use for a Pontoon boat. If you are interested, please contact Steve Cristofar.
- A note on trash pickup - plastic bags alone are not sufficient for putting out garbage as it attracts wildlife. Please place garbage in appropriate trash containers.
- Please obey the parking rules. We are trying to avoid putting up signs or painting curbs – if you have questions about where you can park, please ask a Board member or consult the Handbook.
- The Board is considering the placement of speed bumps at the bottom of the grade leading to tier 4 and at the top of the grade leading to tier 3. We hear pretty constant complaints that cars are just moving too fast throughout the cluster, but particularly in those two areas. We are installing two signs in the Cluster, one of which will warn residents to slow down, that children may be at play, and the other adding “No Outlet” to the Private Road sign at the top of the big grade.
- Finally, the next Cluster Clean-up is scheduled for April 20. Please come out and take some time to spruce up the cluster. More information will be provided via email. Steve added that it has been a windy year and lots of trash has been blown around, April 20

would be a great opportunity to pick up trash around the cluster and adjoining neighborhoods.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

- A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2012 Annual Meeting. Motion was unanimously accepted to approve as submitted.
- **Treasurers Report –**
  - As most residents know, the cluster fiscal year (FY) begins April 1 and ends March 30. Fiscal year 2013 ends in two weeks, so information presented today are not final results since the FY has not ended.
  - Last FY we finished the year with a surplus of \$100.
  - For the current FY (ending in 2 weeks), our YTD income exceeded expectations by several thousand dollars (income is composed of dues, transfer fees, late fees and interest). Our expenses have been under expectations because there has been no major snow, minimal adjustments on fuel surcharges on trash collection, and an underspending on grounds. Overall we anticipate a \$5,000 surplus for the year. Any overages to specific budget line items were minor.
  - Steve explained for those new to the cluster, that we maintain a reserve fund for capital expenses to which we contribute to \$12,800 per year out of dues. The major capital expense this fund covers is our roads (from the circle up top through all tiers) which need resurfacing every 15-18 years. The last reserve study predicted we would need approximately \$100k to do this work. This fund can also be used for other projects such as fixing and/or replacing sidewalks as needed.
  - The reserve fund is split into 2 CDs (1 year and 5 year) with \$25,000 in each. \$25,000 was moved to the 5 year to get slightly more interest this past year. The 5 year is also a “bump up” CD that would allow us to get a higher interest rate if that becomes available in during the next 5 years.
  - Steve added that the Board has the option of adding the \$5k surplus from the current FY to the reserve fund.
  - We do anticipate we will have over the necessary \$100k in the reserve fund at the point the road work will be required.
- **Ground Supervisor’s Report—**
  - Mike Norvell reviewed our landscaping contract with Cardinal Landscaping. Last year’s grounds had itemized \$19k for grounds maintenance, and \$15k split up between trees, erosion and other miscellaneous work. Cardinal offered us the contract for this coming year at the same price as last year. The Board has already voted to accept this contract.
  - Regarding tree work, last year the cluster spent \$7k on tree work. \$5k on removal

of damaged and dying trees, \$2k for pruning (including the big tree on the hillside between tier 3 and 4), with a total of \$7k spent on trees. \$8k was budgeted, but \$1k was left in reserve for unanticipated storm damage.

- Beyond the standard contract, another \$2k was spent on landscaping, which included mostly cleanup work. Mike felt cluster cleanup would be a good place to start.
- No funds were spent from other categories.
- Mike noted there would be ongoing tree work necessary. Bonilla was the vendor used over the past two years. They have done good work, are reasonably priced and are highly rated.
- No money was spent on turf improvement nor erosion control.
- Mike has specific projects in mind for the future. These projects include (by Tier):
  - Tier 1
    - Landscaping to add plants to screen cluster homes from South Lakes and improve the appearance of the cluster from the street and walking path. Mike expects to lose two more trees in the area along South Lakes.
    - The addition of signs to keep the dogs off that area, which is cluster owned.
    - Improvement of turf behind Tier 1 homes. There are lots of bare spots between behind cluster homes and the woods.
    - The woods which are behind Tier 1 homes could also use cleanup.
  - Tier 2
    - Put in place an erosion control plan.
    - Improvements to the island on Tier 2, possibly adding a flower bed.
    - Cleanup behind 2125 and 2177, where there is a great deal of weeds.
  - Tier 3
    - Cleanup wooded area (peninsula at the entrance of Tier 3 and between Tier 3 and Tier 4). This area would be left natural, but vines and leaf litter would be removed. (Cardinal has quoted \$1,200 to do this work, which he felt was reasonable.)
    - There is a great deal of runoff behind Tier 2, behind Tier 3 and into Tier 4 (down to 2143). He would look to bring in an expert to help plan a long term solution. Speculating a more robust solution such as a “rain garden” may require some money out of reserve.
  - Tier 4
    - Along the lakeside edge, the biologs were put in place several years

ago to stop erosion. Native plants were used in the biologs, however, those plants have not done well. He suggested adding tight clusters of native plants (such as cattails) to allow them expand themselves. Beside the cove on Tier 4, he was considering more colored irises, making a point to keep cattails out of that area since cattails would take over the cove.

- Adding perennials to the flower beds to reduce overall maintenance required (which is the bulk of our money). It would also help to brighten the whole cluster up.
- In addition to those specific projects, Mike introduced his wish list:
  - To do something between Cabots Point and Owls Cove along the left side of road down to Tier 4. He looked into native plants, but they are expensive (Dogwood and Redbuds, which were \$300 per tree). Suggested looking at planting seedlings, protected from deer, along with other shrubs that the deer don't like.
  - Create a uniform look in the cluster that would include pathways, plant species, trees, etc. Perennials would be a big part of that also to help reduce overall maintenance requirements.
  - Mike suggested hiring an affordable landscape planner (possibly someone looking for a graduate project) to give us a cluster-wide plan.
  - Mike would like to see leaves picked up by Carinal composted and reused throughout the cluster. This would help us create our own topsoil in several years.
  - Possibly improving the area between Cabots and Owls Cove.
- Finally Mike noted that everyone is responsible for around 15 feet behind and 5-6 feet to the side (for end units) of their homes. This is personal property not maintained by the cluster. It is fine for residents to landscape those areas, but beyond that point is cluster property. Please get permission from the cluster before doing any landscaping work in cluster areas.
- James Clippinger followed up on drainage problem on Tier 3. John N. had not heard from Fairfax County recently regarding this issue. The County had accepted responsibly for the drainage issue and extensive surveying was done in 2013, but ultimately there was no money in the County's budget to remedy the problem. As John understood, there is money in this year's County budget. John N. will follow up with the County and copy James on any information. James expressed concern that the cluster would invest money in erosion control only to have the County rip it out.
- Mike Savage asked about interest in natural gas lines to cluster homes. He had received a quote of \$3k to run a line up the hill to his home and asked if anyone else would be interested; several residents were.
- Karen Rhinard asked why the area between Cabots Point and Owls Cove wasn't

Reston Association responsibility. Mike N. stated that RA has an easement, and he is working to find out how far down the hill we own. Steve thinks that RA owns the stream beds and a few feet to other side; we would be working to improve our side above the steam bed. Karen expressed that she didn't see value in spending money on that project. Mike noted his goal was to add some screening between us and Owl Cove.

- Jill Norvell noted that the small stone wall by sign at the entrance of Cabots Point is not even. Asked if the wall could be made flat and more stones added to improve the appearance.
- Steve noted that we have used Cardinal landscaping for many years and have been very pleased. We had tried another landscaper a several years prior which was a disaster; the company inappropriately applied herbicide which killed many of our grassy areas. We went back to Cardinal and have been happy since.
- Sharron Cristofar thanked Mike for taking on the grounds task.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- **Election of Board Members**—A quorum was established; 18 homes represented and 4 proxies. Motion was made and seconded to vote on the election of John Hills to the Board. President John Norton called for a vote by hand for all those in favor and opposed. All households present voted unanimously to approve the nomination.
- **Annual Budget**
  - Discussed budget for FY 2014, starting April 1, 2013 ending March 31 2014. No major changes in budget are proposed for next fiscal year. The only small change is to prepare for probable increases in garbage collection related to fuel surcharges in the upcoming year. We are projecting revenues the same as this year, and expenses the same as budgeted for FY13. Steve noted that much depends on the weather, so another mild winter may would likely result in another surplus.
    - The largest expense as always is grounds, which accounts for about half our annual budget (\$34k).
    - The second largest line item is the annual contribution to reserve fund for capital improvements (\$12,800).
    - The third largest expense is the trash collection (\$9k).
  - John N. added that the budget as proposed would not require any changes to dues.
  - Jill Norvell asked if the Board carried Directors' Officers insurance. Steve indicated that we did carry a regular liability policy as well as an umbrella policy.
  - Steve reminded residents that the annual \$25 fee for the canoe rack was due next month. There are spaces available and please let know Steve if any residents are interested.

- Steve asked for questions or comments; there were none.
  - John motioned to pass the budget. Motion was seconded and unanimously approved.
- **Cluster Clean Up** - Scheduled for April 20. John asked residents to make an effort to clean up around your home and common areas. The cleanup starts the morning of April 20 between 9am and noon.
  - **Other New Business** –
    - Jill Norvell brought to the attention of residents that RCC is now partnering with Fairfax County to acquire parceled land to build an Olympic size indoor swimming pool near Browns Chappell by Barron Cameron Drive. Jill expressed that she did not like the idea of more open land going to construction since there are already many pool options around Reston. Jill noted residents could find out more by visiting <http://restoncommunitycenter.com>
    - Steve also brought to residents' attention that there will be a hearing in a few weeks on "Soapstone Connector" which is a proposal to extend Soapstone over the Dulles Toll Road. This would provide additional access from South Reston to North Reston after the Metro opens and Wiehle Ave. becomes congested.
    - Gary noted two newsletters: Reston Patch, Kathy Hutchens are good if you don't get them.
    - Charles Tack noted that the Fairfax Times newspapers are being dumped by the cluster mailboxes.
    - Karen Rhinard asked about status of Reston Golf Course. Steve responded that the hearing had been postponed to May, but that John Pinkman who is the head for the opposition to the development was going to have a fundraiser in conjunction with the hearing.
    - Steve made a suggestion to add a bench by the walkway by the lakefront by the top of the stairs leading down to the cluster dock. The bench would be composition material similar to what is currently at the RA playground across from Tier 1. John N. suggested putting it on the dock itself. Mike Savage noted that it might be used inappropriately by teenagers. Bob Potts agreed that young people often use the dock at night and a bench out of sight might encourage that trend. Bob suggested putting a bench out in the open would be more likely to be used by adults rather than kids.
    - Barbra Sinegal indicated she was against the proposed speed bumps (at the bottom of Tier 4 and the top of the hill entering Tier 3) citing wear and tear on our cars. Jill N. noted that the Tier 4 speed bump (since removed) had initially been installed because of children along Tier 4, but the sign remains. Phyllis Peterson added speed bumps would be good to slow people down. John H. said he had supported the idea because his son often plays around Tier 3, but that he

had received little support from other Tier 3 parents and the use of cones when children were playing could suffice for Tier 3. John was going to follow up with the Pendletons and the Brindleys, who have children and grandchildren along Tier 4 to get additional input.

- Resident asked a question regarding the alternate roofing materials that had been under review by the Board. Gary said he had talked to a contractor that had provided preliminary information, but that he had been unable to follow up with the contractor. Artificial shake may be a viable alternative as cedar becomes less available and quality goes down (newer growth trees rather than old growth trees). The artificial shake have 50 year warranties and come in cedar or grey shades; the grey shade looks very similar to a patina of aged untreated shake. As soon as Gary gets more information he will pass it along to the cluster. RA has approved artificial materials (generally speaking), but we would be seeking RA approval if/when the cluster approves. Gary mentioned costs of artificial shake are a little more than cedar but are comparable.

**Meeting was adjourned at 11:20.**

Minutes Submitted by John Hills.

John Hills, Secretary