



Volunteerism: A Very Positive Experience

By Tara Bingham, 4 Lakes Secretary / Trustee

“Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others”. -- Danny Thomas, for St. Jude Hospital

About five years ago we received a notice that our HOA was looking for input on updating the bylaws that govern our community. The letter said that anyone interested in commenting should meet at the gazebo in the park at a certain time, and we decided to attend. Several of the Board members were at the gazebo with their friendly smiles and open minds and they really seemed to be interested in what we had to say. In fact they were such nice guys that when they asked me that same night to join the Four Lakes Board, it was easy to say yes! I was a realtor and a human resource assistant for my husband's company at the time, so my days were already busy, but it seemed like a really good idea to get to know my neighbors. It seemed especially important to know those who made decisions for the benefit of the community.

Being the only female on the Board was a little intimidating at first, but I soon found the guys to be polite, full of good humor, knowledgeable, and very concerned about the well being of the neighborhood and its residents. When they asked me to be the Board secretary some time later, it was easy to say yes again, because it was obvious that they really cared about what they were doing and I wanted to be a part of it. Over the years we have tackled such subjects as accounts receivable, roads repair, water quality, the passing of long time residents, broken pipes, lakes maintenance, and the ever present family of beavers who are certain that they have the answer to the depth of the lakes problem! We have also taken on issues that affect our neighborhood such as the

Cedar Grove composting odor, Passage Point, and non-residents who mistakenly think our lakes are a good place to fish – all while getting to know each other better and building a sense of community.

Volunteerism is an important part of any community service organization, but for Four Lakes, it's key to protecting our property values, to ensuring resident safety, and maintaining our quality of living. The Four Lakes HOA is privileged to have a group of people who volunteer on several committees such as Lakes, Community Property, Water, and Roads. You may have seen some of them on the side of the road or testing the lake water or cleaning ditches or building beaver deceivers. You might also have seen one or two of them patching potholes, putting up signs, or trapping moles in the park. There are also volunteers who plan activities such as the Easter egg hunt and the fishing derby for the kids or emergency drills in case a disaster happens. All in all, they have probably saved our community thousands of dollars and they should be proud of what they have accomplished over the years, not to mention the friendships and support network they have built.

What about you? Do you have some time you can devote to keeping Four Lakes one of the best places to live in King County? There are several positions and opportunities available in 2011. Let Mark, Rod, or Dave know if you are interested in serving. And the next time you see someone pulling weeds at the lakes, gluing down road turtles, or painting a sign, be sure to stop and say thank you!

WINTER 2011

Four Lakes News

ANNUAL MEETING - MARCH 3RD!

The annual membership meeting is set for March 3rd, starting at 6:30 pm. The meeting will be held at Mark and Kristina Achzenick's barn, 24025 SE 162nd Street here in Four Lakes. The meetings last for about two hours. Issues that will be covered include water, roads, community property, emergency preparedness, entertainment, electing 3 trustees and finances. We will also be discussing a dues increase.

Important Decisions Ahead

By Rod Case, Trustee and Treasurer

On April 12, 1969 the developers of Four Lakes filed Articles of Incorporation that, along with the By-Laws and Covenants, were destined to be the operating guidelines for the new community. They established fees upon themselves, and subsequently all purchasers of the properties, that were levied to “provide for maintenance and preservation of the lots and certain common properties” of the Association. The initial assessment amount was set at \$8 a month (\$24 per quarter). The money collected has been kept in two separate accounts. First approximately 45% goes to the water system. The remaining 55% goes to a General account to cover all other activities. Provisions were also defined that would allow the total amount assessed to be increased. At the beginning of each calendar year the amount could be increased by the official change in the Consumer Price Index for the Seattle area.

That increase was not implemented in some of the early years. The amount could be increased further by a vote of the members of the Association. **For the last 42 years there has never been an increase to the assessment other than through the CPI change.**

Continued on page 2

2011 Winter Water Report

By Evan Lurton, Water Chair

Thank you for doing your part last summer to use our water resource wisely. Even though we had a relatively mild summer, our water usage was reasonable. Your Four Lakes water system continues to pump approximately 20,000 gallons of fresh, clean water every day to the residences of this neighborhood (winter usage).

On our end, your water team has improved the distribution and regulation of water by splitting off one water line into an independently regulated zone. Distribution meters have been added, which has given us the capability to better isolate system leaks. A leak location plan has been developed, and repairing system leaks will be one of two primary activities for 2011.

The other major activity to begin this spring will be the installation of a new propane-fueled emergency generator at the well site.

This will be a considerable improvement to our existing gasoline-fueled back-up system with benefits of improved reliability, greatly extended back-up system run time, elimination of the effort to locate and haul gasoline to the well site, and a more simplified means to operate the system.

WWW.FOUR-LAKES.ORG

Four Lakes has its own website! You can do all sorts of things on this site. This is where you can book the gazebo, see who is in charge of the various committees and read the minutes of the board meetings.

Decissions *Continued from page 1*

Over the years the Association has worked hard to improve our common properties. We have a very high quality water system, the roads were paved in the mid 1980's, the Gazebo built, a play area established, etc. In addition to these improvements all the properties (water system, roads, community meeting area, and lakes) have been maintained largely through volunteer work.

It has been a continual struggle for the Board of Directors to allocate the available money in ways that support these volunteer efforts. Some work such as road repaving of course has to be outsourced to professionals at a significant cost.

In the last few years it has become more and more difficult to keep up with the ongoing deterioration of our infrastructures. Anyone who drives by the big lake in the summer time has noticed the ever increasing predominance of weeds and other vegetation. This is due largely to the depth of the lakes decreasing significantly and thereby facilitating growth of vegetation. Despite some valiant efforts by volunteers and professional service companies the vegetation is gaining an upper hand. Several areas of our roads are showing serious signs of their age and will soon require major repaving. The one bright spot is our water system. The money allocated there has proven to be adequate to cover expenses and build an adequate emergency reserve.

The Board and committee chairs know the situation is reaching a critical point. The Association must make a choice. Either we abandon maintenance of one or more resources OR we open discussion for a significant increase in the General dues. This will be the main topic at our 2011 annual meeting. Consider the two options: Keep the dues as they are which we anticipate will eventually lead to the roads reverting back to gravel. The lakes continue to fill in and sometime in the future become bogs instead of lakes? The second option is to approve an increase in the dues. In 2010 the assessment for a standard lot was \$85.50 per quarter. Of that, \$39.13 is placed in the water account. The remaining \$46.37 is used for allother expenses. That is approximately \$16,000 a year for non-water expenses. It is this assessment that we must consider increasing. At the upcoming annual meeting you will hear

reports from each of the committee chairs in which they will describe the issues they face. They will also discuss costs associated with addressing each issue. After hearing all the committee reports the floor will be opened for discussions which will focus primarily on if we wish to increase the general dues amount and by how much. We do expect one or more proposals to be put up for a vote of the Association.

The Board wants to assure each Association member that we have struggled with this issue and do not take lightly the idea of a major increase to the general dues. In this time of ever increasing government tax increases, for what sometimes seem like very questionable programs, we want you to know this is your decision. This is not an increase proposed by some nameless bureaucrat to benefit other communities. The money will stay right here in YOUR community for work you approve of at the annual meetings. The Association Board is asking that you decide if these parts of our community are worth saving.

Come to the annual meeting and hear the various committee chairs reports. Ask probing questions. Make suggestions for alternative approaches if you have them. But please come with an open mind. The Board is not doing this because they get great pleasure out of increasing your dues. The infrastructure issues we face are real and must be addressed. If you want more insight into this issue before the meeting please contact any Board member.

One final fact – any proposed increase would result in a total assessment still much smaller than those of most other similar communities. Ask your friends how much they pay for water, roads, parks, maintenance fees, etc. and we know you will see our dues and a potential increase in a whole new light. We've had a number of people move into Four Lakes over the years and comment on how low the assessment is for the services received. This will be a tough decision for each of us but it is a chance to keep our Association viable and a place we can continue to enjoy living in. Our goal must be to create a funding process that will meet our goals general services as well as the water dues have met that need.

The Great Beaver War Saga

By Bob Leibling, Lakes Committee Chair and 2010 Polar Bear Challenge winner

The Beaver War Saga continues at 4-Lakes, with pitched battles to remove Beaver debris occurring weekly. Luckily, I'm happy to report no fatalities have occurred, however one near drowning occurred a when 4-lakes combatant flipped his canoe into the frigid waters while doing pipe repairs. Only human egos were injured, with no Beaver body counts to report. This event is also worth mentioning as it was the inaugural 4-Lakes "Polar Bear Plunge", with hopefully more than one contestant participating in next years Winter event. On-going Winter events include Beaver dam wrecking parties, which are encouraged as impromptu community activities.

I'm happy to report that the Lakes Committee is just about finished with its Lakes Maintenance Plan. This will identify the major lake concerns that need to be addressed so we can maintain good water quality and pleasing lake environments that promote community recreation and activities. Short and longterm goals, objectives, maintenance tasks, and costs are identified so we can have a coordinated effort in preserving our community's biggest asset. Continual lake maintenance is required in order to restore and preserve the lake water quality. Prior to this, there was no formal plan, nor direction on how to care for the lakes. We're at a point now where we can no longer neglect our lakes.term goals, objectives, maintenance tasks, and costs are identified so we can have a coordinated effort in preserving our community's biggest asset. Continual lake maintenance is required in order to restore and preserve the lake water quality. Prior to this, there was no formal plan, nor direction on how to care for the lakes. We're at a point now where we can no longer neglect our lakes.term goals, objectives, maintenance tasks, and costs are identified so we can have a coordinated effort in preserving our community's biggest asset. Continual lake maintenance is required in order to restore and preserve the lake water quality. Prior to this, there was no formal plan, nor direction on how to care for the lakes.

We're at a point now where we can no longer neglect our lakes. soon, some of the lakes will fill in and turn into swamps, which will not enhance our community. After talking to several lake consultants, we've determined that a treatment plan combining herbicides and mechanical harvesting of the plants is the most cost effective way to mitigate this problem. After several of the committee members attempted to use the weed cutter this past summer, trying to cut a swath in the lily pads on the big lake (lake no. 4), we realize that initially we'll have to hire consultants to do this task, until we can get it to an easier maintenance level. Permits must be applied for at the County early in the year to give us adequate time to have the permits ready by early Spring so we can do the first treatment to the lake. It's worth it to note that herbicides were used on Lake no. 2 several years ago to get rid of the lily pads, and this treatment was very successful.

We will present this plan to the Community at our annual meeting early next year. We invite any suggestions you may have to this plan at that time. The Plan is a "work in progress." It will be refined over the next few years as we learn more about our lakes and what is the easiest way we can preserve them for the 4-Lakes Community.

(Editors Note: Mr. Liebling won the first place in the 2010 Polar Bear Challenge when he over-turned his canoe. As a matter of interest, he also won 2nd and 3rd place. As to whether to invite other participants in the 2011 Polar Bear Challenge Bob remains tight-lipped)