



# Your CasaBlanca

March 2010

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## **Annual Meeting Reveals Change in Maintenance Priorities!**

**Due to the potential expense in maintenance areas that are more critical, the Board has decided to delay for one more year, the painting of the outside of our homes.**

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**T**he pool deck at pool # 4 needs major work. Pool pumps need to be relocated, flooding in the pool utility rooms need to be addressed and tin on the utility room overhead areas can cause a fire potential due to chemicals according to a report submitted to the Board by Anisworth Pool Maintenance. The wood lattice roofs could be replaced with aluminum to reduce maintenance costs. Before we paint, the grass needs to be moved away from walls and patio fences. Irrigation lines will need to be moved in order that the new paint will hold up for a longer time period. Two light pole standards at the tennis courts have rusted out a ground level and need immediate attention.

The Annual meeting was held at the Hope Lutheran Church on Saturday, March 13. Approximately 40 homeowners were in attendance at the meeting. The ballots were opened and counted during the beginning of the meeting.

Lindsey Griffith gave her summary of the year's financial report. Currently, we have about \$428,000 in operating and reserve accounts. The current interest rates on CD's is much lower than what was available last year. She has moved much of our money out of the big multi-regional banks into local banks resulting in slightly better interest rates and much more responsive service. We have been lucky with the foreclosures in our complex to date in that they have been selling within a year. Individual Reserve accounts except for irrigation equipment are funded at levels recommended by our Reserve study, and it is down less than \$500.00. We are being faced with some high maintenance and replacement costs this next year.

**G**ail Christiansen gave the President's Report next. She indicated we had changed our management and landscape companies twice last year and currently are with Whitestar Management and Kirpatrick Landscape, both of which seem to be doing a good job for us. A

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lot of shrubs have been replaced, A new water pump installed in the irrigation system and water filter installed in the reclaimed water lines. Hopefully, both will keep us green this summer. Four roofs have been replaced. Benches have been installed at the tennis courts and the entry way kiosk remodeled with decorative brick design, new light fixtures and the stucco textured. Currently, the landscape is being replaced around the tennis courts with a desert concept and new wind screens will be installed.

The Member Forum drew many complements for Whitestar Management and it's owner, Patrick Belous. Many complements were forth coming for the Board and the new landscape company as well.

**A** request that the official financial report be made available before the Annual Meeting and the minutes of the last Annual Meeting before the current one starts was made. A look at new technology to see if it is now practical to install solar heating at the pools was made. Howard Butzer gave a summary for the Landscape Committee and Syd Sonneborn did the same for the Communications Committee. A request that a third option be available to the members on the IRS Resolution 7- 604 include putting excess funds into the Reserve accounts as well as the Operating accounts was made.

The election results were announced following the Forum. This also included the acceptance of the minutes of the last Annual Meeting. Corrections were made to last year's financial report that could be interpreted to mean we were fully funded in our Reserves, correcting Jim Laraby's first name and Dorothy Saulnier's last name. The minutes were approved as amended. The IRS Resolution 70-604 was approved by a vote of 74 - 1.

The election of new board members resulted in Gail Christiansen and Lindsey Griffith being re-elected to the Board of Directors. The concluding Member Forum resulted in a majority of the people attending being in favor of installing the earthquake automatic shut-off gas valves for the whole complex.

## Annual CasaBlanca HOA Landscape Report

**D**uring this past year, we re-landscaped our 4 entry beds with attractive desertscape and had them edged with concrete curbing. We also re-landscaped the front area of Pool # 4 and the entry beds inside both gates.

We have removed and replaced numerous dead or dying shrubs around homes and we will continue this project as necessary.

We replaced our landscape company in September with Kirkpatrick Landscaping Services, Inc., a company in business here in the Coachella Valley for 42 years. They are certified arborists, horticulturists, licensed for pest control, and have a certified water management personnel on staff. As of these past months, we are well satisfied with their work and the response from many of you homeowners has been very positive.

Major work has been done on the tertiary water system and, as a result, irrigation problems have been minimal since Kirkpatrick has come on board.

Our major project at this time is the renovation of the landscaping around the tennis court area with desertscape. This included the removal of turf and shrubbery, retrofitting the irrigation system to drip and installing drought-tolerant plants, decomposed granite and rock.

As you know, the City of Palm Desert has requested HOA's to convert green areas to desertcape with low water-use plants for water conservation. The renovation will conserve water as well keeping the irrigation water off the tennis courts and soon-to-be new installed screens.

**P**lease be advised that there is no intention of changing all the grass areas in our complex to desertcape. That is simply not going to happen.

Please do not plant or change anything outside your homes. This is common area and is maintained by our landscape company. If you want to make any changes to these areas, you will need approval. Please contact Patrick at Whitestar Management.

Just a reminder: At this time there is an abundance of citrus fruit in the complex and it belongs to all homeowners. Please pick as much as you want and enjoy it.

### **2010 Communications Committee Annual Report**

The Communications Committee has held monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at pool areas # 1 or 4 each month. The objective is to allow homeowners to voice their concerns, praises, and to speed up the process to allow the board to vote on action items at Board meetings. The meeting also bring pertinent information to homeowners in an informal setting.

Also, the Communications Committee manages the Emergency Response Team and Neighborhood Watch program in our complex. The Chairman coordinates meetings and is sponsoring special programs to inform our residents on issues related to these activities

at the monthly Communications meetings. Examples of these informative programs have been on automatic Earthquake gas shut-off valves, Neighborhood Watch program in Palm Desert, and Nutrition.

The Chair also composes and posts the monthly community newsletter on our web site.

A Special program will be held on Saturday, March 27, 10:00 AM at pool #1 on how to prepare for a big earthquake in your home.

We need to attract more volunteers to man the Neighborhood Watch and Emergency Response programs. If interested, Please contact Syd Sonneborn.

### **It's getting to be that time again Home care key as many begin to leave to escape the heat**

Edited by Syd Sonneborn

**A**s temperatures begin the inevitable climb toward triple digits, seasonal residents are beginning to migrate to cooler environs to wait out the Coachella Valley summer. And that leaves dozens of homes vacant and untended for weeks, if not months. Leaving is more than just flipping a few switches and locking the doors,

Whether you are leaving your desert home for a few weeks during the peak of summer or you will not be returning from your permanent residence until next fall, planing for the care of your home is as important as finding the right child or pet sitter for your children or pets.

### **THINGS TO LOOK FOR**

Whether you choose to prep your home for the summer shutdown on your own, or enlist an agency or friend to do the work and periodically checkup on your residence, there are a variety of problems that can crop up. Water damage issues are a critical source of potential problems. Water leaks and floods can be a result of broken pipes that are either above ground or under the slab, or from any number of other sources. I am aware of three incidents here in Casablanca, of copper hot water pipes bursting due to electrolysis. All happened in the summer months.

**U**nplugging ice machines, turning off the hot and cold water to the washer, and unplugging hot water circulating pumps will reduce the likelihood of flooding.

We're in a hostile environment. The intense heat can wreck havoc on an absentee homeowner's plumbing. Left unattended, toilet water can dry up in 45 to 60 days. Periodic flushing can eliminate the threat of an unpleasant homecoming for the homeowner.

Doors, wood furnishings, oil paintings and decorative items are also sensitive to the desert environment. It's important that proper interior humidity is maintained to prevent doors, decorative pieces and furniture from becoming too dry and developing cracks."

### **WATER HELPS**

Filling buckets of water and putting them on hard surfaces around the house adds moisture to the air. This moisture keeps artwork and wood items from drying and cracking.

Bugs are another concern. It's important for absentee owners to maintain their pest control service while they are out of town.

Additionally, patio furniture and other presumably resilient outdoor items are no

match for the hot desert summers. If there's a place to put it inside, put it inside. It will be in better condition when you come back in the fall. **Remember, Patio plants and debris must be maintained in the summer months.**

### **TIPS TO GO**

#### **MECHANICAL SHUTDOWN**

**T**hings to turn off disconnect, unplug or drain:

- Turn off all gas pilots
- Turn off water main to house if home will be left unattended for extended periods
- Turn off hot and cold water to washer
- Drain, flush and refill water heaters to remove sediment
- Unplug hot water circulating pumps
- Disconnect insta-hot units
- Disconnect golf cart battery
- Put car battery on trickle charger or disconnect car battery
- If you have plants growing on your patio while away, please contract with a gardener to maintain the area for the time you are gone

#### **ALSO REMEMBER TO**

- Remove all perishables from refrigerator
- Remove all open flour products (cereals, crackers, flour, etc.)
- Clean and store trash containers
- Place brown paper on inside of exposed windows to block direct sunlight

- Place brown paper under edges of window coverings to protect carpet
- Drape plastic over hanging clothes
- Cover upholstered furniture. Cover oil paintings with sheets of linen or coverings
- Fill buckets of water and set out for humidity control
- Clean and store patio furniture and cushions inside (garage maybe?)
- In case of an earthquake, move breakables or valuables, such as lamps, vases and artwork from high shelves and walls to floor
- Use museum putty to secure items in place
- Leave a key with a trusted friend who summers here to assist in opening the house in case of an emergency while you are away. Have him or her check the house periodically.

## Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety

### Step 1: Secure it now!

Reducing and/or eliminating hazards throughout your home, neighborhood, workplace and school can greatly reduce your risk of injury or death following the next earthquake or other disaster. Conduct a "hazard hunt" to help identify and fix things such as unsecured [televisions](#), [computers](#), [bookcases](#), furniture, unstrapped [water](#)

[heaters](#), etc. Securing these items now will help to protect you tomorrow.

### Step 2: Make a plan

Planning for an earthquake, terrorist attack, or other emergency is not much different from planning for a party or vacation. Make sure that your emergency plan includes evacuation and reunion plans; your out-of-state contact person's name and number; the location of your emergency supplies and other pertinent information. By planning now, you will be ready for the next emergency.

### Step 3: Make disaster kits

Everyone should have disaster supply kits stored in accessible locations at home, at work and in your vehicle. Having emergency supplies readily available can reduce the impact of an earthquake, a terrorist incident or other emergency on you and your family. Your disaster supplies kits should include food, water, flashlights, portable radios, batteries, a first aid kit, cash, extra medications, a whistle, fire extinguisher, etc.

### Step 4: Is your place safe?

Most houses are not as safe as they could be. Whether you are a homeowner or a renter, there are [things that you can do to improve the structural integrity of your home](#). Some of the

[vulnerable pipes](#). [Consult a contractor or engineer](#) to help you identify your building's weaknesses and begin to fix them now.

### **Step 5: DROP, COVER, and HOLD ON!**

Learn what to do during an earthquake, whether you're at home, at work, at school or just out and about. Taking the proper actions, such as "Drop, Cover, and Hold On", can save lives and reduce your risk of death or injury. During earthquakes, drop to the floor, take cover under a sturdy desk or table, and hold on to it firmly. Be prepared to move with it until the shaking stops.

### **Step 6: Check it out!**

One of the first things you should do following a major disaster is to check for injuries and damages that need immediate attention. Make sure you are trained in first aid and in damage assessment techniques. You should be able to administer first aid and to identify hazards

### **Step 7: Communicate and recover!**

Following a major disaster, communication will be an important step in your recovery efforts. Turn on your portable radio for

information and safety advisories. If your home is damaged, contact your insurance agent right away to begin your claims process. For most Presidentially declared disasters, resources will also be available from federal, state, and local government agencies.

## **EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS MEETING MARCH 27**

With the occurrence of the recent major earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, your Casablanca Emergency Preparedness Committee has been approached by some homeowners to hold a general meeting of homeowners to answer any questions residents may have on what to expect when a major quake occurs here, what supplies they should stockpile, and where emergency supplies can be purchased,

Syd Sonneborn, Chair of our Emergency Prep Committee is planning to hold a meeting that should address most people's questions. Syd has gone through the Government sponsored CERT (Certified Emergency Response Team) training course and recently attended a meeting on just this subject conducted by Gary Rosenblum, Risk Manager for the City of Palm Desert.

The meeting will be held on Saturday, March 27th (Hopefully working people and our seasonal residents can attend) at 10 AM in the pool #1 area. This pool area was selected because the Utility room provides proper shade

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for viewing a DVD on a laptop computer and electricity is handy.

You are reminded that a lot of information pertinent to our Casablanca community is posted on our web site at [www.casablancahoa.net](http://www.casablancahoa.net) under "Emergency Preparedness" on the home page.

### **EARTHQUAKE SURVIVAL**

**What do you need?**

**Where do I get it?**

**What will Happen?**

**Questions and Answers**

**Saturday, March 27**

**Pool #1**

**10AM**

## **April 13 Communications Meeting to feature Neighborhood Watch**

**D**eputy Sheriff, Debbie Ellis, a member of the Palm Desert police Dept. is scheduled to make a presentation about the Neighborhood Watch program to us and inform us about the current crime trends on Hovley Lane West.

She will also give us information on how to report suspicious activity to the police department and what activities or circumstances to look for here in Casablanca.

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### Casablanca Management

#### **Board of Directors**

Gail Christiansen, President  
Jerry Winer, Vice President  
Lindsey Griffith, Treasurer  
Dorothy Saulnier, Secretary  
Jim Laraby, Director

#### **Whitestar Management, Inc.**

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