



Your CasaBlanca

September 2009

September Board Meeting Called

President, Gail Christiansen called an unusual September board meeting to deal with several items that needed to be acted upon in a timely fashion. She felt that a summer board meeting was a better way to conduct the business than by doing it by Board Action.

BOARD MEETING 9/15/09

Following the Communications Committee meeting at pool # 1, a Board Meeting was held with three of the board members present. President Gail Christiansen, Treasurer Lindsey Griffith and Member Jim Laraby were present. Gerry Winer and Dorothy Saulnier were out of town. A quorum was present. Nine homeowners remained for the Board Meeting. Our new Manager, Patrick Belous and Rhonda, acting as recording secretary were in attendance. Gail called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

The membership forum was passed over due to the Communications Committee meeting just before had covered all items of concern.

The minutes from the last board meeting in June were corrected and then approved.

Lindsey Griffith gave the Treasurer's report. Due to problems with our last management

company, e-PropertyManagement, exact balances for individual accounts were not available but the total of all accounts, operating and reserves is \$476,000. Two CD's have come due and had to be rolled over and two more will come due in the next month. The interest rates of course in this economy are just a pittance. The report was approved.

Irrigation Pump Proposals: Two bids were received that were very similar and one could make good comparison on. They were from Eagle and Southwest Pump. The proposals basically will replace our over 15 year old electronic controller equipment, add a motor and pump for back-up and install a filter to keep sand and debris out of the irrigation lines. The Board accepted the bid from Southwest Pump for \$13,245. It is estimated it will take about 3 weeks to get all of the equipment in town to be installed and it is hoped to have the remodeled system up and running before reseeding starts in about a month.

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Pool Drain compliance proposals: In order to meet Federally imposed pool drain requirements as regards safety for small children, we need to remodel our systems. Four bids were received but two were out of range in pricing. The spas at pool 1 and 4 need re-plastering at this time too. Two systems can be used to meet the requirements. Install split drains so that no drain has sufficient pressure to hold someone down if one is blocked or install a pressure relief mechanism in association with the pool pump that will automatically shut the pump down if something blocks the drain. A spa has three pumps so would need three regulators installed per spa if we went with that method. To install the two drains, the plaster would need to be ripped out. Therefore, we will be using both methods for economy. The bids considered were from Gary & Sons and Laguna Falls. A bid for \$20,090 was accepted from Laguna Fall.

A bid for non-employee Workman's' Compensation Insurance (mandated by state law) was approved at a cost of \$1,043.

A request by owner's who have a four year old child to have a "Jumping House" placed on common area near their home for a birthday party was discussed by the Board. It was decided to not approve the request due to liability concerns since the structure would be on our common property putting the Association at risk if an accident occurred.

Another request to have three trees removed due to constant leaf dropping was referred to the Landscape Committee for recommendations.

Someone also wrote that they wished to initiate the conversion of the heating of the swimming pools over to solar power. At this time, no action was taken on this concept. No one was aware of an installation that was

efficient enough to repay the cost in a reasonable amount of time and there are parts of the winter season where we still would need gas to supplement the solar system due to cold nights and short days.

Minutes of the Communications Meeting Sept. 15, 2009

Syd opened the meeting at 9 AM in the pool #1 deck area. Approximately 22 home owners attended the meeting.

Syd began by announcing that State agencies are planning on another mock earthquake drill on October 15 at 10:15 AM. We will participate by practicing the safety rules of Drop, Cover and Hold. We did not have sufficient positive response from the Emergency Response Committee volunteers to run a second practice rescue drill at each home in the complex. We may try to have a meeting to review procedures in November when most people are back in town.

The forum was then opened to the members present. Most of the people had complaints relating to the condition of our landscape maintenance and the way the gardeners are performing their tasks. Items of concern were: What is being done with stucco repair work and where is it being done. Trimming of bushes and hedges or the lack there of. Piles of debris and their not being picked up in a timely fashion, lack of or inconsistent edging, tree trimming or the lack there of, dying citrus trees and the new proposed parking rules being proposed by the Board. Howard Butzer, Chair of the Landscape Committee also expressed his displeasure with the conditions and indicated he was aware of most of the problems and that the Committee is working to get them all resolved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 AM to get ready for the Association board Meeting.

Whitestar Management Bibliography

As many of you are aware, we have changed management companies again this summer. Our last company, e-PropertyManagement and its owner, Dan Galindo, proved to not be up to the task of providing us with the quality of service our Board of directors were expecting. Therefore, the board made a change and a new company was hired in July. For those of you who have not read it on their web site, the following is their bibliography.

Whitestar Management Inc. was formed in 2002 by Patrick Belous. Patrick owned several investment properties that were poorly managed; it was due to this dissatisfaction and lack of professionalism that ultimately led to the formation of Whitestar Management. With Patrick's experience, knowledge and passion for providing superior service to clients, he created a successful property management company like no other. Each and every client receives individual attention and client satisfaction is a staff requirement for all employees at Whitestar Management. Our mission statement is "Customers for life built on referrals" and all employees are required to conform and help maintain our customer satisfaction goal!

Whitestar Management provides professional, responsible management services to HOA's/Community Associations. We are **licensed, bonded, insured and our managers are certified with (CAI) Community Association Institute**. We provide a comprehensive list of services including, but not limited to financial services, fiscal review, vendor management, budget preparation, weekly site inspections and assistance with reserve studies. Patrick/Owner is a CERTIFIED Community Association Manager through the Community

Associations Institute. This accreditation and affiliation is particularly important as it assists us in staying abreast of the latest legislature and governing laws to allow compliance and continuity within the association. Our team is very knowledgeable on the latest regulations and laws and this has propelled us in the ever-changing administration of HOA/Community management.

In Patrick's former career he was a financial advisor for over 10 years for two National Banks; managing over \$100 Million in assets. This experience gives him the knowledge and the ability to manage all financial, insurance, and risk management aspects of a Community Association. Patrick's personal accomplishments contribute equally to his ability to be an effective Association Manager. He personally developed and owns a 40 acre, 14 unit Community Association with a private water-ski lake. He located a parcel of land that met all requirements needed for a lake front community and designed a lake specific to the demands of tournament water-skiing. He worked with various city and county officials to acquire necessary permits, ensured compliance with agricultural guidelines, sub-contracted all the needed contractors and supervised their progress. In addition, he worked with legal counsel to create all necessary by-laws and legal documents for the community and has managed all aspects of the community since its inception in 2002.

Whitestar Management has two (2) full-time property managers, one (1) full-time office manager/reception, one (1) bookkeeper and attorney (on retainer). We have a 24 hour emergency service that is available for emergency situations should they occur. We are members of the Better Business Bureau and have letters of recommendation for review that we strongly encourage you to pursue.

CERT TRAINING THIS FALL

In case you missed the announcement in the August 13 Desert Sun.

Two Coachella Valley cities will offer emergency training courses in October to help residents be prepared to act as first responders during disasters.

"During major incidents like an earthquake, the community must work together and everyone must do his part," said Palm Springs Fire Chief Blake Goetz.

The Palm Springs and Cathedral City fire departments will offer FEMA Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training on Oct. 1, Oct. 3 and Oct. 10 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The classes, which cost \$40, will be held at the City Yard, 425 N. Civic Drive.

"CERT-trained volunteers augment the community's front-line first responders in times of crisis," Goetz said. "CERT is about readiness, people helping people, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number."

Residents were asked to download an application at www.palmspringsca.gov under the "Fire" section, which is under the "Government" section. Applications can also be faxed to 778-8430 or mailed to the Palm Springs Fire Department at 300 N. El Cielo Road.

Syd Sonneborn has downloaded the application and can print them for you or send it to your e-mail address. Syd can be contacted at 760-776-5711 or e-mail at sydsanson@aol.com.



Mock quake is coming in October

By Syd Sonneborn

The government agency organizers of last years "Great Southern California ShakeOut" are planning an even bigger event this fall with the whole state participating this year. Last year, on November 13, 5.4 million Southern Californians participated in the first ShakeOut event. We in Casablanca, were part of that number who participated.

Your Casablanca Emergency Preparedness Committee will again participate in this year's event.

ShakeOut 2009: 10:15 on 10/15

ShakeOut 2009, a major earthquake preparedness exercise, is set for 10:15 a.m. on Oct. 15. For information on how to sign up, suggestions on how to participate and how to prepare, visit www.shakeout.org.

Be prepared for the Big One

- Prepare a disaster plan for your family
- Because you may have to face several weeks without basic services like electricity, water, gas and garbage pickup) stock up on emergency supplies of water, food, clothing, blankets, batteries, flashlights, large plastic bags, etc.
- Survey your entire home for earthquake safe-spots, typically under sturdy desks and tables.

- Inform everyone of a place to meet outside the home once the shaking stops.
- Designate an out-of-area person as the contact point for calling once the shaking stops, and make sure that everyone has the phone number either with them or programmed into their cell phones. The designee can relay information to family members.
- Secure your space by strapping top-heavy furniture and appliances to walls, adding latches to kitchen cabinets, and securing TVs and other heavy objects that can topple and cause serious injuries.
- For more earthquake preparedness tips and information, go to www.mydesert.com/earthquakes.

Basically, when you feel an earthquake, **DROP** to the ground, **COVER** - take cover from falling debris by trying to get under a sturdy object such as a desk or dining room table, and **HOLD** on to it. Most injuries and deaths are caused by flying objects during an earthquake.

Portofino Developer Files Civil Suit on City

by Syd Sonneborn

The former owners of Villa Portofino, luxury senior development, have filed a claim against the city of Palm Desert for an estimated \$119.5 million. In a six page letter, David W. Trotter, lawyer for the former owners, said the city rescinded a grading plan for the project in 2008, after residents at the nearby Casablanca community (us) raised concerns about the height of pads and the houses to be built on part of the development.

According to the claim, the city then told the developer they would have to reapply for the plan, which in turn led to building delays, a loss of bank financing and eventual foreclosure on the property. The former owners on the claim are LMI Co. LLC, Royce International Investment Co., Severin & Co. LLC and Palm Desert Villa Portofino I LLC.

They are asking the city for a total of \$119.5 million, including \$70 million for the property loss, \$35 million in lost profits, and \$14.5 million for engineering and attorney's fees, and other development costs.

The City received the claim on July 13 and has 45 days to respond. The developers could file a civil suit if a settlement is not reached, Trotter said in the claim.

City Attorney David Erwin said since the City Council is on summer hiatus until Aug. 27 - after the 45-day response period runs out - the claim will be automatically denied.

"We're not going to write a check," Erwin said thursday: "This goes back and in 1999. I haven't had a chance to go back through the city files."

Many residents of our community who have lived here for years know that we have had problems with the developer going back to its inception about nine years ago. According to a conversation I had with our President, Gail Christiansen, the above problems evolved when the developer, Royce International, started to develop its second phase. In doing so, the trees and shrubs growing outside our North Perimeter wall were removed, exposing the pad heights that the new buildings were to be built upon. Checking with the city engineering department revealed that a grading permit had not been taken out and approved.

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A long and complicated process was launched as a result and is now at this point. It seems that over the years, one city department has not communicated properly with another or series of other departments over the years. Whether this lack of coordination was by accident (lack of over-sight) or intentional can only be a conjecture at this point.

This issue of your Casablanca was produced by:

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