

Sovereign Oaks HOA Annual Meeting 2023 Minutes

[To be approved at the 2024 Annual meeting]



Thursday, September 28th, 2023

Meeting Called to order at 6:00

Meeting Closed at 7:55

Board Members:

President - Kirsten Kern

Vice President - Mark Jordan

Secretary - Catherine Stelpflug

Treasurer - Beth Kainic

Director - Mike Newton

Opening Statements

President - Kirsten Kern:

-Called Meeting to Order

-Reviewed responses to things we agree on as a community naming the Values and Principles Survey which states that we agree on:

Natural Beauty of neighborhood including trails

Proximity to Blue Ridge Mountains and Asheville

-Reviewed Design Guideline

-Reviewed Agenda, and set tone for meeting

- Highlighted that the Proposed 2024 Budget will be voted on, but is not open to changing tonight, it must be approved as is, or SO HOA Budget must revert to the 2023 Budget
- Highlighted that we will also be voting on whether to change our Board of Directors (BOD) member rotations from 3-1-1 to 2-2-1 because while a vote is not required by our own covenants, this is required by the NC Planned Communities Act (NC PCA) which trumps SO's guidelines.
- Highlighted that we will be voting for one, or two, new board members, depending on the outcome of the vote on rotations

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-Reviewed purpose of Covenants, explained how BOD makes decisions, not based on the board's preferences, but based on Bylaws, Covenants, NC Planned Community Act (NC PCA), and the North Carolina Nonprofit Corporation Act; at times we are required by the NC PCA to consult experts when decisions are beyond our abilities or require specific expert knowledge.

-Asked if members were ready to approve the 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes.

Motion: Brad Allen

Seconded: Jack Klippel

Approved -Unanimously

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer - Beth Kainic:

-Explained differences between the volunteer treasurer and the paid bookkeeper, Kristin Eggen, who is also our own SO neighbor.

-Provided overview of budget (see attached) - all dues paid and up to date; the expenses shown are balances at this point with the remaining months of this year's expenses still to come, including possible road expenses this year; the unused \$30,000 that was previously set aside for the pavillion concept will be pushed forward to the 2024 budget into the facilities line item; expected return of approximately \$16,000 on a CD when due in February. Note that all interest earned is taxable.

Call for Questions:

Kim Spence

- Why can't we invest a larger chunk of the HOA's funds now since road work won't be done for a while?

Tim Owings

-Suggested the BOD consider beginning a finance committee with the treasurer as a standing member alongside other owners who have expertise in finance

Brad Allen

-Motioned to approve the 2024 budget (Beth noted that it had not yet been discussed, the questions had all been regarding the 2023 budget. Consensus in the room was to discuss the proposed 2024 budget before voting.)

Leslie Connolly

- So, there is no money in this (2024) budget for the Pavillion Area; I will not vote for this 2024 budget without any funds set aside for this area.

-Leslie also asked if the pavilion project was "dead" or could it be something to be considered in the future.

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President: Kirsten

- There have been concerns about the lack of bathrooms and parking, as well as other issues that we cannot change, so the board tabled work on this for the moment.

Mark Jordan

- We have not used these funds and have no plans for these, the BOD is correcting to a more accurate reflection of how we are actually using our money.

Leslie

- What is the process to move forward with allocating funds for doing something with this area?

Mark

- We would move forward if a proposal comes together by a majority, it would have to be a majority of the members, then the BOD could discuss a budget for that proposal.

Kirsten

-Suggested we vote to ratify the proposed 2024 Budget

Motioned: Tim Conway

Seconded: Brad Allen

For (52)

Opposed (1)

Proposed BOD Rotation Change

Brad Allen (Past Secretary)

-Presented proposal to amend Bylaws to a more consistent rotation of 2 - 2 - 1, which means two members would rotate off in the first year, two in the second year, and a single person in the third year, then the cycle will repeat.

Called for Questions: None

Brad

-Are we ready to vote?

Motion: Art Mandler

Seconded: Tim Conway

-Ballots were passed out, then collected.

For: 55

Against: 0

Approved - unanimously

(While votes were being counted the meeting moved ahead to committee reports.)

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Facilities Committee Report

Director - Mike Newton:

-Reported on work at the HOA's front gate. Projected cost approximately \$2,000, if we have volunteer help.

Fortunately, no one has run into the gate in the last year! Yay!

-We need to replace the wooden fence at the entrance, with the same style but better quality treated wood, we will need volunteers to help with the new fence in order to save money.

-We have worked on cleaning up the former greenhouse area so it can be safely used as a common space. It can now be referred to as the park, and used right away.

-Road maintenance is being done as needed, but we will wait until all construction is complete to repave throughout.

-New mailbox set provides the additional mailboxes that will be needed as the neighborhood is completely built out, including one box for the HOA mail.

-Called for volunteers

-Please email me, Mike, if you want to be added to the volunteer roster

Lisa Armstrong

-What will the style of the new fence be?

Mike

-Similar style as current fence, but better quality.

Leslie Connolly

- How will you communicate times to volunteer?

Kirsten

-Hot Topics in the newsletter.

Mike

-Requested volunteers to help with the fence work in order to save us money on this project.

Amanda Galvin

-Offered to create a signup for volunteering .

Moment of Appreciation for Outgoing Board Member

Vice President - Mark Jordan:

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-Paused to thank outgoing president, Kirsten, for her many hours each week to work on board business, described her role as the board's elected president, to be liaison connecting our neighborhood to many groups, including realtors, legal, area neighborhoods, and more. Members stood to applaud Kirsten for volunteering her time to the board.

Election of New Board Members

Vice President - Mark Jordan:

-Announced result of vote on rotations, passed

-Began election process. Since this has passed we will elect two members tonight. We have Beth Kainic who will step down from her current position as the appointed member to fill the vacated spot by Javier Samosa. She will now stand for election. We have Sam Cooke who has offered to run for the board.

-Called for nomination from the floor. None were offered.

Ballots were passed out, then collected.

(Continued with Committee reports while ballots were counted.)

Committee Reports, cont.:

Trails & Landscape Committee

Matt Kern

Trails and Landscape committee has been hard at work clearing trails, removing debris, and maintaining common areas. These volunteers, and others in our neighborhood, save our community a tremendous amount of money.

We have a new trail, Art & Sarah Mandler's Trail through their additional lot, that is now available for people to use to access the park area.

Matt's report

Sovereign Oaks Trails Committee Annual Report

Volunteer Hours:

Clearing of Old Farm School Rd and disposal (8 man hours)

Created 2 new trails. Dam trail and Art's Trail (10 man hours)

Cleared around the Duck Pond (10 man hours)

Cleared around viewing platform (4 man hours)

Cleared Upper Musterfield Trail twice and Removed downed tree (12 man hours)

Weeded Front entrance multiple times (6 man hours)

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Planted 3 Red buds near the Gate and kept watered (10 man hours)
Weeded and cleared brush on both sides of the Cemetery Trail (10 man hours)
Removed dying bushes at the Skyrunner box on Trail top and replanted new laurels (3 man hours)
Laid Sod around backfilled area of old greenhouse pad (6 man hours)
Misc Small projects (6 man hours)
Total Man Hours – 85 X \$40 per hour= \$3,400
Bobcat Work:
Graded Trail to old greenhouse site (2 hours)
Graded Majestic Oaks Circle and removed dirt (2 hours)
Backfilled around old greenhouse pad (2 hours)
Spread mulch on the new trail at Art's land (1 hour)
Graded and planted grass along Wandering Oaks Way (1 hour)
Total Hours – 8 hours X \$150 per hour= \$1,200

Total Savings to Sovereign Oaks - \$4,600

Called for volunteers: Please join us at Julie's (Julie Brown) house, where we have great snacks!

Called for Questions:

Brad Allen

-Called to attention that water meter covers are popping off, and could be an ankle breaker, can this be addressed. Other neighbors mentioned seeing the same done by bears.

Mark Jordan

-T&L will look into this. Please let us know whenever you see things like this.

Leslie Connolly

-Will the T&L committee decide what happens at the greenhouse now?

Matt Kern

-No, just maintain it.

Amanda Galvin

-There used to be a greenhouse committee, but that disbanded when there was not anything we could do.

Beth Kainic

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-Could someone join the committee and just help a little, without the herculean effort that we all see Matt K. and Julie B. doing all the time?

Matt Kern

-Yes, any help is appreciated.

Cathy Owings

-Is there a plan for the overgrown area at the overlook near us?

That area designated as green space was clear cut, it has been allowed to grow up, now we are having to manage that. The invasive locust is overgrown over the road and even hits me on the head when I walk. It is even growing out of the drain.

Also, the landscapers are not mowing all of the right of ways.

Matt Kern

-We are aware that the landscape crews are not mowing properly and I have to talk with them about correcting their work about every other week, I also try to call them to thank them for their work on other weeks.

-Please notify the T&L about any issues you see, we can't catch everything. I know that is especially difficult for some lots. Some onsite owners, as well as some absentee owners, have a difficult time keeping vegetation on the slopes. Artie has had difficulties with this.

Artie Miller

-Yes, we tried planting and it just washed away.

-Called for volunteers

Facilities Committee Report

Director: Mike Newton

-Described incidence of road rage recently emailed to the board. Homeowner was aggressively followed to our entrance including attempts to run him off the road. At the entrance, the aggressor got out of his car, at which point the homeowner quickly drove away from the neighborhood rather than show where he lives.

-Announced plan to investigate cost to record from our cameras. At present, they do not record. Proposed recording between 72 -96 hours then it will self erase, and begin a new cycle. We recently had an incident of road rage, so we are considering this.

-New Sovereign Oaks sign on a new metal arm (arm crafted by Mike Newton)

-Pavillion clean up, sod prep and setting out, as well as other clean up work was done by volunteers, it is nice and clean and ready to use

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Call for volunteers. A roster of people we can contact to volunteer would be helpful. Often, these jobs are very last minute, when I have a bit of extra time in a day, I go do some volunteer work for a few hours. And, when we have a downed tree, that isn't predictable.

Mike Newton

-Described plan for road maintenance

Called for Questions:

Leslie Connolly

-When was the road bid provided?

Mike

-January

Leslie

-Oh, so very recent.

Mike

-Yes, the gravel is actually one of the highest components, but all is high bc this is a petroleum product.

Mike

-Reported on the new mailboxes. We have a new box set because the developer only put in enough boxes for 97 homes but designated 99 lots. So, we have had to add one set. It will have 3 boxes, one for the HOA, so we will no longer have the expense of a post office box, and one mailbox for each for the last two homes built.

-Called for volunteers, please let Mike Newton know if you would like to be put on the roster of potential volunteers.

Design Review Committee (DRC) Report

David Stark

-Acknowledged, he recently learned of someone who had not ever read the Design Review Guidelines; encouraged people to read the DR Guidelines.

-Named the number of non-design review requests this year, so far: 74
Often these are small things. Amazed at how many emails we get. When we meet we are looking at someone's dream, and we have to make sure it is not in conflict with someone else's dream.

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-Reminded us to all be sure to check with our new neighbors who sometimes have bought an existing home and are unaware of the DRC Guidelines.

Call for Questions: None

Social Committee Report

Amanda Galvin

-Reported being on the Social Committee as well as being the creator of the monthly SO Newsletter, which includes Hot Topics messages from the monthly BOD meetings, when there is something to be announced from that month's meeting. There is a form at the end of the Newsletter for Feedback. Please use this if you want to have something included in the Newsletter or provide feedback.

-Shared that the Social Committee meets once a year to plot out the year, then meets another time or two within the year; also members prepare for events. One or two more members would be welcomed additions.

Members also include: Julie Brown, Sally Klipple, Evie Edwards, Catherine Stelpflug, (Art Mandler, is also a member, but was inadvertently missed in the names read out.)

-Listed events we've had at SO this year:

Plant Swap - people shared and traded plants and seeds

Warren Wilson Hikes - various times this year

Wine and Appetizer Events - every quarter but, has had difficulty maintaining

Bee Seminar - in June; lots of great information. Bees have been very busy this year

Two Book Clubs - fiction through (through Social Comm.), and Artie Miller spearheads a nonfiction book club

Food Trucks - recently we had BBQ

Coming Up:

October 28th, Annual Chili Cook Off - we need a host; I've hosted in the past, need a year off, but want to win one of those spoons!

Halloween - Children will walk WOW, please leave your lights on if you want TT, all those who live on other streets and want to participate may set up along WOW to provide Trunk or Treat stops.

Call for Questions:

Lisa Armstrong

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-How could we ask for help:

I didn't know how to ask for help when I needed it when my husband was deployed for a couple of years a while back. How can we get names and addresses?

Amanda Galvin

-Possibly a committee could support folks reaching out (notes on this from Amanda)

Tim Owings

-Is there a neighborhood directory coming out? I had heard in the past that this was coming.

Amanda

-Less than 50% filled out the form, so we were not able to move forward, then we were very sad when we lost the Slack channel. But, now that we have Discord, we have a good place to message again.

Tim Owings

-Thank you

Open Questions

Kirsten Kern: Directions

-Provided instructions for decorum during OQ

-It will be a time to explore ideas

-It will be a time to work together positively

-It will not be a time to decide on particular investment, that will be done in a committee, and approved by the board

Mike Newton: Moderated

- Reviewed that this time is an opportunity to present ideas to improve our community for all and to bring forth issues that affect all of us. Suggested appropriate speech, one at a time, without yelling. Shared that this is a time to make real progress as last years' Open Questions requests were all completed

1. Speed limit signs, put up by volunteers
2. Four way stop sign put up at the four corners (WOW and Trail Top/Towering Oaks), also by volunteers

Who would like to speak?

Brad Allen

-Could we hear the candidates speak?

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Sam Cooke

-I am so inspired by all the people in the neighborhood who volunteer and I feel, if not me, then who, if not now, then when. So, this is my reason for offering to serve on the board. I am a business owner for over 30 years and an experienced board member on other boards. I would look forward to serving this neighborhood and the wonderful people Kaye and I have met here.

Beth Kainic

-Jean-Yves and I have been in Asheville for two years, and in SO for a little over one. That's my husband (motioned), but you have likely seen me more with my boyfriend, Shaggy (dog). We love where we live and we have now come to love our neighbors. I just wanted to serve this community. We want to keep this wonderful place going.

Mark Jordan

-Brad could you let us know precisely where Bobbi was stung by the bees so the T&L committee can work on this.

Tim Owings

-I was a pastor in my former life, and I'd like to tell a story. "A pastor was in the hospital and received a get well card from the board, We are praying for you, 17-4." HaHaHa. I can tell you anyone leading a group of people will never be 100% liked, and I don't always agree with this board's decisions, but I support them 17-4, just kidding. I support you fully, and greatly appreciate the tremendous amount of work you are doing.

Art Mandler

-I propose that we become an all electric community. To tell a story, when I was at a friend's funeral service, I mentioned that I hoped the mowers wouldn't come due to the noise and disruption. My friend's wife mentioned that her community had voted to become all electric and it was the best decision they have ever made.

Brad Allen

-Tell the rest of the story

Art Mandler

-The community uses a service, and they loaned their electric machines to the business owner. The business became known as an electric lawn care company and became very profitable.

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Kirsten Kern

RESULTS OF THE VOTE:

Sam Cooke has been unanimously elected

Beth Kainic has been unanimously elected

Motion to end meeting: Kirsten Kern

Seconded: Matt Kern

The meeting was adjourned.

-Now, for everyone's favorite, the HONEY!