

THE DOWNS OF HILLCREST NEWSLETTER

August 2024

August Board Meeting The Downs Board met Thursday, August 22 by Zoom, with 47 guests attending. That might be a record attendance, a good thing all around. Many went public with their thoughts, both in the meeting and the following day with emails.

Wanting to offer residents a chance to speak, but not to overwhelm regular Board business, two options were offered for prepared comments from residents. Options were a three-minute slot, reserved ahead of time, for a statement by an individual, or 10 minute slots (limited to 3) on the Board agenda on specific proposals, reserved and submitted ahead of time.

Four speakers who chose the 3 minute option (Dick Agnich, Gary Morchower, Richard Verret and Dianne Doggett with Gary Fagelman). Their comments all related to One Coventry, keeping it in the neighborhood and resolving the dispute favorably.

Three residents asked for time on the agenda for specific proposals:

1. Gerry Shanholt noted the high cost of legal representation and continued conflict, ordered the Board to speak with One Coventry's owners, and threatened a recall effort of the Board if they did not.
2. Dawn and Jon Mellon asked for an update on evaluating our community managers and suggested by-laws changes (limiting proxy vote collection, imposing Board term limits) and creating an Advisory Board of past directors.
3. Carol and Curt Welwood asked to clarify Board member roles and sought to replace SBB Management. They offered a rule to mandate parking on one side of The Downs streets, and for limits on use of open, or guest, parking spaces in The Downs. Further, they sought more stringent enforcement of CCRs, and more common property lighting.

After an hour of open floor comments, the meeting moved on to the agenda items set by the Board.

Financial Report Larry James

The Downs HOA financial position at the end of July remains sound. Through the end of July, 58% of the year has passed, and we've spent 46% of our full-year expense budget. That is a good position to be in because we have some large expenses that we'll incur between now and the end of the year. Two of these are: 1) The final phase of the Gate House renovation project; and 2) The annual tree maintenance in the fall.

- Legal expenses, which historically have averaged about \$6K per year, are \$28.6K year-to-date through July, with all but \$2K of that related to the One Coventry matter. From 2021 through July 2024, our net legal expenses for the One Coventry matter are \$244.6K. We have recouped legal fees associated with this matter in the past, and we expect to recoup a portion of them in the future.
- The Downs has an elaborate system of fourteen pumps that keep the water moving in our ponds. The system is expensive to maintain; already this year we have had to replace two pumps at a cost of \$22.5K.
- The dredging of Ponds 4 through 9, along Milford, has been completed, at a cost of \$32K. This is something we need to do every few years to remove sediment that naturally builds up in our waterways.
- Utility cost, mostly water, but also electricity, is down considerably this year primarily due to repair of a couple of water leaks in our system.
- As planned, year-to-date we've contributed \$19.8K to the HOA reserve account, bringing it to \$350K as of the end of July.
- The total HOA cash balance at the end of July was \$728K.
- Overall, we still expect to end the year close to the original HOA budget.

New Downs Website

A week or two after Labor Day, the new homeowners' association website will be ready for your use. For a short time beginning September 3, the old website will go dark as the domain name transfers to the new webmaster. When that transfer is complete, the first order of business will be a blast to all residents saying the new site is up and running.

What will be new? Updated neighborhood NEWS and an EVENTS calendar, archived Newsletters, a new format neighborhood directory, forms (like a Toll Tag registration) you can fill out and submit online, CCR's and Architectural Review documents you can more easily search, one-stop email contacts for all resident committees and more.

You'll need to register with the new site. We'll send instructions with that website launch announcement.

Downs Social Gears Up for Fall

- Friday evening 5pm Happy Hours continue (moved inside at least for hot weather, sometimes at a new home), so watch your Punchbowl invite.
- Lunch Bunches for Men and Women also by Punchbowl. New dates and places each month.
- Women's and Men's Book Clubs: resume on September 26 at 3pm. The reminder invite comes from Punchbowl.
- Cooking school at Sur la Table. The first one sold out so our social mavens offer another, Sunday September 8 at 10am. Again, find the Punchbowl invitation.
- October 20 Downs Block Party – Save the date.

Coming Your Way – By Mail

The Board approved moving forward with the proposal to amend The Downs bylaws in order to collect a fee from new buyers at the time of closing equal to one year's annual assessment. The proceeds would be added to the HOA's reserve fund for maintenance and upkeep of the neighborhood. The proposal has been checked by attorneys to make sure its language is clear and that it comports with Texas law.

With this Board approval, soon residents will receive a packet of information and a ballot regarding the proposal.

Mosquito Fogging Our warm-month weekly fogging throughout The Downs will continue into October, probably. Monday evenings are our usual time for this service. Labor Day, however, will push this to Tuesday, September 3. In addition to our fogging, residents have been notified that a City of Dallas testing station somewhere on Churchill Way identified some mosquitoes carrying West Nile Virus, so the City did an additional fogging in our neighborhood recently.

Area Redevelopment The Downs will apparently have a new neighbor at the three former Brinker International buildings, located at Hillcrest Plaza Drive, just north of us. The new owner is Trinity Bible Church, presently located on Dyer Street, near SMU. The buildings will stay in place – one will become a sanctuary, and one will be remodeled for a school. They do not presently run a school, so that will be a start-up that will likely take some time. The third building does not currently have a purpose set. If there are City approvals required for this project we do not know what they are at this point.

August Management Report – by SBB Management and Committees

Further details of the August Management Report will be found on the downsofhillcrest.com website when it launches in September. Here is a summary of what was covered.

Front Gate project Renovations at the Gate House are mostly complete, and improvements to the surrounding landscape are in the works. We're working on presenting a clean uncluttered look with a new monument "The Downs of Hillcrest" that can be seen

from Churchill Way. Consistently reading resident Toll Tags is a part of the project. (Contact amenities@sbbmanagement.com if you have problems.)

Community Manager Inspections These are done regularly throughout the neighborhood by SBB. Focus recently has been on election signs (one sign per candidate per yard), on parking issues and visible trash cans on non-trash collection days. Residents with ongoing renovations are encouraged to require contractors not to park so that a Fire truck, for example, would be unable to pass through. We can act on this more quickly than anyone else.

This newsletter follows every Downs Board meeting. The next will happen late in the year, perhaps November.