

The Downs of Hillcrest NEWSLETTER MAY 2024

FINANCIAL REPORT

- Year-to-date through April the Downs HOA had a surplus of \$74.8K. We often run positive in the early months of the year because certain large expense categories, such as Landscaping and Utilities, peak later in the year.
- Legal Expenses continue to run higher than historical levels. Year-to-date through April, Legal Expenses were \$14.6K, with \$13.1K of that related to the 1 Coventry matter, which cumulatively has cost the HOA \$231K since 2021. The HOA, by court order, has been awarded, and therefore has recouped, legal fees associated with this litigation 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. While they are a very attractive feature of The Downs, they are expensive to maintain. Last year we had \$37K of pump-related expenses and thus far in 2024 we've had another \$18K. Some of our waterways also require periodic dredging to remove sediment that naturally builds up. Our contractor is in the process of dredging the ponds along Milford and in the northwest corner of the Downs. We've budgeted \$40K for that work this year.
- As planned, \$11.3K has been contributed to the reserve account this year.
- The HOA cash balance at the end of April was \$542K.

PLEASE WELCOME EUSTY HERMIDA

Eusty is our new Community Manager at SBB, working alongside Rich Nelson (Senior Community Manager) on behalf of The Downs. He replaces Nancy Barcenas, who has left SBB. Eusty has had decades of experience managing real estate, in sales, shopping centers, hotels. Originally from Cuba, Eusty is married with a wife & two daughters he adores. Contact Eusty at e.hermida@sbbmanagement.com. SBB Community Management continues to manage contracts, billing and CCR notices and approvals for our neighborhood.

BOLO Downs common property amounts to an estimated 20 acres of land, trees and shrubs, streets, lights, ponds and pumps, plus wildlife that either visits or nests here. As warm days arrive, remember to be aware as you walk – not every wild animal will make you grin and say “Ooh, Look!” Snakes hide in tall grass or rocks or debris piles - stay away. There are a few baby ducks and geese in the neighborhood – please watch where you drive.

HAPPINESS Weather permitting, Friday Happy Hours will resume beginning this week. Notices of where and when will continue to come to your email address. Downs Social Connection says the next big thing – a Block Party -- will happen in September, though Book Clubs continue through much of summer – find the schedule in the front of the Downs Directory.

MANAGEMENT REPORTS

PONDS AND PUMPS AND DREDGING

The healthier our trees are, the more work we have to keep the water flowing, cleared of pollen and leaves. Dredging accumulated gunk is part of the process – that’s what the large contractor boxes parked on the street have been for. Then, without pumps to keep water moving, we’d have dry waterfalls and still creekbeds. In two ponds (4 & 5 FYI) dredging has been completed and #7 (in the northwest corner of the Downs) is expected to begin next week.

GATEHOUSE AND VEHICLE GATES

NTTA switched to a new, smaller Toll Tag in January, which necessitated new Toll Tag readers all across town. We have two, and have one to re-install this week, with the second one expected to be finished by month’s end. Your old Toll Tags will still work.

The **Gatehouse** has a few final projects. The **landscaping** around it is being planned around a new Downs of Hillcrest marquee planned for the streetside area. The center island inside the gate has just been planted, and planting has been approved for the pond area between Masland and Ryddington. Additional bollards (now 5) are intended to **keep vehicles in their own lane** as they enter the Downs. Gates will be adjusted to begin closing 3-5 seconds sooner than they have been recently in order to **discourage tailgating**. And a new high-tech **camera system** has been installed to actively record gate activity.

Downs residents with HR and community management experience have been consulted regarding efforts to improve consistency in the gate ID protocols. We plan to send another copy of the **gate entry protocols** to each household soon, to remind everyone of what our attendants are required to do.

Note, if more residents used the **Gate Sentry app** to pre-authorize visitor and service entries, those authorizations save time and complication for gate attendants. We believe only 42% of households are active users.

STREETS AND STREETLIGHTS

All streetlights are working, at the moment. Mosquito fogging (Monday evenings after 9pm) commenced April 29 and will continue weekly until cool weather. As this focuses primarily on streets, your back yard is your own challenge.

CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM

We follow City of Dallas code regarding political yard signs. You can post them 90 days before an election (ie August 7) and need to remove them within 10 days after the election. Signs are limited to candidates or issues on an upcoming ballot, and also limited to one sign per candidate and one sign per issue per lot.

PROPOSAL: WORKING CAPITAL TRANSFER FEE FOR DOWNS NEW HOME BUYERS

The board will consider amending Downs bylaws in order to collect a fee amounting to one year's annual assessment, collected at closing, from any new buyer of a Downs residence.

Proposal is to amend The Downs bylaws to add a new form of fee, commonly referred to as a "transfer fee."

This fee would apply to each new buyer of a Downs home. Existing homeowners would not be subject to the fee, and the Board intends to consult legal counsel in adopting language consistent with that.

It would be collected as a closing cost, at the time title to the property is transferred.

The proceeds would be added to the HOA's reserve fund.

It is intended to help ensure that future maintenance and upkeep of the neighborhood is supported by those coming into the neighborhood.

Some other HOAs have similar fees. For example, Glen Lakes has such a transfer fee and the amount is equal to one year's assessment.

Real estate agents have indicated that this fee is common and does not negatively impact sales of homes in the class of the Downs community.

First next step is to consult with attorneys and develop amendment language, presentation and voting materials.

Prior to voting, materials will be distributed to residents, including a Q&A package, and a town hall held to answer questions.

Vote threshold for passage of the amendment is a majority of Downs property owners.

The Downs transfer fee would initially be set at one year's assessment.

Amount of the fee depends on whether the property is an Interior Lot or a Lake Lot.

Based on last 10-year average Downs home sales, and current assessment level, potential revenue raised would be approximately \$40K/year.

NEW DOWNS WEBSITE

The editor's head is presently swimming in Downs details, documents, forms, and instructions, as all need to be accurately placed in the new website before we can release it. Be assured, it's coming. But I'm a one-woman-band, trying to create a symphony.

MEMORIAL DAY FLAGS

Thanks to a generous group of volunteers (often with their grandchildren), once again Memorial Day and Independence Day and Veterans Day will feature American flags posted around the neighborhood. Soon after these holidays, the flags are collected and repaired as needed and saved for the next display. Flags will be set out Friday May 24 and removed by Tuesday morning May 28. If you would like to help distribute or pick up for any of these events, please call Bill Perry (979-571-0618).

The next meeting of the board will happen in August. Happy summer! Edited by Tory Agnich (Tory@agnich.com)