

CLEARVIEW HEIGHTS CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION
Meeting Minutes
November 5, 2013

Present: Karen Burkinshaw, Brian Gauthier, Richard Lacasse, Linda McClay, Norman Muller, and Ed Severance of Northeast Environmental Solutions. In addition to the Trustees, 19 unit owners attended this meeting.

Ms. Burkinshaw called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. The purpose of this meeting was to bring owners up to date about the hill erosion problem behind Building 2.

THE PROBLEM:

The very steep slope behind Building 2 (units 9-16) has been a recurring problem for about 20 years. Previous stabilization initiatives on other areas of the slope (that runs approximately 250 feet behind Building 2) have been done. The most recent problem occurred two years ago during Hurricane Irene, when a large tree behind the Unit 16 end of the building was uprooted and fell down the slope. This left a large hole in the side of the hill and over the next year or so, a lot of soil (no longer held in place by the tree) washed down the slope and also eroded the slope near the bottom. Last year, the engineering firm of Tighe & Bond was hired to assess the situation and make recommendations. They carried out test borings, soil testing, and other tests and came up with a variety of "fixes" ranging from erecting a 75-foot high retaining wall at a cost of millions of dollars to planting vegetation on the side of the hill to stabilize it, at a much lower cost. Since the earth is constantly moving, none of the repairs would be guaranteed to last. Tighe & Bond proposed to plant vegetation on the side of the hill by first blazing a road at the bottom of the slope and then working up the hill. After more research, we were introduced to and met with Northeast Environmental Solutions who could do the same planting by blowing the planting materials through a hose from above the hill resulting in a much lower cost. We contracted with Northeast Environmental solutions to stabilize an area about twenty feet wide behind Unit 16.

Ed Severance told the group his company has been doing this type of work for 13 years and has successfully stabilized 75 to 85 slopes this way. By rappelling down from the top of the hill, existing wetlands are not disturbed, and the repair is accomplished at a much lower cost. Ed's repair plan was submitted to the Chicopee Conservation Commission, who has jurisdiction over the wetlands area, and they approved it. The actual repair was done in two steps during the month of October. The entire area was sprayed with a mixture of loam, mulch, and various types of seeds, anchored down with a carpet of plastic biodegradable mesh and hay, and covered with a second application of loam, mulch, and seeds. Over the winter, this will take root and later on, we may wish to plant bigger plants in the area. Ed and his people will regularly inspect the area for the next three years as will the Chicopee Conservation Commission.

THE COSTS:

Since January 1, 2012, the Association has spent \$33,130.13 on this problem. The bills have all been paid with money taken from other reserve accounts. We are required by

law to have reserve accounts for all capital items that we know will need replacement from time to time such as: roadways, decks, fences, roofs, buildings, etc. Since a problem such as hill erosion cannot be foreseen, no reserves were set up for this expense. The issue then becomes how do we pay for this? A lively discussion ensued as owners pointed out pros and cons of absorbing this expense in our yearly budget versus having a special assessment to pay for it. If we take this money out of reserves, we could still function day-to-day, but we would need to defer other projects such as residing Building 1, mailbox replacement, deck replacement, and other major projects that need to be done. When the Building 5 project was done, we completely emptied our reserves and our reserves have not recovered from that. If we declare an assessment, this will negatively impact many owners who are on a fixed income.

THE OUTCOME:

The Trustees will consider all the information and opinions offered and decide on a financial plan at our next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Norman Muller
Vice President