

# **Irongate Homeowners Association**

## **APPROVED Annual Meeting Minutes**

12/3/2020

### **Opening**

The annual Irongate Homeowners Association was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on 12/3/2020 by Pam Poelker, president of the Irongate Homeowners Association board of directors.

### **Present**

Pam Poelker - President

Gary Graham - Member at Large

Marcie Miller - Treasurer

Sharon Ussery - Sentry Management

Maria Paulsen - Secretary

Community Manager

Greg Ford - Member at Large

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the November 21, 2019 meeting were amended to note a change to a comment regarding pool capacity, noting that capacity is 150 rather than 200. The minutes of the previous annual meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Account Balances as of October 31, 2020:

Current Assets: \$55,584.08

Assessments: \$19,948.33

Miscellaneous Assessments & Fines: \$2,652.20

Legal Fees/Collections: \$7,255.32

Total Accounts Receivable: \$29,855.85

Letters were sent regarding outstanding balances.

### **Violations Report**

No report. The position of vice president has yet to be filled.

### **Participant Question and Answer:**

Craig: Are we voting on the budget or no?

Pam Poelker: No. We do not vote on a budget. You elect your board, and your board comes up with the budget, and we approve that. The old model was the membership voted on the budget, and that is not part of our bylaws now. I don't know if it ever was, but I don't know. It got changed -- part of that is because for this very reason you elect -- that's why it's important to elect your board members, because they're going to manage the association. If you have 469 homeowners -- well, it's hard to get a quorum. So it prevents us from moving along, so --

Craig: Because I remember -- was it in the bylaws or the covenants before where the board couldn't spend so much without homeowners' approval?

Pam Poelker: That's still in there, yes. If it's in the budget we can spend it, but like if something came up big that we needed to spend more, then -- but it wasn't in a budget, then --

Greg Ford: So, Craig, when we rewrote the bylaws in 2000 and --

Pam Poelker: '15.

Greg Ford: -- '15, the lawyer gave us some guidance on wording for that particular section. We used that, and now it is interpreted that it has to be approved somehow, and it doesn't say members versus board members. So the board takes it upon themselves to approve for the simple fact of if we don't get a quorum, like we didn't in '16 for all the way up until March, we have to go and do something. You know, we have to have some avenue to make that approved. So that's how they're going about it now. The only way that can be changed at this point is if someone opens up the idea of open up the bylaws. If you do that, that's a very dangerous position, because there's going to be changes throughout the bylaws, and then it has to be back to the quorum to be approved to go back into place again. So think about that if you want to go that route.

Participant: Wait a minute. What about raising the dues?

Craig: Yeah.

Greg Ford: 6 percent. Dues are automatically 6 percent. That was always --

Participant: The board can't raise them more than 6 percent without --

Greg Ford: No more than 6 percent.

Pam Poelker: Correct.

Greg Ford: Yes, ma'am.

Craig: So you guys can decide to do more fencing --

Pam Poelker: Yes.

Craig: -- spend another \$30,000 of our money without our approval?

Pam Poelker: Correct.

Craig: Nice. Okay.

Greg Ford: The 10 percent that you're mentioning specifically, we wrote a -- put that in there. 10 percent per line item was in there specifically for the overrun of our legal fees that went \$70,000 one year. Okay? That's why we put that in there. The backstop was to have the members to approve that budget. Now that it's not interpreted that way, the 10 percent, the board, we can change that 10 percent at any point. You know, the way it's being interpreted now. So, yes, it might not be what you wanted to hear, but that's the way we're being directed at this point.

Craig: Were the bylaws voted on by the homeowners or --

Greg Ford: The bylaws did not have to be voted on by the homeowners at that point. If you remember, the bylaws had -- the board can change at any point and enforce the bylaws as they wish.

Pam Poelker: But that's not the case now.

Greg Ford: So when we rewrote them, that was the whole reason why I rewrote them is to stop that and to allow you as a homeowner to have some say in the way we govern our homeowners association. So now that was a stop to keep the board from coming in, just doing whatever they wanted, give the power back to the homeowners, but now it's kind of biting us, because now we have this little situation of budget, and we kind of -- we've had the discussion on

the board somewhat, and I know the homeowners -- I'm a homeowner as well -- I don't like that, but I'm also a board member and know what we have to do as a board.

Craig: Do we even get to see the budget or --

Pam Poelker: Yes.

Marcie Miller: Oh, yes.

Pam Poelker: You will receive the budget in the packets that will come out the first of the year with the bill, and I will tell you that the board has approved -- it's not -- it's like 5.99 percent increase. The dues for 2021 will be \$146.

Craig: What's the need for the increase?

Pam Poelker: Electric is going up 7.7 percent. We have a need for maintaining the trees in the neighborhood. Our landscape contract is going up. Costs are going up. And we are also working on starting sort of a savings account, which we have now, but we still plan to do the fence, but we did not get to do a reserve study this year because of Covid. We -- what a reserve study is going to do is someone will come in and look at all our property and our land and our facilities and tell us what we need to start saving for. And then -- so we have a line item in our budget that is going to start that savings for the reserves.

### **Committee Reports**

Pool Report: There were over 90 families that joined the pool this year. There was a delay in opening the pool because of Covid, but it opened as soon as possible without capacity restrictions. The pool closed slightly sooner than preferable, but improvements and repairs were made, including sand filters, valves and pipes.

Crime Report: If you see something, say something. Keep porch lights on all night. The board would like to save up money for streetlights, despite challenges of organizing within two municipalities. In the meantime, keep houselights on as much as possible.

### **Old Business**

Irongate 2020 Accomplishments:

- We weathered the COVID-19 crisis with the pool opening – we did open the pool at full capacity and had a great season.
- Food Trucks – we arranged for food trucks to visit on several occasions. These events were mostly organized by homeowners! We also had the Booze Pop truck about 4 times!
- Trimmed oak trees at the front entrance – lifted the canopy considerably
- Took care of several trees in the Recreation Area that were ill and falling down
- Removed sand from playground equipment and installed a heavy layer of wood mulch
- Used the sand to fill some low spots in the recreation area
- Installed bulletin boards to communicate HOA information and for community posting
- Had playground equipment inspected and repaired. Replaced broken swing
- Successfully took over the key card system for the pool from the prior vendor and are now able to control the system ourselves without the middle man and the lag time for making changes
- The Welcome Committee made approximately 20 visits to new residents. Delivered folders with neighborhood and local area information and an Irongate koozie

- Worked with local law enforcement and City Council to remove a ‘tent city’ located close to Irongate
- Had new fencing on Trolley Road sealed
- Purchased and posted a ‘Congratulations’ banner for 2020 graduates (COVID-19)
- Continued to inspect the neighborhood for C&R violations. Didn’t happen as often as we would like – VP turnover issues and then a BoD resignation hampered progress
- Volunteers worked with the County on traffic issues. Two new speed signs were installed on Savannah Round this week in our pursuit to slow down speeders
- Replaced pool sand filters and the pump for the big pool
- Regular monthly visits by the Dorchester County Bookmobile
- Active Architectural Review Committee responding to as many as 50 plus requests a year

#### 2021 Goals:

- Replace the remaining old fencing on Trolley Road – dependent on new cost estimates, lumber pricing and cash reserves
- Lay new mulch at front entrance and add plantings to the center median area
- Set up a volunteer landscape team to coordinate areas that need work. Resurrect Yard of the Month if the volunteer team deems it worthwhile
- Offer more social events at the pool again – Ladies Nights, movie nights, Easter egg hunt, etc.
- Informal Audit of HOA financial records
- Be intentional about regular property inspections
- Initiate a Reserve Fund Study to see what we need to be saving for in the future
- Get more volunteers involved in the operations of the HOA – some specific needs: signboard volunteers, landscaping team, violations team

#### **New Business**

Participant: Is the pool going to run like it did last year -- individual membership?

Pam Poelker: Yes. Yes. We are looking for new pool management. My great pool manager is deserting me. She will be here -- she will be able to assist and advise. She's not going to desert me. But we are looking for new management there.

I know that in our November meetings -- I'm going to bring this up, and it's not something the board has the energy to do, but some people asked about possibly using the field for a boat/RV storage area. That's something that if we had a committee that wanted to look into that, we would certainly support looking into it. I -- there's a lot more to it than just throwing down some gravel and a chain link fence. I don't have a boat, but I wouldn't put my boat here if it didn't have lights and security and all that kind of stuff. So I think there's probably more than we can do, but it's worth looking into if people want to do that. So --

Participant: Isn't there a piece of property back in the back that was allocated for that off of Essex --

Participant: There was. But I don't know --

Participant: There was? Yeah. I've heard that for years and years. It was in between two houses. There's a place back there that was allocated at one point for --

Pam Poelker: There's an easement.

Marcie Miller: Yeah, it's got to be where the easement is.

Pam Poelker: Yeah. Must be where the easement is, but I don't -- and we maintain that, because if we waited on the county -- but it's, again -- yeah, I mean, my personal opinion would be I sure as heck wouldn't want a boat lot between my house. You know? And it's not that big anyway. And I think this -- this is three and a half acres of land that we have back here. So I think about what we might have if we wanted to use that for something like that is about an acre. And I don't really think it's enough space, and we have to cut down a lot of trees to have access. I mean I just -- it's kind of a good idea, but I think it's way more than we could undertake. And so - - but I -- you know, letting people know that if somebody wants to take on that project and do the research and find out what we would need to do, and, you know, we'd need an engineer and all that stuff. So it's not off the table. That's what I wanted to say.

### **Voting Results**

A quorum was reached. Nicholas Bryant, Gary Graham, Becky Sharpe, and Darius Stevenson were elected to serve on the board of directors for a two-year term. Greg Ford, Marcie Miller, and Pam Poelker have one year left on their terms.

### **Participant Question and Answer:**

Participant: Is there like a spot you put when you need volunteers for certain projects, or is it just kind of like whenever you happen to see it on Facebook, or is there like a location that says dates or times or things that you need or --

Pam Poelker: So, yes. We have a website. We have a website, and I -- it's on my calendar to update it every Monday at 3 o'clock. I get a little reminder. But that is the place that we would use to do that. And we also -- I don't know how many -- how many of you got an email from the board -- when did I send that? Monday? Sunday? Sunday or Monday. We have 313 names on our email list that we took all the emails that we had from Sentry and people that signed up and people that had joined the pool. They all got on that list. And so we want to be able to use email to communicate more. It costs -- so this little proxy and meeting announcement, \$423 to mail that to you, because we have 469 homes. So it's not inexpensive. So we don't want to have to rely on paper mail. And so we are going to be using the email. There's a signup on the front page of our website, and I bet, Ron, that we can pin that to the top of our Facebook page. I'll get you the link.

Participant: The website you're talking about?

Pam Poelker: So it's on the front page of our website, and we will also pin it on the Facebook page. And if you have interest in volunteering, please come and talk to me.

### **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at time by Pam Poelker at 7:31 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Maria Paulsen

**MINUTES APPROVED AT 2021 Annual Meeting  
on November 4-6-7, 2021**