

Message from the President - Spring 2024



Long-time residents have seen a decline in Meadowlark; the board frequently hears it isn't what it used to be. This is a 20+-year-old community. Allowances must be made for dead trees and faded siding, worn-out landscaping, and trees that need to be trimmed. Over time there are mailbox numbers that do not match the approved font, rusted mailboxes, mailbox posts needing paint, faded shutters on houses, and every spring and summer, WEEDS.

We are not condos. Each person owns the land and their building. You are responsible for the outside maintenance of your house. It is your siding, your shutters, your landscaping. The HOA does not maintain the outside of your property, despite what you understood from your realtor. The HOA only provides mowing, edging, and snow removal. We also maintain common areas, trees that get mulched, ponds that get treated, and fountains to be maintained and repaired.

There are hidden costs that go along with these things. The board is all volunteers. We do pay for a management company that does our accounting, maintains records, collects dues, finds vendors for repairs and maintenance, and, drives the neighborhood every three weeks photographing violations and mailing letters asking the violation be remedied.

Did you know we also must maintain liability insurance on common areas? If a person is injured in a common area the insurance covers us. If we did not have insurance, then each homeowner would be responsible for paying a portion of that claim.

We have five fountains to operate and maintain. AES charges us \$35 rental for each meter, plus any electrical we use when the fountains are operating. Speaking of fountains, we also maintain repair insurance on the fountains, which has saved several thousand dollars in repairs over the past four years. The fountains are getting old and are more difficult to get repaired. The board realizes that installing new fountains is in the future. We hope to only replace one at a time.

There are professional fees for accountants to file tax returns, and for attorneys to answer legal questions that Kirkpatrick isn't qualified to answer. Indiana HOA Act and the Non-profit Act are laws we are subject to. The laws change and update and we must keep up with changes in the laws. This is to protect all the homeowners, not just board members.

This board has done everything possible to keep costs down. We are not renting a big sign to advertise the garage sale; the community picnic has been dropped from the budget. The next thing the board can do to save money and not increase the dues will be to cut back on services. We've discussed cutting mowing to every other week toward the end of the season, we have turned back the number of hours the fountains run, and we've discussed having a 3" snow trigger instead of a 2" snow trigger. We used to publish two newsletters a year, but stopped due to the increased cost of printing. We also don't have people who are willing to walk around the neighborhood and distribute flyers.

Board members are people you elect to make decisions for you, just like your state representative votes and introduces bills for their constituents. Every year board positions become open. People who have been on the board for years are there because they care about their neighbors and their neighborhood, but also because there is a lack of volunteers. If you are interested in getting involved, you can contact any board member for information. Join a committee so you can learn the processes that are followed and learn how decisions are made and new ideas are introduced.

Board meetings are held monthly from April through October and are open to residents who would like to make suggestions or ask questions. Only the Executive Session is closed because matters of delinquency and violations are discussed. The board can tell you how much is outstanding in delinquencies and how many open violations there are at any given time, but we cannot provide the names of the individuals.

We currently have over \$11,000 in delinquent accounts. Bad debt is not included in our current budget. Yes, eventually we may collect all those monies, but it isn't guaranteed. That amount would cover liability insurance and management fees for a year! Think of that. Your neighbors who do not pay their bills are causing the board to cut services and ask for future fee increases.

Soon you will be receiving a copy of the updated By-Laws, Covenants, and Plat Restrictions. Please read your Plat Restrictions. They will tell you what you are allowed to do and what you are expected to do. If you have a complaint about someone's property not being maintained, take a photo of the problem and send it to Valerie Atwell at KMC: vatwell@ekirkpatrick.com. Your name will not be disclosed. If you don't report it, then don't complain. Unknown violations cannot be fixed.

Because of the Indiana HOA Act, there is a lengthy process we must follow to resolve both violations and delinquencies. It may appear nothing is being accomplished, but I assure you, we work diligently to follow the steps to resolution. We ask your understanding that it does take more time than any of us would like.

As you can see, there are many things that we must deal with that are not easily apparent to our community. The Board continues with our commitment to serve to the best of our ability for the betterment of our community.

Paula Moore, President

Meadowlark HOA Board of Directors