

Bear Island

Homeowners Association Newsletter

April 2021

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I hope everyone is enjoying our beautiful spring weather as we hopefully "round the corner" from the pandemic.

Keeping our fingers crossed, we have started to meet again at Bear Lakes Country Club. We'll hold our annual meeting and election there on Thursday, April 22, starting at 4:30 p.m. Registration will begin at 4 p.m.

We have many new residents as the South Florida housing market has ex-

ploded and Bear Island is a very desirable community. As I have written before, I try to call and welcome the new residents and answer any of their questions. I constantly hear from the residents how much they enjoy Bear Island because of how quiet and well-kept the community is.



The sun rises over Bear Island Drive.

UPDATES AND REMINDERS

Lethal viral necrosis: The lethal viral necrosis outbreak has so far been limited to five lawns on White Wing Lane. All five of those homeowners have replaced their front yards. We know we aren't out of the woods, and we continue to monitor our lawns and common areas.

ACC applications: Residents are still making improvements such as landscaping, painting and building of back-yard structures without seeking approval of the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) as required by Bear Island's governing documents. Failure to file an ACC application, available on the Bear Island website (<http://bearisland.us/site/general-forms/>), could result in fines and ultimately a legal action, neither of which we want to happen. It's also the homeowner's responsibility to get any necessary permits from the City of West Palm Beach before submitting an ACC application.

Landscaping, leaves and hedge heights: There

Continued on Page 2

ANNUAL MEETING BEAR ISLAND HOA

Thursday, April 22
Bear Lakes Country Club
Registration begins at 4 p.m.
Meeting begins at 4:30 p.m.

*Agenda will be posted
on the Bear Island website.*

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Continued from Page 1

are always complaints about the leaves being blown back into flower beds and hedges after mowing. Per our contract, Florida Image, is responsible for mowing and trimming front lawns, but they are not personal gardeners. Approximately once a month, Florida Image trims our hedges and bushes and rakes leaves from the beds, and now that growing season has begun they are mowing lawns weekly.

The HOA Board of Directors has agreed with the Landscape Committee's recommendation to give Florida Image some guidelines for hedge heights. Hedges should be maintained at least two feet below any roof soffits and at or below the window level in the front of our homes. A City ordinance limits hedges to a height of 10 feet, which would apply to our back yards, walls and fences. Hopefully this will clarify our landscaping guidelines and alleviate any disputes between neighbors.

Speeding and stop signs: There is still a speeding problem, especially on Bear Island Drive, in both the front and back sections of the community. Please adhere to the posted speed limit of 25 mph, as residents are walking their dogs and little children may be in the area. Also please come to a complete stop at all stop signs. Let's help keep everyone safe.

Security and exterior lighting: Thank you to the increasing number of homeowners who turn on their exterior lights from dusk to dawn, as this is an easy way to help deter criminal activity. We really would like to see the whole community doing this as there are still many dark areas. Another crime deterrent is the installation of motion-sensitive lights in the back of your home. The electricity for all this lighting really doesn't add much to your power bill.

Complaint procedure: If you have a complaint about the landscaper or any other issue, the proper procedure is to notify MMI, our property management company either by email to nryan@miamimanagement.com or telephone (561-686-7818). MMI will either address the issue and try to resolve it or refer the complaint to the Board for any action. Complaining to neighbors without notifying MMI does not solve the problem. Residents are always encouraged to attend a monthly HOA Board meeting as the meetings are open to all residents. Meeting notices are posted on the Bear Island website and at the Gate House.

About our Board: Every year I say this but it is very true. I would like to thank our hard-working Board of Directors for volunteering their time (and garage) over the past year in some difficult times. A special thanks to Pat Miclean as Chair of the ACC, interim chair Rebecca Dodge and the ACC for staying on top of applications and assisting homeowners in their requests. Also, I want to thank Vickie Bender, Chair of the Landscape Committee, in helping to keep the landscaping fresh, not only in the common areas but in residents' front yards. Further thanks to David Carpenter, new Chair of the Fines Committee, and his committee for fairly and reasonably enforcing the rules of Bear Island. And lastly, thanks to Paul Nonnenmacher for taking over the Communications Committee and editing this newsletter and monitoring our website.

All board and committee members are volunteers, some of whom have full-time jobs. Bear Island is 34 years old, and as such, more problems arise resulting in more expenses. Because the Board tries to meet monthly, issues may take longer to resolve, but eventually they will be addressed. If you are interested in assisting the Board or a committee, please let us know.

Enjoy the Spring and if traveling, travel safely. We'll keep a light on for you.

Howard C. Berman, President
Bear Island Homeowners Association

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Bear Island will soon have a new website.

Working with Robert Krausankas of Web Design of Palm Beach, Inc., the Communications Committee is modernizing BearIsland.us. It will have the look and feel of the current site, which was built in 2012, but the vast amount of information the site includes – everything from meeting minutes to rules and regulations – is being reorganized to make it easier to use.

The new site is expected to go live this spring.

Paul Nonnenmacher
Communications Committee Chair

PROPERTY MANAGER'S REPORT

Bulk waste: Typically, during April and May, before hurricane season, the City of West Palm Beach will collect larger than normally allowed piles of yard debris. Please call the City Sanitation Department at 561-822-2075 to ask about the amnesty yard waste program before placing any large piles of debris at the curb.

Remember, bulk waste and landscaping debris may not be placed at the curb prior to 5 p.m. the day before pick-up.

Help the Gate House: Our Gate House attendants do their best to screen incoming guests, vendors, homeowners and government vehicles. You can help them by making sure your guest lists are up to date, making sure to delete those people you do not wish to grant permanent access. Please note that if the waiting queue backs up onto Village Boulevard; the attendants have instructions to allow vehicles to enter the community without screening them, though all license tags are recorded.

To update your list, use the Resident Information Form (<http://bearisland.us/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/resident-info.pdf>). Add or remove vendors and permanent guests, and add, remove or change home phone numbers.

Vendor and parking rules: Just a reminder, vendors or people working on your home must be off the property by 6 p.m., unless it is an emergency. An emergency is defined as

- no air conditioning when the temperature is above 80 degrees,
- no heat when the temperature drops below 65 degrees,
- no electricity or
- a leak in your plumbing.

Entry transponders: Transponders are not transferable between vehicles, so if you buy or lease a new vehicle you need to apply for a new transponder and advise MMI of the old transponder that needs to be deactivated. New transponders cost \$35. Please use the transponder form from the Bear Island website (http://bearisland.us/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/6_19-Transponder-App-06012019.pdf) or at the Gate House.

Some vehicles cannot use the conventional transponder. Bear Island transponders are made by the same company that makes them for SunPass, so to see whether your vehicle needs a special transponder check the SunPass Transponders web page (<https://www.sunpass.com/en/about/sunpassTransponders.shtml?sy=tagInstallation>) and scroll down to "Special Windshield Considerations." If your vehicle cannot use a windshield transponder, a front bumper-mounted transponder, which costs \$75, can be installed.

Selling or leasing your home? Please use the Sales Application Form available online (http://bearisland.us/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/6_3_19-Sales-Application-06-03-2019-Complete.pdf) or from MMI (561-686-7818) to give your real estate agent permission to enter when showing or managing your home. It is important to remember if an owner is delinquent in his or her dues or if there are outstanding violations on the property the Board has the right to refuse to grant approval for a sale or lease.

Also, Bear Island does not allow "For Sale" signs.

Pets: Pets must be kept on a leash and under control at all times. Remember to pick up after your pet and dispose of pet waste properly. Pet waste can transmit disease. The City prohibits pets' being tethered outside unless accompanied by a person.

Crime prevention: Do not leave bait for criminals visible in your car. "Move it or lose it" is the motto of the West Palm Beach Police Department. Here's a neat trick I learned from the Police Department: Should you hear someone suspicious outside your home at night, simply press the panic button on your vehicle key fob. It will scare anyone away! Then immediately call the Police.

TREES, TREES, TREES

Last fall, the *Palm Beach Post* published a story headlined, “Oak trees the root of hazardous sidewalks and rancorous neighborhood battles” (<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/story/news/2020/10/09/oak-trees-root-hazardous-sidewalks-and-neighborhood-battles/5924493002/>). I urge everyone to read the story in its entirety, but allow me to quote a section:

“Twenty-eight years ago, it seemed like a good idea for Palm Beach County planners to require developers to install oak or mahogany trees between sidewalks and streets.

“They were expected to become beautiful overhead canopies providing shade from the South Florida heat, to mitigate climate change by capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, to absorb rain through their leaves and to provide a habitat for birds. They have accomplished all that.

“But their extensive root systems have also uplifted sidewalks and curbs.”



Oak trees form a canopy over Bear Island Circle.

So, this problem is not unique to Bear Island. Many communities are incurring annual repair bills of \$50,000 to \$200,000 or more. Several communities have removed large numbers of trees causing major confrontations between residents who want to save the trees and those that want them removed. Palm Beach County requires one to two replacement trees to be planted for every tree removed.

Not only have these beautiful trees uplifted our sidewalks and caused expensive repairs to prevent trip-and-fall hazards, they have uplifted portions of the gutters in the streets causing water drainage problems resulting in ponding of water in front of several driveways.

When Bear Island repaved its roads a few years ago, we also had the gutters realigned to improve water drainage, though a few areas simply could not be properly aligned totally due to tree roots. In front of eight to 10 homes where water ponded directly in front of the driveway apron, we installed surface drains. These drains require regular maintenance to keep them clear and require commercial vacuuming 12-18 months so water can continue to drain. Howard Wight, our neighbor whose company installed the drains, cleaned them out in March.

A few residents who have this problem would like us to remove the trees. This would cost between \$6,500 and \$7,000 per location and also involve removing the gutters, cutting the pavement, removing the tree roots, reinstalling the gutters with the proper pitch, patching the asphalt and, possibly, repairing the sidewalk. And the same problem could occur elsewhere, so we'd constantly be doing these projects.

You may recall we just leveled sections of sidewalks that were becoming trip hazards due to tree roots. That repair work cost around \$25,000.

For now, we have elected to continue to work with the surface drains which, when maintained and regularly cleaned out by residents who have them, should keep water from ponding. The HOA will continue to have them commercially vacuumed out every 12 to 18 months.

Gail Saunders
Secretary

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Several people have asked about my different volunteer assignments in the Villages of Palm Beach Lakes, the section of the city that's home to Bear Island and several other communities, and the City of West Palm Beach. I'd like to try to clarify the situation.

President, Villages of Palm Beach Lakes Property Owners Association: In addition to working with our manager for optimum economical service, I continually lobby the City for financial assistance on maintaining city-owned properties. The medians throughout the Villages, such as that on Village Boulevard, are City-owned. The City has said it would cost \$245,000 a year to maintain them, but the POA does it for \$40,000 a year under an annual contract – and, I believe, we do it better than the City could. I speak often at POA meetings about this ongoing battle.

Chairperson, Criminal Justice Advisory Commission (CJAC): Crime prevention throughout the City is our focus. I address the City Commission about the ongoing problem of budget shortfalls and the need to fully staff and equip our police department.

Since I attend nearly every meeting of the City government, some people incorrectly refer to me as the Bear Island liaison. When requested by our residents to bring a concern to the city, I appeared to be uncooperative. Please understand, what may be seen as my lack of cooperation is for one of the following reasons.

- I annoy the commissioners and staff more than enough for their obligatory duties, I dare not request extras. City staff and employees have been shorthanded for years in all departments.
- There are some issues that I know would be dead ends, such as speed control and traffic calming. I made a fruitless attempt at this 15 years ago, so I concluded it's not worth further pursuit.

Thanks for your attention, your questions are always welcome.

Ron Warnecke
Vice President

LANDSCAPING COMMITTEE REPORT

It's great to see that homeowners have been busy improving their front yards with new plants and sod. It makes such a big difference in the appearance of the community and we want to encourage everyone to keep their front yards looking their best.

Of course, all landscape changes in the front yards need to apply for Architectural Control Committee approval using this form (<http://bearisland.us/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ACC-FORM-C-LAND-SCAPE-CHANGES-10012019.pdf>) and plants need to be chosen from the list of approved plantings (<http://bearisland.us/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Bear-Island-Approved-Plant-List-Feb-1-2021docx.pdf>). There have been additions to the approved plant list, including Japanese blueberry tree, strawberry guava tree and wax jasmine.

The list will tell you location and light requirements for trees and plants. All plants and trees on the list have been selected for their Florida-friendly qualities and are consistent with our maintenance.

Take care and enjoy this beautiful weather!

Vickie Bender
Landscaping Committee Chair

Forms and more information online at

bearisland.us

RESERVE FUNDS OF THE BEAR ISLAND HOA

A few homeowners have raised the question: Why do we need reserve funds and what are they used for?

As your Treasurer, I am happy to give you a brief overview of the way the Bear Island HOA pays for its expenses. Our HOA maintains two funds to pay for community expenses – the operating fund and the reserve fund (also called replacement fund).

The operating fund is used to pay for ongoing expenses and routine maintenance of the community assets; water, landscaping, and the personnel at the gate house, for example, are such routine expenses. Most financial transactions in an HOA occur in the operating fund.

Reserve funds are used for maintenance and asset-replacement projects that occur infrequently, such as repaving our streets or replacing our mailboxes. These projects typically come with a hefty price tag. Since large-scale repairs and maintenance items are expected, the HOA starts saving ahead of time.

Assume we expect that we will need to replace the mailboxes every twenty years. The HOA then estimates the expected replacement costs of the mailboxes and saves 1/20th of that expected amount annually. When the mailboxes are replaced after 20 years, the money has been saved up. It has been reserved for mailboxes as part of the replacement fund. When an HOA saves up monies for such periodic major expenses, it can pay for the major expenses without having to burden homeowners with a special assessment or borrowing the money.

HOA reserves act like a cushion that protects our homeowners from unplanned expenses.

As our community matures, I expect that the expenses for maintaining our assets will go up. Water lines may need to be repaired or replaced, and the trees and hedges in our community may need to be replaced to keep our community attractive and desirable.

How do we fund the reserve fund? As the HOA prepares the budget each year, the HOA not only makes a budget for ongoing expenses, but also determines how much is necessary to keep the reserves at adequate levels. Currently, our HOA has a quarterly assessment of \$1,225 per homeowner. About \$113 of this is allocated to the reserve fund, and the remainder is used to fund the ongoing expenses in the community.

Due to prudent management and careful planning, the HOA has been able to fund the community's major maintenance and asset replacement projects without having to borrow funds or levy special assessments.

Maria Davis
Treasurer

CAN I TRIM MY NEIGHBOR'S VEGETATION AND TREES?

The Bear Island board often receives complaints from neighbors regarding vegetation and trees hanging over their wall or house.

According to columnist Ryan Poliakoff in the March 21 Palm Beach Post (<https://palmbeachpost-fl.news-memory.com?selDate=20210321&goTo=DC05&artid=0>), here's the answer:

“[Under Florida law, Y]ou have the right to trim back encroaching roots or branches which are effectively trespassing onto your property. Be careful, however, that you do so in a manner that does not permanently damage the plant or tree in question. You may want to consult with a licensed tree trimmer or arborist before doing the work.”

In other words, please be considerate of your neighbors. Maintain your plants and trees so they don't interfere with your neighbor's enjoyment of their own property.

Gail Saunders
Secretary