Unapproved Minutes January 2015

These are the unapproved minutes of the January 2015 monthly meeting of the Walden Woods Conservancy Board of Directors to be presented at a future meeting of the Board of Directors for approval.

1. Call to order: the meeting was called to order by (Board President) Andrew Lattimer at 7:00 o’clock p.m., Directors present were: Susan Raupach, Kathleen Tracy (Treasurer) Cori-Lynn Webber, Brian Onessimo (Vice President) Glenn Brand, Adele Clark, Diane Bernier, Pat Tanner. Director Peter DeBisschop attended via cell phone. Director Joe Palladino was absent. Mr. Chris Kohnle of Elite Property Management, LLC was also present. Director Lattimer began the meeting by welcoming the new Directors who have not previously sat on the Board. He also raised the issue of needing a secretary for the Board. Since no one was willing to step up and take the secretary position it was decided amongst the Board members that each Board member who is not an officer will have to take a turn with the minutes. Director Webber agreed to do the minutes for this January meeting as her turn for 2015.

2. Approval of Minutes of Preceding Meeting: the minutes for the November 2014 monthly meeting of the Board of Directors previously published on the Conservancy website and presented to this meeting of the Board for Acceptance were reviewed and the following changes were proposed:

On page 2, section f) on the last line: change the name Glenn to the names Susan and Glenn

At the bottom of the page change spelling of Woodmore to the correct spelling Woodmoor.

On page 3, third paragraph last word change directions to Directors

Page 3 section 5 paragraph 3 change the word residence to residents.

Page 3 unfinished business change Pearlstein to Perlstein

Page 4 last paragraph change Pallodino to Palladino and add second by Director Lattimer

Director Bernier made a Motion seconded by Director Raupach to: Accept the minutes with changes.

Motion passed 9-0-1 with Director Webber abstaining since she was not present at the meeting.

3. Financial/Treasurer’s Report:

Director Tracy reported that she required some guidance on what she should include in her reports to the Board. Director Lattimer the previous Treas. for the last two years explained that the cash balance the liabilities and how they correlate is most important. He likes to look at where we are uncovering our costs during the course of the year, what reserve transfers have to be made to cover costs and then corrected later. Are there other options the treasurer believes the Board should look at including special assessment budgeting upfront for increased anticipated calendar costs early in the year and any other irregularities she sees in the documents?

Director Tracy then reported that water and insurance have caused all of the councils except the Conservancy to dip into reserves to cover those initial upfront costs. She reported that though the councils tried to account better for the expected increases in the 2015 budget they were not successful and completely eliminating the under budget status of those councils. Director Tracy was concerned that the councils should not budget this way. Director Lattimer explained that there are adequate reserves in his opinion to cover normally expected problems even though all of the councils except the Conservancy are historically dipping into their reserves for the first half of each calendar year.

Director Onessimo inquired as to how we would correct this problem going forward. Director Lattimer explained that we currently treat the reserves as a vendor and pay them upfront each month. One way we could do this is to change our policy and pay more into the reserves later in the year and pay more into the high upfront cost items such as water and insurance earlier in the year. He believes this would be very difficult accounting wise. Director Onessimo asked what happens when his counsel borrows from its reserves. Does it show somewhere? Director Lattimer said this was something that was a big concern and he believes that has been corrected and it will show in the final numbers for the year.

Mr. Kohnle explained to the Board that contributions toward the reserves need to be made on a monthly basis to keep property values up. If someone is researching a property on a refi or purchase and sees that no reserve allocation is being made, it might hurt the audit process from the banks and helping purchasers to buy within our community.

Director Tracy will look at the reserve transfers in June for the July meeting and try to keep us updated as a Board on a more regular basis on this issue.

4. Property Manager’s Report:

(a) Mr. Kohnle indicated that he has done his regular walks through and has listed the problems that they are dealing with in his inspection reports.

(b) Mr. Kohnle reported that water and insurance were higher-than-expected costs in the calendar year for 2014. These were adjusted accordingly for the 2015 budget year. The tree work directed by the Board came out nicely for last year. The stone walls and cabana roofs have been completed. There was some staining on the stonewall which the vendor says should be gone in the spring however if it is not he will come back and correct it.

(c) 2015 projects and goals

The pool area and tennis courts need to be looked at. Do we want to redo or patch the tennis courts? Do we want to make one of them a pickle ball court which is less expensive. There was some discussion regarding this topic. Mr. Kohnle reported that the reserve study calls for a complete redo of both courts spending $40,000 in 2016. He has gotten a quote to completely redo them that is less than that $40,000 figure. Director Tanner thought perhaps the Board should consider charging a fee for use of the tennis courts and that the Board should try to figure out a way to prevent nonresidents from using them. Director Tracy suggested that we poll unit owners. Director Tanner suggested using survey monkey to do that since it is a free service.

Director Tanner made a motion seconded by Director Tracy that elite send out a survey regarding the use of the tennis courts to the unit owners and report back at the next meeting. Motion passed 10-0-0.

Mr. Kohnle reported that the pond fountain needs to either be rebuilt or replaced, in reality and per the reserve study.

The pool cover is included in the reserve study for 2015 and that will need to be replaced.

There is $7500 for pool landscaping in the 2015 budget. Proposals from Russo have been sought on that.

The 2015 reserve study also calls for spending $1000 on meeting house walls.

Director Bernier inquired about the patio furniture for the pool. Mr. Kohnle said it was not done last year because there will was a lack of funds. The Board had thought there would be money left over and there was not. This will have to be considered for this calendar year.

Director Onessimo asked about the tree work at the pool. Mr. Kohnle reported that some tree work was done around the pool to clear the walking path in the entrance area. He suggested that Director Onessimo take a look at the trees and see if there was anything else he felt needed attention.

Director Lattimer requested that the Board be provided with a list of the contracts that are in existence, when they expire. After we have the list we will likely require copies as a Board to be sent by email

 5. Unit Owner’s forum:

RB: wanted to say that the pool umbrellas need to be replaced. He mentioned that his wife who is a Board member has a handout regarding running a Board of Directors and the minutes and he thought that might help the new Board secretaries.

BE: commended elite regarding the emergency exit access in the knoll. Russo had not been clearing that area. Once a report was filed was cleared fairly quickly. He would like to thank Russo and elite for taking care of that. He noted that the signs that these are emergency access areas are gone should we replace them? He also suggested that the Board discussed what to do with the unused ball field on Walden Meadow Road/Lochview.

AL: there are five hydrants in the community that were not cleared. Russo needs to be more aware of this. Mr. Kohnle will speak to Russo about that.

BO: is it possible to disseminate a map to the Russo employees so that they know the property. Were aware that Mark the supervisor knows the property very well however his employees on not always as aware of the property lines as he is. Mr. Kohnle said he could look into this.

PE: the mailbox areas on the knoll need to be shoveled out with every storm. Her husband had to shovel out the mailboxes on her street so that they could get to their mail and the postman could drop the mail off.

CW: inquired as to whether or not there is a time when the plowing starts and stops. She has had complaints from some of the unit owners in her counsel complaining about plowing after midnight and before 6 o’clock in the morning. She expressed her concern that this should not happen unless there is a serious reason to do that. Mr. Kohnle explained that it is not their policy to restrict when Russo chooses to plowing remove snow. He doesn’t want to limit that because people in the areas that Russo services want to be plowed out as quickly as possible and to limit when they can start will make that more difficult for them.

AC: wanted to thank Russo for the great job they’ve done on the last two storms

SR: wondered why the snow was blown onto the sidewalk from the driveways and then off the sidewalk. It seems to her that that is double work. She also pointed out that the unit owners in the Duplexes and Townhomes need access over their decks to get to the utility pipes for hot water, exhaust, and gas. The Councils will have to address this in their next meeting.

6. Unfinished Business

a) Council Boundaries: regarding the boundaries Director Brand suggested that the Board once again walk the tree lines in the boundaries when it is possible to do so. Then we would be able to set out the financial impact of what those boundaries are and what the changes would mean. Director Lattimer felt that updating the reserve study was an integral part of going forward and figuring out what the actual cost of adjustment of boundaries would be.

b) 2015 goals

1. Resolve Council boundaries

2. Update reserve study

3. Update bylaws, rules, declaration.

4. Take a hard look at the budgets, tighten them up and try to budget better for the higher upfront costs in the councils.

5. Understanding what Elite’s services include and what we may need to add to their current services. Having the meeting suggested earlier by Director Onessimo with elite to go over what our expectations are and what they expect to provide for us in the current contract should be worked out.

Director Tracy and Webber talked about the importance of getting the boundaries done in this calendar year but getting the information that we need in order to make those decisions first. Director Webber also suggested that we can tackle the items we can resolve without controversy first. Director Lattimer agreed that taking items off the to do list that we can all agree on first would be a good way to begin the year, he does feel that a new, updated reserve study should be on the table. Director Onessimo suggested dealing with the bylaws and the rules because we can accomplish those without too much disagreement. The declaration itself will require the boundary issues to be resolved first.

Director Tanner felt that the Board should be communicating with the homeowners in a more effective way. Since we don’t get good participation from the unit owners we need to give them facts about the impact the Board of Directors decisions is having on them especially with financial analysis of what those decisions mean.

Director Lattimer requested that Director DeBisschop for the bylaws and the rules to the Board of Directors for the next meeting. He suggested that when Director DeBisschop is back in Connecticut for the May 2015 meeting we should attempt a walk of the boundaries talk about the changes that are potentially involved in this declaration amendment. Director Clark agreed that any walk-through of the property needs to wait until the snow has completely melted so that the Board can do a real walk-through. Director Webber asked that it occur at night or on the weekends so that those Directors who work can attend.

Unit owner Bob Ellis asked about the mess of trees behind the Johnsons and the Devlin’s on Ivy Lane needing to be cleaned out after all the storms and snow and wind in this calendar year. It was his impression that many of those are a risk to the dwellings of the unit owners on Ivy Lane. Director Webber asked Mr. Kohnle wetted arborist to come walked the entire property had identified any of those trees as a risk or needing work. Mr. Kohnle remarked that those are council trees and they can be discussed in the Council meetings and looked at, at the council’s direction. He answered that no; those were not marked and yes; they were looked at by the arborist who walked the property in the fall of 2015.

7. New Business:

(a) Director Lattimer wanted to point out that email address is shared with the Board or committee chairs are only to be used for those purposes. They are not to be shared for use outside of Walden Woods’s business.

On the topic of emails he also cautioned the Directors to watch their email communications because different people view comments in different ways. It is better to address issues at the meetings rather than via email communication when possible.

b) In addition to now having a different Sec. for each meeting, Director Lattimer also outlined his idea for committee reports. He would like to have chairs provide a written report to elite before the Board packet is sent out so that the Board can read the reports when they are preparing for the meeting and we can move quickly through what is going on with the committees. If there has been no activity no report is needed orally at the Board. He asked that Mr. Kohnle notifying the Board chair people and have their reports included in the Board packets going forward.

8. Committee Reports

a. Environmental committee: Director Brand reported the environmental committee is dormant. The trails are icy and he suggests that everyone use caution if using them. His committee will begin meeting again in March.

b. Communications: Peter DeBisschop reported that the call for articles will go out to the Board of Directors and all writers in the next week. He is looking for more participation from the Board and the community for submitting articles.

c. Meeting House: Peter DeBisschop reported that in 2014 they were 15 rentals of the Meeting house. 5 Duplex, 6 Village, 1 Woodmoor, 3 Townhomes. The Meeting House was booked 132 total times and is used 11 to 12 days a month.

d. Social committee: Stephanie McKinney was not present Roland Bernier reported that the Souper Bowl party was animated and fun and had 30 or more people attend.

e. Welcome: Ruth Johnson reported that six welcome letters were sent for visits were held and therefore current visits to be made. Welcome committee is having an annual meeting on Tuesday for every 10th at 7 PM at the Johnsons home at 22 Ivy Ln. She also ported that there was a problem with the Duplex booklets for the Conservancy fee. That was incorrectly included in the first coupon book that has now been corrected.

f. Standards: Patty Murray did not attend or send a report. Director Lattimer reported that there has been no real activity. Mr. Kohnle pointed out that there is an updated AAI tracking report in the Board packet. Director Onessimo inquired regarding a request for solar panels being placed on a home in the Ridge. Mr. Kohnle doesn’t recall the request but he can look into it. Director Onessimo recalls that the request was forwarded to elite and the standards committee on behalf of the Ridge unit owner. Director DeBisschop as chair of the communications committee was aware of the email and agreed to re-forward to the appropriate parties so that that request can be acted upon.

g. Garden: Director Bernier reported that there is no activity in the garden right now.

h. Document: Peter DeBisschop reported that the documents committee is awaiting action from the Board and the boundaries decisions.

The meeting was adjourned at 835 by Motion of Director Bernier and seconded by Director Clark The Motion passed unanimously. 10-0

The Board then met in executive session.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cori-Lynn S. Webber

Acting Secretary