



The Shadowword

February 2007

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www.shadowoodcondos.com

JANUARY PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Happy New Year! I hope you all had pleasant holiday celebrations and are enjoying the winter weather and recent snowfalls. **Despite the warmer weather earlier this heating season, higher gas bills are on the way.** Your leadership team is doing all it can to keep gas costs low. Please do your part by keeping your doors and windows closed when heating your unit and reporting any heating problems or water leaks to the office immediately.

Since I first negotiated natural gas prices in the fall of 2005, the Association has saved over \$25,000 in natural gas costs over what the previous managers were able to negotiate. Instead of simply accepting the quote offered by the regulated gas utility as the previous managers did for years, I developed a use profile for the SCA community, determined that our gas use is about 30,000 decatherms per year and conducted an internet-based auction with the technical assistance of Independent Energy Advisors. Using internet technology, our use portfolio was bid among 25 providers and we selected the lowest bidder from the internet offers. This cost the Association nothing and has realized significant savings for each Shadowood unit owner.

By the time the contract completes in April, and depending on the remaining winter temperatures, the total savings are projected to be about \$50,000. This represents about \$110 per Shadowood unit owner—a direct savings to you, the condo-fee paying membership. I am watching the markets carefully and will renegotiate pricing for winter 2007 later this year. I am also exploring an aggregation program with other large gas-consuming condominium communities. If there is enough interest, we will combine our use and purchasing power with others and jointly bid to purchase natural gas at even

deeper discounts.

SPECIAL NOTE: If your unit electric bill is higher than you expect, there is a chance your air conditioner may be running at the same time as your heat. If your January electric bill was higher than about \$50.00, please send an email to: president@shadowoodcondos.com and report the amount on your bill. Koger will check your air conditioner and ensure that it is not running at the same time as the heating.

UOSR Forms / Mailings: As part of your Association's leadership team's continued efforts to reduce expenses, the 2007 Unit Owner Status Forms will be hand delivered to all owner-occupied units (and "standard" mailed to off-site owners) with the spring parking decal packet. This should significantly reduce the Association's postage costs and minimize the number of times residents will have to visit the on-site Association office.

The Association is also hand delivering most letters and communications to all on-site residents. This practice will save many hundreds of dollars annually. A few types of letters must be mailed by certified mail to the owners affected—the Association does so when required by law and charges the postage to the affected units.

As a reminder for new residents and old, the ORIGINAL UOSR forms must be returned—copies or faxes are not accepted—and all unit owners must return completed forms whether or not occupancy or ownership changes have occurred in the unit. Please read the letter accompanying the forms for more details.

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Parking Changes: The leadership team is making a number of changes for the 2007 parking season: The spaces in the parking lot will be renumbered sometime before the new decals are issued this spring. Each parking decal set will be numbered the same as its corresponding reserved space – helping to clear the confusion of which space belongs to whom.

The Board also directed Koger to remove the reserved markings near the clubhouse, which were needlessly reserved for the previous staff, as part of its effort to bring the Association closer to its members. These 12 spaces will soon be available to all as open parking. The car washing spaces are also available for overnight parking; however, we ask that residents not park there when the car washing area is open. We will soon be installing coin-operated timed valves in this area so that water waste is minimized and the cost of the water and sewage is born by those who use the facility.

Remember, unless a space is specifically marked “RESERVED,” anyone may park there until 11 PM. After 11 PM, decals are required to park anywhere on the property – and the Association DOES NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, refund any towing or relocation fees. Towing changes are still being developed—watch the SCA website for more details.

Unit Front Doors: Many stairwell doors are being poorly maintained. The board directed the Koger Management team to survey the stairwell doors, and prepare a list of any needing repairs. **Unit owners own and are responsible for repairs and maintenance on all entrance doors.**

Office Space / Clubhouse Renovations: After nearly 35 years of use, and

many improperly completed installations by in-house staff, the combined office space and clubhouse at 11639 Stoneview Square is being renovated! The entire building is being gutted, repaired, brought up to current code, insulated, and refitted to be a more comfortable and pleasant place to work and meet. You will note new, highly energy-efficient windows throughout, including two new large picture windows on the north side of the clubhouse. In addition, a modern life-safety system has been installed as well as a new, more welcoming lobby space. This space will include a place to sit and complete paperwork. There will be carpeting throughout the building, softer lighting and a modern galley kitchen with a microwave and dishwasher. A small conference room will be available in the clubhouse for private meetings and, of course, the clubhouse space for private parties and other social and community functions. We anticipate the facility will be ready for rentals again at the end of March—watch the SCA website for details and revised pricing/deposit requirements. As always, neither smoking nor alcohol use are allowed at any time on any of the SCA common elements.

Shadowood is the only condominium in South Reston with a clubhouse and this amenity is often noted by Realtors as being a very desirable element. Unfortunately, the building was poorly maintained, had terrible acoustics for meetings, was very dated in its appearance and furnishings and cost tens of thousands of dollars to heat and cool annually. Now that the building will be attractive and inviting, I fully expect each owner to realize a far greater increase in property values than the cost of the renovations (most of which is being funded through insurance proceeds and reserve funds). New rental rates and deposits will be developed shortly and the room will again be available for resident functions.

The building renovations will be

completed in time for the annual meeting, so please be sure to attend and see what's new! PLEASE NOTE: because of the renovations, the office may be closed from time to time until the renovations complete.

New Custodians / Janitors: The new janitorial services company began work early this month. It appears that the property is looking better. Please let me know your comments and suggestions on how this new company is working.

2007 Annual Unit Owners' Meeting: Mark your calendars now for the 2007 Annual Meeting. Monday, March 5th, at 7:00 PM. The meeting, which is open to unit owners in good standing, should be short this year with no new business and one Board of Directors seat open for election. Because this is a meeting of the unit-owners of the Association, tenants will not be admitted to the meeting. Please look for the delivery to your units and/or see the website for more details: <http://tinyurl.com/c6sys>

Based on the positive and encouraging feedback I have received from many of you, I have decided to seek re-election to the Board of Directors. I have worked very hard these past four years to serve and assist many of you in seeking better value, efficiency and professional customer service from the Association. I wish to continue my service to our community and seek your vote for the vacant board seat. Please let me know how I can better meet your needs, keep the condo fee reasonable and bring about much-needed change to our community. As always, you can reach me or any member of the leadership team by sending an email to president@shadowoodcondos.com.

Landlords / Real – Estate Agents / Property Managers: Absolutely NO signs of any kind may be displayed in unit windows, on doors, or on any of

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the limited or common elements. This includes FOR RENT or FOR SALE signs. Any such signs displayed may be removed without further notice and/or the unit owner may be subject to administrative fees and/or hearings fines.

NO lockboxes may be attached to any stairwells or other common elements. Any found will be destroyed and discarded without any further notice.

Comcast Internet: The Comcast High-Speed Internet program is still in progress; however, Comcast has run into some electricity problems and is sorting out how to supply power to their new equipment on the SCA property. We still have no firm dates as to when this program will be implemented and will communicate details through the website and email distribution list as they are available. To date, Shadowood residents have enjoyed over \$157,000 in savings on their basic cable subscriptions.

Website and Email List: There are now more than 350 names on the (secure) SCA Email list. Be among the first to hear of important news and any emergencies by subscribing to the list by going to the site: <http://tinyurl.com/8d6v6>

The list is secure, maintained on an SCA computer and is used only for SCA business. You will not be inundated with spam (unsolicited email), and we attempt to send no more than 2-4 email messages a month.

Administrative Fee Program: As many of you know, the board implemented administrative fees for rules and regulations violations. For the first time in over 30 years, the dumpster and trash areas are beginning to appear decent and maintained. Thanks to your suggestions, this program seems to be working and solving some of the

problems you have frequently brought to the board's attention. How do you feel about this program? Is it working? Are there other areas that need attention? Please let the board know by sending an email to president@shadowoodcondos.com

The rest of the newsletter contains a few tips and hints on how SCA can help you and how you can help SCA help you.

How Can You Help Shadowood Help You?

Simply by complying with the points below, **all of us** will avoid future headaches and administrative fees, and we will enjoy Shadowood as the great community it can be!

Proof of Insurance. Provide the office with a copy of the declarations page of your homeowner's insurance showing your liability coverage. Landlords AND tenants must each have their own insurance and evidence of both must be in the Association's files before permanent parking decals will be issued. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Updated Address. Make sure Koger has the most recent correct address for your billing statements, particularly if you live off-site.

Water Leaks? Promptly report to the SCA office any leakage or water issues that you notice. The association, through H2Options, provides FREE leak repairs on limited fixtures.

Smoke Alarms. Make sure your smoke alarms are functioning properly and have fresh batteries or live connections to a power source. If your smoke detectors are part of an alarm system, please provide the Shadowood on-site office with evidence of the connection and any special testing requirements for your unit.

Pets. Keep the office updated with current information on any pets housed in your unit; keep your vaccinations current and pay your required Shadowood pet fees. Use the pet waste stations on the property—**CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR PETS!**

Tenants. Keep the office updated and copied on status and documentation of any tenants residing in your unit.

Current Vehicle Registrations. Notify the office if you are in the military AND have an active-duty assignment at Ft. Belvoir, have non-Virginia license plates or a legal excuse from having updated registration and valid inspection stickers for your automobile(s), so that you won't run the risk of being towed. With VERY few exceptions, ALL SCA-decaled vehicles parked on SCA property MUST be licensed in Virginia and have a valid inspection sticker. All others are subject to immediate towing at the sole risk and expense of the vehicle owner. **SCA WILL NOT under any circumstances reimburse towing or storage fees.** Please notify the office immediately of lost/stolen SCA parking decals.

Trash and Recycling. Place your trash and recycling materials IN a dumpster, **NOT** on the ground. If the dumpsters are full in your area, you must go to another dumpster on the property. It is **NEVER** acceptable to place trash or recycling materials on the ground.

Best regards from me and the entire leadership team,

Brian Olivia, President

SCA Calendar

February 17, 2007

Hearings Panel – 9:00 AM
Board Meeting – 10:00 AM
SCA Community Center

March 5, 2007

SCA Annual Unit Owners Meeting
SCA Community Center

Landscaping Progress

by Cody Parker

Happy New Year to you and to your families! After having a milder December than usual – where you may have even noticed many of our cherry trees beginning to flower – we are experiencing our first real blast of cold winter weather. This is the perfect time to begin planning how we, as a community, want to improve our landscape this upcoming spring.

At the November 4th Budget Committee meeting, I proposed that we substantially increase the amount budgeted for landscaping improvements in 2007 and focus most of our attention to upgrading the landscaping and water drainage systems in the backs of the buildings. After an open discussion, the Committee proposed to budget \$75,000 for landscaping improvements for the 2007 fiscal year. The Board unanimously approved the proposed budget at its November 18 meeting.

In the upcoming weeks, a landscaping engineering team from Pine Ridge will complete a comprehensive inventory of our current landscaping situation and make recommendations on where improvements are needed first. In addition to aesthetic priorities and removing invasive species, the engineering team will also prioritize upcoming projects with attention paid to improving flood control and decreasing soil erosion near the buildings. As these are the most critical issues, our attention will be mostly focused here. I anticipate discussing the engineering report at the February Board of Directors meeting on February 17th if Pine Ridge has completed their work.

The following is a list of our immediate goals for this year as it currently

stands. More will be added after the engineering evaluation.

- Behind 11621 through 11627
- Behind 11650 through 11656
- Behind 2200 through 2204
- Behind 2231 through 2237
- Behind 2214 through 2206
- The three remaining Parking Islands located in Phases I, III, and IV

Many residents have inquired about landscaping improvements to the fronts of the buildings. While I agree 110% this remains a high priority for Shadowood and is important to improve the curb appeal of our homes, limited financial resources and overall community sentiment has dictated the backs of the buildings to be given higher priority this year.

I welcome all community input and want to work directly with anyone who would like to become involved on the landscaping committee. We recently created a new email account – landscaping@shadowoodcondos.com – that we hope will serve as an easy vehicle for unit-owners to become involved.

Please remember that this budgeted \$75,000 is your money paid by your monthly condo fee! By investing it back into Shadowood through improvements to the physical property, we can dramatically increase the value of our units and make this a more attractive place to call home. The outside appearance of our community is one of the first things prospective buyers and real estate agents see when visiting. That said, please do not hesitate to make suggestions or to become involved in the decision making process!

SCA Community Center Update

by Skipp Galythly

Although the renovations and improvements to the clubhouse will be costly, when spread out among 450 unit owners the per-person cost is rather small. Although we do not have a final cost, we anticipate the additional cost to be less than \$200 per unit. Even if it is \$200, however, for \$200 you get a newly renovated and improved clubhouse and office facilities. We believe this investment of \$200 should add significantly more to an individual unit's value than \$200.

New unit owners, instead of being discouraged to invest in Shadowood because of a burned-out or grossly outdated building, will find an incentive to join our community. The clubhouse is the one building any prospective unit owner can walk in to and get an idea of what our community is like. (Honestly, now – when was the last time you walked into the clubhouse and were impressed?) Many surrounding developments do not even have a clubhouse. If it costs \$200 now, the incentives offered by the improved clubhouse should add more than \$200 to the value of any individual unit.

Finally, because of the condition of the facilities, we have had difficulty renting out the clubhouse in the past. With a newly renovated building, we hope to see additional income from rentals. Already, we've had interested parties contact the office inquiring about rental rates and availability. That income is money that we will not have to pay in the form of condo fees. Finally, of course, YOU will have a great facility for parties, meetings, and similar uses. All of this ... and for only \$200.

What the Hey? My January Condo Bill Went Way Up!?!

by Trent Benisch, SCA Treasurer

Even though I drafted the 2007 budget, it was a bit of a surprise to actually see the changes to my January condo bill. I imagine many of you were a bit surprised too. So, let's briefly review what makes up your condo bill.

WHY MUST I PAY?

The simple answer is because you live in a shared community. As for any shared community (condos, town homes, Reston (yes, you pay a separate assessment to live in *the Reston Association*), many single family communities in the D.C. area, etc.), there are shared expenses such as insurance, trash pickup, external building maintenance, landscaping, operations of the association, etc. Each year, in November, a budget is established for all the things the Association must pay for and those upgrades and replacements the Association chooses to pay for. That budget is then split equitably among the co-owners, based upon their square footage (2-bedroom units have less square footage than the 3-bedroom units, therefore their ownership equitability is less) and divided by 12 (12 months in a year). That is the amount you pay each month.

In addition to the expenses associated with living in a shared community there are utility bills to be paid, as is the case in any residence. Unfortunately, when the community was built in the 1970s, the builders did not create an infrastructure where everything could be billed directly to the person using that utility. This is true for utilities such as water, sewage treatment, and natural gas. Each unit was built with the ability to submeter electricity, so everyone has a separate electric bill. But, for the property lights, boiler and storage rooms, and the community center, there is no way to charge that electricity to individuals, so we all pay

a common electricity charge in addition to the cost of our individually consumed electricity.

What the previous paragraph means is that for some utilities, you pay what you consume. For others, you are stuck paying the same amount as the other co-owners, even if your unit is vacant or you work hard to conserve energy (like me!). I don't like it anymore than you do, but that's the reality of condo ownership. Oh, and by the way, this was disclosed to you in the SCA disclosure documents you were supposed to read before you finished the purchase of your SCA property (which I, for one, neglected to do).

The authority/direction to the Board of Directors to charge a monthly assessment and direct bill utilities is found in the SCA Master Deed:

Section 1. Assessments. All co-owners are obligated to pay monthly assessments imposed by the Association to meet all common expenses, which must include a liability insurance policy premium, an insurance premium for a policy to cover repair and reconstruction work in case of fire, earthquake or other hazard, and all charges for utilities serving the Property and the family units thereon, except telephone. Such assessments may include monthly payments to reserve funds for replacement and for working capital.

2007 CONDO ASSESSMENT:

2-bedroom: \$204.32 / month
3-bedroom: \$230.53 / month

The condo assessment pays for the annual budget. You can download a copy on the Shadowood Condominium website - www.shadowoodcondos.com - or pick one up in the SCA Community Center.

Other monthly charges:

ELECTRIC BILLING FEE: \$7.00 / mo. This is the actual cost of the sub-metering system. It has been \$7/mo for many years, but \$5.00 was previously "budgeted" in the monthly condo fee and only \$2.00 was a direct pass through. The entire amount is now passed through as a direct expense.

COMMON ELECTRIC: Variable (proportional split - each 2-bd and each 3-bd pay the same amount). Lags actual usage by about two (2) months. Typically between \$10-\$20 each month.

UNIT ELECTRIC: Variable. Unique to each co-owner. Lags actual usage by about two (2) months. Typically higher in the summer due to use of the air conditioning system.

NATURAL GAS: Variable (proportional split - each 2-bd and each 3-bd pay the same amount). Lags actual usage by about one (1) month. Typically very cheap in the summer-time; very expensive in the winter-time. It is not unusually for the midwinter bills to exceed \$100 each month.

WATER/SEWER: Variable (proportional split - each 2-bd and each 3-bd pay the same amount). Changes quarterly (every three (3) months). Typically \$20-\$30 each month.

CABLE TV: \$23.00 / month. Provides Comcast *Expanded Basic Cable* to all 450 units. The entire amount is passed through as a direct expense.

BUT, WHY THE INCREASE IN CONDO FEES?

Briefly, here's why your condo assessment went up compared to 2006:

HVAC Replacement. This helps get the HVAC replacement project underway this spring. This project is expected to cost somewhere between \$1.35 and \$2.25 million (\$3,000 - \$5,000 per unit). The Reserves

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January Condo Bill

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currently available for this project is less than 10% of the cash that will be needed in 2007 to complete this replacement.

SCA Community Center. This is to restore and improve the SCA Community Center. In summer 2006 there was a fire at the Community Center that forces us to repair and renovate the Community Center much earlier than planned. Dramatic improvements to this community-shared facility will be visible by the Annual Co-owners meeting.

Landscaping. The association will spend more this year to take care of much needed landscaping repairs and improvements. There are drainage and erosion problems that must be addressed to prevent structural damage to our buildings.

Reserves. Reserves contributions are being increased as this Board tries to ensure that co-owners are not burdened with higher costs in the future when the roofs need replaced, next HVAC system must be installed in 20-30 years, and parking lots are rejuvenated (every 5-7 years).

Bad Debt. Your condo fees are increasing to pay for bad debt the

association has to write off. This bad debt results when your fellow Co-Owners don't pay their condo fees and the legal recourse does not result in us being able to get that money. Believe it or not, SCA is at the bottom of the list of debtors when it comes to liens and foreclosures (after the IRS, lawyers, and mortgage holders). The consequence is that there is not enough "profit" generated from these actions to pay all the above.

In 2006, your Board was very aggressive in trying to get the money owed to the community; however, we will lose nearly \$20,000 last year because of those who refused to pay their condo fees. We will continue to be aggressive in 2007, but need your help to reduce this additional cost levied against all of us. If everyone paid their condo fees we'd all save at least \$3.70 per month (not including lawyer fees saved – another \$2.22 per month).

WHERE CAN I GET A COPY OF THE BUDGET?

I encourage you to look through the budget and see where your money is spent each year. You can download a copy from the SCA website - www.shadowwoodcondos.com – or pick up a hard copy at the SCA Community Center.

Major Revisions to Shadowood's Rules

by Skipp Galythly

As many of you know, the Shadowood Covenants Committee is currently revising the Shadowood Rules and Regulations. The current set of rules is 10 pages long and mostly in 9-point font. Frankly, it can make for some tedious reading. The Board feels that this does not properly reflect the kind of community in which we want to live and sends a negative signal to prospective unit owners about what kind of community we actually enjoy.

The current set of rules is outdated and reflects a period in Shadowood's history where rental units and bad tenants were the norm and former Boards apparently felt that numerous rules and regulations were required. This is no longer the situation in our community and our rules should reflect this positive change. More importantly, our rules should work to foster a sense of community and enhance an individual's peaceful and enjoyable ownership of his or her unit.

Many of the current rules are negative, trivial, and simply not necessary. Furthermore, many are taken from Fairfax County ordinances or contain language that is more legalese than plain English. The new set of rules will be shorter, more concise, positive, and will hopefully lead to a better sense of community and encourage ownership in Shadowood.

I would like to thank all of you who serve on the committee and all of you who contributed ideas concerning rule changes. A complete set of new rules will soon be voted on by the Board of Directors. If you have any ideas or comments on how the rules can be improved, please send your ideas to: president@shadowwoodcondos.com. Your ideas will be shared, anonymously if you wish, with the members of the Covenants Committee and used to help develop the final set of rules. Please look for the new and improved Shadowood rules in your Annual Meeting package.





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