



Bell Tower Property Owner Association's

BELL TOWER NOTES

BELL TOWER PARK BOULEVARD TRANSFORMED

Photos by Bill West and Richard Roux

Special points of interest:

- *New Exercise Area Flooring (P. 3)*
- *2012-2013 Social Program in Jeopardy (P. 3)*
- *Ballyorney Re-Zoning Hearing and Concert Noise Issue (P. 3)*
- *Linear Park Partial Closure (P. 7)*

If a picture is worth a thousand words . . . here are two: "before" and "now"!



JUNE POA MEETING ANNOUNCES IMPROVEMENTS New Choices for Pools, Landscaping, Attorney, More

By Suzanne Ferguson

Subsequent to the Annual Meeting in March, the newly-expanded POA Board has been steadily and purposefully working through a major agenda. After several incidents in the past year of pool closings and fines from Lee County Health Department, the Buildings and Amenities committee conducted a search and recommended replacing Pool Pros with Jackson Pool Service. Board Landscape Liaison, John Davenport, President Dave Barnes and CAM Dixie Cory

reviewed the work of several highly-rated landscaping companies, including site visits and interviews with other clients, and recommended Mainscape Landscaping, a full-service company that will do our irrigation as well as plantings and lawn services. Both were passed unanimously, as was the recommendation from Board President Dave Barnes that our new legal firm should be the Ft. Myers based Condo & HOA Law Group, PLLC. With these three key appointments, Bell Tower Park is poised to make substantive progress.

Treasurer Don Boreman and President Barnes reported on the recently completed audit. Because our previous management company neglected to revise the statements after the audit in 2009, several key adjustments had gone unrecorded. Along with a resolution of the unfinished settlement with the bankrupt developer, Grosse Pointe, these adjustments can now be made, and our financial situation, which is very positive, will finally be fully understood. With regard to 2012, the budget overage of \$55K that had startled people in May turned into

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JUNE POA MEETING CONTINUED FROM P. 1

a \$50K surplus over budget in June as entries were adjusted and the cash flow evened out, as predicted.

Since April, the Board has been following a detailed “punch list” of needed improvements. Completed projects include the new skid-resistant tile on the Clubhouse Pool deck; the Fitness Room floor replacement and equipment upgrade (see the article elsewhere in this issue); additional bubblers in several of the lakes (another article in this issue); palm trees installed by the Clubhouse Pool to replace the “Shady Ladies” (Black

Olive trees); the east-end pedestrian combination-lock gate; and the front and side gate opener replacements. Among those still pending are the Playground renovations and the proposed new walk-in gate on Andrea Lane. As these are completed, other projects are being added.

A new, uniform rule on parking was passed with amendments arising from public discussion at the meeting (see the complete rule in the Documents section of the WEB site). Essentially, the former rule against parking in the street or unauthorized parking in the guest spaces will be en-

forced with towing; residents needing special parking passes for long-term use of a guest space will be able to request them from the CAM. A contract was made for the installation and removal of the Clubhouse shutters in the event of a hurricane warning; and a proposal for a voluntary resident directory was to be sent to our new attorney for review. At the end of the meeting, the Board was complimented on its openness and diligence, and was applauded by the members present. (For a fuller account of the meeting, see the e-mailed President’s Report.) □

NEWS FROM COURTYARD I

by Suzanne Ferguson

Courtyard I is having a busy summer with a number of maintenance and association business projects going forward. At its May meeting, Robert Van Teeffelen reported that Midway Services will be changing out the water valves for all units, replacing them with brass ball valves. Lint Out has cleaned all dryer vents, and

the roofs were chemically cleaned in early June.

Renewal of insurance policies was approved; there will be \$20,000 increase in the cost, due mostly to the increase for the property insurance. The association has enough funds in the operating account to pay for the insurance. Five delinquent accounts have been collected, with the result

that the first quarter budget had a surplus of \$24,000.

Because the associations of BTP are attempting to standardize a fining policy for owners violating Rules or By-Laws, the Courtyard Board adopted a fining policy; members were solicited to serve on the committee and one volunteer, James Thomas, came forward. □

“Midway Services will be changing out the [plastic] water main valves for all [Courtyard I] units”

CARRIAGE HOME UPDATE

By Robert Garland

The Board of Directors would like to welcome our several new residents and encourage them to reach out directly to any of the Board members (listed on the community WEBSITE) or to Dixie Cory, our CAM, with any questions or suggestions. We look forward to seeing you around the neighborhood!

We received the results of an Independent Auditor’s Report in April 2012 for the fiscal

year ending December 31, 2011 reporting that the Association’s operations and cash flow were “in conformity with accounting principles”; this means that our financial reports on file are regarded as accurate. Our appreciation goes out to Cardinal and Dave Barnes for working with the auditor and finalizing the audit.

Carriage Homes continues to operate in the black, staying within budget and chipping away at our delinquent accounts. This allows us to pro-

vide preventive maintenance throughout the community. As an example, the roofs in Phases 1 and 2 were chemically treated for mold during June.

The Board asks for your help in complying with the “Parking of Automobiles” covenants in the Association’s Rules and Regulations, especially with regard to parking in the streets. This creates a safety hazard, and Cardinal has been directed to strictly enforce this rule. Penalties currently include fines up to \$1,000. □

“Help [us] in complying with the ‘Parking of Automobiles’ Rules and Regulations”

SOCIAL COMMITTEE IN FLUX

By Suzanne Ferguson

At the April POA meeting, Greg Harrie, a co-chair of the Social Committee, reported that the committee was disbanding, as he was no longer able to continue because of time constraints; another full-time-resident member couple was moving away; and the remaining co-chair was stepping down from chair responsibilities. As the Committee had struggled to recruit new

members for some time, this news was less surprising than disappointing.

However, *Bell Tower Notes* has received word that two of the part-time residents from the committee are interested in planning the two biggest social events of the season: Kathy Soares will coordinate the Christmas Party in December and Linda Gratz hopes to get the ball rolling for the Tiki Hut Party in the spring. Former committee co-chair Maggie

Martinez has volunteered to spearhead the decorating crew for the holidays, once again using the lovely decorations from Daniel Wenner.

Maggie commented, "We are hoping that more will volunteer and continue to bring the community together. The ground work has been laid out." Anyone wishing to help out with the planned events or participate in the revival of our Social Committee should e-mail Kathy Soares: ksreal-tor@aol.com. □

"Anyone wishing to help ... should e-mail Kathy Soares"

NEW EXERCISE AREA FLOORING COMPLETED

By Jim Stewart

After months of anticipation, the new flooring in the gym was finished the week of May 28th. A new soft rubber floor replaces the carpet that always looked like it needed cleaning. The new surface can be mopped with a mild deter-

gent and/or bleach to keep it clean.

This new floor is soft enough that one could do floor exercises directly on it. However, a few new mats were added for those who want a little more support. All of the treadmill and stepping machines were serviced, and

the entire room has been rearranged. A new weight bench and new free weights were added in the smaller room off of the main gym. So, if you broke your New Year's resolution to get fit, now you have a nice place to renew your pledge. □



New flooring looks great and is easy to sanitize.

BALLYORNEY RE-ZONING HEARING SET FOR JULY 11

By Richard Roux

Individuals who have been impacted by Ballyorney outdoor concerts in the past may be interested in attending the upcoming Zoning Hearing, originally scheduled for June 6th but postponed to July 11th at 1:00 p.m. It will be held before the Hearing Examiner at the Lee County Community Development Public Works Building at 1500 Monroe Street downtown, on the second floor.

This hearing has been requested by Ballyorney, which wants to expand its liquor license for serving the outdoor concerts. However, it is an opportunity for the public to be heard regarding the nuisance created by the concerts in noise and trash, not to mention rowdy behavior.

The complete notice sent to Bell Tower Park is on our WEB site under Announcements, and there is discussion on the Message Board. If you have comments, you can add

them to the Message Board. Better yet, you could attend the hearing.

To summarize briefly, Ballyorney Irish Pub (which formerly operated under various names) has permits for outdoor concerts due to being "grandfathered in" from their original zoning code, issued before any residential neighborhoods occupied within 500 ft. - 1000 ft. of their business, which would have limited their permitted decibel level considerably.

See BALLYORNEY RE-ZONING, P. 7 ➤

THE LAKES OF BELL TOWER PARK

By Barb Haydock



It all started with the removal of a lot of trees and undergrowth and rocks! Then the bulldozers came and hollowed out nine retention basins with connecting conduits that became the storm water collection system for Bell Tower Park. Next, pipes were laid for our irrigation system along with a pumping apparatus. And, voilà! Now we have pretty lakes and storm sewers and a sophisticated sprinkling system to keep our lawns green and plants healthy. Unseen, but an essential part of this system, is a well that is tapped to maintain a minimum healthy water level in the dry season.

By Florida state law, developers are required to accommodate storm-water runoff in their developments. They also must contribute to water quality improvement initiatives for the community as a whole. The choice as to how they will do this—wet or dry basins, canals, swales—is up to them, but it is recorded with the application for development. Going forward, the complex will be measured against the developer’s proposal. The most popular choice seems to be the wet retention basins—ponds, lakes, lagoons—whatever the marketing department chooses to call their “water features.”

Although aesthetically pleasing, the real purpose of the lakes is to collect storm water run-off from the streets and lawns. This water settles on the bottoms of the lakes and can be highly polluted. At first, the pollution came from the debris associated with construction. Now, it contains oil and chemicals from road traffic in the complex. Perhaps the greatest source of contaminants is the fertilizers used to encourage growth of our vegetation. It can also be animal waste from pets and birds and other critters roaming our neighborhood, including those that live in the ponds.

The lakes not only catch the run-off, they clean the water before it is discharged into larger waterways: canals, rivers, bays. Normally, vegetation planted along the shore helps break down the pollutants from the runoff. However, if the water becomes stagnant, if there is no movement to allow oxygen to infuse the lakes, sediment deepens along the bottom of the lakes. Plants are choked off by this sludge. Fish don’t have food or sufficient oxygen, so they perish. The birds can’t find enough to eat, so stop coming to the ponds. Even alligators begin to pass us by! Algae blooms during the summer months may cause foul odors and unpleasant appearance.

This string of events is what happened in Bell Tower Park over the past several years. Our ponds were aging. Sediment on the bottoms of the ponds was deep. By this spring, fish had only 8-12 inches of oxygenated water in which to thrive.

The installation of aerators and fountains initiated by the developer had been halted for several years. The fountains and bubblers (aerators) in lake #1 and bubblers in lakes #4 and #6 were all installed prior to 2005. A proposal to finish the process was tabled for the past 2+ years. But, it was time.

The POA and Cardinal Management stepped in to remediate the problem, calling on Lake Masters, Inc. to install new bubblers in lakes #5, #7, #8 and #9. Lakes #2 and #3 are shallow and were judged less critically in need of aerators. According to POA President Dave Barnes, “The water already is starting to look clearer and we have seen more bird and fish activity.”

See **LAKES OF BELL TOWER, P. 5** ➤

LAKES OF BELL TOWER CONTINUED FROM P. 4

Although there are a number of aerating options available, the bubblers are the most effective option. Bubblers cycle oxygen from the surface of the lakes to the lake bottoms, encouraging the growth of “good bacteria” to control the sludge. They are the least costly to purchase, install and maintain. Fountains, those spectacular sprays in lake #1, are much more costly but less effective. Fountains have a range of only about 5 feet in depth and the circumference of the spray on the surface.

The POA will continue to discuss them for the future since fountains do add to the overall appearance of a complex. Per David Barnes:

Because of the high cost of [fountains] and maintaining them, we have temporarily put any action on these on hold. We did have all the new bubbler electrical installations upgraded so that they could accommodate fountains also. Once we finish all the current projects already budgeted for, we will again address this issue. Ideally this would be a new budget item, where we might install 2 or 3 fountains a year until all the lakes have fountains. Some lakes may require more than one fountain because of their size and shape, such as Lakes #1, 2, 3, and 9. One last thought— all our Lakes have numbers currently; wouldn't it be fun to come up with a contest and rename all our Lakes? □



“The water already is starting to look clearer and we have seen more bird and fish activity.”

HOT-AIR BALLOON LANDING

By Suzanne Ferguson

Residents near the east end of Bell Tower Park Boulevard who were awake around 8 a.m. April 12th were astonished to see a rainbow-colored hot-air balloon coming down between the roadway and the Kensington Loop retention lake. Several rushed over to help the balloon pilot avoid being swept into the water.

According to Christine Cottone, one of the witnesses, they soon discovered that “The balloon actually landed because the pilot was violating RSW (Ft. Myers Airport) air space!” and was ordered to leave. Once the rig was situated on the Boulevard, several neighbors assisted the pilot in deflating the balloon and stayed to chat while he and his two passengers—a woman and a child—waited for his “chase team” to come pick them up.

The balloon had been en route to the Immokalee Airport for a hot-air balloon festival the next day. However, the weekend was so windy that the festival was cancelled, and as it turned out, Bell Tower Park had more balloon excitement than Immokalee! □



Pilot accidentally violating RSW air space is forced to land near our lake #9.

LEE'S CHIEF EMERGENCY PLANNER SPEAKS AT BTP

By Richard Roux

On May 7th of this year, Mr. Gerald Campbell viewed the Bell Tower Park campus and then provided an in-depth talk on hurricane preparedness to approximately 40 residents at our clubhouse. Mr. Campbell is the Chief of Planning for Lee County Emergency Management. The following is a brief synopsis of his comments, along with amplification he provided more recently in an interview.

Mr. Campbell started with some general comments about how even professional planners can discount the power of storms. He had built his own new home in South Carolina on a site deemed to be safe by 100 years of storm data. His new home was a total loss when it was moved entirely off his property by a hurricane. He stressed that any named storm, even a tropical storm, has potential to impact property and human life. Don't discount what can occur, even if unlikely.

Moving on to hurricanes, he discussed the three modes of storm damage: wind, water (rain) and salt water (storm surge). The main wind threat comes from wind getting access to the interior of the home so that it can raise the roof. After seeing the quality of our construction he felt that our homes are well protected from wind damage provided that our garage door stiffeners and shutters are correctly applied.

Rain damage is likely a bigger factor for us. Hurricanes can be accompanied by 15-30 inches of rain. While we have excellent storm sewers and retention ponds, our property is flanked by 2 tidal bodies of water (the slough to the east and Hendry Creek to the west). Our property's floor slab elevation is approximately 11-13 feet above sea level. Mr. Campbell felt that there would be the possibility of wet floors and carpets in some of our units from just the pooling rainwater effects of the direct hit of a storm.

Storm surge is the biggest potential damage factor for Fort Myers. This is a phenomenon which can occur when a storm comes in off the Gulf from the southwest. A significant wall of salt water, pushed by the wind, can come ashore and add to the effects of the rain. A mid-range, 100 mph, Category II hurricane coming from the southwest could conceivably put 3-6 feet of water (or more) into our buildings. This surge could remain in place for many days and become contaminated by sewage, chemicals and other materials, leaving our homes uninhabitable and needing months of repair.

Is it safe for our second floor owners to stay in place during storm surge? While you should be safe if the building's integrity isn't breached, it's far from an ideal solution, as you'll have no electricity or A/C, your car downstairs will be ruined, emergency services may not be able to get to you, and you could be stuck for days.

Has storm surge happened to this area in the past? Yes! Hurricanes in 1873 and 1910, reportedly had significant (>15') storm surge. Will it happen again? Hopefully, not in our lifetime. "Run away!" is Mr. Campbell's advice for storms with predicted significant storm surge (over 10 feet).

Residents should not get caught by surprise. Local and national news broadcasts are the best warning systems for our residents. (You may want a battery-operated radio or TV.) Watch for the convergence of the spaghetti plots (storm track models) at/near this area. Pay particular attention if storm surge is projected.

Mr. Campbell suggested that a pending storm be used to "take a vacation," to protect human life by leaving the area. Leave early! Laugh if it turns out to be unnecessary. He pointed out that the best evacuation route for a storm coming from the southwest could actually be to go south and then across the state to the east coast. We can protect our property and likely re-building special assessment expenses with low cost Federal Flood Insurance.

Hopefully all residents have a full complement of storm shutters (where required) and know how to correctly apply them and their garage door stiffeners. Part-time residents should have plans for getting these items installed. Families should also have their own "Family Emergency Plan." Information on what goes into this plan and other general information are on the BTP WEB site under menu item: "Emergency Planning." We hope you have a boring and safe 2012 hurricane season. □

*"Storm surge is the killer.
Run away from a storm
with large predicted
storm surge"*



Hurricane Katrina storm surge damaging a car.

*"Leave early! Laugh if it
turns out to be
unnecessary."*

LINEAR PARK CLOSED BY CONSTRUCTION

BTP Receives Continued Special Southbound Access

By Susan Kehoe

The John Yarbrough Linear Park, the first mile and a quarter of which run just east of BTP, opened in November 2005. It was originally called Ten Mile Linear Park, because when completed, it will be 10 miles long. In 2008, the Park was renamed the John Yarbrough Linear Park in honor of the former Lee Parks & Recreation Director, John Yarbrough. The park now runs north to Colonial Blvd and is 6 miles long. When completed, the Linear Park will extend south to Mullock Creek in the Jamaica Bay area.

Our section of the Linear Park – from Six-Mile Cypress to Daniels Parkway – will be closed during June to September for work on the filter marsh. Steven Farah from the Lee County Department of Public Works, Division of Natural Resources, provided the following information regarding the filter marsh project and the work to be done during the park closure:

The project will provide water quality improvement to Ten Mile Canal. The project includes expanding the existing filter marsh to the east into Seminole Gulf Railway right-of-way. The expansion will require regrading the existing filter marsh bottom as well as widening the filter marsh to the east. A berm will be built on the east side of the project. Several control structures will be replaced with gated control structures. A long pipe run will be installed on the east side to convey water further south in the filter marsh. There are existing picnic structures that are to remain. The project also includes planting the filter marsh with new/additional plant material.

Since all the work will be done on the east side of the park, we proposed to Lee Coffee, Park Supervisor, that the asphalt-paved section on the west side of the canal - essentially from our neighborhood entrance to Six-Mile Cypress - remain open during the construction period. Leaving it open provides a mostly shaded 1.4 mile "out and back" trail for all to enjoy and gives our BTP residents walking/biking access to the trails along Six Mile Cypress east and Gladiolus west. Mr. Coffee agreed to our suggestion. To support leaving the west section open, the bridge adjacent to our neighborhood entrance will be temporarily gated to prevent people crossing over to the construction area on the east side. □



Steel Bridge outside our back gate (shown) will be closed going northbound.

“The [construction] project will provide water quality improvement to Ten Mile Canal. “

BALLYORNEY RE-ZONING CONTINUED FROM P. 3

Consequently, the Sheriff's Department can not enforce lowering the concerts' volume level when Bell Tower Park residents call throughout these scheduled Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evening concerts.

For your information, the famous Australian rock group, "The Little River Band," will be performing live at Ballyorney on Friday night, June 29th. This should provide a good opportunity for anyone to gather data to present at the hearing as to the likely impact of an extension of Ballyorney's liquor license for outdoor concerts. □



Little River Band to perform June 29th.

LEE COUNTY AMENITIES: DOG PARKS



Designated small dog area
At Woof-A-Hatchee

By Jim Stewart

[Editor's Note: This article is the second in what we hope will be a continuing series on nearby amenities. In the previous issue we featured Lakes Park; now we turn to some dog parks. Suggestions for future articles are welcome. scf@cwru.edu]

If you are a dog owner in BTP, you know that it is required that your pet be on a leash whenever it is outside your home and that all pet waste must be cleaned up. Everyone has been doing a good job following those rules. But some dog owners have been frustrated that their dogs do not get enough exercise.

There is a solution close at hand. Only 4.5 miles southwest of Bell Tower Park (11

minutes by car) you will find Woof-A-Hatchee Dog Park at the new Lee County Wa-Ke Hatchee Community Park and Recreation Center. The dog park has over an acre of land fenced in, with a small separate area for small/shy dogs. There is water for people and dogs and benches to sit on. Trees have been planted that will eventually provide shade. Nearby there are restroom facilities. And if you have young children, there is a nice playground next to the dog park. The best part is that it is free—and so is parking!

To get there, take U.S. 41 south to Gladiolus Dr. Turn right, then keep left over the Summerlin overpass as if you are going to the beach. When you get to Bass Road (near Health Park), turn left

and go about 1/4 mile to the park entrance at 16760 Bass Rd.

There is another dog park at the Estero Community Park, 10 miles south off Corkscrew Road with similar amenities. And on Lovers' Key, south of Ft. Myers Beach and Lovers' Key State Park, there is a terrific beach area for off-leash dogs. Other communities have dog parks, but the "Dog Beach," as it's called, is truly special. Here the dogs and their owners wade and swim, fetch, loaf, and enjoy their freedom. Waste facilities are provided for the dogs, and fresh water and restrooms for people have recently been installed. One thing to observe: this park is really only fun at low tide, so check your tide charts before setting out. □

"Other cities and counties have dog parks, but Lee's "Dog Beach" is truly special."



Carefree, leash-less frolicking in beautiful Gulf waters



Gates to off-leash freedom



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Richard Roux

Welcome to mid-summer at Bell Tower Park and to the fourth issue of *Bell Tower Notes*. Although our snowbirds have left us, there is still a lot of activity in our community. The POA Board and our CAM are busy with numerous projects; and the results are visible throughout the neighborhood. Our new palms along BTP Boulevard are leafing out beautifully; the lake water is clearing; trees are being trimmed; and people are contemplating hurricane preparations.

We are happy to have articles by two new contributors in this issue of *Bell Tower Notes*—Barb Haydock and Susan Kehoe. And we have a new column of Questions and Answers by Jim Stewart. The newsletter staff is always happy to have your comments and suggestions for future reporting. Our next newsletter won't happen until late October; in the meantime you can keep up with BTP events on the community WEB site, belltowerparkcommunity.com.

REMEMBER: WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.BELLTOWER PARKCOMMUNITY.COM

DID YOU WANT TO KNOW?

By Jim Stewart

[Editor's Note: Our intrepid wildlife reporter, Jim Stewart, has turned his attention to a new beat: frequently-asked questions about the neighborhood. Please send your questions or comments to Jim at iuking@aol.com.]

Q. What is the deal with the blue lights we see on the traffic signals at some intersections, including U.S. 41 and Gladiolus?

A. Lt. James Mulligan of the Fort Myers Police Department reports that "these are lights to assist with enforcement of red light running. They are wired with the red light of the signal head to which they are attached. An officer can sit downstream from a signal and identify red light runners and pull them over without having to endanger themselves or others by running the red light, too." (Don't say you weren't warned!)

Q. At what temperature are the BTP pools and spas set?

A. The people who take care of our pools told me the pool(s) are set at 88 degrees. Of course, when it is cool at night, the pool temperature goes down and the heater cannot always keep up with the cold, so you might find the water a little cooler than normal in the winter. In the summer, sometimes the pool heats up to the mid 90's from the sun. That is why a good rain is welcomed to cool down the pool temperature. The spas were set at 103, but because of some incidents of heat exhaustion in the spas, they are now set at 101F. If you find them hotter than that, please report immediately to management.

Q. What is the function of the tower on Andrea Lane that backs up to our property in the southeast part of BTP?

A. A spokesman from the tower company would not reveal any details to me for contractual reasons, he said; however, the owner of Hunt Automotive, where the tower is located, told me it was his understanding that originally it was a tower for Sprint but now is a tower for Verizon.