

March 3, 2025 - Notes to the Community -

Hi everyone,

“Season” is in full swing. Traffic continues to build throughout the County, and the restaurants are pretty much packed every night. It’s very busy here in the community as well. The pools are very popular, the new pickle ball courts are busy, and our traffic and visitor volumes have increased exponentially. A fun time to be here, despite the hustle and bustle of late winter and early spring

However, there are several items that need to be addressed:

Irrigation – has been an issue for several weeks. BTP relies on the aquifer some 300 feet plus below us as a supply for irrigation water when our lakes and ponds begin to dissipate during our “dry” season. We have a well on property with which we are allowed, by the State, to draw water from the aquifer for these purposes. The pump that draws the water from the well has been inoperable, on and off since November.

But, as of last Monday, we are obtaining water from the aquifer. That, and the weather front that provided several inches of rain last week has helped replenish our irrigation supply.

A water main break in the Avon Park area was also repaired, so all these conditions have helped make the community “greener” and will get us through “dry” season this year.

There is however a watering restriction mandated by the County that must be followed. We are allowed to water two days a week, as per our Landscape Contractor, Greenscapes.

Community Gates – As we all know our entry gates have been inoperable for well over two weeks. Envera’s system was unable to

read/recognize our entry stickers, thus the reason why the gates were left open. Other facets of their system were operable – the cameras for example as well as entry fobs.

In addition, the pedestrian gates were removed for five days so that new locks could be installed and so that the gates could be cleaned. They are back in place and in operation. There is also a new entry code that Brandi forwarded to the Community last week. Should anyone have issues with it, please contact the office at your convenience.

Regardless, this occurrence, as well as several other earlier issues with Envera, has created a situation where the Board is investigating other safety/security companies to provide us with this service.

Our contract with Envera terminates this summer. Brandi and I have already met with two other companies, with meetings set this week with at least two more to evaluate alternatives. However, there are several different gate security systems available. We must choose the one that will be most effective, yet easy to use for our residents. Discussions on all of this will take place at least at the next Board meeting, and probably thereafter, so as to get this decision right. We will most likely select a new type of system. One that doesn't "read" driver's licenses for instance, when this process is complete. And there may be a short learning curve for all of us as we learn a new system that will be different than the Envera method. The key will be to choose the best, most efficient and cost-effective system possible to meet our needs.

The last **POA Board meeting** was held on **Tuesday February 24th**, and several key items were covered.

Tennis Court conversion – The **pickleball courts** and **tennis court** are complete (except for the replacement of the tennis court posts. They are a bit too low and will be replaced by Sports Surfaces). We have seen a great deal of play over the last several weeks. More

experienced players as well as newer participants have used the courts daily. There was discussion by the Board about the need for making reservations for the courts for play. It was decided to table this thought until the beginning of next “season”, depending upon demand. The tennis court has also experienced increased activity due to the new surface.

To keep these courts looking good, and to preserve the finish of the surface – PLEASE DO NOT PUT CHAIRS, BENCHES OR ANY FOREIGN OBJECTS ON THESE COURTS, AT ANY TIME. The schedule for resurfacing them is every seven years or so, so please let’s keep them looking and playing as well as we can by adhering to these rules.

The permit for a new fence surrounding the **basketball court** is nearly ready. Once it’s obtained, and the fence is installed, Sports Surfaces will be here to resurface and paint it as well. The appearance will be the same as the new tennis/pickle ball courts, so it will be a really nice, clean look to the Sports Complex when completed.

The **Bocce Court** is another issue. We are still waiting for news concerning the possible permits, surveys and potential studies that may be required before we can move forward with this phase of our project. More information will be forthcoming when we learn more. This has been an exasperating process, but hopefully we’ll have some resolution on it soon.

The first application of the treatment to reduce or **eliminate the large amount of silt or “muck”** that exists at the bottom of our lakes and ponds is scheduled for this week. The second will be applied later this month. It will be very interesting to see how this process will help us with our water retention, once the rainy season begins in June.

Our **hedge row** that covers most of the length of our southern perimeter has been an issue for several years. Four hurricanes over the past seven years have taken their toll. Also, its upkeep had been spotty, allowing vines, dead branches, etc. to infiltrate the space and choke the hedge.

Greenscapes' staff cut them back dramatically earlier this year and applied a great deal of fertilizer as well. The "hard cut" has helped improve its appearance already, and it will continue as long as we don't experience another outbreak of "white fly", which can kill the hedge, or another hurricane this summer/fall.

In addition, our Landscape Committee, led by Dan Kernick, has proposed, and the Board approved, the purchase of 50, 15 gallon Green Buttonwood plants. These plants arrive at around 6 feet in height and grow very quickly. They will be planted in spots where there are gaps in the hedge row to help "fill in". They will be planted in late May or early June to take advantage of the expected rains of the summer season. So, hopefully we will see even more improvement in appearance along our southern perimeter.

Next, the Board approved the yearly **maintenance contract** that we have with **Hoover Pumps**. This applies to five irrigation pumps that send water into our irrigation system. It also now includes the pump that draws water from the aquifer (mentioned earlier) into our lakes to provide water for our irrigation. Previous to this, for some reason, it had not been included in our maintenance plan and created significant extra costs this year due to its exclusion from the plan.

Although we have yet to receive the **final Reserve Study** that was ordered last fall, the Board discussed BTP POA assets that were identified in the draft Study obtained in January, that might need attention in 2025. The primary concern is whether to paint the five Common Area buildings that are the responsibility of the POA. Remember, they all were re-roofed in 2024. However, the estimate

to paint the buildings, as well as the walls along the west perimeter and the partial wall along the south perimeter, is approximately \$52,000. Also to be considered is refurbishing the interior of the Admin Building/Annex with an estimated cost of \$25,000.

Also according to the schedule, are the replacement of the three fountains in our lakes and heaters for the pools and spas. Since we replaced two of our fountains in 2024 and have replaced several pool/spa heaters over the last few years, the Board concluded that we should continue in this direction: replacing these items as needed.

The final Reserve Study report should be completed within the next week or two. At that point the results will be shared with our owners, and the Board's direction as to how to address any reserve shortfall that may exist will be outlined at that time.

Finally, the Board was brought up to date on the status of our **POA owned web site**. The Communications Committee, lead by John Fuller, Mark Lovelace, John Scardella, and most recently Nina Anderson, have worked very hard loading information on to the site. So now the new web site has reached the point where the information contained on it fulfills most of the requirements that are stipulated by the State of Florida to be considered our "official" web site. It is more compliant than the Frontsteps platform that was provided to us by Cardinal two years ago.

So after a short discussion, the Board voted to approve the web site as the **BTP POA Official web site**.

More on the web site will be provided in a separate note later this week. But for those of you that have yet to sign up for the web site, there will be a **Web Site Seminar** conducted at the Clubhouse this coming Saturday, **March 8th from 10AM until noon**. Committee members will be there to help people sign up for and answer questions on how to navigate and use the site.

Other items:

As you've seen, the **Social Committee** has really been busy, providing us with all kinds of fun things to do this "season". Coming up over the next couple of months will be:

- March 6th—Movie Night in the Clubhouse *
- March 15th -- St. Patrick's Day Party – in the Clubhouse
- March 28th – Comedy Night -- in the Clubhouse *
- March 31st – Sip and Paint II – in the Clubhouse *
- April 5th – Annual Tea & Fashion Show – in the Clubhouse
- May 1st – Mighty Mussels Baseball - at Hammond Stadium

Several of these events are new the year (as indicated by the *), so please plan to support the Committee and attend those fun activities that are of interest to you!!

Also – due to attrition and some health issues, the Safety Committee has suspended activities for a while. The Committee had resumed their role of managing parking issues and overall safety within BTP last fall. They serve a very important purpose by monitoring owners, renters and visitors that violate community parking regulations that create safety problems or just blatantly choose not to comply.

We are currently seeking volunteers that might like to help with this effort. Should you be interested in being involved with this valuable Committee, please contact Brandi in the office.

Due in part to the prolonged cold snap that we had here in January, we had an unusual influx of rats in the community. Our pest control contractor, PurCor, has done a nice job of placing traps around our residences to deter and kill off many of these rodents. However, we should remember that we have numerous creatures that exist here amongst us in BTP. Along with coyotes and a bobcat or two, we have armadillos, raccoons, the occasional alligator plus various other critters. Lately residents have reported seeing small rattle snakes in

the neighborhood. (should you see one, please call Florida Fish and Wildlife – 888 -404-3922 to report it)

Remember, we have some pretty large preserve areas within our boundaries: two large areas within the community, plus large parcels along the northern, eastern and southern perimeters. They all can house these creatures – so be careful when walking the community and when you are close to bushy areas or areas with high grass, etc.. This obviously goes for our furry friends when they are being walked on a leash around BTP.

We had a rather disturbing occurrence that happened last Friday morning. A resident spotted and photographed a man walking naked around the Avon Park Circle area in the north central portion of the community. Something like this is unnerving to say the least. Should you ever observe or encounter such a thing, call the Lee County Sheriff's Office **immediately** – 230-437-1000, or if there is an immediate danger call “911”.

We've had problems with our entrance gates lately as we all know. However – even though we are a “gated community”, we, like nearly every other “gated community” are safe, but not necessarily “secure”. Again, like most other gated neighborhoods, if someone really wants to gain entry, they will do so. As always, stay alert – and as the Sheriff's Department always recommends – “If you see something --- say something”!!!

Annual meetings -- You will be receiving packets containing ballots for proxies and Board elections to be tallied at the Annual Meetings being held at the end of the month.

There will be one for the POA as well as a packet for the sub-Association in which you live. **PLEASE** be sure to read over these materials and submit your responses to the office. All four Associations need to have a quorum of responses so that this

official community business can be completed. The dates for these individual meetings have been distributed to you by the office, so again, please be involved and return these ballots and proxies promptly.

Also – the Communications Committee will be hosting a **Meet the Candidates night** on Thursday March 13th at the Admin/Annex Building.

POA Board candidates Tim Kidd, Ron Mc Ewan and Mark Trail will be on hand to present their qualifications to be a member of the POA Board and answer questions. There are two Board positions that need to be filled.

Our **next POA meeting** will be a combination of our regular monthly meeting and **Annual meeting**. It will take place on March 25th. The monthly meeting will begin at 5PM with the Annual meeting to follow, beginning at 6PM.

As always, it will be held in the Admin/Annex building. Should you not be able to attend in person, it will also be available using our new “owl” zoom system.

Thanks everyone! Have a great week,

Ron Mc Ewan, Board President
Bell Tower Park Property Owners Association