

May 19th, 2025 - Notes to the Community -

Hi everyone,

Now that we're well into the month of May, it's time to discuss **Hurricane Preparedness**.

From now until the first of June, we'll be bombarded with reminders of what's just around the corner. Unfortunately, since 2017, SW Florida and BTP have experienced four named hurricanes – 2017-Irma, 2022-Ian, and last year-Helene and Milton.

We are located just inside Flood Area B, the second most susceptible area for flooding in Lee County. For the most part we've had more significant water damage during very heavy rainfall events than during hurricanes (for example, last June when we experienced 20 inches of rain during the month).

But the community has had its share of wind damage – trees lost, (remember the beloved “banyan” trees along the south wall just inside the entrance after Ian left us?), roof damage, and last year a small twister struck the southeast corner of the property, causing significant damage to lanais, some roofs, and an automobile.

So, while we *probably*(?) won't suffer damage from a surge due to hurricane-force winds and rain, we are very vulnerable to wind and flying debris damage within BTP.

Regardless, we need to take precautions to 1) protect ourselves and our property, and 2) be ready to do without electricity and the inconvenience of not having it, perhaps for an extended period.

Most Hurricane Preparedness is based on using common sense. Regardless -- there are two options: evacuate or stay in the community.

Should you elect to evacuate, please don't choose to leave at the last minute. If you decide to evacuate, either by driving or flying out of the area, leave yourselves plenty of time to do so. A last-minute decision to go could leave you stranded on a highway, perhaps without a convenient source of fuel, or in an airport where flights have been cancelled. So, decide early! But before you leave, be sure to secure your home from flying debris, turn off your water, and let a neighbor know what you're doing and how you can be reached.

Should you elect to stay and “ride out” the storm, there are several things to consider:

- Most units were supplied with aluminum shutters by the developer when our homes were built. If you still have these shutters, either prepare to install them yourself, or recruit a reliable person/company to install them for you (and remove them after the storm).
- In the eastern section of the property, hurricane resistant windows were installed by the developer. Many owners in the rest of the community have retractable shutters, and others have installed their own hurricane-resistant windows since then. These are reliable features that protect us from a major storm.
- However, numerous steps should be taken by **everyone**, prior to the arrival of a tropical storm system that could again strike our “piece of paradise.” For these steps, check out Lee County’s website for their **“All Hazards Guide,”** which contains a wealth of information concerning Hurricane preparedness. The new **Bell Tower Park POA Website** displays the direct link in a

couple places, or click [**HERE**](#) to be taken directly to the exact page on the county website.

- Also – there is always a chance of having roof and property damage should we experience a large storm. Be sure that you have your insurance policies handy if such damage occurs. All roofs in the community are new, and we shouldn't have damage to them unless a category 4 or 5 storm arrives. If that occurs, plan to have a contractor available to come as quickly as possible to apply blue tarps to your roof.
- For older, “seasoned” owners and residents here in BTP, you should have a pretty good idea of how to prepare. For our newcomers, it will be a new experience, at least in Bell Tower Park. We’re a community of pretty nice people so, don’t be shy about relying on your neighbors during times like this.

The Bell Tower Park **Security System** situation remains a problem. More and more owners/residents have experienced personal issues with Envera of late, these are in addition to the numerous gate outages that we’ve dealt with this year.

Brandi, as well as Board members, have been in frequent conversation with Envera to uphold their contractual commitment to provide the service that we expect and is outlined in their contract. We’ve had some success in that regard, as we continue to investigate a replacement security company.

This is an important step. Envera has been the Security System provider here since 2011. We have interviewed and investigated five other companies. There are numerous variables involved here: gate operation, visitor identification and approval process, owner/resident vehicle identification system, license identification plus the surveillance cameras and monitoring system and much

more – including, most importantly, client service. Plus, the most important factor ---- get the best system at a reasonable price.

As mentioned before, this situation that Envera was requiring us to purchase all new equipment here – entrance kiosk, cameras, gate bars, cameras, software, etc. to be compatible with their “new system” came out of nowhere in January. The upfront price tag was over \$100,000, which, of course, we didn’t have available. Our previous CAM was aware of the situation, but rather than address it, chose to disregard the issue. And, for some reason, there was not a line-item allocation in our Reserve Schedule for all of this equipment. So, we’re working on how to pay for this package over time, rather than try to pay for it all in 2025.

Obviously, this is a process that we must “get right”. We have eliminated several of the firms that we’ve interviewed and are closing in on a choice that will best serve our community. We will have more on this shortly.

About three weeks ago, the **Bell Tower Park Presidents Council** (the presidents of each of our four associations: Matt Christie – Carriage Homes, Robert Van Teeffelen – Courtyard I, Donna Cleary – Courtyard II and Ron Mc Ewan – the Master POA) met to discuss issues, potential improvements, and policy within the community.

Among other matters, the **topic of gutters and drains** was discussed. A contractor that works frequently within BTP, brought concerns and findings to Brandi about damage that has occurred over time to many of our buildings/homes due to water accumulation during and after storms that periodically occur. Water also causes erosion of the ground around the buildings, as well as damage to air conditioning units and other equipment that is outside.

These issues are created primarily by the water run-off from the roofs during and after these rainstorms. When our homes were built, the developer chose not to install adequate gutters and drains to move these waters away from the buildings. Thus, the problems that we have. The Presidents Council discussed the possibility of creating a program to rectify the problem. By selecting a reputable, licensed contractor that specializes in this line of work, we could offer very attractive pricing to homeowners to have this work done and help preserve the foundations of our homes.

Many BTP owners have already installed gutters and drains around their buildings – be it Carriage Homes with eight units or Courtyard Homes with two. So, in the interest of fairness, it would not be acceptable for the Association to pay for this program. It would be the responsibility of the owners within each of the buildings – Carriage and Courtyard homes – to share these costs and to protect their investment.

We are currently collecting additional estimates for the gutter/drainage installations as well as an engineer's appraisal of the damage that has already occurred. More information on this program will be provided within the next couple of weeks.

Next - **apologies are due for mistakes** made in the last Notes to the Community. It was stated that 165 bamboo plants were planted within the hedge row along the southern perimeter. **Not accurate.** Actually, 50 **buttonwood** plants were installed on April 25th, and over 75 were installed last weekend in the hedgerow. These are a fast-growing species and will fill the open spots in the Ficus hedge. The Ficus are also coming back nicely after the hard pruning that took place last Fall. After much concern over the hedge, it should get back to where it screens much of what goes on along Andrea Lane very soon.

In addition, it was **incorrectly** mentioned that ground cover was being installed along the residents' entranceway into the community. Instead, multicolored Agave ground cover plants will be installed on the end caps along the Boulevard. Then, a colorful variety of Thyme grass will be planted along the residents' entrance within the next two weeks. It will add color and provide a good ground cover as opposed to the mulch that has been laid there over the years. **Again -- apologies for the mix up!!**

Last Thursday, the **Landscape Committee** discussed projects moving forward. There is still much that can be done. It was decided to investigate planting Bougainvillea bushes along the eastern perimeter that borders Lee County property along the Ten Mile Linear Canal. The reason is twofold:

- a) They provide a pleasant looking but immediate barrier to trespassers from the trail along the canal, plus
- b) They add some visually attractive bushes to mask the gnarly trees and foliage on the County property.

The Committee also discussed the potential for setting standards for conforming heights of many of the common bushes, etc. that exist around BTP. These restrictions will be discussed with Greenscapes' Leslie Cassandra before anything is solidified. The long-standing discussion as to whether owners/residents should be able to mark certain plants, bushes, etc. so that the landscapers do not service them was also discussed. There are divergent opinions on this topic, and a policy recommendation was not decided upon.

Other news:

There are numerous, small “**catch basin**” drains existing near and around the 478 residences in BTP. It’s apparent that the maintenance of these drains – some that drain into our lakes, and some that drain into preserve areas – has been neglected for years. There are some that we already know are clogged and water backs up onto the ground, into driveways, etc. when storms occur. With rainy season just ahead, Brandi found a contractor who specializes in this type of work, finding and then identifying whether these “catch basins” are clogged and inoperable.

This study began last week, and we should soon be able to identify where we stand with these “catch basins.” The project entails finding the location of all of these “catch basins,” map them for posterity, and finally cleaning out as many as possible that are clogged. Since we are close to the start of the rainy season, it was decided to move forward with this as soon as possible. The project will be discussed further at the Board meeting, again being held on the 27th.

There have been **rumors** going around about the **closure of our Clubhouse pool**. A piece of corner cement dislodged and fell into the pool. Also, a crack in the pool wall was found. A rumor began immediately that the pool was being closed.

First, the damage was repaired by Pool Executives/a.k.a.Neptune Pools, our long-time vendor. There are also stains at the bottom of the pool. They were caused by either or both a faulty drain or rust leakage from an old heat pump that has since been replaced. Also, there are periodic stain lines around the walls at the surface, primarily created by suntan products getting into the water.

As per the Reserve Schedule, the pool is scheduled to be drained and resurfaced in 2026 or 2027, depending upon which Reserve Study

one uses. Brandi is investigating whether we will need to do this earlier than that. But the pool is NOT being closed at this time.

It appears that this will be an expensive project. The proposal that we received from Pool Executives is roughly \$111,000. It includes the removal of tile, coping, etc., parts of the sub-structure as well as ladders, and a myriad of other items. We will be examining this document closely this week, plus, we have another proposal coming this week as well. Again, more on this as it becomes available. But, at this time, the pool is very functional and fine for use.

The **Amenities Committee/John Davenport** provided an update on the **Bocce Court** project. All permitting has been approved by Lee County. The only one remaining is a permit from the Fire Department, which should be received shortly. It is hoped that the Court installation work will begin sometime in June. More updates to follow.

The POA Board approved the regularly scheduled **painting of the five POA Common buildings as well as the exterior cement walls** in March. Brandi has obtained five proposals for the project. The Board will be reviewing these bids and discussing them at the upcoming Board meeting on the 27th.

Please, everyone have a great week and a terrific Memorial Day Weekend. Safe travels if you are out and about!!

Best regards,

Ron Mc Ewan
Board President - Bell Tower Park
Property Owner's Association