

## July 1st, 2025 - Notes to the Community –

Hi everyone,

The month of June was sure much different than in 2024. Remember the record rains? Over 22 inches of it, causing flooding, compromised foundations in some of our buildings and full lakes and ponds. According to the readings at Page Feld, four miles north of us, we're roughly 7 inches behind normal rain totals for the first six months of the year, and over 21 inches below 2024 levels. But we still have three months left in "rainy season". So, keep your umbrellas handy.

Regardless of the rain situation things keep happening around Bell Tower Park. The **monthly POA Board meeting** took place on **June 24<sup>th</sup>**. A number of important items were discussed. But first, the issues that we've had with the sound system in the Annex allowing owners to join in on meetings, see and more importantly hear the discussion, have been rectified. Thanks to the diligent efforts of our own **John Fuller**, the system was modified and everyone in attendance and on the zoom feed seemed pleased with the delivery.

The Board had tentatively approved Pinch-a- Penny to replace Pool Executives/Neptune Pools as our **pool maintenance contractor** at the May meeting. However, BTP owner **Andy Potts**, a Cambridge Drive owner and resident, stepped forward shortly thereafter and submitted a proposal for his company, Puddles Pools. Andy's proposal was much better than was Pinch-a-Penny's, so the Board approved his bid. Andy attended the meeting, thanked everyone for considering Puddles and mentioned that they service residential accounts as well. So, any pool owners in the community that are looking for a reputable pool service company, Andy offers a special BTP rate.

The next important part of the Board meeting was the discussion concerning **a new Security/Safety System**. There's no need to rehash the problems that we've had with Envera. However, we've researched numerous (at least six) firms to one degree or another and after careful consideration have selected two finalists – **Securitas** and **Key Security Systems**.

**Securitas** is a large, global company, and servicing communities is but one portion of their offering. They guard businesses, with systems and live personnel (gate guards, security personnel for events, or ongoing needs, etc.) and have offices all over the Country, with one here in Ft. Myers.

**Key Security** is a local firm based in Naples. They specialize in providing security systems as well as enclosure security – locks and related products – throughout SW Florida.

As we know, our community, as nearly every other community in our region is not totally “secure”. As Sheriff Marceno says, “people can gain entrance if they really want to”. Also, at this point, our perimeter is not totally enclosed or secure either. All preventative fencing around the perimeter is the responsibility of the POA. So, it's up to all of us to help make BP as safe as we can make it. More on that at a later time.

There are four fundamental components to a “Security System”.

- Equipment --

The guard Gates – vehicular and pedestrian -- and the software associated with it – plus fobs, vehicle entrance stickers, the maintenance of a real time list of owners, residents, visitors, etc. for the community and the system/kiosk that is used to monitor who is admitted into the community. .

Cameras to monitor activity – in our case the front entrances,

the clubhouse/annex/gym, the pool areas – clubhouse and Avon Park – and the recreation area.

- A preventative maintenance contract to service all components of the system
- “Cloud” storage of all video captured by the cameras as well as lists of names/addresses, visitor’s information, etc. plus voice capabilities – recorded voice commands to leave if violators are where they shouldn’t be, etc.
- An off-site/remote surveillance/monitoring group responsible for watching our cameras.

Without going into the “weeds” of the proposals from each company at this point, since we still have numerous questions that need to be addressed on each, we’ve determined what each company generally offers and the pros and cons of each.

Each company provides the first three components outlined above:

1) the gates package - a new entry kiosk – a visitor entry recognition system, wiring, programming, etc. (but excluding new gates and guard bar which at this time, would remain as is), cameras, including the video recording of all activity (vehicles, people, etc.), the maintenance program and the cloud/voice capabilities.

**Key** does not provide the fourth component, the off-site monitor feature, while **Securitas** does, from their remote center based in Charlotte, NC. However, there is a wide difference in costs and comparing their proposals.

**Securitas** has presented us with a three-year program commitment. At this point, after presenting a flat monthly cost for three years that contained all four components listed above combined, they resubmitted one that detailed cost for each of the four components. All equipment and software would be provided and installed at the beginning of the service – all would be in place when the turnover takes place from Envera. Included in all three years are the

maintenance and off-site monitoring program and the surveillance of the cameras at the off-site facility. This process entails monitoring of the cameras, a voice at the kiosk if necessary, and if an issue appears on a camera, their representative calls our CAM for further instructions as to how to deal with the matter.

The cost structure is –

- 1) One time charge for the equipment and installation as outlined above. – approx. \$42,200
- 2) Monthly charges for:
  - Preventative maintenance - \$275
  - Video availability and cloud storage plus video/voice service at the kiosk \$662
  - 24-hour remote monitoring of the cameras - \$7,500

Total cost for the three-year commitment is \$345,932. With the County sales tax of 6.5% the cost is \$368,420

**Key's** proposal is less expensive --- but does **NOT** include the fourth component, the monitoring/surveillance portion and the voice at the kiosk. It too, is a three-year commitment.

- 1) First year costs include replacing all of the equipment mentioned previously – gate infrastructure, cameras, etc. – \$57,123
- 2) Monthly charges for:
  - Preventative maintenance - \$320
  - Video availability and cloud storage plus video and recorded voice service - \$305

Total cost for the three-year commitment is \$79,623. With the County tax of 6.5% the cost is \$84,800.

The reason for the huge differences between the costs for these two companies is the off-site camera monitoring program. \$270,000 of

the \$345,932 (plus tax) for the Securitas bid is allocated to that portion of the service.

We as a Board, and the members of the community will have to decide if that feature is worthy of this additional amount of money.

We've been paying these types of costs with Envera for years. We have to ask ourselves if this expense is warranted. It's essentially a reactive system, as mentioned before. When an incident occurs after hours, the CAM is notified and the decision to react by calling the authorities or not is made. Without this program, a reaction is made the next day, once the office identifies the problem and reacts accordingly.

Again – anything pertaining to either service applies to the activity at the gates and anything that pertains to the Clubhouse/Annex and the pools, not the rest of the community. An idea brought forward by one of our Board members is to install an ADT, or another such system in the Clubhouse/Annex if we used Key. It would be a proactive step to guard against theft or vandalism in our common area complex.

Again, the Board has more to consider before a decision is made and will be investigating all aspects of each proposal. The decision will be made at the next POA Board meeting on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. Comments and questions are **welcomed** by **visiting the new web site** and going to the Dashboard: Resident's Section and drop down to either the "Contact the POA Board" page or the "Contact the POA/sub-Association Boards" page and pass on your thoughts.

After discussion and comments from those in attendance, the Board approved an ARC submitted by **Margaret Stanley** of the Carriage Homes Board to place a **dog station** in the vicinity of the guest parking spaces on Berkshire Dr. This will be paid for by the Carriage Homes Association. As mentioned in the previous Notes to the Community, dog remains are still being tossed into the preserve area

behind the guest parking spots and in the swale behind the Ficus hedge along the street. Perhaps the convenience of disposing of the “leavings” in the dog station, as opposed to what’s being done – apparently by one woman in particular - will cease. This “test” was approved for a six-month period to determine if this would be a viable approach to help reduce the problem or be a waste of time and money.

### **Other items:**

As the office announced earlier, the Bocce Court is complete and open for play. The bocce balls are stored in the Clubhouse – in the storage room near the entrance to the Fitness Center and next to the library. When you have completed play, please return them to the storage room!

Additional work around the Bocce Court still needs to be done. After the construction was completed, the snow around the court and between the court and the playground was pretty much destroyed. Also, sprinklers will have to be rearranged so that the court itself is not watered.

Greenscapes should be in to remedy these problems, hopefully within the next couple of weeks. When residents are playing Bocce, **please** do your best to stay off the new sod until it is established!!!

Now that this large capital improvement project has been completed, two members of the Amenities Committee have submitted their resignations. Chairman Keith Miller and John Davenport, both instrumental in moving the project to its fruition, have stepped aside. So, we are seeking new Committee members plus someone that would be interested in being the Committee Chair. This person could be a current member of the Committee or a new volunteer that has innovative ideas concerning our BTP Amenity package. Should anyone be interested, please contact Brandi at the office.

As mentioned last week, numerous **catch basins** (the small drains around homes designed to rid the property of excess water draining from the roofs, etc.) will be cleaned by Don Man Company. They will be here from tomorrow, July 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, then next week beginning on the 6<sup>th</sup> until the conclusion on July 9<sup>th</sup> (excluding July 3,4 and 5). The object is to reopen these clogged drains that have not been serviced for years – and those that are buried/hidden so that they might be addressed later this year.

To facilitate this process, Don Mar is asking that we **DO NOT** park vehicles on the street . Should you have a friend, a repair person or some other vendor working at your home PLEASE have them park in your driveway or in the guest car parking area while they are in your area. And also – **NO PARKING on the grass! At any time!!**

They will be working from 9AM to 3PM, starting along Kensington Loop, working in the eastern portion of the community, then moving forward towards the front/west. There will use two vehicles: a large, “noisy” truck (hence the reason for clearing the streets) and a smaller pick-up truck. So again, please keep the streets clear while they are in your area.

The trimming of our Hardwood Trees project began this week. This will be a much-needed trimming of our Shady Ladys, Oaks, Ficus and other species (not palms) on the property. Greenscapes’ Arborist Division is handling the project. So please be aware of when they are in your area and keep your vehicles parked safely in your garage or in guest parking during the day.

Thanks to everyone for your patience while these two projects take place. And for those few of you that set off fireworks, please keep it to a minimum if at all on Friday night. The many dogs in our community would be most appreciative!

On a happier note, Happy Canada Day today to our northern friends!  
And of course, please everyone have a Happy, and Safe 4<sup>th</sup> of July  
Holiday! The 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our great Country isn't far away!!

Ron Mc Ewan

Board President – Bell Tower Park

Property Owner's Association

