

SEWICKLEY HEIGHTS MANOR HOMES ASSOCIATION
Message from the President

The first six months of this year have been both busy and at times tumultuous. We began with an unusually severe winter which has caused considerable deterioration to much of our exterior wood trim. We continued to have unusual weather into the spring, with excessive precipitation throughout the early growing season.

In the fall of last year the board went out for landscaping bids, and chose Brightview, a highly recommended lawn service that afforded significant savings to the Manor. The Ridge will complete their contract with Sarver at the end of the upcoming fall season. Unfortunately, both companies have encountered significant manpower issues and weather challenges. I am sure you are all aware that while unemployment remains high, there is a lack of people willing to work. Additionally, H-1 visas were delayed this year. The good news is that Brightview will get more H-1 visa workers at the end of June, and we are hoping for drier weather.

We too have faced severe challenges as an association in hiring landscape labor. We sought to build a team of 2 full-time summer workers, but despite offering a generous wage, we have thus far only been able to hire one worker for two days per week. We have checked with multiple lawn services to see if they could assist, and all have responded that they too are short on help. To augment our summer help we sent bid requests to three small local landscape companies requesting pruning services. All three declined to bid, citing manpower shortages.

On the building maintenance front, we understand that there is much to do, and we face multiple challenges including supply shortages as well as extreme price increases.

Our painting contractor was scheduled to begin in April; however wet weather, labor shortages and material availability delayed the start until June 14th.

I know many of you have issues with your deck. This is a common issue, and we have been working with Sherwin Williams since the spring of 2020 to find a resolution. Last summer two decks were done using two different preparations; the results after one winter were better but not perfect. As reported in our newsletter, Sherwin Williams told us stain would be unavailable for 90-120 days due to the extreme cold weather Texas had last winter, creating a shortage of the chemicals required for their formulations (it is now available). Our contractor is still working with Sherwin Williams to finalize preparation and application procedures. We will notify individual households as we get definitive schedules for this work. We were fortunate in 2021 to be able to partially offset the increase in our painting contract with the savings realized by our lawn care contract.

Regular maintenance on the siding of our buildings is performed in two ways: smaller repairs are handled by our staff with funding coming from our operating budget, and more extensive repairs are handled by outside contractors and funded by our siding reserve account. At this time we have not yet let a contract due to both a lack of response to bid requests, and the fact that the two bids we did receive and are currently reviewing are at price levels above budget forecasts.

This year we are paving Timber Lane and associated roads and parking areas. The contract costs exceeded our forecast reserve costs by \$58,000.00, leaving that reserve account in poor shape. Fortunately, there are no roads scheduled to be paved next year.

The roofing contract for this year has been awarded, and we expect work to commence by the end of June. We have been fortunate in this area, as material technology has improved, increasing the useful life of our roofs. An updated engineering study done in 2019 has enabled us to delay replacements, softening the impact of material and labor increases beyond our 3% annual adjustment for inflation.

Deck replacements are funded through a reserve account. Due to the current issues with deck staining and ever-increasing costs of our painting contracts funded through operating costs, the Maintenance Committee is investigating material alternatives that we would expect to reduce our long-term maintenance expense.

Sidewalk/patio repairs/replacements are funded by a reserve account. We have executed a contract, and the most urgently needed repairs have been completed. The balance of the work has been delayed due to our contractor's health issues. The contract for this year is within budget only because some of the less critical areas have been deferred to future years.

Recreational facilities maintenance have no scheduled repairs this year. As the tennis courts have all been redone over the past two years, the next projected repair is the replacement of the pool lining, which is currently exceeding the projected life expectancy.

Our equipment reserves are in reasonable shape, largely due to the majority of our equipment having been replaced by insurance as a result of the fire that destroyed our maintenance building a few years back. Fortunately, the board some years prior had the foresight to change our insurance to cover replacement cost of any losses.

I frequently hear comments as to why the Ridge assessments are so much less than in the Manor. It is important to understand the major differences in the structures of these two communities. In the Manor, we have townhouses for which the Association bears the financial responsibility for all exterior building maintenance. In the Ridge, the single family homeowners bear all responsibility for all exterior maintenance including roofs, siding, driveways and decks.

The homeowners in the Ridge contribute to our recreation facilities the same as Manor residents to support the pool, tennis courts, basketball court and the playground. The other services they receive are lawn and landscape services, which is a separate budget from the Manor landscape budget. The houses on Sewickley Heights Circle contribute to a reserve fund for the private road and drives behind their homes. All other roads in the Ridge are Township roads. In the Manor only Sewickley Heights Drive is a Township road.

Bearing all of the above in mind, ours is an aging community, with the majority of construction being between forty and forty five years old. As time marches on our infrastructure is requiring more repair, as evidenced by additional exterior maintenance, and three water line breaks this year.

In 2014 the board commissioned an engineering study to look at the adequacy of our reserve accounts, which provided estimated replacement costs. These costs have been escalated by 3% per year for inflation. The board is studying these projections and reviewing new contract pricing; however we are determining that current material and labor costs exceed these projections.

Peter Cady
President