

Village Happenings

Winter 2013

Volume 4, Issue 1

News and Updates from Colonial Village I

Articles of Special Interest

- Replacing Your HVAC Unit
- Landscape Updates
- Improving Colonial Village I — Looking Back, Looking Ahead

*Monthly Board Meetings
are held on the
4th Wednesday of each
month at 7 pm in the
Meeting Room at
2021 N. Key Boulevard*

Chuck Edwards, Editor

**Colonial Village I
Management Office
1903 N. Key Blvd
Arlington, VA 22201
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Assessments Rise 3 Percent for 2013

Chuck Edwards

The Colonial Village I Board of directors has approved an assessment increase of 3 percent for 2013. Overall, our budget rises from \$838,000 in 2012 to \$862,000 in 2013, an increase of \$24,000 (figures are rounded).

The 3-percent increase in assessments is the smallest in several years. The Board was able to hold down the increase due to several favorable factors. These include continued low natural-gas prices, lower-than-expected maintenance expenses, favorable prices on annual service contracts and higher-than-expected move-in fees. We also benefitted from unexpectedly low costs on a mortar repair (tuck-pointing) project; this alone saved us \$20,000.

These favorable developments were partly offset by an unexpected \$10,000 write-down due to a negative 2011 audit finding (we reported this figure as \$17,000 on an earlier listserv posting, but it was revised down after subsequent investigation). It appears that a long-running accounting error led to us paying less than our fair share of the three Colonial Villages' employee health costs in past years, which means that we have to reimburse the other two condo associations for our underpayment. The proper split is reflected in this year's operating budget.

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Donations Requested for Trees

Chuck Edwards

The CVI Board has authorized Chuck Edwards of the Landscape Committee to solicit donations for tree planting. We plan to plant two elm trees in the courtyard at 1916-1924 Rhodes this spring. We had to remove one of the two existing large trees there because of extensive trunk rot. The other tree is declining and probably will not last more than a couple of years.

Due to the need to fund capital repairs, we only have enough landscaping money to plant small trees. A tree 11'-12' in height and 1½" in diameter costs around \$300. We would like to plant larger trees. But to move up one size (about 16' and 2½" in diameter) would cost another \$200 per tree. Another \$200 per tree would get yet a bigger tree. Hence, we are hoping our residents might pitch in to buy bigger trees.

Colonial Village I is not a nonprofit organization, so donations are **not** tax-exempt. Contributors will get the satisfaction of contributing to the beauty of our landscape and will be recognized by name in our next newsletter.

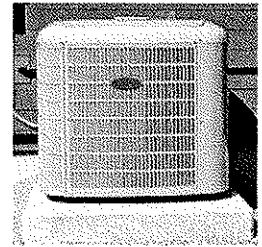
If you would you like to help us "up-size" our trees, please drop off your donation — cash or checks only — at the management office, indicating that they are for "Colo-

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Replacing Your HVAC Unit

Janel Brattland

Each unit in Colonial Village I relies on an individual heat pump for its heating and cooling needs. Heat pumps currently have a life expectancy of approximately 15 years if properly maintained. Recently, some Board members have had occasion to replace their 15+ year old heat pumps and thought it might be helpful to share their experiences.



There are two parts to a heat pump — the condenser that sits outside and the air handler that resides indoors. The heat pump uses a chemical refrigerant to exchange heat between the condenser and the air handler, providing heat during the winter and cool air during the summer. There is also an auxiliary electronic heater on most indoor air handlers to help out in the coldest weather.

New heat pumps — both the condenser that sits outside and the air handler that resides indoors — are generally larger in size than units built 10 or 15 years ago. Freon, the refrigerant commonly used until the past decade, is being phased out because it depletes the ozone layer. The new refrigerants replacing Freon operate at higher pressures, and the resulting equipment generally takes up more space.

The problem for us in Colonial Village is that our heat pump systems were designed for the air handler to reside in a ceiling overhang in the living room. The larger air handlers of today may not fit in the overhang. In fact, many of the major manufacturers such as Carrier have gotten out of the business of making the compact ceiling-mounted air handlers. Therefore, there are some tradeoffs you should be aware of when next replacing your heat pump system.

► **Keeping the air handler in ceiling overhang:** There is at least one manufacturer we're aware of that still makes ceiling mounted air handlers: First Co. of Chadds Ford, Pa. (http://www.hvacproducts-inc.com/pages/First_company/first_company.htm).

Among local companies, Twin Tech, Mannix Heating & Air, and Parrish Services have all installed First Co. air handlers in various CVI units. You should be able to install an outside compressor of your choice and pair it with a First Co. ceiling-mounted air handler. The pluses are that the unit is still out of the way with no loss of floor space, but the minuses are questions about durability and servicing (warranties on First Co. air handlers last only one year whereas warranties on conventional equipment by companies such as Trane or Carrier are usually 10 years).

► **Installing conventional air handler:** The other option is to put a conventional air handler somewhere in the apartment, either installing it in a closet or (perhaps) placing it near the current ductwork and building some sort of cabinet around it. The obvious downside to this is losing some closet or floor space. One Board member recently had Arlington Heating & Air install a new air handler in the coat closet and then had an Elfa closet system installed around the air handler to maximize the remaining space. Moving the air handler out of the ceiling overhang means that the overhang can be reduced in size because it only needs to house ductwork.

Replacement for the entire heat pump system usually runs about \$5,000. It is best to replace both the condenser and heat exchanger at the same time, although it is possible to replace one and not the other as long as they both use the same refrigerant. If you replace an outdoor unit that used Freon with a new unit using a new refrigerant, you must also replace the indoor air handler since they must use the same refrigerant.

CVI Notes

New Bank Lockbox Address

If you pay your assessments by check or by a bank bill-pay service, please make sure that the payments are sent to our new lockbox!

Colonial Village I
Condominium
P.O. Box 105771
c/o Legum & Norman
Atlanta, GA 30348-5771

Those who pay by direct debit or through the Legum & Norman website do not need to make any changes in payment arrangements for 2013.

Storage Bins for Rent!

We still have a few storage bins available:

Full size — \$240/yr
Half size — \$120/yr

Parking Stickers

Residents have informed us that some 2012 parking stickers are peeling off their windows. If this is happening to you, please stop in the office and get a free replacement.

Landscape Updates

► 2013 Landscaping Program

The Board appropriated \$13,000 for landscape improvements in 2013. All courtyards in the complex will see at least some work, but the major projects will occur in the following areas:

- 2007 Key Blvd. – The recent removal of a large maple has changed the environment in this area from full-shade to full-sun. This means we have to transplant many shade plants and introduce sun-loving plants.
- 1917 Rhodes St. – The 2009 foundation repair wiped out the landscaping in this area, and it must be replanted.
- 1900-1902 Rhodes – The professional landscaping done in this area five years ago was a mixed success. Some of the plants simply do not get enough sun, so they must be transplanted and replaced.

It should be noted that, whenever a project entails replacement of existing plants, we do our best to preserve and transplant the plants, rather than discarding them. The 2013 plan completes replanting in all but three areas in the community: 1801-13 Key; 1802-1804 Lee Highway; and 1901-1905 Rhodes. The 2014 plan will handle those areas, and, we hope, complete the replanting program begun seven years ago.

► Pruning Works!

For the past two years, we have pursued an aggressive tree-pruning program, cutting down dead, diseased or dangerous trees and removing dead wood from healthy trees. We saw the results this past year: In the June “derecho” windstorm and the Sandy “super storm,” we lost no limbs larger than two inches in diameter.

Not uncommonly, in past storms or blizzards, we would lose a lot of large limbs or even entire trees, requiring a visit by our tree company and a clean-up bill ranging up to \$3,000 or more. Also, residents’ cars frequently experienced damage from fallen limbs. In 2012, we had no clean-up expenses and no car damage. So our preventive pruning has saved the Association money and our residents hassles.

In our 2013 pruning program — scheduled for completion in mid-January — we plan to prune all trees not addressed in the previous two years, thereby wrapping up a comprehensive three-year sweep. Most of the pruning will be conventional clean-up, but we plan on removing three trees: a large hickory in the courtyard at 1916-1924 Rhodes St. that has extensive trunk rot; a medium-sized white pine at 1804 Lee Highway that is interfering with the growth of the superior trees around it; and a diseased dogwood at 1811 Key Blvd. We are soliciting donations to plant two new trees to replace the hickory (see p. 1).

We also plan to upgrade the lightning protection system in the large hickory behind 1918 Rhodes. This tree was hit by lightning five years ago. It provides a lot of valuable shade to the 1916-1924 Rhodes St. courtyard, so it is well worth preserving.

► Growing Grass in CVI

We occasionally get questions about the condition of the lawn in Colonial Village I. Some areas have little or no grass. We face a couple of major challenges in growing grass:

Our Trees — Our wonderful trees conflict with grass. Grass requires at least a moderate amount of sun (a minimum of four hours per day). It simply will not grow in deep shade. In addition, certain trees, such as magnolias and maples, have many surface roots that compete for water with grass; the trees always win.

Our Pets – We love our dogs, but dog urine is fatal for grass. Areas with a large population of dogs simply will not have a good lawn. Notwithstanding products that purport to mitigate the impact of dog urine on grass, our horticulturists have uniformly deemed any attempt to fight the problem to be a waste of money.

We hope that the pleasure brought by our trees, shrubs and perennials offsets any disappointment with the quality of our lawns.

Colonial Village I Happenings



CVI Notes

Your Pet and CVI

We love our pets, but CVI by-laws say:

- 🐾 Pets must be leashed or carried
- 🐾 Pet poop must be bagged and placed in the poop bin in the trash rooms
- 🐾 Poop bags may not be left on the stoop

Please be a good neighbor and pick up after your pets!

Trash-room Etiquette

Residents have been observed opening the trash room door and simply tossing their trash bags on the floor. Others deposit their trash bags in the first trashcan close to the door, even if it is overflowing and the trash containers next to it are empty. This makes for a mess, blocks access to the room for others and attracts rats.

Please:

- 🗑️ Deposit your trash and recycling in the appropriate bins.
- 🗑️ Use all bins

Board of Directors

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Neil Chritton, 2nd Vice
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Chuck Edwards, Treasurer
Susan Craig, Vice Treasurer
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CVaughan@LegumNorman.com

Sonya Rainey, CMCA®
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SRainey@LegumNorman.com

Amanda Bright
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ABright@LegumNorman.com

703.525.5557 OFFICE
703.525.5558 FAX

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.colonialvillagei.com

Board President's Email
colonialvillage1@gmail.com

Email Updates

Join our listserv and get prompt notice of events affecting your community. Just send your email address to cviupdates@gmail.com and ask to be added to the list.

Improving Colonial Village I — Looking Back, Looking Ahead

The Colonial Village I Board and management have an ever-expanding agenda of items to improve the physical, financial and social environment for owners and residents. We thought the start of a new year would be a good opportunity to review the past year's achievements and plans for the coming year.

For 2013, our plans can be quickly summarized: carpets and roofs. First, we plan to completely rejuvenate our entrance halls by replacing our severely worn carpets and repainting. Second, we intend to replace at least three or four roofs — this is a blitz to get ahead of a major 4-5 year replacement program.

Among the major achievements this past year:

- Recovering \$101,000 from our insurance company for the 2009 foundation repair at 1917 Rhodes Street.
- Reorganizing our storage cages to open up new storage areas for rental by residents and simultaneously creating a new income stream.
- Repainting the exteriors of all buildings.
- Replacing the roof at 2007 Key Blvd.
- Tuck-pointing the rear of the buildings at 2007-2021 Key Blvd.
- Installing new chimney flues throughout the community.
- Replacing the main sewer line at 1801 Key Blvd.
- Resealing and repainting the parking lot at 1903 Key Blvd.
- Sealing the foundation at 2021 Key Blvd.
- Revising several regulations to conform to new Virginia laws.
- Taking steps to free up new space for bicycle storage.

Assessments, *continued from page 1*

Due to favorable trends in infrastructure costs, the Board believes that we can safely contribute less to our reserve fund for 2013 than projected in our recent reserve study (available at www.colonialvillagei.com). In 2012, we set aside \$242,000 to fund major infrastructure projects like tuck-pointing and roof replacement. We were scheduled to increase our annual reserve contribution by \$16,000 in 2013. Instead, we increased our reserve contribution by only \$8,000. In total, we are slated to deposit \$250,000 in our capital reserves in 2013. If costs turn unfavorable, we may have to boost our reserve contribution more in 2014.

Although our capital reserve account fluctuates constantly due to periodic payments for completed projects, we expect our uncommitted reserves to be in the neighborhood of \$100,000 at the end of 2012. Ideally, the figure would be double that, but we definitely have the liquidity to proceed with a vigorous infrastructure program.

Tree Donations, *continued from page 1*

Colonial Village I trees." Checks should be made out to "Colonial Village I." All donations will be logged in and expenses monitored by the management office.

If you would like to mail your donation, please mail the check to:

Colonial Village I
Attn: CVI Trees
1903 N. Key Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201

If we collect more than the amount needed to up-size our trees, we will use the additional money for other trees or shrubs in the community.

Thank you for considering a donation!