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myriverwoods.org

BOARD CORNER

Two Water Main Breaks in Unit Lower Number Areas

On February 7, the grounds manager noticed water pouring out onto the street near Unit #61 and freezing in the street, obviously a water main break. He called a company that specializes in repairing such breaks, Valley Rich, and they were able to repair the break and restore water service to the dozens of townhomes affected in less than three hours of arrival.

On February 24 another water main break occurred in the same general area, which resulted in another call to Valley Rich, who repaired the leak the following day.

Finding and repairing a water main break is not an easy task; it requires specialized equipment and experience. The company has to locate the exact site of the break by using sonic probes pushed into the soil, break through the frozen topsoil with a jackhammer, dig a hole almost 10 feet deep with a back hoe, set up shoring around the hole (so dirt wouldn't collapse on workers), finish uncovering the water pipes with shovels (so as not to damage it further with the back hoe blade), clamp a collar over the break, bolt it in place, remove the shoring and fill the dirt back in.

Complicating the operations was the fact the breaks were under blacktop. As blacktop can't be patched in cold weather, we filled in the holes to ground level with #5 gravel, so residents can drive and walk on it. When warm weather permits, we will patch with blacktop to restore the dug-up areas to their original condition.

River Woods' water system is over 50 years old and is showing its age.



Would it Be Cheaper to Replace the Whole System?

A resident called to ask a logical question. If we are having frequent water main breaks in one area, might it not be cheaper to replace the whole system? In a word, no. To replace the water pipes in just one area, involving perhaps 50 homes, would cost well north of a million dollars. And given that an enormous amount of time-consuming hand digging would be involved to avoid ripping up sewer and gas lines that also cross under the area, the homeowners involved wouldn't be able to drive cars out of their garages or walk across the street to get their mail for several weeks.

Valley Rich charges between \$12,000 and \$19,000 to handle a repair like this. And it inconveniences owners for only a few hours. It is far cheaper and less intrusive to repair these breaks as they happen and just budget for them each year.

March Dates to Remember

The **Board** meets on March 18 at 5:30 in the HOA office.

The **ACC** meets on March 25 at 5:30 in the HOA office.

The **HOA office** will be closed March 10

What's a 'Roof' and Whose Responsibility Is it to Maintain?

There is some confusion among homeowners in River Woods as to what constitutes a roof and who is responsible for maintaining it.

"Is my deck, with a membrane under the flooring, considered a roof?" No, it's just a deck, and any maintenance of it is up to the owner.

"Isn't the Association responsible for keeping my roof in repair?" No. The extent and limit of the Association's responsibility regarding roofs is to replace shingles every 20–30 years. Period. Any damage to the roof is an issue between the owner and the insurance company. The Association is responsible for ensuring that the shingles are properly installed. Beyond that, the Association has no specific responsibility for maintaining the roofs.

"I've got water spots on my ceiling. The roof must be leaking. You've got to do something about it." It is possible the roof is leaking, if the weather is warm and there has been rain. This could be due to faulty installation if the shingles are newly installed (though we've never had a single case of that happening) or to roof damage.

But the last such call we had was on a day when the wind chill was -35. There is no roof leaking when the temperature is way below zero. The most likely causes of water stains on your ceiling are:

- **Ice dams.** They can cause melting water to back up under your shingles and drip into your attic. Ice dams form when there is lots of snow on the roof and the air in the attic is much warmer than the cold outside air. The leaking happens when the temperature rises above freezing and the melting water can't run off the roof because of the ice dam and backs up under the shingles. Solution? Adequate insulation in the attic and sufficient vents into the attic so cold air can circulate in the attic. (Ideally, the temperature inside your attic should be exactly the same as the temperature outside.) This will usually prevent ice-dam formation. When River Woods townhomes were built in the early 1970s, they were built with nowhere near enough insulation or ventilation to prevent ice dams. If your home's insulation and ventilation have not been upgraded since the house was built, you are very vulnerable to ice-dam formation.

- **Condensation.** This is a more common cause of water stains than ice dams. When warm, relatively moist air from inside your house escapes into the attic

—through ceiling light and fan fixtures that are not sealed, or because a bathroom fan empties directly into the attic instead of being piped outside — it can condense and freeze on the cold underside of your roof. When the weather warms up, even for a couple of days, the ice can melt, dripping through the insulation onto your ceiling. Solution? Make sure your exhaust fans, bathroom and kitchen, empty directly outside through roof or side vents, not directly into your attic, and make certain that all holes in your ceiling for fixtures, fans, etc., are foam-sealed to prevent air seeping upward into the attic. And, like preventing ice dams, be sure there is sufficient venting to make sure any moist air that does seep into the attic is quickly dispersed.

Dogs Running Loose?

We've had a few calls lately from residents complaining about dogs running around unleashed. Remember, both Burnsville ordinances and Association rules require that dogs outside the house must be on a leash and accompanied by a person. Dogs running loose or tied up unattended outside are a violation.

If you see a dog wandering around loose, we suggest you call Animal Control in Burnsville, which enforces the Burnsville ordinances. If you see a dog tied up outside with no one in attendance, please contact the office and we will attempt to contact the owner. Such a violation may result in a fine.

New Pool Tags This Year

We will be using new, green, pool tags for entry to the pool this year. And we are limiting replacement tags to one per unit if you lose your tag (at a cost of \$5). During the next three months you can exchange your old red tags for a new green tag. The tags will be exchanged *only* at the HOA office, not at the pool. We will set up a schedule for tag exchange as we roll out the new tags, and let residents know the tag-exchange schedule by email in the upcoming months.

There are also a few new pool rules that will take effect this summer:

- The entire enclosed pool area will be a no-smoking zone.
- All coolers brought into the pool area will be inspected by monitors for alcohol and glass containers of any kind (both of which are prohibited). Two years ago, someone brought in a glass bottle, despite the rules, and dropped it on the concrete, breaking it into many pieces. The pool had to be shut down for three days, all the water and chemicals in the pool drained so the

pool floor could be inspected, and a crew spent hours going over every inch of the pool area looking for fragments of glass. The total cost of the cleanup was well over a thousand dollars. Previously, inspection of coolers was optional at the discretion of monitors; this year, **all** coolers will be inspected. Anyone who refuses cooler inspection will not be permitted entry to the pool.



Anyone who forces their way in, in spite of being told they can't enter, will temporarily lose pool privileges and face a significant fine.

- A maximum of two non-resident guests are permitted per unit.

How Fast Will the HOA Office Respond to Queries?

In late January, a resident sent an email with a query. Ten minutes later they called, asking why we hadn't responded.

We will ultimately respond to all emails. But how quickly depends on how busy our village administrator is at the moment. If she's dealing with a water main break, trying to inform affected residents with emails and a series of phone calls, she won't be responding immediately to an email requesting removal of a tree next summer. If she's in the middle of doing payroll, which requires a lot of concentration and triple checking of hours and dollars, she won't immediately respond to any email. Please be patient when you query the office. You will get a response as soon as possible.

Is Your Mailbox Stuffed?

We know there are a few residents who don't empty their mailboxes, perhaps because they are tired of getting advertisements and don't expect any personal mail. We can sympathize, as all our mailboxes get filled up with such ads.

However, US mail, email, and *The Villager* newsletter are the Association's primary means of communication with residents. If you don't have an email, or don't check your email, then US mail and the newsletter are the only way you'll find out about such things as changes of rules and regulations, upcoming painting of your house, repaving of your roads or ballots for the annual meeting.



And, perhaps more importantly, you won't get any statements regarding your account with the Association. If, for example, you are late with a monthly fee payment, you will be assessed a \$25 fine on the 10th of the month it's due, and a statement will immediately be mailed to you showing that. If you don't see that statement because you don't pick up your mail, you may not realize you owe the penalty and not pay it. So, as time goes by, and you don't get your statements, additional fines will accumulate, and you won't even know it until the total reaches a level at which it's sent to our legal counsel for collection. By then, even though it may take many months, the total will be a lot more than \$25. Please don't let that happen.

How do we know some residents aren't emptying their mailboxes? Each month we get statements returned by the post office marked "undeliverable," even though we know the address and addressee are correct. The post office informs us that if the mailbox is too full to put more mail in, they will return any mail as undeliverable.

We do try to contact those homeowners by email and phone to inform them of the problem, but some owners do not have an email listed with us and sometimes our phone calls are not answered. Please don't let your mailboxes fill up so much that you don't get important letters.

Do I Need Radon Mitigation?

Maybe, maybe not. Radon is a gas that exists in the ground. It can seep through foundations, and, if inhaled over time in sufficient concentration, can cause lung cancer or other problems. Most homes in Minnesota don't have a serious problem with radon, but some do. There are relatively inexpensive radon detectors you can borrow or buy to find out if you have a problem. And if you feel you have a problem, you can install a system to mitigate the problem.

Because we had a request recently to permit construction of a radon mitigation system by one homeowner, the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) looked into the matter. There are two basic styles of radon mitigation systems, external and internal. In an external system, air is pumped from areas of the house where radon is concentrated (usually the basement) and pumps it through pipes on the outside of the house to disperse in the air. In an internal system, the air is piped inside the house to a vent in the roof, so nothing shows on the outside of the house except a small roof vent.

The ACC will approve only *internal* radon mitigation systems, as that does not alter the outside appearance of the house. (Remember, you must apply to the ACC for permission to install any changes to the outside of your house.) Because an internal system goes through a unit's roof and shingles, a board-qualified roofing contractor must be hired to do the roofing work to make sure you don't have water leakage through the new vent.