



(photo submitted by Anne Holland)

December 6, 2024
Sterling Woods II – Master Association
Monthly Newsletter
Website: www.sterlingwoods2.org

Dear Unit Owners:

On behalf of the Master Board and REI, we wish you all Happy Holidays and a Happy and Healthy New Year in 2025!



As you know, the association recently held the Annual Owners Meeting for ratification of the proposed 2025 budget. After board presentation, and a question and answer session with the owners that were present, the proposed 2025 budget was unanimously approved. As a result, there will be a 4.2% increase in common charges next year.

Coupon books will be mailed to all Unit Owners in the near future. We anticipate their arrival before January 1st. Please do not mail in your January payment until your coupon book has been received. Unlike years past, late fees will not be waived in January since you will receive the new coupon book early enough to make your January payment on time.

Please be reminded that if you pay your common charges through First Citizens Bank, you will have to go to their website and adjust the amount you authorize to be paid each month. It will not be updated automatically by First Citizens Bank. If you set up automatic payments through your own bank, you will have to adjust the amount they pay the association each month.

If you pay through First Citizens Bank, or online through your own bank, and need to change the amount you pay starting in January, the new common charge rate per model style (per month) in 2025 is as follows:

<u>Model Style</u>	<u>2025 Common Charge Monthly Rate</u>
Acorn - you paid \$437 in 2024, and your 2025 common charge rate is:	\$455
Beechnut - you paid \$507 in 2024, and your 2025 common charge rate is:	\$528
Chestnut - you paid \$539 in 2024, and your 2025 common charge rate is:	\$562
Dogwood - you paid \$642 in 2024, and your 2025 common charge rate is:	\$669
Birches - you paid \$642 in 2024, and your 2025 monthly common charge rate is:	\$669
Hickory - you paid \$552 in 2024, and your 2025 monthly common charge rate is:	\$575
Juniper - you paid \$507 in 2024, and your 2025 monthly common charge rate is:	\$528

Assessment Update

There will be an assessment in early 2025 to cover 2024 budget overages as well as to payback the \$75K that was borrowed from the reserves earlier this year to cover the increased insurance premium payments associated with the 2023/2024 insurance rate increase. The current budget overages include large expenses in general maintenance due to water damage caused by the severe storms this year and the requirement from our insurance company to pay even larger prepayments for 2025 insurance coverage.

The amount of the assessment will be determined after year end. At this time, it is predicted that the average assessment will be \$538 and unit owners will be given several months to pay it off. The assessment was discussed at the November board meeting, it was further explained at the December owners meeting and it will be voted on by the board at the January board meeting.



Important Information Regarding Snow Removal

Snowstorm Parking Reminder: The snow removal contractor uses visitor parking areas during storms for the temporary placement of snow. The availability of these areas is critical during a snowstorm. Do NOT move your car from your driveway to the visitor's lot during a storm to make it "easier" for the contractor to clean your driveway. It actually hinders the snow removal effort and is a violation of association rules.

The snow removal contractor provides 24/7 dispatch service during snow and ice storms. Their dispatcher is available to REI for dealing with any issues. If you have any concerns during or following a snowstorm, please contact Kim Murray. The snow removal contractor is not permitted to take directions from unit owners.

Please note - snowstorms are handled differently by the snow vendor depending on when the storm starts, when the storm ends, the temperature, how cold the ground is, if freezing rain is expected, etc. For example, if there is freezing rain after it has already snowed, the snow contractor waits until the freezing rain ends before shoveling the walks, steps, and driveways because they want to let the ice adhere to the snow versus if they shovel earlier, the stairs, driveways and walkways would be a sheet of ice.

Vehicle Information

Please remember to let Kim Murray know if any of your vehicle information changes. See below from the Rules & Regulations:

Article VI, Section 6.13 states Unit Owners are required to provide accurate vehicle identification information for all cars and trucks that are housed on the community's property. Identification information includes year, make, model, color, vehicle license number and the state the vehicle is registered in. Please note - landlords are responsible for submitting this information on behalf of their tenants.



Holiday Related Information

Per the Rules & Regulations, decorations may be installed only up to 30 days prior to holiday observance, and they must be removed within ten days after the holiday. Holiday decorations shall be limited to the front door and porch area and may not be permanently affixed to the Unit. However, in the Birches, Village Unit Owners will be allowed holiday decorations up to six feet in front of their single-family homes.



Dumpster for Christmas Tree Disposal

The association is once again offering Christmas tree disposal services for all residents. A dumpster will be placed in the parking area at the top of Revere Road (across the street from the clubhouse). The dumpster will be dropped off on January 2nd and picked up on January 10th. If the dumpster is full before January 10th, it will be removed sooner. Please understand that no artificial Christmas trees will be accepted for disposal. Your trees, free of all decorations, will be welcome and accepted at the disposal site. **Please do not leave your Christmas tree next to the dumpster.**

Holiday Decorations

The board appreciates the donation of time and work from the following unit owners: Julia Brzezinska, Maureen & Tom Dunkerton, Lou & Jennifer Vitullo, Claire Hines, and Norma Schlager. We thank them for putting up the decorations at the entranceway to Sterling Woods and in our clubhouse. They highlight the festive mood of the season!

Gutter Cleaning

All gutters throughout the association will be cleaned in the very near future. Please do not be alarmed if you see workers on ladders near your unit.

Garbage Rule Reminders

Please remember that your garbage can must have tight fitting lids on them per the Rules & Regulations and that you properly secure all recycling. On windy days, garbage and recycling will often be seen blowing throughout the community leaving a lot of litter behind.

Your garbage can and recycling bin can be placed at curbside for pickup either after dark on the night before pickup, or on the same day as pickup. All refuse containers must be removed and brought inside your unit the same day as the pickup. No garbage container shall be stored outside a unit.

Parking Rule Reminders

We would like to remind Unit Owners that parking on the street is not allowed. Also, **please do not park your car in the visitors' lot.** Your cars should be parked in your driveway and in your garage.



The December Landscaping Report and the Landscaping Year-End Report are attached.



2025 Board Meeting Dates

Board meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 PM. The board meetings are being held in person at the Platinum Club clubhouse or via conference call. Information is provided in the newsletters each month letting you know the call-in information for the following month's meeting.

In 2025, the November and December board meeting date has been changed. The November meeting will be on Wednesday, November 12th and the December Owners Meeting and monthly board meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 3rd.

January Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 15th at 7:30 PM. It will be held in person at the clubhouse, or you can attend electronically. If you choose to attend electronically, call (203) 666-8107 and then enter the conference ID number which is 611 827 55#. When you call in, you will be put into a "lobby" and when the meeting is ready to begin you will be "brought" into the meeting.

Please note – if you would like to address the board and would like to be added to the agenda to speak at the beginning of the open session meeting, you should e-mail Kim Murray at kmurray@rei-pm.net a week prior to the meeting. There will also be a sign-up sheet at the meeting if you would like to add your name to the list to address the board at the beginning of the meeting. If you call into the meeting, you will be asked if you would like to be added to the list to speak at the beginning of the meeting. If you call into the meeting, you will be muted during the meeting. Questions will not be taken at the end of the meeting.

The Board meeting agenda will be posted to the website prior to the meeting.

Some routine reminders...

There will be no delayed trash pickups for the remainder of the year.

[Receiving correspondence via e-mail saves the Association money](#)

Currently, there are 327 Unit Owners (out of 358) who receive correspondence via e-mail versus receiving correspondence through U.S. mail. The board is requesting that all unit owners who are not currently signed up to receive correspondence via e-mail do so. At times, the board would like to provide information quickly to owners and sending an e-mail blast is the best way to do that. By receiving correspondence via e-mail, you will also save the association money. If you would like to provide your e-mail address, please contact Kim Murray.

Please remove decorations that are out of season - such as pumpkins and potted plants that have died off for the year. If the pot is a large ornamental, you can clean it of dead plants and leave it where it is for the winter. Please properly store smaller pots inside your Unit.

If Kim or I can assist you in any way, please let us know. Kim's hours are approximately 7:30 AM until 2:30 PM. Her email address is kmurray@rei-pm.net and the on-site phone number is (203) 748-0859 or she can be reached at 203-744-8400 ext. 153. If you have an emergency, you can call 203-744-8400 and hit zero.

Sincerely,



Art Stueck
President
REI Property and Asset Management

Attachments

LANDSCAPE REPORT DECEMBER 2024

The Landscape Committee held its last meeting of the season on November 14, 2024. Even though our meetings have concluded for 2024, the Landscape Committee keeps in contact with our members and vendors throughout the year about the concerns of our unit owners. We will begin our meetings for the new season in mid-April.

Gonzales Landscaping continues leaf blowing and policing of trash. Their contract provides us services until mid-December and after that our snow vendor takes over the policing of trash.

Bartlett work will commence on the 2025 contract in the winter months (Dec.-Feb.) and the pear trees on the left side of SWII (Heartwood Lane, Logging Trail Road, Silversmith Drive and Cypress Drive) will be pruned. Also, the maple trees in these villages will be pruned. Additional tree work outside of the contract includes Pruning of 8 maple trees near the SWII clubhouse and pruning of tree branches behind 1801 and 1802 Cypress Drive.

Lawn Doctor will begin its 2025 lawn services either late April or early May. The application is a 90-day fertilizer, crabgrass control and broadleaf weed control. In addition, gypsum (leaches out salt left from snow piles) will be applied to center islands of the main driveway and the lawn areas of the units that have stairs (these units have smaller lawn areas where snow can be piled, thereby, leaving more salt residue on the lawns. Lawn Doctor coordinates their work with Gonzales so any spring reseeding work is not compromised with any weed lawn applications that could harm the newly planted grass seed. This could cause a delay in the first lawn application. Also, all applications depend on weather related issues.

LANDSCAPE REPORT - YEAR-END 2024

The Landscape Committee Members are Claire Hines, Norma Schlager, Elissa Silvio, Maureen Dunkerton, Louis Vitullo, MaryBeth Day-Byrnes, Kathy Grosse and Julia Brzezinska.

Meetings took place from mid-April to mid-November.

The Landscape Committee's function is to make recommendations to the Master Board and follow up on all residents' concerns and take corrective measures as needed. Minimizing costs without compromising essential services is our objective.

We have four vendors maintaining landscaping services: Gonzales Landscaping, Lawn Doctor, Bartlett Tree Company and Murad Tree and Landscaping.

In late fall, Gonzales cuts down perennials such as day lilies, sedum, hostas, and ornamental grasses. Regular trimming of shrubs is done twice a year (June and September). A light trimming is done of any spent perennials and any ornamental grasses including any winter damaged branches. Every spring, mulch is added to all the villages. However, mulch removal and replacement are done every two years, that is, two villages a year. In 2024, mulch removal and replacement was done on Logging Trail Road, Silversmith Drive (The Birches), and Hancock Drive and Revere Road (The Maples). In 2025, it will be done on Pinnacle Way (the Summit), on Cypress Drive (the Willows) and at the Sterling Woods II Platinum Clubhouse. This work is done to prevent arterial fungus (black spots) from adhering to the siding on the houses. Also edging of shrub beds and tree mounds, weeding, removing dead shrubs and planting new ones, reseeding, aeration, over seeding, blowing leaves and policing the grounds for trash are performed by Gonzales Landscaping.

This year we replaced 170 shrubs with 10 warranties. Last year we replaced 278 shrubs with 26 warranties. In 2023, we replaced 349 shrubs with 36 warranties.

Lawn Doctor does five lawn applications a year from April to October. We are continuing applying gypsum during the first lawn application to the Beechnut and Acorn units' lawns. These units have exceptionally small lawn areas and, in the past, have not responded well to reseeding work. Gypsum works as a leeching agent to remove salt from lawns as a result of the snow mounds on the lawns.

In 2024, not counting our pine tree removal project, a total of 24 trees were removed due to storm damage and drought conditions which caused the trees to die. Only 2 were replaced. Last year 25 trees were removed and 4 were replaced. In 2022, 32 trees were removed and 5 trees were replaced.