**Board Members Present:** Mickey Ribera, President; Carney Siciliano, Vice President; Joe Hearon, Treasurer; Jon Michalski, Secretary; Trustees: Ralph Ruggiero, Barbara Hubbard, Jim Farley

**Member Forum Q&A on Agenda only** called to order at 7:01 PM; no questions or comments.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING** called to order at 7:02 PM

**Initial Comments**: *Mickey Ribera*

Mickey stated that through various circumstances, we are in an unprecedented position where all seven Trustee positions are up for election. With only four candidate names on the ballot, however, we are currently three candidates short for the open Trustee positions this election. He explained that our By-Laws require a quorum to conduct HOA business, but with a reduced Trustee roster there may be significant risks to our community. If that were to be the ongoing case, of greatest concern would be the resulting NJ assignment of a court-appointed administrator (presumably a for-profit management company) with no vested interest in how life for residents is impacted. Homeowner monthly fees would likely increase significantly, and services potentially decline. Short of that, with a diminished roster, homeowners could experience delays impacting normal services. To ensure our community remains efficiently self-managed, Mickey encourages all homeowners to thoughtfully consider being nominated at the upcoming Meet the Candidates event.

**Approval of previous meeting minutes:** All Board members previously reviewed the draft meeting minutes for July 16th. With no discussion, Mickey filed a motion to approve these minutes; all approved.

**Treasurer’s Report:** *Joe Hearon*

Total Assets to date are approximately $331k

Current Liabilities are approximately $43k

Overall, the Trustees are managing all budget areas responsibly and ensuring we are not overspending.

Looking ahead, the Budget Committee is diligently working to develop the proposed 2025 Budget. With continuing inflation driving increased expenses, some changes will be necessary to reduce costs going forward. Some consideration may need to be given to reducing services. It remains a balancing act to control spending while providing for the various community services and amenities that make Whiting Station a desirable place to live. We are striving for fiscal responsibility with the overall community’s wellbeing foremost in consideration. The Budget Committee is to be commended for their efforts.

**Bus:** *Jon Michalski*

Regular bus operations continue to run smoothly. We received notification of a non-safety-related software update. A routine maintenance service is also due in the next month. Accordingly, our driver, Lori, will be scheduling these services to be completed without impact to our regular bus schedule.

Our great volunteers, Joan Forgione and LouAnn Breaks, are always working in the background to schedule upcoming bus trips of interest to residents. A new trip they have just scheduled is to Longwood Gardens on 4 December.

**Irrigation:**  *Jim Farley*

Fortunately, we have had no major repairs. The wells, meters, and operating controls are all operating as they should. Jim has adjusted some heads to improve spray patterns. He will be meeting with Jersey Shore Sprinklers management to negotiate cost for them to spend additional time when performing next year’s system opening to make sure everything is functioning optimally, which should decrease service calls throughout the season and keep us in budget. The more efficiently the system works, the less water we will use, which is a concern with the State mandated well monitoring restrictions.

**Covenants:** *Jon Michalski*

The Covenants Committee has assessed and addressed 8 or 9 specific inquiries in the last month. Some friendly reminders to help maintain awareness:

* While we have many very responsible pet owners in the community, it is sometimes helpful to remind ourselves of the HOA rules concerning management and ownership of dogs, which align directly with Manchester Township Ordinance, Chapter 101. A couple of key points to remember are that dogs must always be on a 6’ maximum leash whenever outdoors, including anywhere in the owner’s yard. Also, please respect the guidelines which restrict dog walking on neighbors’ lawns and common areas, as specifically outlined in the Rules & Regs.
* Brush, twigs, branches, leaves, etc., may not be piled on homeowners’ property, at the curbline, or in the roadways. Individual homeowners are responsible for removing these materials, as they will not be picked up by the lawncare crews. Inaction is not an option. Debris can be dropped off free of charge at the Whiting Recycling Center off Route 70, just west of the Township Public Works facility.
* With the summer growth season, some properties have allowed excessive weeds to accumulate, which is prohibited. Flower and shrub beds maintenance is each homeowner's responsibility.
* Personal items may not be stored around the homes’ exterior. Use of a deck box for storage is permitted in accordance with the specifications stated in the Rules & Regs.
* Homeowners may direct inquiries to the designated Covenants Committee email address: *whitingstationcovenants@gmail.com*.

**Lawncare/Snow:** *Barbara Hubbard*

As previously announced, planned mowing skip days are built into the calendar. September 6th will be a planned mowing skip day, to better allocate an additional contract mowing day for the Fall cleanup. Voice call reminders will continue to keep everyone informed.

One of the major increases to our 2025 proposed Budget expenses concerns lawncare services. As previously mentioned, services that were not in prior contract scope to reduce costs, resulted in numerous homeowner complaints. To address this, we are seeking a renegotiated scope for next year which will include blowing off patios and porches, driveway edging, and additional fall leaf blowing of beds. Consequently, 2025 costs will increase.

**Architectural:** *Carney Siciliano*

During this reporting period, 16 new applications were processed; 15 approved, 1 pending. 5 were tree related; 11 were home improvements.

A new walkway has been approved for accessing the multi-court gate from Morning Glory Lane, rather than walking on grass. Work also includes a ramp and a step to access the courts from the parking lot side gates. Work will be performed by Coastal Edge in mid-September.

Trees that blocked a main water gate drain at Basin 2 were removed on 24 July.

We have provided Ocean County Engineer’s Office with additional requested information regarding the planned sidewalk repairs along Schoolhouse Rd. The contractor is cooperating with the Engineer and hopes to complete repairs by the end of September.

**Clubhouse & Pool:** *Ralph Ruggiero*

The pool will remain open until 15 September, with hours adjusted to 10AM – 6PM.

No issues with the clubhouse.

**Budget Committee:** *Joe Hearon*

Joe restated the importance of the Budget Committee’s work, led by Bud Havens. This all-volunteer homeowner team has analyzed 2024 budget vs. actual expenses, and is working to project 2025 costs, factoring accepted escalation estimates, to determine 2025 homeowner monthly assessment rates that provide for our wide-ranging services and amenities in the most responsible, cost-effective manner possible. All homeowner input is welcome throughout this process.

**Election Committee:** *Lynne Sweezo*

The September Express will have an insert with Trustee candidate resumes. It went to press early with five resumes; however, in the interim, Carney Siciliano has had to withdraw for personal reasons, despite his valuable contribution to the Board. As a result, there are only four current candidates for the seven open Trustee positions. We are seeking floor nominations at the Candidates event on Tuesday, 3 September, where applications can be completed on site. Ballots were mailed and will arrive to homeowners the first week of September. Everyone should wait to cast ballots until the final candidate slate is determined, pending floor nominations. Lynne explained the voting process, which requires all ballots by 7 October, at 9AM. Results will be announced at the Annual HOA Meeting that night.

Lynne also mentioned there’s a misstatement in the Express, page 20, and clarified that the newly elected Trustees will meet among themselves and determine the offices.

**Residents Club:** *Deb Cassens*

**Upcoming Events:**

* Labor Day Pizza Pool Party will be held rain or shine. 115 RSVPs accepted, so they request attendees bring lawn chairs. They invite people to bring a dessert. RSVP No-shows will be charged $5 for pizza cost.
* Karaoke Night – Saturday, September 28th, 7-10 PM. $10 per person. RSVP by 22 September.

LouAnn Breaks also requested any leaders to identify their group volunteers so that they can be included in the upcoming Volunteer Luncheon.

**Unfinished Business:** *Mickey Ribera*

No prior unfinished business.

**New Business:** *Mickey Ribera*

Discussion of tree removal and replanting along west side of clubhouse parking lot. Three proposals were evaluated by the Board. The recommendation is to proceed with TurfMasters’ proposal, which includes removal of 20 invasive white pines, stump grinding and root removal, topsoil regrading, planting 44 green giant arborvitae trees, and applying mulch to retain moisture and prevent weed growth. Carney explained the rationale for recommending selection of TurfMasters, and stated that the white pines’ roots are invasive, creating dangerous hazards to patios, foundations, and are mowing and trip hazards. Several of these trees are dying, as well. Thick debris from pine needles and pinecones accumulates throughout the area, two trees are leaning toward the parking lot, contributing to the safety concerns. Trustees have spoken with adjacent homeowners. Mickey motioned to accept TurfMasters proposal for $17k plus tax; Barbara seconded the motion, Trustees unanimously approved.

David L. requested to comment on the issue. Mickey stated that Q&A regarding the agenda was held at the beginning of the meeting, with no comments being raised, and was therefore closed. Accordingly, comments would not be entertained concerning the vote just approved.

**Adjourn** Being no further business or questions, Mickey filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ralph seconded, all approved. Meeting was adjourned at 7:54 PM

**Next Meeting: September 17, 2024, at 7:00 PM** via Zoom with simulcast available at Clubhouse.

*Respectfully submitted by*

*Jon Michalski, Secretary*