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

**Absent:** Ralph Ruggiero

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING** called to order at 7:01 PM

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

**Initial Comments**: *Mickey Ribera*

Mickey stated a reminder to all residents that the state-mandated HOPA (Housing for Older Persons Act) survey forms were delivered to every Whiting Station residence within the September *Express* (page 15) and are due no later than October 15. Please place completed forms in the drop box labeled HOPA Survey located outside the Business Office. To maintain NJ requirement compliance, an 80% response is required.

**Approval of previous meeting minutes:** All Board members previously reviewed the draft minutes for August 27th BOT meeting. With no discussion, Mickey filed a motion to approve these minutes; second by Carney; all approved.

**Treasurer’s Report:** *Joe Hearon*

Total Assets to date exceed $870k

Current Liabilities are approximately $30k

Our operating numbers continue to look good.

Joe will speak more about the Budget later in the meeting.

For 2025, we will no longer be printing and distributing maintenance fee coupon books, as they are under-utilized and expensive to produce ($2k per year). We encourage homeowners to use their personal bank bill pay service to automatically send monthly payments directly to the HOA. There is no cost to individuals, and it can be easily set up. In addition, Laura in our office can help with setup instructions.

Some late fees continue to accrue.

**Bus:** *Jon Michalski*

Regular scheduled bus operations continue to run smoothly. Both the routine maintenance service and the manufacturer software update campaign have been completed. The 2025 registration renewal was completed, and the motor vehicle inspection is expected to be completed next week without impact to our regular bus schedule.

**Irrigation:**  *Jim Farley*

During this period, we have had no big problems; there have only been some minor leaks and head adjustments. Jim has changed zone run times to 20 minutes as recommended for the balance of the season, and changed zone start times so that all zones complete cycles prior to 8 AM. This should help optimize lawncare improvement.

Jim reminded residents to fill out an irrigation work order for any problems or requested service. Forms are located on the website, in the office, or inside the outdoor cabinet at the back of the clubhouse.

**Covenants:** *Jon Michalski*

During this reporting period, the Covenants Committee issued and followed up on friendly reminders for a few properties that were not in line with the community’s rules and regulations, resulting in positive responses, including cleanup of flower beds, removal of brush debris, and removal of personal and lawncare items stored along home’s exterior. I would encourage homeowners to maintain awareness of our Declaration of Covenants and Restrictions and our Rules & Regulations requirements. Both documents are available on the whitingstationcommunity.org website, on the Homeowners Association tab.

It seems unnecessary to reiterate that parking in the fingers is prohibited at all times, yet some people continue to leave vehicles in the fingers for extended periods.

Another issue requiring mention is that feeding wild deer is prohibited in NJ. While some residents may feel that they’re helping these interesting creatures, according to NJ DEP Fish & Wildlife, feeding of wild deer is undesirable because:

* Feeding increases reproductive potential. Deer with higher nutrition levels have larger litter sizes and breed earlier.
* Deer lose their fear of humans. Male deer become more aggressive during the breeding season, and females may become defensive of their fawns, sometimes inflicting serious physical harm to humans.
* Feeding enhances the spread of disease and parasites and may compromise the health of non-target species. Concentrating deer in unnaturally high numbers around food piles increases nose-to-nose contact and may heighten the transmission of pathogens and parasites. Additionally, large piles of supplemental foods like corn often develop toxic fungi, which cause ill effects to both deer and other animals that come to the food pile.
* Deer feeders are bad neighbors. Deer cannot meet all their nutritional needs from a food pile and will consume the plantings of surrounding properties or devastate the surrounding natural environment after the supplemental food is consumed. Because feeding concentrates deer in unnaturally high numbers, environmental damage is often severe.
* Feeding can change behavioral patterns. Feeding may cause deer to cross roadways they normally would not, increasing the potential for deer-vehicle collisions.
* Feeding can sicken and kill deer. Deer, like most animals, have symbiotic microorganisms in their digestive system which enable them to break down the cellulose found in plant matter. As the seasons slowly change from one to another, so too do these organisms change to accommodate the change in available natural foods. When deer are fed high carbohydrate foods out of season, they lack the necessary gut microflora to digest these foods. This can result in a condition known as *lactic acidosis*, which causes bloating, diarrhea, enteritis, and in some cases, death.

As always, homeowners may direct inquiries to the designated Covenants Committee email address: *whitingstationcovenants@gmail.com*.

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

As previously communicated, there have been two planned mowing skip days to better accommodate anticipated Fall cleanup. Looking ahead, there is a Township brush pickup scheduled for November 5.

**Architectural:** *Carney Siciliano*

During this reporting period, 15 new applications were processed with 11 approved, 1 denied; 1 on hold (new Township protocol); 2 pending (revisit in Spring). 8 were tree-related; 7 were home improvements.

Any requests to use Phil’s Tree Service will no longer be approved, as the owner has not upheld HOA protocols, and has proven to be disrespectful and uncooperative.

The new multi-court walkway project has been completed, improving safety and aesthetics.

The Ocean County Engineer’s Office is requiring engineering drawings for ADA-compliant sidewalk ramps for the repairs along Schoolhouse Rd. As a result, the contractor is challenged with obtaining an engineer to provide drawings but is hoping the delay will be minimal. The commitment remains to complete this project, but for now it continues to be a work in progress.

The white fence around the drainage basin between Lily Ct and Schoolhouse Rd is scheduled to be power washed.

We received a notification regarding trees from Manchester Township, of which we were not previously aware. This will necessitate updates to our Rules & Regulations going forward. All tree removal activities require prior permit approval from the Township Zoning Office, except for single tree removal and, to meet reforestation requirements, a new tree must be planted for every tree removed. The application fee is $75 per tree, $150 for two. Mickey added that our HOA can make rules more stringent than Township ordinances, but we cannot make them less stringent.

**Clubhouse & Pool:** *Mickey reported for Ralph Ruggiero*

The clubhouse is operating normally, and Laura and our volunteers are doing a great job. The pool is now officially closed after an enjoyable season with minimal issues and fantastic volunteers. The cover will be installed this week. A pool resurfacing project will be completed in the Spring, which will be discussed in further detail later in the meeting.

**Election Committee:** *Lynne Sweezo*

There were three additional Trustee nominations received at the Candidates Night event. A team is in place for the scheduled vote count on October 7 at 9AM. A quorum of 110 votes is required.

**Residents Club:** *no report provided.*

**Upcoming Events:**

* Karaoke Night (Saturday, September 28th)
* Halloween Party (Saturday, October 26th)

**Unfinished Business:** *Mickey Ribera*

No prior unfinished business.

**New Business:** *Mickey Ribera*

* Following the pool leak repairs in the Spring, it became apparent that there are other issues, including hollow spots and large chunks flaking off, necessitating a temporary repair. However, after 9 years, the pool needs to be completely resurfaced before the next season. This need is accelerated from the current projected 15-year schedule, so Reserve Study funding is not fully available at present. We do, however, have the balance necessary to complete this project by allocating portions of the discretionary and deferred maintenance funds. This is being proposed now so that the project can be scheduled and completed earlier in the Spring, prior to pool opening. Trustees have all reviewed the three bids received for this work and Mickey filed a motion to accept the Fortunato Pools resurfacing proposal at a total cost of $37,500. Barbara seconded the motion and all approved.
* Although the multi-court walkway was already completed as an emergency repair for safety reasons, Mickey filed a motion to approve the $2,500 cost for the work; seconded by Carney, all approved.

**2025 Budget Overview:** *Joe Hearon*

Joe expressed thanks to Bud Havens, the Budget Committee, and Board members for the significant efforts to develop the proposed 2025 Budget.

The cover letter that was recently distributed to all homeowners explained the reasons for the proposed $10 per month increase. Joe reiterated that inflation has been the primary driving factor for this increase and explained that greatly escalated insurance rates (from 8%, to 10%, to 12% year-over-year), additional proposed lawncare service improvements, and the fact that prior years’ surplus can no longer be applied for next year, are all additional contributory factors. Also, compared to similar communities in our area, our proposed monthly fee is more than $20 less for similar services.

Considering all these things, we can conclude that a $10 per month increase is very modest. We want to communicate clearly and be above board so that everyone understands what impacts the budget. Homeowners can contact Joe with any questions.

Joe reminded everyone who currently uses their bank bill pay service for monthly HOA fees to increase the automatic payment amount to $182, effective with the January 2025 payment.

**Member Q&A**

(CG—78 MGL) requested clarification regarding the Township tree removal permit and fee. Carney explained that for a single tree removal, a permit and fee is not required; however, the 1 for 1 requirement to replant a new tree remains. For multiple trees, the permit and fee ($75 per tree) are required. In every case, an HOA application must first be submitted and approved.

Regarding trees, Barbara Hubbard asked whether this is a new Township ordinance or have we just become aware of it. Carney responded that the information came to us via a homeowner inquiry to the Township. From that we received the written guidance, which was dated 2022. Apparently, the genesis of this change was a DEP directive, in conjunction with the Pinelands Commission.

Updated Rules & Regulations will be distributed in January and will include these updates regarding trees within the Architectural Guidelines section.

**Adjourn** Being no further business or questions, Mickey filed a motion to adjourn the meeting. Joe seconded, all approved. Meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM

**Next Meeting: Annual HOA Meeting is Monday, October 7, 2024, at 7:00 PM** at the Clubhouse.

*Respectfully submitted by*

*Jon Michalski, Secretary*