

Shearwater Grounds and Landscaping Report July, 2014

General

As Shearwater's new landscaping chair, I would first like to recognize the achievements of our previous landscaping committee chair, Ron Faulkner, and landscaping committee members Maryann Cummins, Pat Duvall, Frances Higgins and Don Kadonoff. I would also like to thank the many residents who have generously shared what they know about our past and plans that had been laid for the future.

Over the past five years or so, the Shearwater landscaping committee has been responsible for the progressive rejuvenation of the Shearwater grounds, bringing it from the 1980's to the 21st century. Overgrown and tired landscape elements that had reached the end of their useful life have been replaced with indigenous plants selected to thrive in a coastal environment yet blend with and echo original plantings throughout the community.

I would also like to recognize the recent contributions of Mary Irace and others who joined forces with the committee in the selection of trees to replace the overgrown Leland cypresses adjacent to the pool that were removed last winter. The fast growing Leylands, which had been planted too closely together 30 years ago, are notorious for their shallow root system which has caused many to fall in the extreme weather conditions we have witnessed over the past several years. The new emerald green and green giant arborvitae that have replaced them are growing well, thanks to community contributions of irrigation equipment and volunteer efforts to ensure that the plants are watered well until established.

Many community members have come forward with ideas on how to enhance our landscape, improve our views and introduce improvements to protect our environment. All ideas are welcome and appreciated as we work to develop a master plan for the next five years.

Update on landscaping evaluation and planning

- Survey, assessment and documentation of existing landscaping is ongoing, along with recommendations for improvements. To that end, we have zoned the Shearwater community into 11 locales, each unique in terms of local physical, ecological and social parameters and yet an integrated part of the community as a whole.
- Planting and/or transplanting of landscape elements should not take place until fall. In the meantime, our focus will be on weeding, maintenance and irrigation.
- Planning of special projects for the coming year is underway. Updates will be provided at the September meeting.

Update on large tree issues

After walking the grounds several times and listening to the concerns of many residents, the landscaping committee has developed a preliminary "wishlist" of tree-related actions. These will be used as a basis for discussions with qualified tree companies from whom we will solicit proposals. Of primary concern are the aging oaks in front of buildings 15 and 16, a large dead

pine tree on the left side of Building 15, and several tall dead pine trees lining the driveway next to Building 8. These present a potential safety risk to people and buildings and should be addressed in the near term. An initial inspection by a certified arborist familiar with Shearwater, Tyler Balderson of Bartlett Tree Company, has been scheduled for Tuesday, July 22, to be followed by a more comprehensive assessment later in the week. Assessments and proposals from Davey Tree Company, also familiar with Shearwater, will be requested along with others, so please feel free to provide referrals and recommendations.

Status of irrigation system

- The sprinkler heads installed under Phase 1 and 2 of the irrigation plan for Shearwater were recently inspected by Don Kadonoff and were found to be functioning properly. We have also recently adjusted the irrigation schedule in response to the advancing warm weather season and will continue to make adjustments as needed.
- We are owed a Mid-Season Tune-Up under our contract with Terra Nova and will be scheduling that for the end of July or early August.
- It's time to look at Phase 3 of the planned irrigation system for Shearwater, with the hope that it can be executed in time for the 2015 warm season. We are currently evaluating what areas would most benefit from automated irrigation systems to ensure that our landscape investments and assets are well maintained and preserved. In the meantime, we applaud and encourage all those who are contributing personal resources and time to keep Shearwater green or are working with the landscaping committee to design and establish plant beds and landscape features that thrive naturally here.

Landscaping committee procedures

Procedures past, present and future are currently under discussion. We anticipate presenting draft recommendations at the September meeting.

Submitted July 22, 2014 by Deborah Birch

Tel: 202-629-6035, email: dbirch@seagreenintl.com