



## Newsletter, July, 2020

This edition of the Waterway Pines newsletter is filled with reminders, good news, and a couple of admonitions. Oh, and one cancellation: it continues to be a strange summer.

### Change of plans

The annual ice cream social, usually held this month, was originally rescheduled for August. However, given the spike in COVID-19 cases in Ottawa County, we are cancelling the event, and hoping to resume that tradition next year. Eat all the ice cream you want, in the comfort of your own space!

One thing we can't completely cancel is our annual meeting, required by our bylaws. That meeting is still on the calendar for October, but it will likely be different than in the past, and almost certainly will not include a potluck. Stay tuned for more details as the board figures them out.

### Reminders

Have you noticed how many walkers and bicyclists there are? It has been tricky this summer to navigate around humans and their dogs, cars, and work vehicles. Hear your mom's voice in your head: Walk on the left. Bike on the right. Obey the speed limit. Pay attention!

Something else to remember: use the [wwpines.net](http://wwpines.net) website to communicate with the board. It is much easier for board members who are responsible for landscaping, buildings, and the pond, to hear from you via that website than to try to answer other emails or phone calls.

Phew! One more reminder: please do not interfere with vendors working in the association. Do not ask them to do work for you, or to alter the way they are doing their job. If you want something done, or want it done differently, use the [wwpines.net](http://wwpines.net) website to communicate with the board member who oversees that particular area. Workers can get in trouble with their bosses if they take direction from anyone other than their supervisor.



## Good news

The **Little Free Library** is finally here! Located on the northeast corner of Timberlake Crossing and Timberlake West, it was officially unveiled on Wednesday, July 22, at 7:15. Please visit Waterway Pines' newest little condo, and be among the first to "take a book, leave a book." If you aren't familiar with Little Free Libraries, check out their website: <https://littlefreelibrary.org> Our LFL is registered with the national organization, and is available for anyone here in the association, or for other neighbors to use. Many thanks go to Steve Rademacher, Jeff Stuttmann and Nick Medendorp for their hard work in designing and building our own LFL. Thanks also to the Waterway Pines book club for their generous financial sponsorship. The LFL will be stocked and ready to go on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, so we hope to see you then, from a safe distance, of course. Borrow a book, donate a book, find something amazing to read!

**Driveway repairs and replacements:** The good news is that the vendor with whom we contracted actually showed up, did good and speedy work, and that job is done for the year! As our buildings and roads age, more such repair work is on the horizon, and will be in future budgets.

## Less happy news

Let us begin with the ponds, and the creatures that live in them.

Two pair of geese raised families on the ponds this year. And yes, the board is aware that geese are a nuisance to many residents. The geese mitigation strategies used in the past (lights, etc.) seem to have had little effect this year. However, geese and other migratory waterfowl are protected by state and federal law. It is illegal to trap, poison, or shoot them. It is also illegal to interfere with their nests. The fine for doing so can range up to \$1,000. In addition, the use of firearms is prohibited on association property. Despite all this, a goose was shot earlier this month on association property. The DNR was called, but could not trap it. It died a slow death in a flower bed during the heat wave earlier this month.

Our resident naturalist assures us that the best course right now is patience. The geese will move on as soon as the young are able to fly. If you live with ponds in Michigan, you will likely live with geese. Here's another way to look at it: the presence of the mallards, buffleheads,



and geese are evidence of a healthy ecosystem, and that is good for all the residents at Waterway Pines.

But even a healthy ecosystem can have troubles.

The pond committee offers this report:

The ponds are a real asset at Waterway Pines Condominiums, but they are aging in varying degrees. This is a normal process that is increasingly evident depending on where you live in the association. Because the north pond is shallower than the south pond, and the bay in that pond is even more shallow, the aging process is farther along.

The pond advisory committee is working on a short- and long-term plan to rectify the excessive weeds, algae and scum, which are greater in the bay of the north pond. The problem is exacerbated by the high temperatures we recently experienced. While there is no immediate fix, the board is conscious of and concerned about the conditions people are dealing with. The advisory committee is contacting qualified pond specialist businesses for estimates and will come to the board with recommendations very soon. The board asks for your patience, especially those of you who live on the bay of the north pond.

There is also concern about the loss of over 100 fish in the last month. The possible causes (and there are several) have been pursued, but there are no proven answers. Every effort is being made to avoid a recurrence of this kind of loss. If you happen to catch a pike or catfish, do not throw it back! These predatory fish do not belong in our pond.

## **Buildings and maintenance**

Work is ongoing on more than 300 small and large maintenance projects this summer. About half of those projects have been completed, but some of the larger jobs—including the replacement of electric meter panels, and the replacement of sunroom support posts—are delayed because vendors are still catching up from the stay-at-home orders in the spring. To complicate matters, some building materials are in short supply, causing further delays.

Clogged gutters and clogged or broken popups have taken a significant amount of



time, effort, and budget, and we are not yet finished. In fact, the water diversion system has been neglected for years with buried/broken popups and clogged gutters. The system maintenance this year has exceeded the budgeted amount for the year and will require significant expenditures in the future to maintain the functionality of the system. So far, four of the 12 broken popups have been repaired which involves cleaning/filtering the whole system.

Everyone appreciates your patience.

### **Finally, something to think about**

Labor is a significant expense in the association, particularly for landscaping and building maintenance. Some work must be done by licensed professionals, and there isn't much room for cost cutting when it comes to major building repairs, mowing and lawn care. However, some of the work required to maintain the appearance and integrity of the property can be done by unskilled labor.

This is why Dennis and Sally Mulder are up on ladders cleaning gutters, and why Brian Waterway with a team of teenagers has been cleaning out brush and planting/removing shrubs. Brian has also purchased some plant materials through a local nursery, rather than going through our general landscaper.

As an association, we are fortunate—and grateful—for this level of volunteerism from board members. However, there is a cost: we can't always count on board members to have the interest, knowledge, or physical stamina to do this sort of unskilled labor. And doing this sort of work can feel overwhelming, leading to burnout.

The board is worried about this, and wonders if there are people in our community who might volunteer to work occasionally, under the supervision of a board member, on some of these tasks. Would you plant a bush? Climb a ladder to clean a gutter? Paint a service door? Pull out weeds? If the answer is yes, please let us know.

The bottom line is, in fact, the bottom line. We know that most any problem can be solved with money. And we know that neglecting maintenance of our buildings and landscape only serves to kick the cost down the road, and often leads to greater costs. Certainly, we can pay our vendors more to get this work done. Of course, that will be reflected in our association monthly fee.





**Last word:**

Who could have predicted the ways in which the challenges of COVID-19 would affect our association? Delays, increased costs, limitations on the sorts of work that can be done—all have had an impact.

At the same time, our community is ticking along pretty well. Work is being done. Walkers and bicyclists are greeting one another. The Little Free Library has become a reality. We are looking out for one another. Even if it is hard to find sometimes, there is a silver lining.

