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COVERED BRIDGE ASSOCIATION, INC.
DRAFT OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
July 16, 2024

The meeting was called to order by President Ron Cobert at 10:00am.

Pledge of Allegiance, and a moment of silence.

ROLL CALL – In attendance, Ron Cobert, Gene Fischer, Kathy Gray, Leigh Russ, and Phyllis Klase. Frank Brown and Jim Moore in attendance via Zoom.

NEW RESIDENTS – Carol Ott, living on Pinecrest, introduced herself.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

Ron Cobert reminded residents we are not reading the minutes during the meeting anymore to save time during the meeting. The Board Members receive the draft of minutes ahead of the meetings to review for the next meeting. He also reminded residents the minutes are always posted on the board next to the handicap bathroom. For the minutes of the June 18, 2024, Board Meeting. Ron asked the Board Members for any corrections, and none were made. Ron asked for a motion to accept the June 18, 2024, minutes. On a motion made by Kathy Gray and seconded by Phyllis Klase the motion passed with all members voting aye.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer's report was given by Kathy Gray and accepted as read. A copy of which is attached and made part of these minutes.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS – Ron Cobert

I am surprised by the reluctance and resistance to providing necessary information being gathered in our effort to complete the required data for our 55+ community status. HUD could come in at any time and ask to see our records that prove we qualify for the Age 55+ community status. If we lose that status, we could see the ages of our residents become low enough to include families with children. Do we really want that? I don't think any of the Covered Bridge residents want to see that happen.

Our HOA lawyer was contacted concerning some of our residents objecting to provide information for this Age Verification Survey. He said to keep a list of those households, send him their names and addresses, and he will deal with them. He indicated fines and legal costs would be the next step in Covered Bridge's efforts to complete this survey; due to be completed by the end of this year. Federal and State law, along with Article XIX (19) of our Covenants, require that Covered Bridge maintain updated records related to the age of our residents. This process is necessary to ensure compliance with the laws that govern housing for persons 55 years and older.

The Board has taken the next step regarding violations of our rules and regs. We had sent out notices of violations to a couple of resident owners along Venetian Pkwy, with little improvements made to correct the violations. Our HOA lawyer has been given records of our attempts as prescribed in our Covenants and governing documents and is now involved in the process to bring these properties up to Covered Bridge standards. In preparation for the Hurricane season, we have printed off informational guidelines as published by Highlands County, Division of Emergency Management and another set of preparedness guidelines generated by Covered Bridge. You may pick up a set in the office after today's meeting.

The Pool and Hot Tub Refurbish Contract has been signed. The contractor has all our necessary repair and refinish materials and will begin our pool and hot tub work soon. He expects the total downtime for the project to be approximately two weeks. He has several projects in southern Florida to finish up before starting work on this contract. The pool will need to be drained several days ahead of the commencement of this pool refurbish project.

There were some misunderstandings concerning the July 4th pool party. Some of the attendees said they were under the idea that the Board would not allow them the use of the kitchen. The planners of this party were told the clubhouse and kitchen could be used but would need to be cleaned up after usage. The organizers said they did not want to be

responsible for any kitchen cleanup but would use the clubhouse for eating. Thank you, Rick and Lynn, for cleaning up the clubhouse after the party was over.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ARCHITECTURAL – Ron Cobert – We had one carport with new drainage system, two carports, and one whole house generator with 500-gallon gas tank which were all approved. We had one unapproved, which was a 10'x20' free standing shed in the back yard of a single-family home which violates our Architectural Committee rules and State regulations.

BUILDINGS – Terry Myers – Hung a medical kit in the clubhouse by the door next to the exit to the pool. General maintenance and checklist items: light bulb replacement as the old bulbs burn out, replaced battery in outdoor handicap pad (pool side), check restrooms. Rick Nelson will be out of state from July 18 to July 29, and Terry Myers will be filling in during my absence.

GROUNDS – Alan Drake – no report

POOL – Gene Fischer – The contractor, Crystal Clear Pools, LLC, will let us know this week the timeline for when they can begin work on the pool and hot tub.

COMPOUND – Gene Fischer – We will have changes to the rules for the Compound to be discussed in our next meeting. According to the changes in Florida Statute 720 that became law on July 1, 2024, we are required to make changes to Rules in our Agenda 7 to 14 days in advance of our next Board Meeting.

FAIR – Donna Palmatier – no report

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH – Bob Evans – There are at least 18 yard lights that are not working, and an additional 7 or so that are too dim. Check your yard lights.

DANCE/MOVIE NIGHT – Phyllis Klase – Movies will start back in August on the first Thursday.

SOCIAL – Peggy Story

July calendar

- 19th – Coffee Hour 8am. Please sign up on the bulletin board in the back of the clubhouse so we can get a count for donuts that will be ordered on Wednesday.
- 20th – Pool Party noon. Bring a dish to share, and hot dogs are provided.
- 23rd – Garden Club 11am

August calendar

- 8th – Private Event 2pm-4pm
- 9th – Potluck 5:30pm – Theme is salad.
- 13th – Social Meeting 10am. Everyone is welcome to come.

September calendar

- 8th – Patty Hynes' Buddy Party
- 14th – Bobbie Snow will have a party

October calendar

- Bingo will resume probably in mid-month.
- 26th – Halloween Dance

BRIDGE GATE CLOSURE – Mike Kratt – The committee came up with about 7 ideas, and we have not decided on any of them; whether to permanently close, leave it open, put the arm back up, or put in a swing gate like we have at the pool. We are at a standstill right now what to do with it. If we put the arm back up temporarily, people can still get through with their bicycles but would have to get off the bike to get through the opening. That's about all we can do right now until we have more comments. Ron Cobert said we have been addressing this for quite a few months and would like a recommendation to be brought to the Board by next month's meeting. Mike indicated a recommendation will be provided.

OLD BUSINESS

BRIDGE REPAIR – Ron Cobert – We have received our plans and specs from the Structural Engineer from Lake Wales, and he gave us a contractor list to contact for bids. We hope to have the bids in by the end of August.

POOL AND HOT TUB REPAIR – Gene Fischer – We have recently been notified that the light at the deep end of the pool goes on and off at random times. When the pool is drained, we will have that looked at for repair.

INITIATION/ENTRANCE FEE – Ron Cobert – This is now in the lawyer’s hands, and he will write up what needs to be done and what needs to be said. The attorney said it will have to be included in our new Covenants which is coming up this Fall. This fee is strictly for new buyers coming into Covered Bridge and not for current residents. It is mandatory for this new fee to be included in our Covenants which will require a vote from 67% of our residents to pass.

AGE 55+ CENSUS – Connie Charles – no report

POTHOLE PATCHING – Gene Fischer – Soon we will start repairing a few more potholes.

NEW BUSINESS

GATORCO CONTRACT – Ron Cobert – The current contract ends December 31st of this year, and there have been a lot of complaints about their service. We are currently looking for other contractors to provide bids to begin in January, and Gatorco can also submit a bid. We have talked with a couple of companies that would have to hire more labor to do this work. An idea was also raised that the work doesn’t necessarily have to be done in one day, but maybe in two days.

SUGGESTION TURNED IN – Bob Evans suggested a totem pole in Covered Bridge to honor the Seminole Indian Nation, the only tribe in the entire US that was never defeated by the American government. It will take some time, not just a week, to complete a project like this. This would take funding, and we would need a Totem Pole Committee to see it through to completion. Bob suggested placing the pole between the clubhouse’s flagpole and the three palm trees, and he said he has talked to contractors that might donate a harvested tree. Ron Cobert said before the Board could even vote on it, we would need look at expenses, what are we going to carve it with, what kind of design would be use, etc. Ron asked residents in attendance if they wanted to show interest by raise of hands, but the residents determined this discussion should be brought up when more residents are present. Therefore, the suggestion has been tabled until this Fall.

RESIDENTS COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Sally Lemke asked if we could add trimming to the lawn service we receive. Ron Cobert said the lawn service would require more money than the ~\$100k we already pay them in a year. Sally asked if we could just ask the service provider how much it would cost Covered Bridge to do this, and Ron indicated that we would ask the contractors for this separate price.

Norm Boucher spoke about the Bridge Gate Closure. “My wife and I moved here on April 6th, and I attended the Board Meeting. Ron Cobert had asked for volunteers (to be on the Bridge Gate Closure Committee), and I volunteered.” He read through minutes from May 16, 2017, to present to educate himself on this topic and be able to recount what has been documented from Board Meeting Minutes. He pointed out this topic has been in discussion for many years, and the Board never approved removing the arm from the bridge gate.

- May 16th, 2017, a Sheriff’s Deputy stated we should consider closing off the open space on each side of the bridge to be a good idea for improving security for the community.
- July 18th, 2017, the issue was raised about fencing off an appropriate four-foot area at the bridge, and the subject was tabled.
- February 18th, 2020, a letter from a resident dated February 10th was read. Neighbors in the first block of Venetian Parkway successfully eliminated a problem of loud motorcycles passing through the side of the bridge gate at night and traveling on to Lake Francis Rd. The Board gave thanks to the writer of this letter.
- April 20th, 2021, a question was asked if the arm could be removed from the gate. Maintenance will see to it.
- June 15th, 2021, it was brought up that at the April Board meeting the arm at the bridge be removed. Since then, it was determined to leave the arm in place to keep motorcycles from coming through. Everyone felt it should stay to slow traffic. If you are a resident, you can use your key to open the gate.
- May 17th, 2022, a person spoke discouraging people from confronting folks coming through the bridge. The arm of the bridge was removed at night. The cameras were unplugged, and everything was cleaned up and removed. The police were not notified.
- March 21st, 2023, a community member wanted to know who removed the bar on the bridge. Cindy Hubble (then President) said she had compliments on the bar being taken down for easier access for bicycle traffic.

I am now aware of two petitions that have been presented to the Board; one for the arm to be reinstalled, and a second for it not to be reinstalled. The second petition had a very well written letter stating many facts. Unfortunately, it had no name or contact information, and I would have liked to ask questions of the writer.

Our past committee chair (of Bridge Gate Closure) reports he spoke to 40 people 10 said to leave the walkway open and 30 would like to close the walkway. I personally spoke to each member of this committee.

These are the responses I received when speaking to the committee; I called them all on Thursday.

- You will never make everyone happy; leave it open or permanently close it.
- When I asked if a swing gate like what we have at the pool would make a good compromise, everyone said yes.
- One member said he did not want the gate locked. Both he and his wife walk and bike ride.
- What I have personally been told by bikers is "The key to open the gate would be ok if I could remember to take it with me".
- Another person said, "It would just mean they would have to get another key." They only have one key in their family.
- In speaking to people who do ride past this area, they dismount from their bikes and walk through the opening.

Something to note on the second petition (to not reinstall the arm), it had 55 signatures from 38 homes out of the 369 homes in our community. That is 10% of the community. 90% of the people, it doesn't bother them.

What we should all be doing is working together for better water service at a lower cost, as well as remedy the smells from the water treatment plant.

The boil water notice should not be coming from Facebook, but on everyone's phone, but I applaud the people who do put it on Facebook.

Then when we have taken care of the water, how about a traffic light at the corner of Hwy 27 and Lake Francis Rd.

There is small stuff that is taking up too much time.

Norman asked the Board for a motion for their approval; motion to install a swing gate like the ones at the pool at the opening of our Covered Bridge Gate area. Second part of the motion is that if anything were to happen to the new gate, whether by accident or theft, that the opening be permanently closed off. We have spent enough time talking about this gate. There should be two signs posted at that gate, one on each side; "Private Property, Covered Bridge Residents Only, Posted". The work "Posted" gives you more authority. In talking to others, the budget should be about \$400 and not to exceed \$400.

Janice Vedernjak spoke about a yard that needs to be trimmed and weeded. Ron Cobert explained the home is for sale and the owner probably stopped their yard service. Ron will ask the mowers to take care of this.

Norman Boucher commented on the 55+ Census. In the Minutes of February 18th, 2020, "Residents that have not completed their resident's information sheet, please do so." Ron Cobert stated it is a State and Federal mandate, so we must comply with it.

A resident suggested, if people that don't want to give their information to the person that is volunteering to collect the 55+ Census information, then go to the office to give this information themselves.

RESIDENTS COMMENTS

Bobbie Snow asked residents to sign up for the Neil Diamond Tribute. We already have 190 people signed up, and we can only have 220 attend this entertainment. The cost is \$10 per resident, but if there are not enough people sign up, we will open it to the outside and they will pay \$20 per person.

Linda Taylor commented on the theft in the kitchen, and the kitchen being locked. She indicated that residents should be informed of what has been taken. Ron Cobert said the theft issue had been reported to him by four different women; they work in the kitchen, on workdays, or Coffee Hour. Items missing were plates, napkins, paper towels, toilet paper, plastic wear, food out of the refrigerator, and a bunch of stuff. This hasn't been just one time; it has been going on for years. Linda suggested it should have been brought up at the last Board meeting, and Ron Cobert said we have talked about it several times. Linda said she heard the missing items had been found. Kathy Gray said we found one box of paper plates, but we still used 1000 paper plates in less than two weeks. Kathy said since we have one person doing the purchasing now, it is easier for us to keep track of what is being bought repeatedly. This is how we were able to determine that there is some theft going on. Kathy went on to say we have brought this up more than once. We had to take steps, not that we wanted to, but this is your (HOA) money they are stealing from.

Judy Heroux spoke on what to do with your food in the event of a hurricane. If the electricity goes off and you can't maintain your refrigerator for an extended period, she will open the kitchen. You can bring your refrigerated foods to the clubhouse, and she will start serving food from what is being donated. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be available for those that need it. It's a lot of work and she will need volunteers to help.

ADJOURNMENT: Ron Cobert made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Phyllis Klass, the motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:59am.

Respectfully submitted, Leigh Russ

