

Report: 2016 Accomplishments and Challenges

- The long-awaited land lease offer came through but as a series of individual “mini-leases” as opposed to one master lease with the HOA. The HOA did not and does not take a position as to what individual homeowners should decide. However, just a reminder, an acceptance period of two years was specified for the lease extension offer. If you have not extended your lease and would like to additional information or clarification, contact Feys Canyon Realtors at 760-325-0905.
- Significant reserve funds were utilized to re-plaster pool #2 (to include the pool decking), and spas #3 and 4 as well as replace coping at all of the spas. In addition, pool furniture was purchased to replace failing pieces and to maintain the designated number of chairs, lounges, and tables at each pool.
- Unfortunately, two pool sheds were broken into—with a pool pump stolen from one and a spa pump from the other. Based on insurance deductibles, the equipment was replaced as an unanticipated expense using reserve funds. In addition, new, reinforced doors were installed at each of the pool sheds.
- By using a state-sponsored program, we were able to install solar heating panels on top of each pool shade structure at a cost of \$100 each. This combined with lowering the pre-set temperature of the spas has saved us several thousand dollars in gas usage over the previous year. Good thing too, as despite ongoing efforts to decrease water usage, our water bills are considerable higher this fiscal year compared to the previous one.
- Speaking of water savings, our Alejo desert-scaping project was completed early in the year. After considerable effort, we received a grant from DWA for \$11,306; as well as \$2,500 grant from the City of Palm Springs. Due to drought conditions, water restrictions, and projected water rate increases, the Board reinvested these savings in to other water-saving initiatives: specifically, removing turf along the exterior of Alvarado and El Segundo and replacing it with gravel and changing to drip emitters, and removal of turf in the fire lane on Consuelo.
- Water rate increases: DWA approved a meter rate increase in 2017. The impact of this increase is relatively modest through June 2017--only \$15.54 a month. However, a water service rate increase (based on usage) and another meter rate increase have been proposed to go into effect in July 2017 (with additional increases each July through 2020). As mentioned above, our water usage this fiscal year to date is higher than projected and budgeted for (possibly in part due to over seeding the lawn). If the DWA proposed increases for July 2017 are adopted (more likely than not) , using Jul-Nov 2016 usage as a baseline, our costs will rise \$1185 for the same five-month period in 2017. Extrapolating that to a full fiscal year, additional water fees for next fiscal year could easily exceed \$2500 (and again, large increases are proposed for July 2018, July 2019, and July 2020)—so it’s easy to see why continued attention to water usage is a high priority of the Board.

- **Lighting:** Our lighting infrastructure is old and subject to problems due to issues such as buried unshielded wires subject to the elements. As a result, lighting maintenance costs have risen significantly prompting a meeting with our lighting company who have agreed to conduct a no cost common area lighting survey and develop a list of prioritized recommendations for lighting issues, upgrades, and replacements. Based on funding, the project will be accomplished in phases with first priority given to any potential safety issues.
- **Roofs:** Ongoing maintenance of our roofs is another high-ticket and priority item for the Board. Contracts were reviewed and adjustments to the scope and frequency of work were made which has resulted in better and more prudent use of reserve funds.
- **Landscape:** The budget for replacement plants has historically been underfunded and the landscape committee is to be commended for effecting the many improvements that have been done. They've long advised that many of the shrubs and tree in the complex are reaching the end of their functional life—a concern greatly exacerbated by watering restrictions and the additional stress that brings on. Our landscape contractor, a certified arborist, provided a report confirming the position of the landscape committee. The average life span of fruit trees is 35 years (about the age of our complex) although depending on weather and watering, it can be 4-7 years. Many of our citrus were dead or dying and others are likely to die due to the stresses of water restrictions. Queen Palms are reaching the end of their life span. Seven of 25 had to be removed and the remaining are expected to die off in the next 1-2 years. The cost to remove approximately 20 trees was \$5500. Future landscape plans will have to consider cost, lifespan, and water rate increases.
- **Speaking of trees...**our reserves took a considerable hit (approximately \$20,000!) in December from tree roots infiltrating a sewer line and COMPLETELY filling the pipe! It's one of those things that can't be planned for, and which hopefully isn't a sign of things to come. However, it does serve as a reminder that homeowners are responsible for any trees or shrubs planted in exclusive use common areas (e.g., patios). If you have any such plantings, you must keep them appropriately trimmed, and you are responsible for any damage they cause to wall foundations, patio flooring, etc.
- **Short term rentals:** this issue generally isn't a problem in St Tropez as rentals under 30 days are prohibited by the governing documents. However, just a heads-up that the city has passed a new ordinance that includes hefty licensing fees, strict enforcement, and fines of up to \$5000 for a first offense! So violations could lead both to HOA and city fines.

Remember to visit the St Tropez website: www.sttropezhoa.com for copies of the Rules & Regulations and other governing documents; meeting agendas and minutes; and other important information, documents, and forms.