

Shadywood West Homeowners Association

Topeka, Kansas

October 1, 2010

Dear Neighbors,

This newsletter is intentionally short. The Shadywood West Homeowners Association Board of Officers (“the Board”) met last weekend in preparation for the October annual meeting. During that meeting, one subject dominated our discussions, and the Board thus decided to forego a “newsy” newsletter in lieu of something that everyone needs to consider.

The subject is the future of the organization.

It’s great that the SWWHA motors along quite nicely, that homes are maintained within the standards of the neighborhood’s covenants and restrictions, that most people pay their dues for the year, that neighbors care for neighbors, and that there is little strife among neighbors. As a result, we collectively have much to be grateful for, including a harmonious, well kept neighborhood and a budget account solidly in the black.

But the same handful of volunteers continues to carry the load, and we believe that there are good, capable people who could take a turn at the plate. As one Board member said Saturday, “I don’t mind doing this, but it shouldn’t be a life sentence.”

For example, our grounds “chair” been performing that duty for four and a half years (without a committee to assist), our secretary (pressed into service last year to fill a void) is the former association president, the vice president and treasurer have just agreed to serve another two years each, the recent architectural committee chair performed that role for many years while simultaneously serving as president for a term, and I’m going on my seventh year or so as association president.

The latter concern is the most immediate. According to the term limits in our by-laws, I cannot legally serve as president after October. Despite numerous direct probes and public announcements, no one outside of the Board has offered to fill this void or any others cited.

The classic response from people is that they are too busy. Eschewing the temptation to describe the Board members’ own schedules, I do want to say that none of the association duties are overwhelmingly hard. Precisely because the neighborhood is a good one, the roles of the officers and committees do not take considerable time. But someone who volunteers ought to know that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Moreover, attendance at annual and semi-annual meetings has been meager. During some, we have not even reached a quorum. Since a quorum is defined as 10% of the members (meaning the number of the 132 owners who are current on their dues), that’s not a very high threshold.

The next annual meeting is scheduled for Sunday, 17 October at 6 PM in the HyVee meeting room. We have important decisions to make, and we need good attendance.

Based on the Board's discussion last Saturday, we feel it appropriate at that time to decide how the SWWHA should function as we go forward. The Board will ask the members to consider dissolving the association. Alternatively, we may seek to change the by-laws so that a private enterprise could be hired to manage the neighborhood; we have funds to do so for a couple of years, probably.

The officers of the association do not take these considerations lightly. Dissolving the association will most certainly lead to abrogation of restrictions and a decline in the maintenance of our common areas. A concomitant drop in appearance – if not home values – is likely. And contracting the association's duties would be expensive, impersonal, temporary, and legally awkward.

Of course, what we prefer is a vibrant association where neighbors take their turns with the time and talent they have to help keep Shadywood West the great neighborhood that it is. That starts with attending the two meetings per year (a small investment of time) and people willing to stand up and participate as officers or committee members. We have good systems in place, solid by-laws and restrictions, a great core of current and former officers, funds in the bank, and a majority of owners who pay their dues. Happily, there are no big problems to fix. But we can't keep riding the same horses year after year.

So please consider serving as an officer or on a committee. The duties of the four officers can be found on our website (www.shadywoodwest.org) under Bylaws. The standing committees are not defined there, but they include Architecture, Grounds, Webmaster, and Social as well as our Senior Block Captain and block captains. You can let me or any of the officers know of your interest – ideally before the annual meeting. And please attend that meeting. We have important issues to discuss.

George Webb
President
Shadywood West Homeowners Association