

Forest Lake Townhomes Homeowners Association, Inc.
Newsletter from the Board of Directors - May 2013

Fellow FLT Members,

Here are some Community News Items and Board Activities over the past two months. Minutes of the March and April Board meetings can be found on the FLT website – www.forestlaketownhomes.org.

Parking: Five new parking spots have been added in the southwest section of the community at a cost of \$5690. Repairs are also being done to damaged areas of 11 parking places. Passes for guest parking are in the process of being distributed. You can pick them up Tuesday mornings or Thursday afternoons at the clubhouse. Residents are reminded that they cannot use the guest parking areas or park on the streets and that a maximum of two cars per townhome are permitted. Guest parking violators will be given a 24-hour warning after which they will be towed. No warning will be given for parking on the street or blocking a resident's driveway. And, please make sure your vehicle registration is current.

Leasing: The process and forms were revised for leases and lease renewals. The forms are available from the website in the forms section. The lease application lists the required documentation. Lease renewals now only require a lease renewal form, a copy of the new lease, and a rules violations check.

Hot Tub: Several residents have asked about having a hot tub installed in the pool area. The Board will investigate the feasibility of this.

Dog Park: A committee has been authorized to study the various aspects of setting up a dog park. Several volunteers are needed to look into various aspects of this. Please let the Board know if you would like to help.

Clubhouse/Pool Access System: The current fingerprint access system set up by Whitestone has been plagued with numerous problems. It was a beta system being tested by Samsung, was never put into production by the company, and is currently unsupported. A new access system is needed and needed soon. The Board considered a fingerprint system proposed by Envera and three key fob systems proposals. At the March meeting the Board voted to install a key fob system for pool and clubhouse access. At that meeting Mr. Spies requested reconsideration of Envera's proposed fingerprint/vein system and stated that he would set up a demonstration run by Envera. The Board agreed to this. The demonstration was held on March 27th at 1 pm at the clubhouse. About 25 residents attended. Almost all attendees could register and use the system including many who could not use the Whitestone system. This is a state-of-the-art fingerprint/vein identification system used by many government installations, including the CIA and the Department of Defense.

Despite this, the Board did not change their mind and will select from among the three key fob proposals. This decision is based on the following reasons. The cost from data provided to the previous Board was over \$40,000, whether purchased or "leased" with the leased version being merely buying the system on a loan from Envera. This \$40,000+ cost did not include the monthly cost of maintaining the database or the system equipment. The fingerprint/vein database would be labor-intensive and expensive to set up and maintain. The fact that Envera has never used the biometric system they proposed at any other HOA or could even supply us with information on its use elsewhere in a HOA pool environment meant that FLT would again be used as a test case. We had that experience with Whitestone, and we didn't want to repeat it. The Board also did not feel that the level of security provided by this high-tech system was currently necessary, plus the cost was at least three times that of the key fob system. As a secondary point, guests of owners could not use the clubhouse/pool facilities until their fingerprints had been added to the database. This would have to be done on a Tuesday morning or a Thursday afternoon by TI at the clubhouse. A key fob system does not incur this inconvenience. Basically, a key fob system used in an HOA pool environment is a low tech proven system that is cost effective, easy to setup and maintain, and should provide quite adequate security for our community situation. Each fob will have a unique code associated with each unit owner. Each owner is responsible for his actions and for those of his guests. If a fob is misused or lost, that owner's fob access will be deactivated.

Landscaping: A member recommended planting areca (bamboo) palms along the FLT northern fence line as a visual and noise barrier. The Board liked this idea and will look into doing this for both the northern and southern boundary lines and possibly along Metro Blvd.

Volunteer Opportunities: The Grounds Committee is looking for several more committee members. Wilfredo Russian is the committee chair. You can contact him through the website or directly at wilfredorussian@yahoo.com. The committee members will be looking for ways to improve the landscape of our community as well as reporting rules violations to TI. We also need Dog Park Committee volunteers. Can you help?

Cable Television: The Board investigated upgrading the current Comcast service as well as changing over to Dish Network satellite service and new service from Century Link.

Dish Network: offered to build a centralized system that would include a set of dish antennas and a fiber network. (Comcast owns the coaxial cable network in place.) Dish estimated the cost of this at \$150,000, which they would absorb for a 7-year contract. They proposed Digital Bulk Service of 120 channels for a 7 year contract at \$25.99/month/unit. It was not clear what this level of service included. Their Neighborhood Value Plan (NVP) would be paid separately by each owner. NVP requires an access fee of \$10/month/unit, a fee in addition to any upgraded services an owner contracts for. The installation time and level of disruption this network installation would involve is not known. Dish assumed the existing coaxial infrastructure is in sound condition and could be "home run" to units in such a manner that Dish could utilize L-Band technology. The availability of Internet service from Dish was another consideration. A while ago I talked to a Dish salesman who actually recommended Comcast for Internet service rather than anything Dish could provide.

Century Link: I think we can disregard this company. Their representative said that the FLT wiring is insufficient and that a lot of work would have to be done to get the project to work properly. He also said they could not come close to the June 2013 deadline and their pricing could not come close to that quoted by Comcast.

Comcast: The Comcast contract ends in June. The original contract with Comcast was signed ten years ago. Many technological changes have occurred since then. We currently pay \$31.98/unit/month (not including taxes and fees) with a 5.79% annual increase for the expanded basic channel line-up. It does not provide high definition TV (HDTV). This channel line-up can be found on the website home page. Comcast claims that the retail rate for this level of service is \$66.95/month. Dave Dilny met with the Comcast representative and was able to get their HD Bulk Starter service for \$32.99/month/unit, \$1/month more than the present basic cable and \$2 less than Comcast's original offer. This provides true HDTV service, which is what most owners want. It currently costs individuals an additional \$14.95/month to get this upgrade from our current level of service. He also got a 3% increase/year vs. 4% offered, free cable and Internet service for the clubhouse, plus two free community channels that we can use within the community. The contract would be for 7 years. The Board has decided this is the best option.

The HD Bulk Starter service would be paid out of your monthly HOA fee. If you want Internet, telephone service, and/or premium channels, you must contract directly with Comcast as is currently the case. The Xfinity TV channels for different tiers of service, including the Digital Starter line-up, can be found at <https://www.comcast.com/channellineup/ChannelGuidePDF.aspx?SortDir=Ascending&OfferId=0> or on the website home page.

Bottom Line: Most owners already have or probably soon will get HDTVs since the price has come down quite a bit and the picture in HD is so much better than the old analog picture. Once you have seen it, you just don't want to go back to the lower resolution. The Comcast HD Bulk Digital Starter would provide HDTV as the base TV service provided by our HOA for only \$1/month more than our present service with a lower annual increase. Comcast can offer a smooth transition to the upgraded service that the others cannot. Building new infrastructure would also be time consuming and disruptive and may not be accomplished by the time Comcast's contract ends in June 2013. Comcast Internet service is available at \$29.95/month. This would be an option for individual owners. Comcast also offers voice over Internet (VOIP) telephone service. As an alternative to this, you might consider MagicJack Plus. If you have high-speed (WiFi) Internet service, this gives you telephone service for about \$70 for the first year and about \$30 per year thereafter. Check this out at www.magicjack.com. It does not require a computer to run. I use it and found it works fine—something worth considering.

Ken Callahan
FLT HOA Secretary