

## State of the Association 2017

### **Letter from the President**

Dear homeowners and residents,

Recently I heard a speaker talk about different cultural values throughout the world and over time. He said they do differ, but three values transcend all cultures. They are beauty, truth and kindness. South Park is beautiful. I know this from my own observation and what others tell me. No one has ever told me our community is ugly.

Our Association elects those among us who are willing to serve as Board members to address the beauty of the community through an annual assessment that is collected on a monthly basis. To that end the Board of Directors uses the annual assessments to pay for ongoing maintenance through the Operating Fund and long term maintenance through the Reserve Fund. The Reserve Fund is determined through an engineering study that is done every 5 years by Borne Engineering that tells us what likely periodic maintenance or replacement we should do each year. So each year an Operating Budget and a Reserve Budget are set. The Association assessments drive a well-maintained and beautiful community. Southpark 2 is a well-maintained and beautiful community, says landscape architect, Wendy Booth. She also points out that many of our shrubs are close to the end of their life span and need to be replaced. Two years ago the Board under the advice of the Landscaping Committee and with the assistance of our landscaping vendor, Emerald Isle, identified and removed old and dying shrubs to enhance the beauty of our community. The problem is that many of our shrubs continue to die, or are so overgrown they impinge on sidewalks and driveways. We all want the grounds around our homes to be beautiful. It is something special about Southpark 2. We value its beauty.

While beauty is easily recognizable, truth is elusive. So, do we seek truth from an expert such as Wendy Booth, or do we subscribe to the belief that it is our landscape vendor's fault, and that they don't know how to maintain the landscaping. These people are also experts. So what is the truth?

Truth is often based on what we believe or our perceptions. Facts can lead us to the truth, but facts are often ignored or abused. Here are some facts that can guide our dialogue and discussion:

- Shrubs have a life expectancy of about 30 years. Many of our homes were built over 30 years ago.
- Landscaping prices are skyrocketing due to expensive labor and high demand for plant material.
- The Borne Reserve Study had never addressed Landscape Renovation until this past year.
- The Board has spent \$19,000 on a survey that was required by the Landscape Architect and paid the Landscape architect \$8000. Eleven thousand dollars has been spent on plant removal.
- At least 3 previous attempts have been made at Landscape Renovation. All were abandoned.
- The Board still has \$200,000 in the Reserve Landscape Budget as a carryover from last year. No new money will be sent to the Landscape Budget this year.

- In order to put in new landscaping a reliable water supply must be maintained.
- Plants that will thrive in our heavily shaded environment are expensive.
- Well kept personal gardens are often abandoned through home sales and other life events. Costs to tear out and replace average \$3000.
- The number of rental units in the community has risen above 30%.

Facts such as these are helpful, but can also be contradictory or insignificant. Individuals may argue about what they want done, but it is the Board of Directors that has to decide what can be done and what must be done. We must seek and speak the truth. It is not easy to speak as one voice, but it can be done if we remember the importance of the third transcendent value, kindness.

In September, I called a special Board Meeting to address a landscape proposal. Signs popped up on the mailboxes expressing concerns. The concerns were laced with misinformation designed to stir people up. The signs did do that. It also created enemy camps. No signs, except mine, identified the writer. Anonymity is safe from scrutiny. Or perhaps it is because only the Board may place signs at the mailboxes according to postal regulations. I went into the meeting feeling as though I would be a target. Surprise—I was not the target. I was treated with kindness. The topic was the target. Individuals stated concerns, Board members took notes and everyone treated each other with kindness. Everyone felt good about the community and the meeting as we left.

Unfortunately, we have returned to anonymous mailbox postings in efforts to influence votes for candidates. However, they are often perceived as unkind. Putting signs on the mailboxes is probably not the way to solve our issues and differences. Speaking directly to individuals with kindness and sincerity about issues will come closer to achieving positive results. We all want positive results.

Beauty, truth and kindness, which is what I believe this community seeks. We pool our money to maintain and enhance our community. Since I moved here in 2001 our assessments have increased each year. Next year our assessments will increase \$5 per month as contracted services have gone up and other services are calculated to go up 3-5 %. The assessments will be \$145 per month beginning in January.

It is not our wish to create an unnecessary hardship for our fellow owners. It is to collect enough money to provide the day to day maintenance of our community and assure the long term beauty. Please reach out to us through the property manager anytime you have a question or issue. His contact information is always on the second page of the newsletter. We value your input as a means of determining how we should serve you.

Charley Brown, Board President