



# CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION

## Newsletter

September 2018

*"A self-managed and run community composed of a volunteer board that works to keep costs low while striving to enhance property values and provide efficient leadership through open and honest communication."*

### **MAINTENANCE TEAM UPDATE**



Birch Pointe's permanent maintenance team is growing! As mentioned in the summer newsletter, Jules Litchfield began on August 6<sup>th</sup> in a part-time summer capacity to help with the many day-to-day tasks throughout the community. Based on exemplary performance and overall need, the Board voted to convert this role to full-time starting October 1<sup>st</sup>. Eric Kennedy gave a brief performance review to the Board and relayed that Jules has been at capacity since his hire. He is knowledgeable, friendly and has been active in the maintenance field for decades, with trouble-shooting experience in many areas including HVAC systems, plumbing, drywall patching and even intercom repair. Please join the Board in congratulating Jules's full-time appointment when you see him around the community.

Furthermore, you will start seeing Dennis Kennedy a little less throughout Birch Pointe beginning in January 2019. Dennis has served Birch Pointe for well over a decade and will spend a little more well-earned leisure time beginning next year by going part-time.

### **NEW STREET LIGHTS**



With the help of the state and Rep. Mike Ramone, funding for additional street lights in Birch Pointe has been approved! Eric walked the community to discuss optimal locations with Delmarva representatives and learned that we were spared the roughly \$39,000 cost of having these new fixtures installed. Great news! The lights will be placed in darker areas on Haley Court and Birch Circle benefiting most from increased illumination. Miss Utility will soon be marking the sites for digging, with installation scheduled before Thanksgiving. Brighter and safer streets will be much appreciated.

### **WASTE MANAGEMENT / TRASH CONTACTOR UPDATE**



In its process of seeking bids for maintenance agreements, the Board has received three proposals for the upcoming trash removal contract: Waste Management (our current provider), WasteMasters as well as TrashTech have all submitted proposals.

Upon review, that from WasteMasters was found to be the highest and those both Waste Management and TrashTech came in at similar rates. Unfortunately, TrashTech did not submit a formal, written proposal, and thus was excluded from consideration. Subsequently, the Board voted to again select Waste Management (6 for, 1 abstention) as the vendor for the next three years.

The new agreement with Waste Management will go into effect early, specifically on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. Several adjustments will be made as part of this new contract, including reduction of the recycling capacity to a single container designed for cardboard and other broken-down items. The size of other regular bins will all be increased to 6-yards to compensate for the missing recycle capacity.

Since all trash companies have become significantly stricter about "contamination," Birch Pointe will combat the associated surcharges for including these banned materials (such as plastic bags) by eliminating the ability to contaminate recyclables in the first place. By doing so, a small reduction in regular monthly costs was realized for the first year of the new contract.

The Board would also like to remind everyone that the community has a direct impact on monthly costs when discarding large furniture into dumpsters, or leaving trash besides the containers. Anyone seeing such behavior continues to be encouraged to send photographic or video evidence to the Board or Eric so that the costs/fines can be passed directly to the responsible party.

## **VERIZON COPPER LINE RETIREMENT**



Verizon has informed the Board that it will cease to operate and service the copper-line infrastructure deployed throughout northern Delaware sometime in 2019. As a result, Birch Pointe will have the rare opportunity to receive fiber-optic (FIOS) build-out, which will significantly increase the bandwidth availability and service options going forward. The Board voted unanimously to allow Verizon to conduct a detailed survey of the community and submit a proposal for the subsequent FIOS build-out.

**It must be noted that this is non-optional, and the retirement of the copper-line network will affect anyone that has a landline and/or uses Verizon's DSL service today.**

We will work closely with Verizon to minimize the impact to the community during this transition, and look forward to having a proper competitor to Comcast available in Birch Pointe going forward.

## **UNIT REPAIR RESPONSIBILITY**



Several inquiries have been received recently regarding ceiling sheets in top (3<sup>rd</sup> floor) units detaching from the beams, either partially or completely. The Birch Pointe maintenance team investigates each of those incidents separately and determines whether the damage was caused by a common element (i.e. a roof leak) or if the resulting damage is caused by something else, such as age fatigue. No roof leaks have been identified at this time as the cause. Subsequently, it was determined that responsibility for fixing the ceiling rests with the unit owners as our by-laws and CC&R's clearly state that individual owners are responsible for everything inside a unit, including drywall, unless such damage was caused by a common element.

Please be cognizant of your walls, particularly your ceilings, as drywall sheets can be heavy and may pose a danger if left unsecured. Individual owners should also review their insurance policies to determine if they have proper coverage for events such as these since repairs can be potentially costly.

## **ROBUST COMMUNITY TURNOVER**

Summer certainly has been a busy real estate season for Birch Pointe! As evidenced by the large number of property transfers, units are selling well and the community appears to be a desirable place to buy. Below is a look at the recent settlements which occurred in July and August since the last newsletter.

When moving, PLEASE inform Treasurer Monica Rieder if you are on Birch Pointe's ACH program so that future automatic bank debits can be cancelled. Since it seems that units might be on the market for a very short period of time – great for property values – additional work is required to refund double payment of HOA fees. Once DUCIOA forms are requested, any scheduled ACH draws should be discontinued if possible. Current owner monthly payments can be made at closing by check, still at the \$330 ACH discounted rate. Contact [mrieder@birchpointe.net](mailto:mrieder@birchpointe.net) if there are any questions or concerns.

On a related subject, please also note that **parking hang tags for units being sold are to be returned to Eric**, not handed to new owners directly or to real estate agents. Tag numbers are associated with specific vehicles for security and tracking purposes. If the existing protocol is not followed, confusion may well result regarding undocumented cars and their actual owners if the new information is not provided. Your cooperation is appreciated!

**Real Estate Status:** Online resources such as Realtor.com, Trulia, Zillow, Estate.com, etc. (since last newsletter and info as of 9/19/2018)

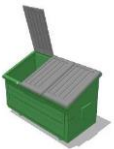


(1) Units on market now:	3 Birch Circle 1 on Claremont Court 1 on Diana Drive	2 which are new listings new listing, with sale contingency pending new listing
(2a) Units sold:	1 on Haley Court 5 on Birch Circle 1 on Claremont Court 1 on Diana Drive	SOLD 7-27-2018 (short sale) SOLD 07-13, 07-31, 08-02, 08-30, and 09-14-2018 SOLD 08-13-2018 SOLD 08-13-2018
(2b) HUD-owned Units sold:	1 on Birch Circle 1 on Claremont Court	SOLD 08-10-2018 SOLD 08-29-2018

**Notes:**

- Let a member of the Board know if you are aware of a new listing in Birch Pointe, or if YOU are moving and planning to sell your *own* condo.
- Eric is the Birch Pointe real estate liaison and can provide many of the essential documents, forms, and certifications needed for property transfer for a \$25 fee.
- Birch Pointe was recertified by HUD in November 2017 allowing buyer to obtain FHA insured mortgages.
- **Birch Pointe has a policy regarding investors to protect the interests of ALL owners which must be disclosed to potential buyers, either directly by the seller or by his/her realtor. The document outlining this policy – which was established in 2013 – is clearly outlined on our website.**

**COMMUNITY REMINDERS AND REFERENCE INFO**



**DUMPSTERS ARE FOR HOUSEHOLD TRASH AND RECYCLING...ONLY!**

Please DO NOT leave trash on the outside of dumpsters or put mattresses, furniture, carpets, appliances, etc. in or beside the dumpsters. **Private contractors are NOT permitted to dispose of materials in BP dumpsters!** Residents disregarding this warning will be assessed a fine in addition to the current \$175 special pick up fee charged by Waste Management.

**SMOKING POLICIES**



Smoking is prohibited in all building common areas including hallways and staircases; light up only once outside. In addition, do not toss butts onto property or over balcony/deck railings as this can be a serious fire hazard; please dispose of them properly.

**COMMERCIAL VEHICLES**



Per Birch Pointe by-laws, **commercial vehicles** are NOT permitted to be parked overnight on site. Common areas are solely for ordinary passenger vehicles. Should owners have such trucks or vans as their only means of transportation, it is required that any signage, logos, and/or advertising be covered up and blocked such as with removable magnetic panels.



**FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS (important!)**

The fire alarm systems in the buildings (with the exception of 3300 and 3400 Haley Court) **DO NOT** automatically contact 911. It is an ALARM only, alerting you to check your immediate area and VACATE the building until cleared by Fire Department. Do not assume it is a FALSE ALARM!

# **BIRCH POINTE DIRECTORY / IMPORTANT NUMBERS**



## ➤ **GENERAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT QUESTIONS**

Eric Kennedy – phone: (302) 685-4310; e-mail: [ekennedy@birchpointe.net](mailto:ekennedy@birchpointe.net)

## ➤ **MAINTENANCE ISSUES AND QUESTIONS**

Maintenance staff (Dennis, Eric, Jules) – e-mail: [maintenance@birchpointe.net](mailto:maintenance@birchpointe.net)

## ➤ **ACCOUNT STATEMENTS / CONDO FEE QUESTIONS / ACH SIGN-UP**

Monica Rieder – e-mail: [mrieder@birchpointe.net](mailto:mrieder@birchpointe.net)

## ➤ **BIRCH POINTE MAINTENANCE EMERGENCIES**

phone: 1-267-474-2907; e-mail: [maintenance@birchpointe.net](mailto:maintenance@birchpointe.net)

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## **September 2018 Board Meeting**

(held on 9-12-2018 at Skyline Middle School library)

- Political Candidate Presentation – Stephanie Barry
- Collections – Payments / Delinquencies / Legal Cost Recovery
- Financial Reports and Monthly Expenditures
- Real Estate Update – Units on Market / Units Sold
- PT Employee Performance Review – Eric
- Additional Street Lighting – Review
- Discussions and Votes
  - Carpet Cleanings
  - Stucco Repair
- Contractor Bids for 2019
  - Trash Collection – Waste Management / Waste Masters
  - Landscaping – GSU (preliminary)
- Verizon – Copper Wire Retirement / FIOS Build-out



## **Collections Report:**

(1) Total operating income posted in August:	\$ 93,390.00 <sup>1</sup>	in HOA fees
	\$ 75.00	3 DUCIOA re-certification fees
	\$ 2,442.50	recovered legal expenses



<sup>1</sup> does not reflect the \$5,820 in pre-payment HOA monies collected in July attributable to each month

(2) There have been several large delinquencies which have recently been cleared out. The return-on-investment associated with sending these accounts to our legal counsel is rather striking and also includes actual cost recovery in a few cases. Of the four recent discharges, three units have sold, requiring payment at settlement. The other is a current owner now in good standing. These properties represented payments of almost \$11,000 in current and back HOA fees. Nine unit owners whose accounts have also been sent demands from our attorney continue to make progress with their payment plans, with HOA back fees of almost \$20,000 collected to date. So please take note:

**THE BIRCH POINTE BOARD IS TAKING LONG TIME DELINQUENCIES SERIOUSLY  
AND REFERRING THEM TO OUR ATTORNEY!**

- REMINDER:**
- MONTHLY HOA FEES SINCE 2017 ARE **\$350**
  - OWNERS WHO ARE ENROLLED IN ACH (OR OTHER E-FUND TRANSFER) RECEIVE A \$20/MONTH DISCOUNT
  - PAYMENTS MADE BY CHECK MUST BE REMITTED FOR THE FULL \$350

ACH/FIS enrollment currently stands at 80%

**Notes:**

- Owners in financial difficulty should speak with a Board member to discuss their situation and arrange a payment plan/schedule to address ways of clearing up past balances.
- A Birch Pointe ACH enrollment form is attached for convenience. Sign up and receive a \$20 discount on your monthly dues. Contact Monica for more info at [mrieder@birchpointe.net](mailto:mrieder@birchpointe.net).

**Cable service will be disconnected on to units in significant arrears  
without a Board-approved payment plan in place.**

**Treasurer's Report:**



(1) Total operating costs for August:	\$ 73,975	in	utility, maintenance, professional, and office expenses; wages; loan
(2) Major expenditures for the month: (other than utility costs*)	\$ 7,954	for	monthly insurance premium
	\$ 3,500	for	monthly landscaping installment
	\$ 2,256	for	maintenance supplies
	\$ 1,803	for	fire system inspection/maintenance
There were also 3 payroll cycles during August.			
AMEX discount/rebate posted to August \$535.			
(3) Capital improvement expenditures: Paid out in August	\$ 40,676	for	3 balcony rebuilds on Birch
	\$ 4,400	for	4 building intercom replacements on Birch
(4) Status of Birch Pointe accounts: (see financial summary at end)	Operational Reserve	=	\$ 65,405
	Reserve Fund	=	\$ 254,944

# August 2018 Financials

## – Operating Account

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>	\$	79,672.50
<b>Inflow – Operating Income:</b>	\$	95,907.50
<b>Inflow – One-time Transfers (from ORA*):</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Outflow – Operating Expenditure:</b>	\$	72,973.78
<b>Outflow – Capital Expenditure:</b>	\$	45,076.00
<b>Outflow – One-Time Transfer (to ORA*):</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>	\$	57,530.22
<b>Target Ending Balance:</b>	\$	50,000.00
<b>Surplus / Deficit:</b>	\$	<b><u>7,530.22</u></b>

## – Operational Reserve Account (\*ORA)

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>	\$	65,401.04
<b>Inflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Inflow – Interest:</b>	\$	4.44
<b>Outflow – Periodic Transfers*:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>	\$	<b><u>65,405.48</u></b>

## – Reserve Account

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>	\$	254,922.26
<b>Inflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Inflow – Interest:</b>	\$	21.65
<b>Outflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Outflow – One-time Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>	\$	<b><u>254,943.91</u></b>

# BIRCH POINTE CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION CENSUS FORM

P.O. Box 1195 Hockessin, DE 19707

Unit Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Persons Residing in Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Owner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Owner's Mortgage Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Owner's Vehicle Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Owner's Condo/Home Owner's Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Owner's Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Work / Mobile

If Non-Resident, Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Tenant(s) Full Name(s) and Phone Numbers:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Home Number Work / Mobile

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Home Number Work / Mobile

Emergency Contact Info: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Phone

Vehicle(s) Owned by Occupant(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Year Make / Model / Color State & License Plate Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Year Make / Model / Color State & License Plate Number

Pet(s) in Unit: \_\_\_\_\_  
Size / Breed

Are you currently in possession of the Rules and Regulations of the Birch Pointe Condominiums? Yes / No

I understand that the above information is for the sole use of Birch Pointe Condominiums Association and its authorized agents in maintaining the community and providing emergency services. I also acknowledge that I must notify Birch Pointe Management if there are any changes in this information and/or if my unit is rented or sold.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Owner Date

**Census: 6-30-2018**

09-20-2018

# Direct Payment Plan Overview

## A smart and easy way to automate your payment with Direct Payment.

Direct Payment is a repetitive payment between businesses and consumers that enables the service provider to deduct scheduled payments from the customer's checking or savings account. It's a dependable, flexible, and convenient process that does not require the consumer to use a computer or access the internet.



### With Direct Payment, you will:

- Save time by having one less check to write
- Reduce postage costs with one less bill to mail
- Eliminate late fees or charges by making payment(s) automatically

### How does Direct Payment work?

You (the customer) will authorize regularly scheduled payments to be deducted from your checking or savings account by completing and submitting an authorization form. Payments are originated one business day before the specified day that they are due. Direct Payment is usually a repetitive payment that will remain in effect until the customer terminates the authorization. It's just that simple!

### What is ACH?

The Automated ClearingHouse (ACH) Network is a nationwide system that processes electronic payments on behalf of depository financial institutions. The ACH Network was established in the 1970s as an electronic substitute for recurring check disbursements and collections. The ACH system is designed to serve all depository financial institutions, regardless of size, on an equitable basis. The system uses batch processing which costs less than on-line, real time processing systems. This feature makes ACH payments less expensive than other electronic payment methods such as wire transfers, and allows many financial institutions to participate.



# Direct Payment Plan Authorization Form

1. Mark the box of the type of account from which payment will be deducted, either a checking or savings account.
2. Fill in your name, unit number/address, financial institution information, and date.
3. Indicate what day of the month funds should be withdrawn and if this is for a monthly or 6-month pre-pay draw.
4. Attach a voided check for verification of all financial institution information.
5. **Be sure to sign the form!**

## AUTHORIZATION FOR DIRECT PAYMENT

I authorize Birch Pointe Condominium Association to initiate electronic debit entries to my:  
**(check ONE)**

checking account

OR

savings account

for payment of my condominium fee(s) on or about the day of the month selected below, as well as any late fees, fines or assessments that are assessed (returned ACH fee, census non-completion fine, general fines, etc.).

This authority will remain in effect until I have cancelled it *in writing*.

Processing date **(check ONE)**

1<sup>st</sup> of month

11<sup>th</sup> of month

21<sup>st</sup> of month

Processing schedule **(check ONE)**

monthly

6-month pre-pay

Starting month for regular HOA payments

Unit ID (e.g. 5001BC, 4005HC, 5203DD)

Financial Institution / Bank Name

**(Please Print Neatly!)**

Account Number at Financial Institution

Financial Institution Routing/Transit Number

Financial Institution City and State

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date

**PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THE AUTHORIZATION FOR YOUR RECORDS**

Please mail to: Birch Pointe Condominium Association, P.O. Box 1195, Hockessin, DE 19707

**Staple Voided Check Here**