



# CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION

## Newsletter

January 2020

*"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."*

### NEW HANG-TAGS FOR 2020 ...



The current Birch Pointe parking hang-tags have expired at the end of 2019. These dated, two-year placards will need to be replaced on ALL vehicles using "Resident" spots in the community. **A new batch of 2020/2021 hang-tags has been ordered and will be available for pickup at the maintenance building on Claremont Court starting on Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> (open 7:30am – 3:30pm weekdays).**

**Furthermore, residents may also pick up their new hang-tags on Saturday, January 25<sup>th</sup> 8:00am – 3:00pm.**

Surrender of present orange hang-tags at the time of trade-in for the new black ones is required, and information on all unit vehicles that may ordinarily be parked in Birch Pointe must be provided, including license number, make, model, and color.

Every unit is entitled to exactly ONE hang-tag; any secondary vehicle(s) must be parked in unmarked spots. Note that no one will be entitled to park in a resident-marked spot with a 2018-2019 tag after Friday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. This should give everyone ample time to collect the new hang-tags. Each owner is responsible for collecting his/her hang-tag.

While the parking situation has dramatically improved in most areas since the introduction of the "Resident" parking spots, the Board has still received continued complaints about violations since the policy went into effect. It became clear that the existing "honor-based" system is not working as intended everywhere, with cases of ongoing abuse by some residents. To that end, the Board has reviewed and discussed this topic and, as mentioned in the last newsletter, has approved the creation and funding of a "Parking Enforcement" position to address this issue.

### ... AND PARKING ENFORCEMENT



After reaching out to the retired law enforcement community as well as other suitable groups, the Board is pleased to announce that Bob Ragazzo, a school constable and retired law enforcement individual, has accepted the part-time parking enforcement role. Bob will start on or about February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 and will patrol the neighborhood at random during evenings and on weekends, issuing warnings and citations for repeat parking offenders. This hire is intended to resolve some of the existing abuse and disregard by Birch Pointe owners and guests/visitors alike of community policy. While it is not the intention of the Board to be heavy-handed with citations, it is hoped that warnings will make people more aware that abiding by the parking rules serves everyone in the community. Residents on streets with limited parking availability will appreciate the cooperation of others.

### MAILBOX REPLACEMENTS



Birch Pointe is a well-established community, now about 35 years old. Many replacements and improvements have been made during its more than three decades of existence, including siding, roofs, gutters, bridges, even street repaving. Some of these are, in fact, again on the list of near-future focus. Others have, unfortunately, received less vigorous attention and have been put on the back-burner as non-vital projects. The mailboxes are one of such items.

With the prevailing good financial standing, it was passed by the Board to do a trial installation of a new mailbox bank on Haley Court. These new boxes have many features that make them not only more attractive, but also more functional,

and are fully USPS compliant:

- Bronze pedestal units are totally USPS approved for multiple-dwelling complexes (4C)
- Access for postal employees will be entirely from the front, which will be easier as well as also obviating the need for clearing snow behind them
- Appearance is much improved over the existing, weather-worn and sometimes damaged ones, improving curb appeal
- Unit numbers will be engraved on the individual boxes so that ownership will be clear
- A slot is dedicated for outgoing mail
- Small, shared parcel lockers are included in each cluster unit which will be used for USPS-based package deliveries

The installation will require a new concrete pad to be poured for anchoring.

If feedback and reception by residents is overall positive, the remaining mailboxes throughout Birch Pointe will receive a similar replacement and in some areas, mailboxes will be relocated to more opportune places.

## **BRIDGE LIGHT REPLACEMENTS**



Yet another trial improvement was completed recently at the very beginning of Birch Circle. It may have been observed when driving into the community at night... significantly improved lighting on the bridge at the 3300 building!

At the suggestion of our general contractor ProTech, post-cap type LED lights have been installed to replace the existing ones. They provide better and brighter lighting as well as being more aesthetically appealing. Like many other "smaller" projects in progress throughout Birch Pointe, such upgrades help the general overall appearance of the community and will also necessitate less maintenance in the future.

Monies have already been allocated in the 2020 budget to change over all remaining bridges with these LED's as responses have been favorable towards them.

## **WHAT DID THE FOX SAY?**



If the fox – or likely several foxes at this time – sighted throughout Birch Pointe and other developments around the golf course, could talk, it would say: "Please STOP feeding us; that's why we keep coming back, even in broad daylight."

Birch Pointe is aware that several unit owners have been feeding the wildlife naturally occurring in the area, causing these animals to become accustomed to humans and lowering their fear threshold when it comes to interacting with and being around humans.

The Board asks that all members of the community remain vigilant and keep their pets indoors or properly supervised outdoors at all times (as is required by Birch Pointe). Furthermore, the Board advises all residents to stop feeding the wildlife, either intentionally or unintentionally: do not leave food out on balconies or decks and close all lids and doors to dumpsters throughout the community. If someone is seen intentionally disregarding this request and feeding wildlife in Birch Pointe, please report it to Eric Kennedy.

## **BIRCH POINTE WEBSITE**



**BirchPointe.net**

Birch Pointe was advised by our current website maintainer and hosting provider that they have outgrown Birch Pointe and are thus looking to end their business relationship with us. As such, the Board is looking for members of the community who may be interested in helping maintain the website going forward. The time commitment is estimated to be no more than one hour per month and work is largely comprised of uploading documents such as the newsletters. This also may provide an excellent way to get involved in a Board-level role in the future! Please consider contributing a bit of your time and expertise on behalf of the community in which you live! The Board appreciates any and all replies.

# OTHER COMMUNITY REMINDERS AND REFERENCE INFO

## • DUMPSTERS ARE FOR HOUSEHOLD TRASH ...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. Several owners have been recently invoiced \$250 for such actions!

## • SMOKING POLICIES



NO SMOKING

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 or deck railings as this can be a serious fire hazard; please dispose of them properly.

## • 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!

## • PET WASTE and PET LEASHING



Cleaning up after your pet is expected and **mandated!** The fine for disregarding this rule is \$50 per occurrence. Please dispose of bagged pet waste properly; for convenience, pet waste baskets have been installed on Claremont Court and Diana Drive open space areas and also between 3700 and 3800 Haley Court. **All pets are to be leashed at all times; NO EXCEPTIONS!** If unleashed dogs are seen, animal control will be notified. This also applies to pets being left alone for extended periods of time on unit decks or balconies.

## • DISPOSAL OF RECYCLABLES



Remember that there is a recycle bin for community use located on Haley Court. This is a single-stream dumpster for the recycling of paper, cardboard, glass, allowable plastics, and aluminum. **Please do not "contaminate" these materials with plastic items other than those designated by numbers 1 to 7. This includes NO plastic grocery or trash bags, sheeting, foam cups, and packaging materials.** Your participation is most appreciated in keeping our community clean!

## ▶ ▶ AND AN IMPORTANT WINTER SAFETY REMINDER !

### • FIREPLACE SAFETY (especially for new owners)



**Unless your fireplace has been repaired/rebuilt and undergone a "Level 2" inspection** (by order of the state Fire Marshall), it is **NOT** safe to use. Due to crucial safety concerns, ALL chimneys were capped! Maintenance will uncapp them ONLY if documentation is provided indicating the fireplace has passed inspection. Use of such capped chimneys will result in almost immediate smoke build up in the unit which, no doubt, will lead to a 911 fire call. New owners, especially, are cautioned and should be made aware of their units' status by the previous owners.



(2) Units sold	1 on Diana Drive	SOLD 1-3-2020
	1 on Claremont Court	SOLD 12-30-2019 (FSBO)

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. 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.

Note also 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. **This procedure applies to units which are rentals: tenants moving out should do like-wise and turn over their tags.** Remember that replacement fees for reissue of a hang tag is \$50. Your cooperation is most appreciated!

**Notes:**

- Eric is the Birch Pointe real estate liaison and can provide many of the essential information and documents needed for property transfer – including completion of DUCIOA forms. **The fee for re-certification is \$50.**
- **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 available on our website.**



**Collections Report:**

(1) Total operating income posted in December:	\$ 86,200 <sup>1</sup>	in HOA fees
	\$ 50	1 DUCIOA re-certification fee

<sup>1</sup> Does not include \$6,780 in fees collected with July 6-month pre-pays attributable to each month;

December is often notoriously slow with HOA fee collections due to the holidays. Owners remit checks very late in the month which will, consequently, be posted to the following year. January 2020, however, has a good start as a result of these deferred payments as well as carry-over funds and a new round of 6-month pre-pays.

- (2) Four check bank deposits were made in December totaling \$11,795.
- (3) Few larger amounts were received during the month: 1 at \$700 and 3 at \$400

**THE BIRCH POINTE BOARD TAKES LONG TERM DELINQUENCIES SERIOUSLY AND ARE REFERRING THEM TO OUR LEGAL COUNSEL!**

- 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 is steady at 85% (250 units)

**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 to units in significant arrears without a Board-approved payment plan in place.**



## **Treasurer's Report:**

(1) Total operating costs for Decemberr:	\$ 76,232	in	utilities; maintenance/trash; Comcast; loan; accountant; pest control; wages
(2) Major expenditures for December: (other than normal utilities)	\$ 13,844	for	insurance (worker's comp; EPLI/D&O; monthly premium)
	\$ 4,100		final 2019 landscaping installment
	\$ 1,225		cleaning services
	\$ 1,895		maintenance supplies
	\$ 1,035		ice melt bucket supply and delivery
	\$ 962		legal expenses (lien research; promissory note)
AMEX discount/rebate posted to December = \$239			
(3) Capital improvement expenditures:	\$ 13,488		balcony rebuild
	\$ 370		trial LED bridge lights at 3300BC

# December/Year-End 2020 Financials

## ▶ Operating Account

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>		<b>\$ 101,762.47</b>
<b>Inflow – Operating Income:</b>	\$	86,250.48
<b>Inflow – One-time Transfers (from ORA*):</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Outflow – Operating Expenditure:</b>	\$	76,231.66
<b>Outflow – Capital Expenditure:</b>	\$	13,857.74
<b>Outflow – One-Time Transfer (to ORA*):</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>		<b>\$ <u>97,923.55</u><sup>†</sup></b>

## ▶ Operational Reserve Account (\*ORA)

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>		<b>\$ 20,433.73</b>
<b>Inflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Inflow – Interest:</b>	\$	0.86
<b>Outflow – Periodic Transfers*:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>		<b>\$ <u>20,434.59</u><sup>†</sup></b>

## ▶ Reserve Account

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>		<b>\$ 257,370.66</b>
<b>Inflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Inflow – Interest:</b>	\$	437.54
<b>Outflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Outflow – One-time Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>		<b>\$ <u>257,808.20</u><sup>†</sup></b>

† = new starting figures for 2020 budget

**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

**\*\* NOTE: Renters are NOT permitted to have pets/animals while residing in Birch Pointe \*\***

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

**If a unit is a rental, it is the duty and responsibility of the owner/landlord to notify the Management/Board and advise all tenants of the Rules, Regulations and Code of Conduct of Birch Pointe Condominiums**

I understand that the above information is for the sole use of Birch Pointe Condominium 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.



## 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

**Attach Voided Check Here**