



# CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION Newsletter

February 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."*

## BIRCH POINTE ANNUAL OPEN MEETING



Once again, the time has come to schedule the annual community open meeting. Therefore, pursuant to by-law Article II, Section 2.1.1., notice is hereby given that this important assembly of the Birch Pointe Condominium Association has been slated:

**Date: Wednesday, March 25, 2019    Time: 6:30PM    Location: Skyline United Methodist Church**

Please plan to arrive on time so that the meeting can begin promptly. It is important that all units be represented. If unable to attend, note that **proxies are available to send in for voting purposes.**

The purpose of the meeting is to communicate to the community the actions of the Association. This includes a review of what happened during the 2019, a brief discussion of the current year's budget (FY2020), election of Board members, and to transact such other business as may come before the unit owners. Guest speakers – including District Rep. Mike Ramone and possibly Councilwoman Janet Kilpatrick – are expected to address various local issues which involve and/or impact Birch Pointe including the development of the former Three Little Bakers golf course. An agenda for the meeting is being drafted and will be distributed at the meeting.

**This notice also serves as an invitation for new/additional owners to petition for candidacy** to join the all-volunteer Board. Persons interested in serving and helping out Birch Pointe should complete the attached form and submit to the Association by Wednesday, March 20, 2020 via e-mail or post. There is always a need for individuals to donate time and effort to keep the community running smoothly. New ideas and participation are encouraged as 2020 is expected to be another busy year with respect to maintaining and improving Birch Pointe.

Finally, if there are any specific items which an owner would like to have addressed, please inform the Board so that they may be included on the formal agenda. Any items not on the agenda will not be discussed.

## BOARD CANDIDATE BIOS



In preparation for the upcoming annual meeting, candidates already known to be running for Board positions have, once again, submitted brief biographies for review by the community. These outline why they are seeking office and any special interests, qualifications, and/or experience they have which might help in the management of the community.

Member-at-Large Richard Shelton, after dutifully serving Birch Pointe for over a decade in various roles on the Board, including as past President, has communicated his intention of retiring from the Board and will, thus, not be running for re-election in 2020. Remaining sitting Board members' brief bios for review are included below.

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My name is **Manuel Harnisch** and I've lived in Birch Pointe since 2009 and have served on the Board since 2010. I've been a Member-at-Large; have served as the Treasurer; filled in as the acting President; and most recently served the community as President. I will continue to serve this community to the best of my abilities as long as I am asked to do so.

I travel frequently and often spend extended periods away from Delaware and Birch Pointe, which I understand may be a concern for some members in the community. I see this as an advantage, in that I have a broad, well-rounded view of the issues that affect all of us.

I am an ardent believer in technology and modernization, both of which I know can help solve some of the many challenges we face. Lastly, I believe that driving property values and quality of life in Birch Pointe are first and foremost the result of constantly finding new avenues of creating value for all of us, while keeping costs at reasonable levels.

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Hi...I'm **Monica Rieder** and have been on the Birch Pointe Board since 2012, as Treasurer since 2014. As such I am responsible for pretty much all aspects of the community's finances: collections, deposits, payments, budgets, ACH, insurance, taxes, among others. I have also been the prime composer of the monthly newsletters.

I have lived here on Diana for over 33 years and, as a result, have witnessed many changes during that time, from management companies to property values to maintenance issues. Like others on the Board, I really like this community and notice the progress and many improvements that have been made during the past several decades, especially since our transition to self-management. Birch Pointe has become a well maintained, well respected, and desirable place to live in Pike Creek as a result of hard work and dedication of our volunteer Boards. I believe I can continue to be of value to the Board and would like to continue in my role as Treasurer. Our Board is dedicated to Birch Pointe's near and long term interests, and I would like remain an integral part.

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My name is **Susan Yeatman** and I have lived in Birch Pointe for over 20 years. I am now retired. I have been a board member for over 4 years and have been welcoming new buyers into our community by distributing welcome packets with all the info they need about our community. My intention is to help, in the best ways I can, to keep this community running smoothly and maintained for not just for now but also for the future. It is imperative that we look not only at the present but for what lies ahead of us.

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My name is **Steve Papparazzo** and I have been a member of the Board the past 2 years and hold the position of Vice President. It has been quite the experience working for the community and listening to my neighbors about all things Birch Pointe.

I would like to continue my work with the Board because we are all working very hard to modernize Birch Pointe. From updating by-laws, development of the Three Little Bakers Golf Course, and the ever-changing State of Delaware I will work hard to make sure that we stay current. It is imperative that we continue to be responsive and leaders within the area so that the best possible outcomes for all Birch Pointe residents are kept in mind. Thank you for the opportunity to serve and I hope that you will allow me to continue.

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My name is **Cheryl McDonough**. I have owned my condo on Haley Court since 2015. I became a Board member in 2015 because I felt my extensive public/private sector experience could be of assistance to Birch Pointe. Being self-managed requires a lot of work and I feel the current Board has worked very hard and the results have enabled the much needed maintenance/up-keep to be completed. I'm running again this year because I feel Birch Pointe is a great place to call home and I want to continue to help the Board maintain this community.

## **2020 HANG-TAGS**



As a reminder, old orange Birch Pointe parking hang-tags expired at the end of 2019. All of the outdated, two-year placards need to be replaced on any vehicle using "Resident" parking spots in the community. **They are available for pickup at the maintenance building on Claremont Court** upon surrender of former 2018/2019 ones. The new black tags provided at time of trade-in will still require current information for any unit vehicle that may ordinarily be parked in Birch Pointe, 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.**

The existing "honor-based" system has seen cases of ongoing abuse by some residents. The Board has approved the creation and funding of a "Parking Enforcement" position to address this issue.

## **UPCOMING PARKING ENFORCEMENT**



Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, parking enforcement will be delayed until further notice as the selected part-time hire has resigned from the position for personal reasons before enforcement could begin in earnest. The Board is actively looking to backfill the role again.

However, this situation does not mean disregard by Birch Pointe owners and guests/visitors alike of community policy will be tolerated: warnings may still be issued by existing personnel to repeat offenders to make them more aware of the parking rules. Cooperation will be expected and appreciated by everyone, especially residents living on streets with limited parking availability.

## **BRIDGE LIGHT REPLACEMENTS**



Work continues with the installation of the post-cap type LED lights on the community bridges. To date, replacements have been completed on Haley Court, Claremont Court and most of Diana Drive. The Board views this as another improvement which addresses not only safety, but also creates a more aesthetic uniformity throughout Birch Pointe.

## **BIRCH POINTE WEBSITE**

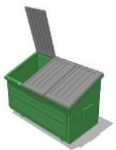


[BirchPointe.net](http://BirchPointe.net)

Birch Pointe has found a new hosting provider, DreamHost, for its website and migration from Planet Ten is underway. Maintenance for the time being will be done by Board president Manuel Harnisch. Members of the community who may be interested in helping with this task going forward are encouraged to offer their services. As noted earlier, the estimated time commitment should be no more than about an hour per month, with work largely comprised of uploading documents such as the newsletters. This provides an excellent way to get involved in the community, and will also relieve some Board members of one of many jobs they selflessly take on. Remember that all the work done is on a volunteer basis; please consider contributing a bit of YOUR time and expertise. After all, this helps ALL owners!

## **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.

### **• 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 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. **Note also that pets are NOT to relieve themselves on decks or patios.**

## • **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!

## • **WINTER 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 uncap 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.

# **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 / HOA FEE / OR ACH QUESTIONS**

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)

# February 2020 Board Meeting

(held at Skyline Middle School library, 2-5-2020)



- Collections – Payments / Delinquencies
- Financial Reports and Monthly Expenditures
- Real Estate Update – Units on Market / Units Sold
- Parking Enforcement Hire
- New Hang Tags for 2020 – Progress
- Birch Pointe Web Site
  - New Host Needed / DreamHost
  - Updating and Maintenance
- Legal Counsel
  - New Law Firm
- Annual Open Meeting
  - Setting Date and Location
  - Outreach to Reps – Ramone, Kilpatrick
  - Agenda Items, Elections
- Organizational Meeting Date – Probably Electronic
- Adjournment

**Real Estate Status:** Online resources such as Realtor.com, Trulia, Zillow, Estately.com, etc. (since the last newsletter and info as of 2-5-2020)



- (1) Units on market now: 2 on Haley Court both new listings with sales pending, one after a \$5.5K price reduction  
2 on Birch Circle 1 under contract; other is FSBO
- (2) Units sold none in January

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 January: \$ 137,101 in HOA fees  
\$ 50 1 DUCIOA re-certification fee



January saw another round of 6-month pre-pays, with 19 unit owners taking advantage of the additional discount offered. Of these, 15 remitted funds for a half-year and the remaining were paid for the full year. This provided a total of \$44,160 to the balance available for upcoming expenses and capital improvements, including the annual sewer bill as well as the bridge lighting and mail box replacements. Many thanks for the participants!

- (2) In addition, four check bank deposits were made during the month of January totaling \$15,796.
- (3) Few larger amounts were received during the month: 1 at \$1,500; 2 at \$1,050; 2 at \$450 and \$400 each
- (4) Repayment of a former owner's promissory note continues, offsetting prior attributed bad debt.

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

- REMINDER:**
- MONTHLY HOA FEES ARE **\$350**
  - **ONLY 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 85.7% (252 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 January:                   \$ 77,012           in           utilities; maintenance/trash; Comcast; loan; accountant; pest control; wages

Artesian expenses were unusually high for January's billing, with one specific building pod standing out is apparent water usage. Upon investigation by our maintenance crew, it was found that a toilet was running in a unit for which the owner was away. Fortunately Eric was able to locate an emergency contact to gain access and remedy the problem. THIS, AGAIN, SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPLETING THE REQUIRED CENSUS FORMS! Had this not been available, it may have been necessary to forcibly enter the unit due to potential lower floor damage.

(2) Major expenditures for January:	\$ 4,980	for	salting, bridge clearing for 2 icing events
(other than normal utilities)	\$ 4,808		waste removal for 2 months
	\$ 3,936		maintenance supplies (including new hang tags)
	\$ 1,411		engineering investigation for parking expansion
	\$ 1,248		quarterly fire system inspection/maintenance
	\$ 1,225		hallway cleaning services
	\$ 961		legal expenses

AMEX discount/rebate posted to December = \$368

(3) Capital improvement expenditures:	\$ 14,751	balcony rebuild (with extensive rotting)
	\$ 11,940	remainder of new LED bridge lights
	\$ 1,400	entrance concrete planter and shrub

Additionally, the remainder of the equipment rental for the 2019 power washing was paid, the invoices having been sent to the wrong address.

# January 2020 Financials

## ▶ Operating Account

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>		<b>\$ 97,923.55</b>
<b>Inflow – Operating Income:</b>	\$	137,100.97
<b>Inflow – One-time Transfers (from ORA*):</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Outflow – Operating Expenditure:</b>	\$	77,012.37
<b>Outflow – Capital Expenditure:</b>	\$	32,871.19
<b>Outflow – One-Time Transfer (to ORA*):</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>		<b>\$ <u>125,140.96</u></b>

## ▶ Operational Reserve Account (\*ORA)

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>		<b>\$ 20,434.59</b>
<b>Inflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Inflow – Interest:</b>	\$	0.87
<b>Outflow – Periodic Transfers*:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>		<b>\$ <u>20,435.48</u></b>

## ▶ Reserve Account

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>		<b>\$ 257,808.20</b>
<b>Inflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Inflow – Interest:</b>	\$	438.28
<b>Outflow – Periodic Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Outflow – One-time Transfers:</b>	\$	0.00
<b>Ending Balance:</b>		<b>\$ <u>258,246.48</u><sup>†</sup></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

**\* \* 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**