

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Banbury Meadows HOA Common Area Waterway/Pond Committee Report (Nov 2015)**

A Committee, comprised of seven Banbury Meadow residents, was chartered to provide findings and recommendations to Banbury Meadows Homeowners Association (HOA) Board of Directors to improve the Common Area Waterway/Pond (CAWP). The common area pond/waterway was constructed by the original Banbury Meadows developer for aesthetics and to obtain fill material. Historically the HOA performed little vegetation landscape maintenance and improvements within the CAWP. As a result, undesirable Reed Canary Grass (RCG) has become the predominant vegetation and there are early signs of sloughing soil in areas. The Committee met six times between May and October 2015 to develop findings and recommendations.

Committee Charter: Evaluate inconsistent application of standards (including landscaping, vegetation and trees) of HOA property contiguous to ponds and waterways; maintenance and protection of the riparian vegetation; control of invasive weeds; protection of habitat for desirable wildlife; erosion control and repair; promoting pleasing area visual aesthetics; potential compatible recreation; control of undesirable and non-native wildlife; Improve water quality (control pollutants, reduce algae, improve surface cleanliness); compliance with applicable laws, regulations, permits, local codes and deed restrictions/covenants; and explore viable options for homeowners living along the banks of the pond/waterway to maintain the bank that borders their property.

Current HOA pond/waterway support: The HOA currently provides application of aquicide to control algae growth and improve water clarity; application of herbicides for noxious weed control; operates four aeration 'bubblers' and a set of high volume 'water cannons' to improve water quality; cleans upstream grate (weekly from Apr-Oct) to remove floating material from entering pond; skims scum accumulation on pond (~ 10x per yr); mows waterway (weekly Apr-Oct) from #16 Tee boxes to grate; and aquatic pest control (muskrats and/or beavers) as required.

Pond/Waterway Committee Options evaluated to improve CAWP:

- Level 1 (Fully Improved): The HOA maintain the landscaping vegetation adjacent to the pond to a fully improved level commensurate with other HOA landscaped common areas. This includes replacing RCG with fescue and/or buffalo grasses; modify existing Villa sprinkler systems irrigate banks and install additional sprinkler irrigation systems as necessary along the common area surrounding the pond; plant shrubs, bushes and trees around the pond on the banks to control erosion and stabilize banks; cut the common area grass to 6" to 8" and remove cuttings ~ three times a year; and operate, maintain and winterize the sprinkler system. Estimated capital investment cost is \$150-200K and with an HOA landscape maintenance cost increase of ~\$10-15K annually. The Committee deemed this option not feasible due to high capital cost and significant increase in annual HOA fees.
- Level 2 (Semi-Improved): The HOA maintain the vegetation between homeowners and the pond to a semi-improved level. This would entail twice a year trimming the CWAP vegetation to 6-8" hit from the joint property line to a six (6') foot border zone adjacent to the pond; within the six foot border zone, trim to no higher than 18-20" or enough to remove RCG seed heads; and plant selected low maintenance/low water shrubs and bushes in areas where necessary to stabilize banks from

sloughing/erosion. Total estimated HOA cost for this option is \$4-6K initially and typically \$6-9K annually thereafter.

- Level 3 (Transitional Area): The HOA create a 'transitional' area (~ 6 feet) between the RCG and homeowners lots/ lawns to alleviate the dramatic changes from 3" bluegrass lawns to ~ 36" RCG blocking the view of the pond and reduce the ability of RCG to spread. This entails trimming the transitional area to levels approximately 6"-8" approximately 3 times a year; and allowing the transitional area to be replanted with fescue or buffalo grasses (if irrigation is available or installed) by the homeowners if they wish. Total estimated HOA cost for this option is \$4.5-7K.
- Level 4 (Homeowners Maintenance): The HOA allow homeowners that would like to participate to maintain common area frontage through a written agreement between owners and the HOA Board. This entails allowing no more than 60-70% of each lot frontage area ground cover to be periodically trimmed to 6-8" by homeowner to avoid a 'checkerboard' appearance along the pond; and allowing homeowners to do some landscaping on the common areas with proper Architectural Review Committee (ARC) plan approval/oversight. Types of acceptable landscaping would include large rock/boulders, small trees, shrubs willows, fescue, etc. Landscape contractors performing work within the CAWP would be approved in advance by the HOA Board. Total estimated HOA cost for this option is nil (\$0K).

#### COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Inconsistent existing landscaping be inventoried and 'grandfathered' approved in their current state 'as is' and should not be used as precedent for similar future landscaping activities. All future landscaping/improvements must stand on their own merits and plans submitted /approved by the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) and/or HOA Board.
- HOA promote replacing RCG with more aesthetically acceptable ground cover (fescue or buffalo grass).
- The pond be inspected by a qualified technical specialist to determine the extent of any soil sloughing and threat of further issues. HOA Board take actions to correct or mitigate erosion/sloughing issues as appropriate. Plant selected low maintenance/low water shrubs and bushes in areas where necessary to stabilize banks from sloughing/erosion.
- The Board implement/approve a hybrid landscaping and maintenance level consisting of Level 2 (Semi-Improved) and Level 4 (Homeowners Maintenance) for the CAWP.
  - Allow the homeowners to maintain common area frontage as detailed previously in Level 4.
  - Where adjacent homeowners elect not to maintain a portion of the Common Area frontage (ie, Level 4), the HOA should maintain the areas to a Semi-Improved state (ie, Level 2).

#### BOARD DECISION:

The HOA Board appreciates all the hard work done by the Committee. The Board is considering implementing some recommendations, however due to funding limitations, a phased approach over a few years may be required. The Board is drafting a Resolution to formalize Board decisions regarding common area landscaping and allowing homeowner maintenance.