

# THE HILLSIDE NEWS

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## **New Landscaping Service to Start in Spring**

The Landscape Committee (LC) and the Board have chosen Pepperidge Landscape & Design as Hillside's new landscape service provider. They will start this spring 2018. The Board approved a 1-year contract which is renewable each year for up to 2 more years, if they meet or exceed our expectations.

During negotiations, the LC and Board asked, and Pepperidge agreed, to include sprinkler maintenance and adjustment, as part of the contract. This puts the responsibility on the landscaper to adjust the sprinklers based on how the lawn and gardens are doing throughout the growing season.

The contract amount per year, even with the increased services, came in under budget. The service contract price is the same for all 3 years. After that, if we want to continue their services, we will renegotiate the contract and the price.

Pepperidge Landscape & Design had a number of factors in their favor:

- Their overall contract bid was the second lowest and it was thought to be the most realistic and inclusive of the garden maintenance and other items that the LC wants done and improved
- Their references were "outstanding"
- Lowest bark costs
- Reasonable costs for optional items, if needed
- Second lowest salt costs
- No limit on number of snowplowing "pushes"
- The owner has a horticultural degree from MSU
- They can do landscape design and installation, if desired

- They also do irrigation system installation and service

Special thanks go to Dave Robinson and the Landscape Committee. To misquote Humphrey Bogart, let's hope "this is the beginning of a beautiful landscaping relationship."

## **Paying Your Dues**

The title of this article makes it sound like it should be about something you have to do in order to play the Blues. But no. This is about paying your COA monthly fee. Sorry...

The Hillside Policies state that the maintenance fee is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month. The Association allows a 10-day grace period in the month the bill is due. If the fee is still not paid, then there are late fees and possible legal actions that may be taken.

The fees should be made payable to – Hillside at Thousand Oaks Condominium Association. They can be mailed or delivered to – Gerow Management Company, 4060 Commercial Dr., Cedar Springs, MI 49319.

If you choose, arrangements for automatic monthly deduction of your COA fee is available through ChoiceOne Bank. By using this method of payment, your COA fee is electronically withdrawn from your bank's checking or savings account and deposited in the Hillside COA account on the first of every month. There is no cost to you for this service. If you would like to pay this way, call Natasha at Gerow Management (616-433-9090).

Apparently, there are a number of ways people go about paying (or not) their monthly dues. This is the money our COA depends on to pay for snowplowing, lawn mowing, general operations, building

reserves, etc. Overall, so far, we have a pretty good record of owners paying on time and we have not had to resort to punitive measures. However there have been some problems (mostly forgetting or losing it in the turbulence of moving) that have caused payments to be late.

Please get those fees in on time. Your neighbors are depending on you.

### **Outdoor Garage Light Replacement**

If one or more of the outside lights above your garage door burns out, how do you get it replaced? Who pays for the light bulbs and the costs of changing them? Why are they on all night without a shutoff switch anyway? Well here are some answers.

The original reason for having the garage lights come on automatically, with no shut off, was to take the place of effective street lights. It was intended as an enhanced security element. We actually have a combination of street lights and garage lights because it was thought to be a better solution. So those outdoor garage lights are part of the “condo concept” that we are all learning about and adjusting to. The garage lights are for the whole neighborhood’s benefit. Please do not remove or unscrew them to turn them off.

In the past, if your outdoor garage lightbulb burned out, you could buy a bulb and replace it yourself. Or, if you are unable or did not want to do it yourself, you could call Gerow and they would replace it. In the latter case, the COA is charged for parts (lightbulb: \$5-25) and labor (about \$37 per hour) to change the bulb.

The Board discussed this at our last Board meeting. The lights serve the community and we believe it is important that they stay operational. Therefore, we thought it should be a service the COA should provide. If you want and are able to take care of it yourself

in a timely manner, then that is still perfectly acceptable. If you are unable to do the work, for whatever reason, then please call Gerow (616- 433-9090) and talk with Natasha. She will notify our **Garage Lightbulb Replacement Team**. What the heck is a GLRT you ask, well read on...

Board members and other COA members have volunteered to purchase a stock of the appropriate bulbs, hopefully at a volume discount, and store them in someone’s garage. Then, when asked by you or Gerow, the GLRT members will spring into action to install them in your outdoor garage lights. There will be no charge to you or the COA for labor and the bulbs will be a COA expense. Pretty nifty. Let’s give it a try and see how it works. It should save us a little money and help keep our neighborhood safer.

### **Plainfield Township Water Update**

The following was taken from the 2/7/18 Plainfield Charter Township Newsletter. They will be adding a new carbon filtration system to the current water processing plant. If you want ongoing water updates and Plainfield Township Information, google “Plainfield Township newsletter” and sign up. It is free to your email box each week.

*We have allocated \$400,000 for the initial installation. It’s important to note that the filter we will install is not as simple as a Brita filter or even a whole home filter. To install a granular activated carbon (GAC) filter, we will need to retrofit our current filter beds, removing sand and anthracite so that we can install approximately 8,000 cubic feet of GAC – which is roughly 200,000 pounds of material. As noted below, we are evaluating longer term solutions that would run the water through a separate filter(s) either before or after the plant’s regular filters. This solution, if pursued, would be more*

expensive because it requires additional large piping and possibly a new building.

We have talked with other municipalities and have explored and continue to investigate many treatment options, including doing nothing, using resin for PFAS removal, reverse osmosis (RO) and granular activated carbon GAC.

**Doing nothing** at our existing treatment plant is an option only if we can find new wells that are free of contamination and have enough capacity to supply our needs. The well field search is ongoing.

Specialized **resin** beads also could be used as a filtering mechanism for PFAS removal, but the resin is very specific to PFAS and wouldn't remove anything else. This option would require major infrastructure improvements at our treatment plant and would take much longer to implement.

**Reverse osmosis (RO)** is an entirely different treatment process than our current lime softening process and would require building a new treatment plant. It would be effective in removing PFAS, but it would also remove all minerals from the water. The water would be corrosive, so hardness would have to be added back in prior to distribution. The RO process also would create a concentrated reject stream with all the PFAS in it, which would require additional treatment.

**GAC** would remove organic compounds and taste and odor compounds in addition to synthetic chemicals if present. We are looking into using GAC in some of our existing water plant filter beds to minimize the time needed for implementation. While GAC is being considered for the initial installation, the long-term solution may be one or more of the options above.

**A connection to Grand Rapids** is not economically feasible as noted above. It is also worth noting that surface water

systems, such as operated by Grand Rapids and Wyoming — while producing safe drinking water — are also subject to similar trace contaminants, including PFAS, and additional contaminants, such as pharmaceuticals and micro-plastics that are not found in well water.

### Website

The URL for the Hillside website is: [hillsidecondos.wordpress.com](http://hillsidecondos.wordpress.com). It now has ads because we are using the free version of their website builder. We would have to pay a recurring fee in order to remove the ads and have access to other functionality. We are going with free for now. Let me know if you have any comments or constructive criticism. Thanks – Tom

**Notice:** The next Hillside COA Board meeting is March 6, 2018 at 6pm.



### **Bird Nest Prevention**

One of our Hillside neighbors is a former contractor and he knows skillful people to help him build things. He was looking for a good way to prevent birds from building nests on top of the columns of his front porch. He gathered his resources to address the concern and came up with an elegant solution.

These are only needed for front porch columns that have a stone bottom and a wood top. There is a flat space on top of the corner of each column that faces inward, towards the door. It is apparently a very attractive space for birds planning to set up their abode and raise a brood.

Dave has built a couple of “bird’s nest preventers” that he installed on his own porch last year and they seem to be working well so far. The real test will be this spring/summer. They are inclined triangular wood structures that would make any nest building slide right off. They are caulked and painted to match the house color. You would think that they are an original part of the column. (see pictures)

My newsletter policy is not to include any advertising. However, I thought these were a good solution to a problem for both Hillside owners and birds. Dave is offering them custom fitted, caulked, painted and installed for \$125 per pair. He is doing this more as a service and not as a profitable business. If you are interested, you can contact Dave at 231-206-9067 or email him at [ddongvillo@gmail.com](mailto:ddongvillo@gmail.com).

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