



# The Town Homes of Townsend Woods

07/21/2025

## **Townhomes of Townsend Woods Association Meeting Minutes July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025 6:34pm –8:25pm via Zoom call.**

Officers present: Salena Taylor (President), Valerie Myers (Treasurer), and Sally Riccardi (Secretary).

Members' Present: 15

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a roll call from the officers.

### Review of Meeting Minutes

Motion made to accept the minutes, motion seconded, motion passed.

### President's Report

- A summer reminder was given about making sure all outdoor activities are cleaned up immediately upon ending that activity. This includes inflatable pools, water tables, sprinklers, sports equipment and more. The items may not be “stored” on your patio, as the patio cannot be used for storage. They must be brought inside your unit/garage.
- Any adjustments to your outdoor property (landscaping or awnings), must be approved by the board first. The list of acceptable changes and the approval request form can both be found on our website for downloading and printing. You can turn them in at the black drop box on the Mount Hunger side of the association.
- Pet Etiquette reminders:
  - Your pet MUST BE LEASHED at all times.
  - You must pick up after your pet IMMEDIATELY, and discard the waste appropriately, in a trash receptacle.
  - If you are letting your pet outside in your backyard, their leash should not be long enough for them to reach either of your neighbor's yards.
  - If you're letting your pet out on a lead, you must still be present with your pet. No unattended pets are allowed in this neighborhood.
  - If you know your pet is reactive, please put in extra effort to keep them under your control to keep our neighborhood safe for everyone.
- Garbage Day Reminders: You can put your cans out on Sunday night at 5 pm, and you must bring them in by Monday night at 7pm.
  - Bringing your cans in does not mean leaving them in your driveway near the building. They must be inside your garage.
- Notices and Violations
  - Since our last meeting, we have sent out 9 warnings for the following violations:
    - Missing soffits/siding/fascia
    - Installed fences
    - Garage screens attached to the building
    - Holiday decorations

- Off leash dogs
- We have also sent out 3 Violation Notices:
  - Garbage cans being left out
  - Garage Screen attached to the building
  - A permanent backyard pool on a patio
- Most of these have been resolved, those that haven't are incurring regular fines on their account.
- If you see something that needs a warning for violation, please say something. We do not have cameras around the neighborhood and do sometimes miss things. We walk around the neighborhood regularly, however, that doesn't mean we see everything.
- Next meeting will be on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 at 6:30 pm. At this meeting we will release the tentative dates and times for the meetings in 2026.

### Treasurer's Report

- Our HOA fiscal year runs from April 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>.
- An explanation of the report was given. Nothing out of the ordinary happened this past year.
- The budget for 2025-26 was presented at the meeting in January and was approved by the board and the attending homeowners. If you have questions, you may reach out to the treasurer, whose contact information is at the bottom of these minutes.
  - The budget was discussed at this meeting to show homeowners where we are in our spending this fiscal year.
- Delinquent Homeowners
  - Valerie presented a spreadsheet she put together so everyone could visually see where we are with delinquent homeowners and whether their balances have been paid. Some paid right away, some set up payment plans, others have made no contact with the board. They will receive new notices in August.
  - The process of notifying homeowners of their delinquent accounts is as follows:
    - First notice goes out, letting them know they have a balance.
    - Second notice goes out a month later if we do not hear from them. This notice says if we don't hear from you in 30 days, your account will be sent to our attorney.
    - 30 days later they are sent to our attorney. The attorney's fee for this is paid for upfront by the association and then added to the homeowner's account. When the homeowner pays the association (via legal action from the lawyer), we recoup those fees that we paid upfront.
  - The association's bank does not allow the use of Zelle. Our bank does not connect with Zelle. If homeowners want to pay their dues via Zelle, they need to address this with their personal bank to get it set up. If your bank also does not use Zelle, you can ask your bank to set it up as an automatic bill pay transfer.
  - Homeowners were inquiring about not seeing a line-item report of the incoming and outgoing money. Valerie stated that she has all that information, she just simplifies it for the meetings. If people would like to see it that way instead, she can absolutely start doing that.

- Another homeowner inquired about how we can budget for more than we bring in.
  - This is an aging association. The money that was placed in CDs to grow was put there, knowing one day we'd have to use it. Now it is that time. We are using SOME of the money from the CDs to cover the difference while we work on these big projects that need to be done (sealcoating, driveway replacements, roof replacements, etc.). Once these projects are finished, we can stop pulling from the CDs and begin growing them again for the next big project. It is a thin line we're walking between taking care of an older association while not raising dues to an excessive amount. We will absolutely need to raise dues several times in the coming years, but we're trying to balance between the two things.
- Another homeowner asked what kind of accounting software we use.
  - Valerie answered. She uses a variety of excel sheets, we don't pay for accounting software. Our tax accountant creates all the necessary technical sheets for us.
- We will be doing an audit next year. Homeowners asked why we can't do it now. We can, but we didn't budget for it. We will have to have a vote of homeowners to change the budget. We can initially put it in the budget for next year, so it is already covered.
- Homeowners behind in dues:
  - 27 delinquent accounts
    - 3 HOs owe between \$0-\$100
    - 8 HOs owe between \$100-\$500
    - 11 HOs owe between \$500-\$1000
    - 5 HOs owe more than \$1000.

#### Light It Up program:

- This program will resume August 1<sup>st</sup>.
- There are 7 lights that need replacement and 2 lights that are starting to dim.
- As a reminder, all garage lights must be white!
- As another reminder, lightbulbs will be provided for homeowners to get changed from here on out.

#### Old Business

- Front Entrance
  - We've gotten a couple of quotes from different companies. We will be getting this area cleaned up soon. The trees will be trimmed up a bit, trimmed back from the sign/road, rubbish will be removed, etc.
- Landscaper
  - We brought this up in order to seek feedback and constructive criticism to pass on to the new landscaper. Most homeowners are not happy with their work. Some homeowners are very happy with it.
    - One homeowner stated it was the worst job they've ever seen in their life. They miss large areas of the yard, and the grass is 3 different heights.

- Another homeowner stated the weeds are horrible this year and is very concerned that the contract does not include weed control and keeping the flowerbeds nice.
  - A third homeowner said the landscaper trimmed his bushes but left the clippings behind.
  - A 4<sup>th</sup> homeowner said she misses the old landscaper and dislikes the new one.
- There was a long discussion, and homeowners expressed their concerns to the board. We have heard you all, loud and clear. We will speak with the current landscaper about your concerns and see if he is willing to change the contract at all and if he is willing and able to do some of the things homeowners are asking of him. We will also begin looking at new companies for next year, should it come to that.
- Roofs
  - We replaced 2 roofs this year. There are 4 roofs left to replace. If we budget for only replacing 1 roof per year for the next 4 years, the last building will be done in 2029. That building was built in 2010, so we will still be able to replace all the roofs within the 20-year lifespan of the roofs. Moving forward, we will only be doing 1 roof per year for the next 4 years until they are done.
- Driveways/Sealcoating
  - Due to concerns from homeowners about the budget, and some board shake-ups recently, we have decided to not replace any driveways this year and not do any sealcoating
    - A homeowner responded about his new driveway that is crumbling and needs to be seal coated this year. The board will come physically look at the driveway and speak with the homeowner. We will then check all the driveways replaced last year for similar wear and tear. We will decide on this matter quickly.
    - We will sealcoat all driveways next year and continue every other year after that.
    - We will begin getting quotes for sealcoating next year from different companies as soon as it makes sense to do so.
    - We will revisit driveway replacements next year and will only replace driveways in the years we are not seal coating, barring any extenuating circumstances that require a driveway to be replaced sooner.

### New Business

- Introduction of interim Vice President and Trustee
  - 2 board members stepped down last month and they needed replacement quickly. 2 Homeowners volunteered (1 per open position). They will be instated August 1<sup>st</sup> as INTERIM vice president and trustee until the next election in 2026.
  - Interim Vice President is Anastasia: She is honored to be a part of this association. She's been an owner since 2018. She works with NIU as a research specialist at the Center for Governmental Studies. She is also a PhD candidate, and she teaches yoga. She wanted to join because she's happy with everything about living in this association so she decided to see if she could help.

- Interim Trustee: Jamie: She isn't new to the board or the position. She works in government and has lived in the association since 2021. She promises to stay on top of the violations and supply lightbulbs to those that need them, as is the job of the trustee.
- Management Companies
  - Since at least 1 homeowner has requested that we switch to a management company, the board did some research into this so that homeowners could have some information about what it might look like.
    - There are varying levels of management that companies can provide. They can do some little things, or they can take over everything. With any level, there will still have to be a board of homeowners that makes decisions for the association. The management company would take care of everything else.
      - Quote 1: Lowest rate is \$240/month. The highest rate is \$280/month. This quote was from a local management company.
      - Quote 2: flat rate of \$300/month, from a company based out of St. Charles.
  - Homeowners had questions about how we would go about switching to a management company.
    - We must have a majority vote by the homeowners to switch, a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote or 75% in favor of switching is needed. You'd need to go door to door to get signatures. In this case, we have 101 homes. You'd need 76 homeowners to vote in favor of switching. Renters cannot vote. They need to be homeowners.
    - Once you have the votes, we just let the lawyer and management company know we want to switch and go from there in the process.

### Open Session

There were a lot of discussions about several topics. They are all listed below:

- Bylaws and Regulations
  - A homeowner brought up the idea of writing all new bylaws and regulations. To change them, or re-write them, it costs thousands of dollars. Just adding 1 amendment to the current bylaws' costs \$1200. The issue is that to change the bylaws at all, you need 75% of homeowners to vote for that change. Do we spend all that money to change the bylaws, and then not be able to get the votes?
  - A suggestion was made to get the votes before we officially make the change and pay the fee. Get boots on the ground and go door to door to get homeowners involved.
  - Another homeowner stated that years ago they spent a lot of money to re-write the bylaws and there ended up not being enough participation to make the changes. She stated that the changes were discussed at every meeting for 2-3 years and they still couldn't get anyone involved. They ended up spending all that money on nothing.
  - The only reason to change the bylaws is to help the board be able to get somewhere with the issues we can't do much about because of the bylaws, such as parking issues, speeding cars, exterior damage to homes, etc.

- The cost of everything has increased significantly over the past several years. This is evident to the board daily as we try to hire companies and keep the association looking nice without raising the dues.
  - Some of the homeowners present at the meeting believe there is a fundamental communication issue between the board and the homeowners.
- Landscaping
  - Homeowners again made clear that they are not content with the current landscaping. Some of them do not take issue with the landscaper himself, but with the contract. Others believe this landscaper is just not good at what he does.
  - An HOA fee of \$110 per month doesn't get very far. Maybe we need to raise the dues so we can hire better companies.
  - Weeding is specifically not in the contract of the current landscaper. We can ask him to make changes, then we have to muster through until we can get a new landscaper next year. Maybe we can break the contract if we are dissatisfied. Something to investigate moving forward.
  - Another question was brought up about mulching this year. We are not mulching this year. The board votes on mulching each year based on the budget. Another homeowner mentioned that she moved in in 2006 she was told there would be mulch every other year and sealcoating every other year. She was also told that the board would take care of all exterior maintenance. However, in this HOA, as an owner of a townhome, you own the inside and outside of your home. It is your responsibility to upkeep the exterior of your home.
- Light It Up Program
  - The interim trustee clarified that the board is responsible for providing you with a light bulb if your light goes out on your garage (not your door/porch light). The board is not responsible for replacing it for you. It was great that the old trustee replaced them for homeowners, but the new interim trustee will not be taking on the liability of replacing them for homeowners. If the board is replacing a bulb, and the fixture breaks, now the board is responsible for replacing fixtures. Jamie will give you a lightbulb with a notice that your garage light needs replacement. If you need help replacing it, you'll have to ask someone to help you.
- Elections
  - A homeowner requested a detailed description of the election process.
    - Homeowners fill out ballots and return them to the drop box or mail them.
    - Valerie is the only person with a key to the drop box and the mailbox.
    - She walks down there with a person from the nominating committee (made up of 2 homeowners who have nothing to do with the board)
    - The person on the nominating committee takes all the ballots while Valerie takes all the checks and other mail.
    - The 2 people on the nominating committee (who again have nothing to do with the board members and are not sitting members of the board) meet and count the ballots, twice each.
    - Judy, who was on the nominating committee this year states that it was a good, clean count. The nominating committee marked ballots in a way that none of us on the board know about to be sure each ballot was legit and to prevent any ballots from being duplicated and turned in.

- Every ballot received was a legit ballot and it was a good, clean count and an ethical, accurate election.
- A homeowner asked how many ballots there were: There were 33 ballots returned. They asked why not 2/3 like everything else that has to be voted on to make any changes. We cannot force people to vote. Just like in a regular government election. People are not forced to vote. The majority winner of those who participate is who wins.
- In the future, we need to communicate more clearly about the voting process so that homeowners don't feel like the election was rigged.
- Another homeowner suggested there are better ways to make it more ethical such as using computer programs to tally votes, but someone else offered the opinion of the elderly and how they would struggle with using a computer to vote.
- Something for everyone to investigate before the next election, ways to make the election feel fair and more ethical.
- Parking/Speeding
  - Homeowners are still concerned about the parking situation on the berm near Maplewood. Other homeowners on the call say it's not an issue and everyone just needs to drive slower.
  - Other homeowners are very concerned about the number of speeding cars in the association. We can't report it to the police because we have private streets, and they won't do anything. A suggestion was made for the board to file a complaint with the police department to see if that helps.

The board wants to remind those at the meeting that for each homeowner that wants to paint the curb yellow, change the bylaws, or have a re-election, there is another homeowner who doesn't want those things. We represent the entire association. Not just those that show up to the meetings. When the association is split on what they want, there's not much we can do. There are homeowners who do not attend the meetings, but who do contact the board to express their concerns and interests. Everyone is welcome to reach out to us outside of meetings and let us know what they want or don't want around the neighborhood. We encourage you to do just that, so we know what most of the association wants. We'd like everyone to keep these things in mind as they are brainstorming ideas to make this association better. We are here to listen to you and try to confront the issues that matter most to most homeowners.

After much debate, skipping between the above topics several times, the motion was made to adjourn the meeting, motion was seconded, meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

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