

# THE STEEPLECHASE REVIEW

JUNE 2024



Bi-annual Newsletter including news, views and announcements. Contributions welcome.

Contact: [jwynen@gmail.com](mailto:jwynen@gmail.com)

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## MEET THE PRESIDENT

The Board of the Steeplechase Condominium Association impacts all condo owners (and their renters) by working to maintain and continuously improve the environment, security, value and well-being the Steeplechase community.

Maureen, can you tell us a little about yourself? How long have you been in Naples and from where have you come?



*I am a New Yorker, grew up on Staten Island and currently live on Long Island. My in-laws came to Naples in 1974. They owned THE GOOD LIFE gourmet cookware store in downtown Naples on 13th Avenue for many years. During those years my husband and I and our two young daughters visited occasionally. Since 2010, I have been coming to Naples on a more regular basis, and my husband Paul and I bought in Steeplechase in 2015.*

What do you think has prepared you for this new role? And what has motivated you to take it on?

*In NY, I have been on our local property owners' association since 2005, serving as Director, VP and President. I also joined the Garden City Historical Society as a trustee in 2003, helped raise the Society from an owner of a mere historic home to the site of The Garden City Historical Society House Museum. I also served as treasurer for 4 years. When my girls were in elementary and middle school, I served as PTA president.*

*It can be hard to get people to take official, unpaid roles in associations and yet the work is so important to the community. When I joined the Steeplechase Board in February 2023, I was brought in as Vice-*

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*President. With Arlene Goffredi's planned departure, there was going to be a significant gap and I agreed to fill it. My concern was that I am not a full-time resident so I am particularly grateful to other Board Members who are permanent residents with eyes on the property.*

*This is why I initiated ZOOM Board meetings from the beginning - to be as inclusive and as effective as possible. We are fortunate that there is a solid core of people volunteering their time at Steeplechase. This makes a difference and supports the whole community.*

How can owners at Steeplechase best support the Association, and you as president?

*First of all, if you have areas of expertise or interest, consider joining the Board of Directors or a committee. Are you knowledgeable about Landscaping? Maintenance? If you are here and have time, volunteering would be great. We also have working sessions to address special topics and you could join in on these as well.*

*Otherwise, being fully aware of Steeplechase Rules and Regulations, and knowing requirements for responsible maintenance of your property, is a huge help along with being a responsibility.*

*It's also important to, whenever possible, look for answers to questions on our Steeplechase website, [www.steeplechasesnaples.com](http://www.steeplechasesnaples.com), or through contacting Lori at Cambridge Property Management Company, contact info on our website. That allows the Board to focus on other items.*

*Last but not least, simply being a good neighbor, respectful of what it takes to live together, means a lot for the whole community.*


Thanks Maureen ( [mtraxler@optonline.net](mailto:mtraxler@optonline.net) ) for this short interview and each of us will surely pause to greet you personally when we see you in the area!

We also extend a warm welcome and sincere thanks to the continuing members\* of the Board and to our newcomer\*\* for their dedication and time:

\* Jackie Fritsch – Vice-President ( [jackiefritsch@icloud.com](mailto:jackiefritsch@icloud.com) )

\* Gary Ryan – Treasurer ( [gary@garycryan.com](mailto:gary@garycryan.com) )

\*\* Gail Rowe – Secretary ( [growe@yahoo.com](mailto:growe@yahoo.com) )

	<p><b>CAMBRIDGE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p>As owners and residents in Steeplechase, we benefit from gaining better understanding of the way in which our shared properties and grounds are served and maintained. Of particular interest is the role of the Property Management Company (PMC) that supports our Community. We have engaged CAMBRIDGE Property Management of SW Florida in this capacity.</p> <p><b>So what is the role of a Property Management Company?</b> In sum, the role of a Condo</p>	<p>Property Management Company is to make the operations of the condo stress-free. They are engaged to take charge of the daily upkeep and essential tasks so that the condo runs smoothly. They make sure the common areas and assets are maintained and complaints of the residents are resolved.</p> <p>This is also THE primary point of contact for residents and owners to signal issues. In this way, the PMC takes pressure off the members of the Condo Board of Directors who already are doing a great deal on behalf of all of us.</p>
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Cambridge states on their website: ***We Are Passionate About What We Do.***

*...we are passionate about the services and quality of support we provide. We take support one step further by strategically assigning a highly trained professional to each community by comparing its needs to his or her expertise we feel would be the best fit.*

Our dedicated contact is Lori Shields and anyone attending a Board Meeting will have a chance to meet her. Lori is attentive to our needs and eager to support our community.

**And when would you need to contact the Property Management Company?** The PMC is charged with management of the property and interfacing with the BOD on anything that is brought forward by the community. If you have concerns, ideas, or complaints, please do bring these to Lori Shields. Lori or others working with her will interface with the Steeplechase Board of Directors and ensure that action is taken and that you receive feedback concerning the issue raised.

Location: 2335 Tamiami Trail N. Ste. 402. 34103 Naples

Lori Shields: [LoriS@cambridgeswfl.com](mailto:LoriS@cambridgeswfl.com)

Phone: 239 249 7000 (extension 114)

## A P P F O L I O

As our Property Management Company, Cambridge invites you to set up your presence on their ONLINE PORTAL. This online portal allows you to submit requests for support easily. It also offers an online payment facility which can be used for individual quarterly fee payments or to set up a standing order for payments.

The on-line portal is called AppFolio. Cambridge believes that it is the fastest, easiest and most secure way to connect with property management and access convenient tools to help them to support our Association as best as possible.

On this [AppFolio](#) you are able to (to name just a few of the functionalities):

- Request Architectural Reviews- Get approval on changes to your home
- Make Payments- Avoid late fees by setting up automatic payments
- Submit maintenance requests- Quickly file requests and track their status

The link is here: <https://cambridgesouthwestflorida.appfolio.com/connect>

If you have difficulties accessing, please feel free to call Cambridge Management SWFL at (239) 249-7000 to ensure you are set up for access.

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## ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

Electric Vehicles (EVs) are becoming more present in our environment and



these cars require a charging station. This is a new happening at Steeplechase and the Board is currently reviewing the need for guidelines associated with EV charging station installation (such as, use of certified electricians, acceptable locations for the station, the cost of installation as the sole responsibility of the owner). The Condominium Association has a role in ensuring safe and secure installations. Once established, any new addition to Rules and Regulations will be formally shared.

## CONDOMINIUM QUARTERLY FEES

Costs seem to be rising everywhere - from groceries to utility bills to fuel costs. In the last two years, we all noticed the specific impact of rising insurance costs on our Steeplechase quarterly fees.

To put our fees in the context of a broader environment, our treasurer\* performed an analysis of the Condo quarterly assessments across the King's Lake area including Bristol Square, Courtyard, Greenwood, Greenfield, Hampton, STEEPLECHASE, Tamarynd Place and Windsor.

The analysis considered cost per square foot. Given that the condominium units in Steeplechase are larger than in the other condominium associations,

Steeplechase actually has the lowest Quarterly Fees per square foot of any of the above condominium complexes.

As a side analysis, the Steeplechase properties have also sold at significantly higher prices than the other condos.

Steeplechase faced unprecedented insurance increases in 2023-24, suffering a 150% increase in its basic insurance premium over the previous year.

There is sound hope that insurance costs are stabilizing, and we will not see the same uncomfortable increases in quarterly fees in the coming 2024-25 insurance premium.

\*Sincere thanks to Gary Ryan (Steeplechase Board Treasurer and Broker Associate at Royal Shell Realty) for this interesting analysis.

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## **GARDENING. I HAVE IDEAS FOR MY COURTYARD! WHAT CAN I DO?**

Steeplechase has contracted VISION Turf Care for our landscaping and irrigations needs. Of course, from time to time, residents are interested in embellishing their environments around their homes with additional plants. In order to best manage and maintain our communal environment, requests for specific landscaping or planting projects are to be presented to the Board and require Board approval. This is to ensure that plants are appropriate for the proposed setting, are not going to become invasive or detrimental to other plantings and can be appropriately managed and maintained by VISION Turf Care. We have asked VISION to give us a list of plants that are appropriate for the Steeplechase environment and will share that with you when we receive it.

You can make your requests by using the form that is available on the Steeplechase website <https://steeplechaseaples.com/#> under Documents/Forms → Applications & Forms → Architectural → Landscape Request - Pay to Beautify

- Requests can be submitted to
  - Linda Reed 402-890-5010 or [Lreed5373@yahoo.com](mailto:Lreed5373@yahoo.com)
  - Jackie Fritsch 239-450-6527 or [jackiefritsch@icloud.com](mailto:jackiefritsch@icloud.com)
- or directly to CAMBRIDGE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT.

These recipients will bring all requests to the Board for timely feedback.

## **FASCINATING PLANTS IN OUR ECOSYSTEM.**

The next time you walk the path from the mailboxes to the pool, take a look at this amazing plant on the right side of the pathway.



The [CROWN OF THORNS \(Euphorbia mili\)](#) likes it hot, dry and sunny - making it a perfect plant for spots where nothing else wants to grow. This is one of South Florida's most drought-tolerant plants and it flowers nearly year-round. It can grow up to 3ft with succulent leaves and eye-catching red flowers.

You can propagate the plant from tip cuttings; however, because the resulting white latex sap causes a mild poisonous reaction when in contact with skin or eyes, wear gloves when working with this plant.

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## POOL COMMITTEE NEWS by Ed Finamore, Committee Chairman



The Clubhouse & Pool are the central focus of social activities at Steeplechase. Over the past few years, much has been done to maintain the clubhouse and pool area and to keep it looking attractive for our residents and guests. Despite the occurrence of several maintenance issues, the pool and spa equipment have been operating properly and the clubhouse has been well maintained.

Not too many people know that our pool system, installed when our Steeplechase community was developed in the 1990s, is a geothermal system, which draws on the heat below the ground surface to help heat pool water. We have inherited this technology, and have made some significant changes in upkeep over the last few years.

Bracken Pools, our pool tech experts, recently addressed some deficiencies that were identified and caused the chlorine/bromine content to be out of spec and the pool to overflow. The pool was temporarily closed while Bracken addressed mechanical problems and pool operations were quickly restored. In compliance with Collier County, our pool is routinely and periodically inspected to ensure it is working properly and all regulations are followed. Recently, we received a notice from the county that a periodic inspection was not completed as required. Bracken Pools was able to complete the paperwork needed to

re-certify operation without loss of pool use. Some recent actions that have been taken involving pool related maintenance are:

- Additional storage space was created in the clubhouse with the installation of shelving above the chair and table storage area
- Plumbing repairs were made in the restroom areas, and space was opened up by removing tables and chairs and storing them in the new storage area
- The pool deck surface was power washed to improve appearance, although additional repairs to fix chips and cracks on the surface area may still be needed
- We have reviewed the clubhouse and pool area cleaning contract to ensure that proper attention is given to pool cleaning, and that clubhouse consumables such as paper and hand soap are adequately maintained.

The principal pool-related issue at this point is the growing need to replace our rapidly deteriorating pool deck furniture. Over the past year, several more lounge chairs have been discarded due to breakage, and it is no longer feasible to repair the pool furniture and incur the cost. At this rate, a significant shortage of pool furniture is likely to be experienced before too long.

Several circular tables are deteriorating rapidly, and their time for replacement is also long overdue. Consequently, some residents believe that the overall condition of the pool furniture has begun to detract from the general appearance of the pool area. It is therefore anticipated that this issue will become a focal point in the coming year.

Overall, the clubhouse and pool area are well maintained and continue to serve as the central area for Steeplechase parties and activities. As we encourage the creation of more activities for Steeplechase residents that make use of the pool area, we are confident that the facilities will be adequately maintained and will serve our needs.

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## COMCAST... OUR CABLE PROVIDER

Currently, your quarterly fees include a television offering for all Steeplechase residents. Each resident's annual cost for basic Cable TV is about \$650. Our Comcast contract is due to expire on December 1, and Steeplechase must tell Comcast by October 1 if we are going to renew our agreement or discontinue service. The new Comcast offer requires a five-year commitment, and some concern has been registered regarding the length of the contract and evolving technologies.

Along with landscaping, Cable service is a discretionary charge that can be addressed to impact Condo fees. Canceling the Comcast contract would not necessarily lower fees, but would mitigate some of the other increases, such as insurance, that we're currently facing. Escalating fees due to insurance costs are a focal point for the board.

To ascertain whether residents want to continue or cancel this TV contract, the Board is considering a vote by the Steeplechase membership. The requirement for passing any change would be approval by 2/3 of the members that exercise their right to vote.

Year-round residents who value an extensive TV 118 channel offering may find a new contract meets their needs and would prefer to move forward with the contract. Individuals who derive most of their entertainment through Internet Streaming or some of the free apps, such as Pluto, Tubi, or YouTube TV may find it beneficial to cancel the contract and seek their own entertainment choices, which may include a personal Comcast agreement. About 88% of Steeplechase residents currently have a personal contract with Comcast and could enjoy some of the benefits of bundling their Internet and television services.

Some seasonal residents have expressed the desire to be able to control their cost through the seasonal convenience plan, which enables Comcast subscribers to pause their service when not being used. Many seasonal people reside in Steeplechase for as little as three months per year. Under the current bulk contract, they cannot take advantage of the seasonal convenience plan, however under a personal contract with Comcast they could.

There may be people within the community that are uncomfortable with technology and intimidated by the challenge of finding the best service for their needs. Should the vote move forward and favor the cancellation of the contract, volunteers have offered to assist people in finding the best offering and in making the change.

The Board is reviewing this subject and awaiting some additional information from COMCAST prior to providing all information possible to owners for a vote at the end of the summer. Further communication will follow.

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## TOILET CONNECTOR REPLACEMENT PROJECT

You may be wondering: what's all the fuss about replacing the toilet connecting hoses to ensure that braided stainless steel hoses with metal connecting nuts are used in place of nylon and plastic materials?

Last summer, multiple apartments were damaged due to a broken toilet hose resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars of loss.

The \$25 cost per toilet of ensuring all Steeplechase toilets have metal connectors can be considered one supportive step as protection against this type of flood from occurring.

It is known that Naples has some of the highest water pressure in the country and this additional protection against bursts to our water systems will be of value to all. The project will be initiated in the autumn, and you will be asked to pay upfront for the replacement in your unit. The Steeplechase Board of Directors will organize the replacements by a licensed contractor. More details to follow later in the summer.

Of course, even more critical to protection against water damage in our apartments is ensuring that each owner and/or renters/visitors, turn the water main off, and lock it, whenever you will be absent from the condo for more than 48 hours and when not inhabiting the unit.

## LIVING IN COMMUNITY: KNOW THE RULES & REGULATIONS

Our interdependencies and the diversity of individual needs and interests often come to head as a result of different styles and approaches. Living in Community requires open dialogue, patience, tolerance and tuning our sense of respect and care for one another.

In Steeplechase, we all share a desire to live in peace, to responsibly care for our properties and to create an atmosphere where we can joyfully thrive.

To support this goal, there is a set of [Rules and Regulations](#) which set parameters to support the building of Community. These are available on the website [steeplechaseinaples.com](http://steeplechaseinaples.com), under Documents/Forms → Governing Documents → Rules and Regulations. It's a short read and is worth a regular review as part of building our Community.





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## CARS AND TRUCKS AND THINGS THAT GO

There have been some recent discussions regarding the presence of Trucks on the property. Our current Rules and Regulations provide guidelines regarding what is acceptable and what is not permitted with respect to trucks. There are various ways that these guidelines can be interpreted. Some residents have asked to clarify and/or expand the current parameters to allow for pickup trucks (noncommercial) and some other truck-types to be permitted on the premises. The Board is currently discussing the various requests and will determine whether or not to change the current guidelines. News to follow.

May everyone have peaceful summer months!

