

MEMORANDUM

May 19, 2020

From: Meadows-Ferndale Board of Directors
To: Meadows-Ferndale Owners and Residents
Subject: Common Area Landscaping and Irrigation System
Ref: Board Memo 200501(F) dated May 1, 2020

Dear Owners and Residents,

The Meadows-Ferndale Board of Directors (the Board) thanks you for the thoughtful and helpful inputs to our memorandum of May 1 ("Landscaping Common Areas"), which addresses the issues related to the lack of an irrigation system for the common area landscaping along our streets – commonly referred to as "planter strips". The Board would like to provide immediate feedback while we deliberate about the issue and evolve toward a decision. The first step in the decision-making process is to select a favored option and initiate detailed planning. This will not be a final decision, but rather an intermediate step that will enable us to focus our attention on options that are at least feasible. We would like to assure you up front that our final decision will not be for a course of action that requires an increase in monthly dues or a special assessment. The Board is fully committed to ensuring that neither of these happen.

The following is a summary of the comments submitted in response to the referenced memo and the Board responses thereto. In no particular order:

1. Comment. Do not shift responsibility for the "planter strips" to the homeowners.
Response. The option to shift responsibility was deemed not viable by the Board in the referenced memo. Some homeowners may not be able to absorb the extra cost of maintaining their patch. Some may not be physically able. The responsibility would not be spread evenly: some homes have a patch, some have none, some extend across more than one house, and some patches have no home nearby.
2. Comment. Ask the project developer to pay for, or contribute to, the cost of extending the sprinkler system to the rest of the development.
Response. The developer has declined to provide any financial or technical assistance.
3. Comment. Ask owners to maintain their lots.
Response. This is an issue separate from the decision about how to maintain the planter strips, but the Board will continue to monitor the condition of the neighborhood and reach out to individual owners as needed to ensure proper maintenance throughout.
4. Comment. The Board memo (reference) should have been more neutral instead of pointing to a solution.
Response. The Board is endowed with the responsibility to manage the Association. Performing the analysis documented in the memo is in exercise of that responsibility, but we wanted to share our thinking and stimulate additional thoughts and inputs so that we can migrate to a fully informed decision.

5. Comment. Homeowners themselves should be responsible for the planter strips in front of their homes. If any choose to let them go brown during the dry summer irrigation season, that's okay.

Response. The Board considered this option, but concluded that it is fraught with problems. The additional physical and financial responsibility, although minor, might not be feasible for some homeowners. Also, some of the planter strips cannot easily or logically be assigned to a specific house. For some, there is no nearby house. Others actually span multiple houses. Some houses have no planter strips. Bottom line: there is no fair and equitable way to assign responsibility to homeowners. As far as letting the planter strips go brown, the Board disagrees. Some would, some would not. A patchwork of green and brown strips would be unsightly and would not be fair to the homeowners who provide the time, effort and expense to maintain the green.

6. Comment. Who is responsible for monitoring unaccompanied minors on the wetland foot paths? Board members? Homeowners?

Response. This is a separate issue, but one that deserves attention. The short answer to the question is: Parents or guardians. Anyone else who interfaces with an unrelated minor is risking trouble. Parents can be, and often are, very protective of their children and will not tolerate interference from strangers. We as a community will continue to address this issue, but there is no simple answer.

7. Comment. Decorative rocks are a good low cost option.

Response. At present this is the Board's first choice and recommended option.

8. Comment. If we choose rocks, won't there be a weed problem?

Response. No. We will install a weed barrier under the rocks.

9. Comment. The best option is decorative rocks (2" diameter minimum) and the selection should be put to a vote by homeowners.

Response. The decorative rocks option is the Board's first choice and the 2" minimum diameter suggestion is reasonable. If decorative rock is the decision, the Board will pre-select a few examples and submit photographs to homeowners for comment, from which the Board will make the final decision. Decorative rocks would be far preferable to gravel. See Response #16 for more about voting on this issue.

10. Comment. Suggestion: use mixture of bark/rocks and drought-resistant shrubs.

Response. Worth considering. Might be too expensive.

11. Comment. Suggestion: pave some of the planter strips. Bark/Rocks on rest.

Response. This would be costly and would further disrupt the visual harmony of the area.

12. Comment. Will the original developer pay or help pay the cost of extending the irrigation?

Response. Developer says current design was deliberate (not an oversight) and considered adequate. They will not contribute.

13. Comment. Rocks are the preferred option.

Response. Noted.

14. Comment. Do nothing.

Response. The issue is not just a matter of dying grass. Weeds will take over and present an unsightly mess.

15. Comment. How much will it cost and how will it be funded?

Response. Preliminary cost estimates were provided in the memo. The Board is committed to avoiding both a dues increase and a special assessment. The intent is to fund the project from the reserve fund, possibly augmented by funds from the general accounts. The answer will reveal itself when we select an option and prepare a detailed cost estimate.

16. Comment. Put the issue (any issue involving HOA funds) to a vote of home/lot owners.

Response. The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Sections 64.38.020 and 64.38.025 grants to the association Board of Directors the responsibility and authority to act in all instances on behalf of the association to regulate the use, maintenance, repair, replacement, and modification of common areas – or to cause additional improvements to be made as a part of the common areas. In this case the Board has solicited input and will carefully weigh all inputs and comments as part of its decision-making process.

17. Comment. Too expensive for watering trees.

Response. Remember this is not just about trees. It is about the grass that is dying and allowing weeds to invade. The proposed project is about solving both problems. One more year of watering the trees will give them a little longer to develop a good root system. Then we will reevaluate the need for continued watering. Meanwhile if we select the “Rock” option, the grass and weeds will have been replaced with rock so grass watering is not needed.

18. Comment. The cost of the decorative rock is too high.

Response. The estimated cost is not just for the rock. The planter strips need to be excavated to make room for the rock. The excavated sod and dirt requires disposal (no we can't dump it in the wetland areas). There are a lot of planter strips and the Board will shop for the best price.

Finally, thanks again for the input. The Board is currently leaning toward the decorative rock option, but remains committed to not increasing monthly dues or imposing a special assessment. We may have to let the work span two calendar/budget years – or perhaps devise some other creative solution. The Board will ensure that the final selection fits within our budget.

Sincerely,

/Meadows-Ferndale HOA Board of Directors/