

# Briarcliff Grapevine

WINTER 2017-18

BRIARCLIFF HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

WEST BLOOMFIELD, MICHIGAN



## Happy New Year, Briarcliff

As I write this, most of the country is being held hostage by an unprecedented deep freeze. Below zero temperatures and tons of snowfall abound! Unless you are an avid skier, skater or sledder, so far *this* winter is probably not the winter of your dreams. But it's the winter we've been dealt by Mother Nature, so, in pure Briarcliff fashion, we embrace the good with the bad and charge forward!

Welcome 2018! Another fresh new year. Another time to be thankful for the blessings of the past year and to take stock of our achievements as we look forward to the challenges and opportunities of the coming months.

At the Annual Meeting in December, I reported on the accomplishments we made last year here in Briarcliff; you can review that summary elsewhere in this newsletter. I believe it was a substantial and well prioritized list of which we can all be proud. Again, we were able to stay within our approved budget and handle some major issues with no incremental charges or assessments to our homeowners.

## Resolutions for new progress

At the same time, the brand new year is a time to start afresh, to start strong, and yet another chance to make positive changes. For us, that means taking a look at what we can do to improve the quality of our

experiences here in Briarcliff, as well as how we can continue to increase our collective property values.

We've identified several desirable improvements to our aging infrastructure and overall subdivision environment as well as some administrative opportunities that we believe would be beneficial to the membership. You will hear more about these plans in the coming months. As always, available resources will dictate what plans become realities.

On behalf of your newly elected Board, I wish you and your families a healthy and happy new year! Stay warm, stay safe, and stay kind. I look forward to hearing from you this year. -

Connie Claybaker



BRIARCLIFF HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

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# Make the most of your new year!



**DON'T MISS OUT ON THE EXCITING THINGS HAPPENING AT THE PARKS THIS WINTER!**

## Polar Party

**January 27, 2018**

Recreation Activities Center  
4640 Walnut Lake Road  
from 1-5 pm

Featuring winter-themed activities for the whole family to enjoy!

- Live Animal Show: Meet Elsa the Lynx from Siberia, Sven the Arctic Fox and more Arctic animals at Polar Party!
- S'more roasting
- Snowman building contest
- Craft station
- Ice sculptures plus a live carving from 1-3 pm
- Snowshoeing: For more to explore outdoors, try on a pair of snowshoes and explore the winter wonderland. Snowshoes are provided. Boots are required to snowshoe, and snow pants are recommended.



**\$6/resident - \$8/nonresident**



### Save some money this winter!

Visit [dteenergy.com/staywarm](http://dteenergy.com/staywarm) for tips and suggestions on how to find and seal air leaks, recommended temperature settings how to avoid costly repairs. Better yet, sign up for a DTE Energy Home Energy Consultation and you could receive up to \$400 in energy-saving products AT NO COST! Schedule an appointment online at [dteenergy.com/hec](http://dteenergy.com/hec) or call 866-796-0512 (press option 1).

### WORTH REPEATING

**The Water and Sewer Bill you receive from the Township only covers your SEWER usage and you pay them directly.** (currently \$163.80 per quarter)  
**Your drinking water is delivered by our private, Briarcliff water system and is supported by your Annual Service Fees (payable Jan 31 and July 31) which covers unmetered water service to all homes.**

## SENIORS OFTEN FACE CHALLENGES WITH TRANSPORTATION

Many of our friends and neighbors here in Briarcliff are seniors. And as our senior population grows, so does their need for services which may be difficult due to age, health, family relocation, etc.



Although this is **not an endorsement**, we wanted to bring to your attention a young man who saw a need and filled it here locally. A recent article in the *West Bloomfield Beacon*, along with the *Jewish News* and various TV outlets highlighted high school student Jackson Partrich who is providing private transportation to seniors in our area. The rate for his Schlepper services is \$16 per hour or \$12 for a one way trip. He will go to medical appointments, grocery shopping, restaurants, etc. His goal is to not only provide a vehicle, but a trusted, friendly driver. Schleppers can be found online at <http://www.theschleppers.com> or he can be emailed for additional information at [jackson@theschleppers.com](mailto:jackson@theschleppers.com)



Call 248-451-1900 for more information.

Cost is **\$52/couple** for resident;  
**\$62/couple** for non-resident  
**\$22** ea. additional daughter!

**WHEN TEMPERATURES STAY BELOW FREEZING:**

**Keep water working**  
Keep water moving through the pipes by allowing a small trickle of water to run.

**Give pipes a helping hand**  
If pipes run through basements or garages, open the doors to let warmer room temperatures flow in.

**BUT IF YOUR PIPES DO FREEZE:**

**Thaw pipes with warm air**  
You can melt the frozen water in the pipe by warming the air around it with a hair dryer or space heater. Be sure not to overheat heaters, unattended, and avoid the use of portable heaters or open flames.

**Shut off the water immediately**  
Don't attempt to thaw pipes without turning off the main shut-off valve.

**Be careful turning water back on**  
Once pipes are thawed, slowly turn the water back on and check pipes and joints for any cracks or leaks that might have been caused by freezing.



Though a new year lies ahead, for those of you unable to attend (in the snowstorm)!, following is a brief synopsis of highlights of 2017 from the Briarcliff HOA **Annual Meeting** which was held on Wednesday, December 13, 2017.

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

- Considerable water services actions and improvements have been completed including a major water main break and replacement of isolation valves (see Water Manager's report). Many of these expenses reflected repairs which would not have been anticipated, but we were able to absorb within our approved budget
- Extensive trimming and turf repair/replacement was done to the Middlebelt entrance to repair DTE damage and provide increased visibility/safety
- Liability insurance for Water Services was renegotiated resulting in considerable savings to the HOA
- Over 6,600 feet of subdivision roadway were repaved
- A dangerous tree limb was removed at the park and the HOA negotiated with the homeowner of the adjacent property to participate financially
- We are working toward future line blowing succession
- Unapproved planted fruit trees were removed from a public cul de sac and a policy upheld that no resident may plant or place private items on public property.

### WATER MANAGERS REPORT:

- All testing was completed and submitted to the DEQ with no detection of contaminants
- A water main leak was repaired on Merrybrook
- The isolation valve at 14 mile was replaced
- The GenTracker monitoring system was installed
- A dehumidifier was purchased for the pumphouse keeping moisture in check and resulting in less future rust on the pipes
- The curb stop log book (located in pumphouse) has been digitized and is now easily accessible by phone/computer if a plumber was in need.
- A battery was replaced in the Generator
- The 2017 Water Quality report and annual pumpage report would be complete in January

### ELECTIONS:

- Three of the current 11 Trustees had terms expiring in 2017 and agreed to run again.
- There were no nominations from the floor, volunteers or write in candidates.
- At Large Trustees were voted on as follows for terms expiring in 2020: *Lynn Abraham, Phyllis Weeks, Paul Watha*
- Officers for a one-year term expiring in 2019 were then elected from the slate of existing Trustees. The following will serve:

<b>President:</b>	<b>Connie Claybaker</b>
<b>Co Vice Presidents:</b>	<b>Phyllis Weeks</b>
	<b>Roberta Work</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Kendall Weeks</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Denise Gordon</b>

## 2018 Approved Budget

	2017 Actual	Approved Budget 2018
<b>Income:</b>		
Homeowners Fees	113,015.00	111,660.00
Status Letter Fees	400.00	300.00
Interest Income, CDs	3.51	3.50
Interest Income, Checking and Savings	2.04	2.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>113,420.55</b>	<b>111,965.50</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
<b>Basic Services:</b>		
Park and Entrance Lighting	1,111.12	1,241.97
Lawn Maintenance	10,732.00	10,865.00
Reserve for Road Repair	17,245.00	10,000.00
Reserve for Subdivision Improvement	4,695.50	4,800.00
Snow Removal	5,095.00	5,225.00
<b>Subtotal, Basic Services</b>	<b>38,878.62</b>	<b>32,131.97</b>
<b>Water Services:</b>		
Generator Maintenance/System	748.92	1,050.00
Natural Gas for Generator	251.46	225.24
Electricity for Water Pumps	4,996.30	5,246.12
Federal/State Testing	225.72	755.00
Hydrant Flushing	1,920.00	1,920.00
Homeowners Line Blowing	12,770.00	13,745.00
Water Quality Report/Continuing Ed	957.23	1,100.00
Water System Manager	20,911.00	21,512.60
Water System Assistant	4,166.00	4,277.24
Curb Stop Repair and Maintenance	3,603.00	2,700.00
Prev Maint, Pump House	2,495.94	2,232.00
Repairs	13,209.74	6,000.00
<b>Subtotal, Water Service</b>	<b>66,255.31</b>	<b>60,763.20</b>
<b>Taxes and Insurance:</b>		
Park Property Taxes	904.58	931.72
Insurances	5,230.00	5,329.00
<b>Subtotal, Taxes and Insurance</b>	<b>6,134.58</b>	<b>6,260.72</b>
<b>Administrative Services:</b>		
Bookkeeping Services	7,200.00	7,200.00
Professional Fees/Miscellaneous	152.00	200.00
Communications	1,058.25	1,000.00
Office Supplies	151.51	75.00
Postage & P.O.Box Rental	509.80	400.00
Committee Work	1,099.00	1,198.00
<b>Subtotal, Administrative Services</b>	<b>10,170.56</b>	<b>10,073.00</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>121,439.07</b>	<b>109,228.89</b>
<b>EXCESS, REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>-8,018.52</b>	<b>2,736.61</b>

It was necessary to cut the lawn in our common areas a couple of extra times this year. This led to an unfavorable variance (as compared to budget). We've budgeted a higher amount for 2018 assuming the same happens next year. Our "Water Services" budget was challenged this year by several unforeseen repair expenses. As a board, our number one responsibility is to maintain our water system while compensating for normal wear and tear. The installation of the Gen Tracker System was unbudgeted, but protecting our system is paramount. The biggest change from prior years is our new thinking of funding reserves for the roads (\$10,000) and for subdivision improvements (\$4,800). We will be setting aside 1/12th of these amounts each month and drawing on these reserves as the need arises. - Connie

**Mark your calendars**  
 Wednesday,  
 June 13, 2018  
 Briarcliff HOA  
**General Membership Meeting!**

Annual Service Fees are due  
**January 31, 2018**  
 if not received by 7:00 PM on April 11, 2018,  
 water service will be terminated

## HOMEOWNER IRRITATION:

### ROBOCALLS



## What can I do to crack down on robocalls?

You may not mind if a legitimate robocall provides a helpful announcement from your child's school or an appointment reminder from a doctor's office. But sadly, criminals often use robocalls to collect consumers' personal information and/or conduct various scams. Newer "spoofing" technology displays fake numbers to make it look as though calls are local, rather than coming from overseas, which could trick more people into answering the phone.

Robocalls have been illegal since 2009 (unless the telemarketer has the consumer's prior consent). In mid-2017, federal agencies announced they are ramping up enforcement by fining violators and encouraging blocking technologies. What should you do if you want to help put an end to this nuisance?

1 Don't answer calls when you don't recognize the phone number. If you pick up an unwanted robocall, just hang up. Don't answer "yes" or "no" questions, provide personal information, or press a number to "opt out." Responding to the call in any way verifies that it has reached a real number and could prompt additional calls.

2 Look into robocall blocking solutions that may be offered by your phone service provider. If they're available, you may need to follow specific instructions to "opt in." Otherwise, consider a mobile app or cloud-based service designed to block robocalls; some of them are free or cost just a few dollars.

3 Consider registering your phone number on the **National Do Not Call Registry**. While taking this step can help mitigate the amount of robocalls you receive, it's only a partial solution to the problem. The Federal Trade Commission advises consumers whose numbers are on the registry but still receive unwanted calls to report robocall violations at [complaints.donotcall.gov](http://complaints.donotcall.gov).

## Digital Deception: BE ALERT — BE SMART — BE SAFE

Quite possibly this past holiday season, you received an email with an urgent message asking you to verify your banking information or a financial transaction by clicking on a link. Or maybe you got an enticing text message claiming that you'd won a free vacation to somewhere exotic — all you have to do is click on the link you were sent. In both scenarios, clicking on the link causes you to play right into the hands of a cybercriminal seeking your sensitive information. Just like that, you're at risk for identity theft because you were tricked by a social engineering scam.....or digital deception.

Cybercriminals psychologically manipulate their victims into divulging sensitive information by creating believable scenarios which evoke emotion (curiosity, fear, empathy, excitement). As a result, people often **react without thinking** due to curiosity or concern. Since social engineering attacks appear in many forms and appeal to a variety of emotions, they can be difficult to identify and it's easy to become a target.

Take steps to protect yourself from this scam. If you receive a message with a sense of urgency, slow down and **read it carefully before reacting**. *Don't click on suspicious or unfamiliar links in emails, text messages, and instant messaging services.* Don't forget to check the spelling of URLs — any mistakes indicate a scam website. Also be sure to look for the secure lock symbol and the letters **https**: in the address bar of your Internet browser. These are signs that you're navigating to a legitimate website.

Never download email attachments unless you can verify the sender. Don't ever send money to charities or organizations that request help unless you can follow up directly with the group. Be wary of unsolicited messages. If you get an email or a text that asks you for financial information or passwords, do not reply — **delete it**. Be alert and be safe.



## BRIARCLIFF BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018

### PRESIDENT

Connie Claybaker

248-752-8762

[president@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:president@ebriarcliff.org)

### CO-VICE PRESIDENTS

Phyllis Weeks

Roberta Work

[vice\\_president@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:vice_president@ebriarcliff.org)

### TREASURER

Kendall Weeks

[treasurer@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:treasurer@ebriarcliff.org)

### SECRETARY

Denise Gordon

[secretary@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:secretary@ebriarcliff.org)

### WATER SYSTEM MANAGER

Dan Gordon

[water@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:water@ebriarcliff.org)

248-421-3184

### TRUSTEES

Lynn Abraham

David Howard

Richard Rauch

Sean Warren

Paul Watha

### BOOKKEEPING SERVICES

Connie Claybaker

248-752-8762

[bookkeeper@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:bookkeeper@ebriarcliff.org)



## Another plea for your photos!

We know you love your camera. We see your selfies on Facebook. We see you snapping photos of your kids and pets while you walk in the neighborhood! Please won't you share?

As stated in previous newsletters, we have a very empty 'photos' section on our website and we would love your contributions! Just how many pictures of a water tank installation and entrance sign can we look at?

Show us your garden, the before and after of your latest home improvement project, your perfect snowman or how about your fish tank? Send them to [webmaster@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:webmaster@ebriarcliff.org) and let your neighbors enjoy too!