

Condo fees to increase by 3.91% in proposed budget, new ad hoc committee seeks ideas for cost reductions

By *Mikhailina Karina*

The bulk of the Oct. 25 Board of Directors work session focused on the proposed 2017 budget for \$8,392,441, which includes a Repair and Replacement Reserve contribution of \$2,495,500 funded by a 3.91% increase in condominium fees. To see the entire budget in detail, go to the association website at www.montebello.org/document_view.asp?id=2772&lr=1 and scroll down to page 32. No votes were taken at this meeting attended by about 30 residents.

In an effort to contain expenses with cost-saving ideas, the board has authorized a new ad hoc Committee on Cost Savings. The committee, made up of directors Bruce Shaw, Guido Zanni, and John Powers, will “entertain all suggestions however small or seemingly impractical,” states the resolution. Furthermore, it will “assess each of the suggestions and attempt a quantitative estimate of the savings along with identifying their respective negatives.” All committee meetings will be open to residents and owners. “We want to take advantage of good ideas,” said board president Greg Bender.

The board also discussed the growing problem with dogs doing their business in freight elevators and garages. “We have select bad actors in a population of good dog owners,” said director and dog owner Jerry Stedge. Assistant general manager Marco Mendoza said one guilty pooch has been identified and the case has been forwarded to the Covenants Committee.

In addition, the freight elevator problem involves some contractors, who apparently “abuse service elevators,” Bender said. One potential solution the board discussed would be installing

cameras in freight elevators (Building 2 already has cameras in all elevators) to nab the perpetrators.

Bright street lights are still a bane for lower-level units. “Remedial measures do not work,” said second-floor resident Peg Wesbecher. In spite of having light bulbs replaced behind Building 2, she says she can still read on her patio without any other lights from her home.

“Bright lights are a hazard, not a help,” agreed Georgia-Dee Jones. While walking her dog late at night, she says overly bright street lights have a negative effect on her vision and she cannot see potential obstacles. “I don’t feel safe at night,” Jones said. “I would love to see the bulbs go back to what they were.”

Bender explained that street lights appear brighter because the globes are clear and the lumens have increased. The dilemma is how to provide safety with adequate lighting without infringing on the quality of life in lower units. To replace an individual light fixture costs about \$2,000 plus electrical work. Marked a “priority project” on the proposed budget, the Replacement of Exterior Pole-Mounted Lights will cost \$215,000.

Both pedestrians and drivers agree that driving around Montebello is becoming Monty 37. Director Bonnie Daniel, who lives in Building 4, said she frequently encounters aggressive drivers careening up and down the short Mt. Eagle Drive. Because many vendors and delivery trucks come around Building 4 to the community center loading dock, there is constant conflict between cars and pedestrians on that stretch of the road. “This safety request is based on my observations that driving seems to be getting worse,” she said.

Daniel suggested placing “pedestrian crossing ahead” signs at the beginning of the curve behind Building 4 going from the community center toward the short Mt. Eagle intersection. She pointed out that the other three building already have such signs.

Furthermore, Daniel wants 10 mph signs placed on the same stretch because there is too much traffic to allow vehicles to drive any faster. Likewise, she said the 20 mph sign on short Mt. Eagle Drive needs to be changed to 10 mph because this “short stretch of road has two curves (both blind), a pedestrian crosswalk, two stop signs, and parking at the top.”

Realistically, Daniel said she wasn’t sure more signs and speed restrictions would make a difference, but something needs to be done to improve safety. Director Zanni commented, “I don’t think signage alone will be effective.” One possible solution would be adding speed humps to problem areas.

Another on-going problem has been weekend package deliveries left in lobbies instead of being delivered to the door of the recipient. Bender said he spoke with delivery companies and learned that most problems occur with replacement drivers.

With more packages being delivered during the holiday season, Bender said the association has created a form that will be given to each delivery driver entering the property. The form, to be signed by each driver, states that all deliveries must be made through the building’s service entrance; leaving packages in the lobby is prohibited and all packages must be delivered to the unit door; and warns that any violation of these rules will result in the driver being prohibited from entry to Montebello. 