

OUR CIRCLE REPORT

SPECIAL EDITION

NOVEMBER, 2008

Re: 2009 Cottages Budget

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is once again time to prepare and adopt a budget for the operation of the Cottages in the coming calendar year.

The Board of Directors and the budget committee have put together the attached plan for the next year and it maintains the quarterly dues at their current level.

During the past year we did major work on our trees and our sod and those expenses are expected to repeat in large measure next year as we continue to replace aging shrubs, damaged and inappropriate sod, and keep our trees safe for the hurricane season. We also need to deal with the growth of the trees and decline of shrubs over the past twelve to thirteen years and the needs to relocate and repair our irrigation system.

We have realized substantial savings in not having to pay for a local unit management company and having the services at a very low relative cost for basic maintenance of our irrigation and street lights. Our savings in those areas allowed us to affordably make major repairs and meet maintenance expenses that would otherwise have demanded an increase in dues. This budget anticipates a similar plan for next year in order to complete the needed repair work on landscape areas and the clubhouse.

We will be meeting on Wednesday November 26th to discuss this budget and to adopt a final version that will be the basis for our dues in the coming year. It is possible to make adjustments to the budget during the coming year and that is a routine process as special needs or situations demand. The dues are set, and the budget is the target, and the real limitation is the amount of income from dues and the reserve commitment. The board will make final adjustments within that gross budget amount.

We would like to thank the budget review committee that included Mike Georgopolis, Carole Myles and Jane Lettich. The meeting on the 26th is a the board meeting when the board will adopt a budget there will only be limited other items discussed at that meeting.

Sincerely,

Rivendell Unit 1
Board of Directors

LAWN CARE AND MAINTENANCE

This year has been a little better than last in terms of chinch bug control and we have had extensive repairs and updates on our irrigation system, but our lawns are still in need of more improvement and attention.

Our overall appearance is pretty good, but many of the older homes have shrubbery that needs updating and with the onset of the dry winter season, we will need to keep a close watch on irrigation and how our lawns are standing up to the lack of water. During the next year we expect to have substantial replacement of shrubs and foundation plantings as well as continued sod replacement. The effort will be expensive compared to prior years, but the goal is to have our homes look good and help retain values and bring the landscape up to a better level of overall appearance.

Many have probably noticed that Middleton Pest Control has been here on a more regular basis over the past two months, and that we are finally allowed to put fertilizer on the yards. That will help a great deal with the greening and growth.

Unfortunately Sarasota County created a well intentioned but very disruptive ban on fertilizer just as the growing season arrived last spring. As a result, this is the first application of fertilizer since February. Over the coming months they will be putting soil amendments and fertilizer in place to beat the deadline and help our yards do better through the next main growing season. The ban was intended to prevent fertilizer from contributing to red tide and algae blooms in the retention ponds and streams in the county.

One major problem we have faced and need help with is that sod that has been replaced was not watered due to the failure of irrigation at specific houses. The failures were typically caused by the tripping of GFI breakers in the garage and if the owners were away, could not be reset. The result was dead sod. This was a terrible waste of our money and could be avoided if when leaving the owner would leave a key or garage door opener with a neighbor so our maintenance people could reset the breaker and get the system running again.

There is another challenge that we are facing regarding sod and that is the growth of our beautiful oaks. They are doing well, but the shade they produce makes our St. Augustine sod become less dense and eventually even disappear. We have looked into solutions for this and for areas on north sides of homes where the shade is nearly year round, the alternative of a ground cover is most likely the best option. We are having some "test" installations done to see how this solution works and will have more about this after January 1st.

Lastly, if you have a lawn problem - or if you see one on a neighbor's lawn when they are not around - please notify us as soon as possible at **unit1maintenance@yahoo.com** or by calling a board member so we can address it before it becomes extreme. In the care of our lawns, time is definitely money.