

# **WESTCHESTER GARDENS OWNERS, INC. NEWSLETTER**

DECEMBER 2020

WESTCHESTER GARDENS  
OWNERS, INC.

## **POSTPONEMENT OF ANNUAL SHAREHOLDERS MEETING**

### **Board of Directors**

**Lou Cirillo**

**Kim A. Derbin**

**Michael Hughes**

**Trevor Victor**

**Karin Aurichio**

**Robert Orlofsky**

**Jeffrey Sommers**

Due to Covid-19 and New York State's ban on large gatherings, the Westchester Gardens Annual Meeting of Shareholders, usually held in December, will be postponed for six months or until it is safe to hold a meeting.

## **2021 OPERATING BUDGET**

On November 9, the Westchester Gardens Board of Directors met via Zoom with Mark Cohen and Lori Lerman, from the accounting firm of Bloom & Streit.

Mark and Lori presented to the Board a 2020 nine-month financial report with a comparison to our budget and a proposed 2021 operating budget.

Mark and Lori pointed out that the interest income Westchester Gardens is earning on it's Reserve Fund will be lower in 2021 because United States Treasury Bonds and Bank Certificate of deposits now pay less than 0.5%.

Certain operating expenses increase every year and are beyond the control of the Board, including Real Estate Taxes, payroll, union benefits and utility costs.

After an extensive discussion and based on the recommendation of our accountants, the Westchester Gardens Board of Directors adopted the 2021 Operating Budget that requires a modest 1% increase in the monthly maintenance charges effective January 1, 2021.

The Westchester Gardens Board of Directors has worked hard and has been successful in keeping the operating expenses down and the increase in the monthly maintenance charges to a minimum. It is a fact that since 2015 the monthly maintenance charges at Westchester Gardens have increased on average only 1% a year which is a tremendous financial accomplishment.

Besides keeping a lid on maintenance charge increases, the Westchester Gardens Board has not assessed for any of the major capital improvement projects made through the years.

You can download a copy of the 2021 budget from the managing agent's website [www.robortorlofsky.com](http://www.robortorlofsky.com)

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**Superintendent  
Dominic Totino**

## CAPITAL PROJECTS AND IMPROVEMENTS

In spite of a worldwide Pandemic, 2020 at Westchester Gardens was a year of major accomplishment.

**Oil Tank Decommissioned** – For years, the Board and Management have been studying the feasibility of taking our oil tank out of service. The oil tank is a 20,000 gallon buried oil tank installed sometime in the 1940's. Because of its age, the Westchester County Department of Health requires that the tank be tested every year to ensure the system is tight and there are no leaks. If an oil leak develops underground the remediation process is costly and the Health Department could require that the tank be removed from the ground.

The Board did not want to risk incurring a huge financial expense if the tank started to leak and was ordered to be pulled out of the ground.

The alternative was to decommission the tank, which means to permanently take it out of service.

A company that specializes in this type of work was hired. The Westchester County Health Department issued a work permit to decommission the tank that required a tightness test and drilling test wells into the ground around the tank to confirm there are no active oil leaks.

After all testing was completed a final Environmental Report was written and submitted to the Westchester County Health Department.

The results were the tank was tight and there were no underground oil leaks. Accordingly, the Westchester County Health Department and the City of Mt. Vernon Fire Department gave final approval to decommission the tank in place and permanently take it out of service.

In 2017 Westchester Gardens converted the heating system from oil to natural gas (dual fuel). Since we no longer have an oil tank, Westchester Gardens will continue to operate on natural gas.

Using gas as a primary energy source is a benefit. Gas is cheaper, burns cleaner and there is much less maintenance. In the future a new above ground oil tank could be constructed within the boiler room.

**Main Entry Door Replacement Project** - We have just completed the project to replace all of the front building entry doors A – K.

This was not just a simple replacement of the doors. The scope of work included making repairs to the structural steel in each building entrance that was causing the floors to buckle. An engineer was hired to design the replacements and the City of Mt. Vernon issued a building permit.

Besides the beautiful new front doors, all of the entry lobbies now have commercial carpet tiles installed that look great and can take snow, rain, rock salt and just need a sweep and vacuum to keep the entrances clean. The work also included complete repainting of all of the entry lobbies and the exterior concrete details above the entrances.

All new polished brass pulls and interior push plates are on order that will replace the exterior thumb latch pulls and the interior door knob system that were difficult to operate and maintain. A new sample pull has been installed at A building. The hold door open posts are temporary and will be replaced next year.

**New hallway lighting** – The Board and management are now exploring options for new decorative LED light fixtures for all of the hallways. The existing hallway light fixtures are very old, dark and use old style circle line fluorescent bulbs. New LED fixtures will not only be decorative, brighter and more energy efficient.

**Tropical Storm Isaias Causes Damage** – In the middle of our building projects, on August 5, Tropical Storm Isaias ripped through our area toppling a major Linden tree in our courtyard that crashed against H building. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

Our managing agent responded quickly, reported the damage to our insurance company, brought in an engineer to do a damage assessment report and arranged for all of the repair work. Removal by hand of the toppled tree took several days, windows that were smashed were replaced and the exterior brickwork was cleaned and repaired.

The Board directed management to have Savatree do a site assessment report on the condition of the remaining Linden trees in the courtyard. If Savatree confirms that the trees are sound, then no further action will be necessary.

### **PANDEMIC CLEANING AND SANITIZING**

At Westchester Gardens the Board has made it mandatory for all residents, visitors and contractors to wear a face mask or face covering in the hallways, basement and laundry room. The mask not only protects yourself and your family, it protects your neighbors, guests and our maintenance staff.

The City of Mt. Vernon has issued a stay at home advisory. Covid cases in recent weeks have “doubled”. The City of Mt. Vernon strongly advises residents to stay inside their homes unless traveling for work, school or essential needs.

We cannot let our guard down. If we are all vigilant and wear a mask, we can keep Covid out of Westchester Gardens.

You owe it to yourself, your family and neighbors to wear a mask in the common areas of the building.

The Westchester Gardens Maintenance Staff, who have been our front-line workers since the Pandemic began, continue to clean, disinfect and sanitize all of our common areas in accordance with CDC guidelines and recommendations.

From the beginning Management and our staff, Dominic, Edgar and Luis have been committed to the safety of the Westchester Gardens Community.

A big thank you to everyone for their efforts and dedication.

***Best Wishes to you and your family for the Holiday Season  
and please Stay Safe!***