

The Highlands in Kirkland

This edition's Community Spotlight is about The Highlands in Kirkland. Information was obtained from The Highlands Board President, Ms. Beverlee Little, and Association Manager, Ms. Kathleen Chafin of Yates Wood & MacDonald. Both Ms. Little and Ms. Chafin are members of the Washington State Community Associations Institute (WSCAI) and feel that WSCAI provides them with the information and resources to do the best possible job for the people they serve. I caught up with both of them for this article.

The Highlands, located in the Rose Hill area of Kirkland, was built in 1997/1998, has 13 buildings and a total of 43 condominium units ranging in size from 1600 to 2000 square feet. Kirkland is located on the northeast shore of Lake Washington and barring traffic issues, is an easy commute to Seattle.

The complex is situated next to a green belt, has views of Lake Washington and the homeowners are within walking distance to downtown Kirkland's beautiful restaurants and unique shops. They are also close to Redmond where Microsoft's world-wide headquarters is located. Although The Highlands does not have amenities such as a pool, Jacuzzi or tennis courts, the upside is they are able to keep their maintenance costs and liability insurance premium low.

Beverlee is serving her second term on The Highlands Board of Directors. Prior to becoming President she was Vice President on the first Board when the developer turned over the responsibility to the new homeowners. Since assuming her current position, Beverlee has had a very active and busy role. Like some associations, The Highlands had construction defects and was in litigation against the builder/developer for construction defects. The case settled about the time Beverlee assumed her new position. Since repair and reconstruction of their units began, Beverlee and the Board has learned much about the process by working closely with David Bach of Bach and Associates, LLC, Todd Kilburn of Sandler Kilburn Architects LLC, and the Charter Construction team responsible for the repairs and remediation. When asked how the remediation process was going, Beverlee said, "despite a pallet of roofing materials accidentally being dropped on a homeowner's car in a place it shouldn't have been parked, it's going very well." Her advice was "hire a good construction manager like David Bach to manage the project, and hire a good architect and contractor." Working with all three has been a real pleasure for Beverlee and the Board.

Beverlee also wanted to recognize the past Highlands Board members because they made her transition to her role as President much easier. Former Board members, Lisa Commander, David Jacobs and Jennifer Jacobs worked with the Barker Martin, P.S. legal team who represented the association during the construction defect litigation against the developer/builder. Beverlee felt the Board did an excellent job navigating the Association through the entire litigation process. She also added "The Board members

have always worked well together to get things done and are eager to jump in to help where needed.” Beverlee also mentioned the homeowners have been very helpful and accommodating during the remediation process.

Beverlee also acknowledged the help and support she receives from Kathleen Chafin, of Yates Wood & MacDonald. Beverlee said, “Kathleen is extremely knowledgeable, supportive and always provides the board good information that helps them make decisions.”

In today’s professional environment, I know that association managers are busy serving their clients and have many other priorities they are dealing with daily so I was happy to talk to Kathleen. Kathleen has been the association manager at The Highlands since 2001. Kathleen’s 23 years of experience as an association manager helped move the entire process along once the defects were discovered. Kathleen arranged for the Board to meet with various law firms as she knew time was of the essence. Through Kathleen’s efforts, the Board selected a law firm to represent them and the case was filed one week before the statute of limitations was to expire. Kathleen didn’t stop there. She met repeatedly with engineers, set up homeowner meetings and above all, allayed homeowners’ fears when they were selling their units while the Association was in litigation.

As I spoke to Ms. Chafin and asked her about her client, she shared with me the pleasure she has working with The Highlands Board of Directors. I asked her what made this relationship so special. It’s simple – the previous and current Board of Directors are devoted to their association and community, they have attention to detail, they operate in a very professional and business-like manner, they took time to educate themselves about condominium law, they communicate with each other and the homeowners, and they are creating a sense of community and it shows!

Kathleen also mentioned that The Highland Board has been very proactive. An example of this was when they began identifying construction defects and decided to hire a firm to conduct a Reserve Study. Upon receiving the completed Reserve Study, the Board did not file it away in a desk drawer, but used it to plot their course for the future. They were extremely proactive with organized presentations for the homeowners and communicated all information to the homeowners.

The Highlands is currently about 75% complete with the remediation process. Kathleen sees that the board is managing this project like they would a business. They have a business plan, invested the settlement money to earn additional income and have kept emotions and politics to an absolute minimum. Considering the magnitude of such a project, there have been no major problems.

When I asked Ms. Chafin’s most rewarding experience since working with The Highlands, she said “Working with the past and current board of directors has been a joy. Their meetings are well organized, and decisions are made quickly. They set the standard and for me, they are the model board.” What more can an association manager ask for?

Beverlee Little, President, The Highlands Board of Directors, can be contacted through Kathleen Chafin of Yates Woods & MacDonald.

Kathleen Chafin of Yates Woods & MacDonald can be contacted at 206-268-3314.

Gil Price is Executive Director at Barker Martin, P.S., Construction Defect and Homeowner Association Attorneys. He can be contacted at 206-381-9806 ext. 124. He currently serves as a volunteer on the WSCAI Communications Committee.