

The Sierra Post

VOLUME II, ISSUE 12

THE SIERRA AT JACK LONDON SQUARE

December, 2006

Contact Information

Front Desk / Lobby

Phone: 510-285-3515

Fax: 510-663-4526

lobby@sierrajacklondon.org

Erik Olson, CCAM

General Manager

Phone: 510-663-4889

erik@sierrajacklondon.org

Mario Brown

Building Engineer

Phone: 510-663-1245

engineer@sierrajacklondon.org

Ron Siengo

HOA President

president@sierrajacklondon.org

Other HOA contact information can be found at

<http://www.sierrajacklondon.org>

Oakland Police

Emergency Hotline: 911 or 510-777-3211 (on cell phone)

Non-Emergency: 510-777-3333

For advertisement information, questions or comments regarding this newsletter, please email to news@sierrajacklondon.org

Homeowners may place free classifieds by sending email to the same address.

Please check the bulletin board for postings of the next HOA meeting.

HOA Meeting Summary

The last Board meeting was held on Nov 28th. Please check the bulletin board for the official meeting minutes.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Ron Siengo gave a presentation on the 2007 Budget. Overall, there will be a 6% increase in the budget for 2007. A motion was made and seconded (Siengo/Nguyen) to approve the 2007 budget as proposed. The vote was unanimous.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The general manager explained that at the previous board meeting the board had approved sending out to the membership, election rules for a 30 day comment period that had been drafted up by the Association's attorney. These rules needed to be adopted by the board at this meeting due to changes in the law which effect all homeowner Associations holding elections after July 1, 2006. The election rules were mailed out to the membership at the end of October and no written comments had been received by the general manager. The general manager recommended that the rules be adopted as mailed.

A couple of homeowners stated their concerns over the use of the nomination form as a way to nominate themselves to run for the board.

The board did discuss that this was the only additional rule not originally drafted by their attorney, but that the Association's attorney had looked it over and did not see any issue with the board adopting it. The general manager stated that many homeowners' associations have a formal process for members nominating themselves and that the nomination form serves that purpose. Eliminating the form at this point would mean that the rules would have to be sent out to the membership again for another 30 day comment period, possibly causing further delays in the election.

The general manager and President Siengo gave a brief update on the water intrusion. Essentially, the board (through the Association's attorneys) has put the developer (Crescent Heights) on notice. Crescent Heights has a 6 month time frame (expiring Dec. 19th) in which they have to present to the Association a scope of work for the repairs to the building, along with what they anticipate the costs for those repairs to be. If they do not meet the deadline, the board can proceed to the next legal step, involving formalized arbitration. It is anticipated that the developer's attorneys will offer to compensate the Association financially for the repairs and not actually perform the repair work. The developers do have the first right to perform repairs but are not legally bound to do the repairs if they choose to make an offer to pay for the repairs. As this process will encompass a number of issues throughout the building and will be time consuming for the Association while it does its own investigation (through a soon-to-be-hired consultant), the Association will also be getting a 3rd party administrator paid for by Crescent Heights to handle communication updates to all affected homeowners.

A homeowner asked how the general manager will communicate to the affected homeowners between now and when the 3rd party administrator takes over. The general manager explained that the process the Association is going through is a very slow one. As such, the information given to the general manager and board members does not change very often. When a major event takes place, the general manager will send written correspondence to the affected homeowners. Whether something of significance occurs or not, the subject will be brought up at the homeowner meetings which are currently held monthly. In addition, what is mentioned at the board meeting will be posted in the board of director minutes, which are also duplicated in the Association's monthly newsletter.

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HOMEOWNER COMMENTS

A homeowner asked about cutting the costs to the security / concierge desk by limiting their hours. The suggestion was made to send out a survey to the membership to get their feedback.

- The board stated that this was brought up at a board meeting last year, but a majority of homeowners in attendance at that meeting wanted to keep them 24 hours/7 days a week, so they did not make any changes.
- A board member stated that members in the past have commented to them that having the security / concierge 24 hours/7 days a week is what makes the Sierra stand out as a unique and special building relative to the others similar to it in the area. This contributes to members' property values.
- Another homeowner stated that having the security / concierge 24/7 helps to cut down on noise because they are a deterrent to potential noisy residents.
- A homeowner stated that they have seen the security / concierge staff sleeping during the early morning hours and sometimes they are not at the desk at all with no note as to when they will be back. The general manager stated that sometimes the front desk staff does have to leave the front desk when they make their rounds of the building, to use the restroom, and for breaks, etc. but that there should be a note as to when they would return. He has spoken with the site supervisor (Ali) for King Security about guards not leaving any notice on a couple of occasions. Ali stated that he would talk to the other guards and that further reports would lead to disciplinary action.
- A homeowner asked what the oversight is to make sure the guards are doing their rounds. A board member stated that the guards touch the end of a stick they carry to small sensors located throughout the building. These sensors record the date and time they were touched by the stick. Reports are then generated by the system monitoring these sensors which are reviewed by supervisors.
- After a lengthy discussion with the homeowners in attendance, the board agreed to send out a survey to all homeowners asking for their feedback on cutting the hours of the front desk.

A homeowner asked if there was a membership vote if the Association were to accept an offer from the developer for the repairs to the building or if the board accepts the offer on behalf of the members.

- The GM stated that we are still a ways from that happening, but that he would find out the answer.

A homeowner mentioned that it looked like the garage had not been cleaned very thoroughly. The GM stated that because the garage floors have circular grooves in the floor, the cleaning crew could not use water on the garage floor. When the garage floor gets wet, the liquid can get trapped in the grooves, ultimately attracting further dirt and making the floors actually more dirty than they were before. For that reason, the janitorial crew used a damp chemical, which when sprinkled on the surface of the floor will attract dirt particles which can then be swept up. The janitorial crew will be back out to scrub the real heavy stains, such as in front of the elevators with water at a later date. Stains such as soda and coffee should come up, however oil stains are not expected to be removed as they are permanent once dry.

- A homeowner requested that a letter go out to all members detailing the day and time of when the janitorial company plans on coming back out to scrub the heavy stains in the garage. Some homeowners might want to move their vehicles from their spaces so that the janitorial crew can get to soda or coffee stains in their stalls as well.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T



BachUS Real Estate Investment, Inc.

We are located in the heart of the Historic Waterfront Warehouse District and we are here to provide personable quality real estate investment services to individuals and families at The Sierra at Jack London Square.

Feel free to visit our office to discuss your real estate needs. Our office is located on the ground level next door to the gym.

**Bach Nguyen, REALTOR® Broker
510.452.1927 Office
510.928.8261 Direct
bach.nguyen@JackLondonRealty.com**

A Note From Erik



Homeowner Caused Water Leaks & Condo Owners Insurance: If you do not already carry your own condominium owner's insurance policy, please look into purchasing one. Within the last month, 7 units have been impacted by homeowner caused water leaks. The leaks have been the result of sinks overflowing and faulty dishwasher connections. Please make sure to turn off any water if you are not actively monitoring it. While the Association does carry an insurance policy to cover the building, the policy does not cover any personal contents or any damaged caused by another owner. Carrying your own condominium owner's policy would cover these items and could save you the heartache and money if something like this should happen.

Election: Ballots are mailed out on December 8th. Please make sure to return your ballot as soon as possible so that the Association can meet its quorum requirements! Not meeting a quorum means cost the Association extra expenses by having to mail out the ballots again. The following is summary of the upcoming election dates:

<u>December 8th:</u>	Ballots are mailed out
<u>January 17th:</u>	Deadline for Voting. Ballots must be received by this date
<u>January 23rd:</u>	Election results tabulated at an open board meeting
<u>January 23rd-February 7th:</u>	Election results reported

Gym Restroom: We have found the men's restroom locked on a couple of occasions with a sign on the door saying "Out of Order." If you find the restroom in the gym is broken, please do not lock the door. Instead, please report the problem to the front desk so that we can send someone to fix problem.

Smoke Alarms: A couple of residents have reported hearing their neighbor's unit making a loud beeping noise. In some cases the residents are being kept up at night and find it difficult to get to sleep because of this noise. In all likelihood, this beeping is the result of the unit's smoke alarm batteries dying. If you notice this noise, please replace your batteries in your smoke alarm. If you need directions on how to do it, Mario can help you.

Moving In or Out: If you are planning a move in or out of the building, please remember the following: moving can only take place weekdays from 8am to 5pm. All moves must be scheduled with the front desk. All moves must be done through the 4th street elevators. All movers must provide liability and worker's comp insurance. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Holiday Baking

This is a simple and delicious biscotti recipe. It makes 2 cookie sheets, plenty to share with your friends and family during this holiday season...

3/4 cup of canola oil	1 1/4 cup sugar
3 eggs	1 cup of chopped walnuts
1 teaspoon baking soda	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon anise extract	1 cup golden raisins
3 1/2 cups all purpose flour	

Mix above ingredients together, then add enough all purpose flour to make a firm dough (about 3 1/2 cups). Spread half the dough on a cookie sheet. Use an ungreased cookie sheet or line with parchment paper. Bake at 350 degree for 20 min or until a light brown. Slice into strips of 1/2" wide, bake on each cut side for 5 min. Repeat with the other half of the dough.

Neighborhood Events

Holidays at Dunsmuir House

Mansion visits, holiday teas, children's teas, a la carte service, carolers, horse-drawn carriages for hire, craft booths, children's activities. Tickets in Advance: Adults - \$11.00 Seniors (62+) - \$10.00 Juniors (6-13) - \$7.00. Dunsmuir Historic Estate located in the Oakland hills. 510.615.5555.
<http://www.dunsmuir.org/>

Oakland Museum

Dec 10, 1pm. Free architecture tour of the building and gardens.

Kwanzaa Celebration

Dec 13 and 20, noon to 1pm at City Center Plaza. Performance by the West African Highlife Band.
<http://www.oaklandcitycenter.com/>

The Christmas Revels 2006

Dec 8 - 17, 1pm. A theatrical celebration of the Winter Solstice. Come with us this December on a wintry journey to the densely forested and mountainous terrain of late 18th and early 19th century French Canada. Performances take place at the Scottish rite theater, 1547 lakeside drive, Oakland. 510-452-9334

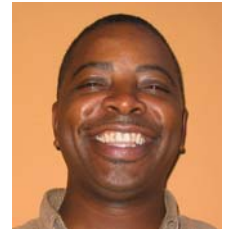
Mario's Corner

Winterizing: Winter is here so that means the patio cushions will be removed from the pool chairs and from breezeway areas.

Tree Disposal: Christmas trees will be picked up for recycle on Jan 2nd and Jan 9th. All trees should be brought to the loading dock on the ground floor. It is very important that you bag your tree before disposing it to keep the needles off your unit and common areas.

Recycling: Please keep up the good work with recycling. Large gift boxes should be taken to the loading dock on the ground floor. If you don't know where the loading dock is, please check with the front desk.

Package Service: Please pick up your package promptly as we only have limited storage space for storing packages.



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Ron Siengo, CPA

Partner

ron.siengo@sierraafc.com

Maya Nguyen

Partner

maya.nguyen@sierraafc.com

311 Oak Street, Suite 24
Oakland, CA 94607
Voice & Fax: (510) 764-2058
www.sierraafc.com

Income Taxes – Real Estate – Small Business - Accounting

**Have a Safe & Wonderful
Holiday Season!**

*We will be closed from December 1st, 2006
Through December 8th, 2006.*

*We will be open for the remainder of the Month
on the regular scheduled days.*



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Committed to Excellent Service!

President's Report –Assessment Increase

Dear Homeowners,

During the last Board of Directors meeting the Board adopted a new budget that included an average increase in homeowner assessments of 6% over the current budget. The Board recognized that this increase was on top of a 6% increase a year and a half ago; therefore, it will be helpful to explain the reasons for the increases.



The first increase in mid 2005 was necessary to bring the department of real estate (DRE) budget up to date with current operating costs. The increase was necessary to fund a shortfall in revenue for utilities costs and to increase janitorial services. Utilities per the DRE budget were significantly lower than actual costs mostly due to refuse disposal costs. Janitorial services were increased in order to meet homeowner demands for a cleaner building.

The second increase, which will happen on January 1, 2007, was required in order to fund operations at current levels due to inflationary cost increases in our janitorial and front desk/security contract rates. The Board went out to bid on janitorial services and chose the lowest bidder. The board reviewed the security rate increases for its employees, which amounts to two dollars per hour per employee, and agreed that the increase was fair given that there has not been an increase since the building opened in 2003.

The following table summarizes the timeline of fee increases assessed since the building was opened.

June 2003	Building opened with DRE budget
January 2004	No increase in assessments
January 2005	No increase in assessments
June 2005	6% increase in assessments
January 2006	No increase in assessments
January 2007	6% increase in assessments

Summary of June 2005 increase:

Janitorial staffing increase	\$42,168
Shortfall in utilities from DRE budget	\$52,053
Excess common area maintenance per DRE	(\$33,507)
Other costs	\$14,133
Total increase in assessments	\$74,847

Summary of January 2007 increase:

Security contract rate increase	\$23,870
Janitorial contract rate increase	\$27,940
Common area maintenance increase	\$23,370
Other savings	(\$5,096)
Total increase in assessments	\$70,084

Sincerely,

Ron Siengo
Board President

Homeowner Survey

Would you be interested in reducing the front desk/security staff hours in an effort to save money for the association? Cutting four hours of security service per day would save the association approximately \$30,000 a year, or 3% of the annual budget. Please email erik@sierrajacklondon.org with your opinion. If you agree, also include what hours you think should be cut. If enough homeowners agree that cutting security staff hours is an acceptable way to save on homeowner assessments then the Association will research the idea. If there is not significant feedback from homeowners in favor of this idea then no further action will be taken by the Association.

This page is left intentionally blank due to the lack of content. The newsletter committee currently has only one active member. Your help is greatly needed for the continuation of this newsletter. Remember the Board of Directors and committee members are just homeowners who volunteer their time and effort to help out our community. The more we pitch in, the better the quality of life we will have at the Sierra. If you would like to volunteer for the newsletter committee, please send an email to news@sierrajacklondon.org. You can also help by submitting articles to the same address.

If you would like to help on other matters, please contact Erik at erik@sierrajacklondon.org or stop by his office at the mezzanine level. Erik has been looking for volunteers to put together social gatherings for the holidays. As of this writing, we do not have any events scheduled due to the lack of volunteers.