

**With the Owners Survey sent out on October 27, 2022, we had 281 comments provided to us which we have sorted out into eleven (11) topics. Two of the topics we titled, Positive and Personnel Comments which the Board of Directors have read.**

**The remaining comments fit into nine (9) separate topics that the Board of Directors have addressed for you, so you would understand the position and decision they made in regards to these topics.**

**They are as follows:**

## **COST RESPONSE**

In response to the survey many owners expressed their appreciation for the work done to control costs and manage the resort by management and board of directors. Thank you! We also want to answer the concerns which other owners had regarding maintenance fees and other financial items.

To understand the current rate of the maintenance fees, it is good to understand the history of these fees for Rushes owners. For the first 2 decades that the Rushes was in existence, the maintenance fees were kept artificially low, and little money was put into reserve funds to take care of the long-term upkeep and maintenance of the resort. Initially the units at The Rushes were sold by a developer who took a profit. The Rushes is now run like a cooperative not for profit where every dollar is invested back into the resort which we all love and enjoy. Contrary to the perception which some have, there is currently no big pot of money sitting there which we are able to draw from to take care of repairs and upkeep. Our current annual reserve collection approximately matches our yearly reserve capital expenditures. This is one of the reasons why we did the survey to best allocate the money we have to best support what is important to you as a Rushes owner.

Some have expressed that they would like to see a rental discount for owners. There is a 30% discount for owners to rent weeks owned by The Rushes during off-peak weeks. Please contact the office if you want to take advantage of the rental discount for owners on additional weeks or purchase additional weeks to trade.

Some owners expressed the notion that they feel that the summer owners have more amenities to use. There are amenities available year-round at The Rushes. They are different for each season.

Another big item which had comments is the deed back of weeks. Currently we as owners of The Rushes have 397 weeks which have been deeded back. While some of these weeks are rented to produce income, the balance of unrented weeks results in lost income. The deed back of weeks started in 2008 and since then 430 weeks have been taken back and 33 resold by The Rushes.

With owners deeding weeks back to The Rushes, increasing employees' wages to retain staff and inflation increasing our costs of energy and materials these are challenges we have to keep our increases as low as possible while maintaining the resort. Please know that the board and management are constantly working on this situation by reducing costs where we can while promoting rental opportunities and sales.

What can each of us as owners do to help keep the maintenance fees as reasonable as possible? Each owner of The Rushes also has the opportunity to help promote and invite others to The Rushes. When you hear of people looking for a place to vacation, tell them why you love The Rushes and of the opportunities available to rent or own at The Rushes. Also, consider renting an additional week yourself to spend more time at the place we all love and cherish.

## **INTERNET / TELEVISION RESPONSE**

We had nine (9) owners leave comments about this internet question. The good news in this topic is that the Town of Jacksonport and Frontier Communications are negotiating a contract. This would ultimately provide a fiber optic system directly to each unit at The Rushes as each unit has its own physical address and this will include not only the internet but television and telephone service.

The Town Board of Jacksonport has agreed to borrow up to \$1,750,000.00 to be partners with Frontier Communications who was selected by the Town to provide the majority of homes and businesses this service. They are also pursuing any available grant money for this project.

The engineering study for this project is estimated to be completed by the spring of 2023 with completion of this project over the next two (2) years. The current internet service is aging and beginning to fail requiring us to replace parts of the system until we can secure the fiber optic system.

A request has been made to provide TV programming guides and the Wisconsin Big Ten Network. We are subject to what our cable provider is able to supply, and they dropped out of the BTN contract some time ago.

## **PETS RESPONSE**

There were a few comments in response to the survey which asked the board to consider finding a way to allow owners to bring their pets into at least a few select units. The Rushes has and will continue to have a “no pets in units” policy.

Having a few selected units where pets are allowed does not work for several reasons:

- 1.) People have assigned units and like to use that unit.
- 2.) A bigger issue is cleaning the pet odor, dandruff, dander, etc. out of the unit after someone has left is next to impossible. Even with a good clean, those who have pet allergies are still affected.

On this whole topic we also want to remind people that the only animals allowed at The Rushes are service animals. Please do not try to pass off your “comfort animal” or pet as a service animal as this undermines those who truly need a service animal!!

We will continue to strictly enforce the no pet policy with the only exception being those who truly have and need a service animal. Those who try to bypass this policy will be charged a \$350.00 cleaning fee plus any additional damage caused by bringing a pet into the unit.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation!

## **FIREPLACE RESPONSE**

We had a total of six hundred and fifty-four (654) owners respond to the survey overall. Of those, forty-four (44) owners left comments about the fireplace question overall and sixty-six (66) percent of the owners taking the survey were in favor of keeping the fireplaces and in paying an additional \$36.00 per week in their maintenance fees for the next six (6) years to have the fireplaces replaced.

All our fireplace units are at a minimum thirty (30) plus years old and now exceed the manufacturer’s recommended life expectancy. With the survey results, the board is now moving forward in replacing all the fireplaces over the next six (6) years.

The Board of Directors has been discussing and analyzing this very issue for the past two plus years and in this process, we reviewed four separate chimney and fireplace installation and repair companies and ultimately chose Professional Chimney Service, LLC out of Appleton, Wisconsin to clean and videotape all forty-eight (48) fireplaces and chimneys.

It was during this process that they found six (6) fireplaces deemed unsafe and damaged that we needed to take them out of service immediately. This videotaping service provided the board with the knowledge we needed and allowed us to put the fireplace units in priority of replacement moving forward.

We then researched electric fireplaces and ultimately chose the one to use in these six (6) fireplace units as a temporary option for owners and guests to use. At that time, we also began the process of documenting the amount of firewood used and the labor incurred to provide the firewood for each unit for each week to study the fireplace usage and to analyze the overall cost of operating these fireplaces. To our surprise in doing this analysis, we found that the majority of the forty-eight units used the fireplaces year-round, yes, all 50 weeks.

We met with numerous chimney service companies in this process in acquiring a bid to replace the entire fireplace.

We investigated the cost to have natural gas brought to the resort but unfortunately, Wisconsin Public Service does not provide natural gas and has no long-term plans on bringing this service to the Jacksonport area. Wisconsin Public Service stopped their service at the intersection of Hwy 42/57 outside of Sturgeon Bay, which is some 17 miles away from our resort.

We spoke with our propane company, Milton Propane, as an option for the gas fireplaces and they proposed to have one (1) tank supply, two (2) buildings or four (4) units. This would have required a minimum of twelve (12) large thousand (1,000) gallon tanks. The cost for the tanks was \$ 96,000.00 plus the cost of digging and burying the tanks. No matter what, we would have to bury the gas lines 12" to 18" deep and we need to connect to each fireplace in each building and this cost would be extra.

We inquired about smaller tanks such as 500 gallons, but they aren't available at this time. We looked at gas fireplaces as an option overall, but this came in \$5,000.00 per unit or \$240,000.00 plus the cost to set up propane or natural gas to the units.

Ultimately, we chose Laughlin Chimney Service which estimates the cost at \$5,900.00 for two-bedroom units and \$7,300.00 for three-bedroom units plus the additional cost involved by our maintenance employees who pull the siding off of the building prior and then reinstall it when they finish installing the new fireplaces. Laughlin was the least expensive fireplace repair and replacement company, and the board was pleased that they are a local company. The board of directors is moving ahead with this project with eight (8) of the fireplace units being completed in 2023 with all of them planned on being completed in 6 years.

## **MEET & GREET RESPONSE**

As in the past The Rushes would hold a Monday Night Wine/Cheese Party so that the owners of that week could meet each other and socialize. In response to several owners' requests to bring back that social hour we have decided to hold a Tuesday Morning Social that begins at 9:30AM at the Recreation Center.

Everyone is invited to get to know the owners/guests from that week. Limited beverages will be provided.

As of this writing, we have had a very favorable response to this event.

## **INFORMATIONAL STATEMENTS RESPONSE**

Concerning the control of bats and rodents, everything is done to ensure there are no openings where bats and rodents can enter your unit. However, bats usually only get in when doors are left open (please be mindful on warm evenings). In the fall of the year, buildings that are near the wilderness area and lake (buildings 12 thru 16 especially) mice try their best to get in. Maintenance has monitored and has changed procedures to close holes more effectively. Our pest control contractor increases the amount of bait they place in the fall as well.

Door County has numerous activities and events to explore. The Rushes provides the Door County Go Guides and Dining Guides are always available at the Rec Center. There is also now a bulletin board near the locker rooms where staff will post information/events as they become aware. Because activities can change every day/week in Door County it is very hard to keep up with this. Please take opportunity to call the Door County Visitors Bureau before and during your week.

Fishing in October – all of The Rushes watercrafts have been removed by that time and they are either stored for the winter or are being repaired as needed. We encourage you to search for rentals in Door County before your planned stay.

The Activities staff continually seeks out new ideas for group activities, some on the grass near the beach, some in the rec center, and others in the wilderness area. That said, we encourage guests to continue to invite others to join in games/activities they wish to start on their own. The more, the merrier!

Area discount coupons are available at the reception desk as they become available from local vendors. If you hear of some we don't have, please tell the retailer to contact The Rushes.

Some trees have been removed near our units due to disease, some because they have been causing mildew and rot on our units. Vegetation and trees near the lake are somewhat controlled by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), so we must work within their parameters. We will not be replacing any trees that are causing damage to our buildings. The general manager is working to get the old stumps removed if possible.

Furniture on the upper decks was not in good repair and was not being used to any great extent. Accordingly, a decision was made to eliminate it and focus more on furniture on the lower decks which needs continual maintenance and cleaning.

All canoes, kayaks and sailboats now must be signed out and in and none are to be taken back to their units rendering them unavailable to other residents. If anyone sees this please inform the front desk or staff immediately.

Winter activities are provided by The Rushes; ice skates, cross country skis, snowshoes, pool, hot tub, units have fireplaces with wood provided for a relaxing chance to quietly read in front of the warm fireplace. There are games and movies available at the rec center, pool exercise classes, ping pong table, pool table, an exercise room and steam room. All available without leaving The Rushes property!

At The Rushes we have units in the woods and lake units, each having their own characteristics and appeal. It is not our intent to remove trees by the units in the woods to gain views of the lake.

The lower bedrooms have twin beds for use by children. We also provide a crib if one is needed. Please know that you may ask to have the twin beds moved together by maintenance, which will then provide a king-size bed for your adult guests. It is best to ask for this prior to check in so maintenance and housekeeping can coordinate this prior to your arrival.

## **POOL HOURS COMMENTS**

Regarding the responses on the pool hours, there were a few comments which expressed a desire to have the pool open until 9 or 10 pm. The vast majority of owners (over 80% on both questions) were not in favor of paying the additional costs associated with expanding the pool hours.

In line with other comments which have been made regarding the survey, the board takes very seriously the matter of trying to keep the maintenance fee increases to a minimum while also always working in the best interest of The Rushes.

For that reason and keeping in mind the desire of the majority of the owners, the pool hours will remain as they currently are. The recreation center is now open 12 hours a day/7 days a week allowing guests many hours of opportunity to use.

## **REMODEL / MAINTENANCE RESPONSE**

We very much appreciate the positive feedback on the survey for all the work The Rushes board, maintenance staff and management has done to maintain our home away from home. We do our best with the limited resources we have.

A few owners have expressed concerns with the amount of yearly maintenance fees. Please know that we as owners ourselves do our best to keep the increases reasonable, while still protecting the value of our home away from home.

The general manager keeps a file on each unit in the resort showing what maintenance or improvements have been done, what date they were done, and what still needs addressing. However, windows, appliances, faucets, etc. fail periodically. If you see something during your stay, please report it to the office right away. We cannot fix something if we do not know about it. If it is something maintenance can fix right away, they will. If not they will fill out a repair order so it can be addressed before the next family arrives or as soon as possible depending on time and material needs and availability.

Some owners have stated their unit has been remodeled but the bathroom vanity was not changed. We have become aware that previous general managers omitted replacing them. They will probably be replaced towards the end of our remodeling project.

We are aware that some of the bedroom furniture was not replaced. We do intend to replace it. However, finding quality furniture at a favorable price and location can be challenging and the general manager is working diligently to find a new supplier. We have also had to concentrate on roofs and gutters this last year and by necessity that has been our priority.

Units built on slabs have dryer vents emptying into pails. Be mindful the board and management have inherited this condition from the developer. Humidity can be a problem when running the dryer and heat and humidity can be a problem when running it in warm weather. We are looking for an alternate solution such as direct venting out the side wall (not certain it is possible). Until an alternate is found, you **MUST** run the bath fan when you are drying. That is the only chance to remove the heat and humidity. And you **MUST** keep the vent in the pail as the humidity condenses there. Otherwise, it condenses on the floor causing another problem.

Some have expressed concern over the wooden dinette chairs; however, cloth seats are extremely difficult to maintain in a commercial environment such as The Rushes. Years of experience with the cloth seats has shown us they are difficult to maintain.

A few owners have said the kitchen knives need replacing. We currently have them sharpened twice a year. Their sharpness is dependent on their use so please use good judgment when cutting and handling them to help protect their edges.

We have retained some very good beach staff from last year and will need to hire additional for this coming season. Beach staff using technology instead of working is not permitted.

Time is another challenging issue as we only have two shut down weeks a year with full access to the buildings, so planning occurs over a number of months in advance to get the best use of that time to get the maximum number of projects done. We now have two full-time maintenance people, and we hire outside help for some of our projects. With financial and logistical challenges, we have to prioritize what gets done each year. Many items such as appliances/carpet/painting are being replaced or done but because the same model appliance, carpet or paint color is being applied it may not be noticed by the owners from year to year.

Thank you for your comments and please know that all your comments are noted and taken into serious consideration.

## UNIT SALES COMMENTS RESPONSE

Some Rushes Owner comments expressed concerns for the sale of their unit week(s). We understand that life circumstances change and that owning your unit week may not be a “forever” for all owners. For that reason, The Rushes hired their own inhouse licensed real estate agent and developed a Deed Back Policy.

All real estate sales at The Rushes are transacted by our licensed real estate agent, Sue Dahms. State requirements also require us to have a contract with a Wisconsin licensed broker, who for us is Shorewest Realty.

It is unfortunate, but many real estate brokers find that selling real estate and homes is much more lucrative than the commission on the sale of time shares. Fortunately, this is not a factor for Shorewest Realty and Sue. This is also important for all owners as we have found there are some unscrupulous companies that exist and sell the weeks to fraudulent people. These scams hurt The Rushes in lost dues and unnecessary collection costs.

If you are interested in selling your unit week, please consider your agent Sue! Sue works four days a week and has paperwork necessary to sell your week and works closely with the title company to finalize your transaction securely. More importantly Sue has a list of people who are looking to purchase unit week(s) and has a history of timeshare selling prices.

Sue will work with you to find and consummate the sale of your week and also work to find more potential buyers for The Rushes. As we can appreciate, not all weeks are attractive to the masses, and we continue to work on various marketing avenues for the sale of flex weeks and the offseason winter weeks. The Rushes advertises in several publications, associations, our website, exchange companies and owners themselves to improve our rental program and the sale of our unit weeks. We have found that these marketing streams work best to bring in new owners and are cost effective for all owners.

We do understand that waiting for the right buyer does not always work. With this in mind, The Rushes Deed Back Policy was developed. If an owner is interested in this process, they can contact Sue for the cost and more information about the process.

Sue can also help to answer some questions you may have for your estate planning and the transfer of your unit week to family members. But please remember, we are not attorneys, and you should consult with your attorney for the completion of your estate plan.