RCA Considering Appropriate Next Steps to Protect Our Rapidly Aging Surface Water Management System

By the Rivendell Board of Directors – January 13, 2020.

LMZs Control Erosion on Pond Shorelines

As you know, Low Maintenance Zones (LMZs) are now in place on all pond shorelines currently mowed by the community, and voluntary LMZs have been recommended for over a year for homeowners living adjacent to ponds. These Zones are in place to control the erosion that is now clearly visible at our rapidly aging pond shorelines – resulting in the loss of community property. Significant financial consequences will be incurred by the entire association if we continue to allow erosion to degrade our Surface Water Management System.

Avoiding taking action is not a responsible choice! Therefore, over the next few months, the Board will be deciding the merits of a policy that will require all homes adjacent to ponds to implement a mandatory 3-foot LMZ. LMZs not only control erosion, they provide key habitats for wildlife and keep property values strong.

Pond Shoreline Maintenance is HOA Responsibility

Our pond shorelines are all deeded community property and are part of the Surface Water Management System. This System is the responsibility of the HOA and managed under a permit with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, a State agency. It is the legal, fiduciary responsibility of our HOA to assure the proper functioning of the System and to protect the shorelines from the effects of erosion. Note that all land between each homeowner's surveyed property line and the pond shoreline is also community-owned common ground – that community property depth is at least 10-20 feet.

Installing and Trimming the 3-foot LMZs

If you are a homeowner living adjacent to a pond and you have installed a voluntary LMZ, we thank you for your cooperation! **If you are living adjacent to a pond and have not previously installed a LMZ, please instruct your landscape contractor to avoid mowing the three feet of grass close to the edge of the pond as soon as possible.** It will take several winter months for the newly-installed LMZs to grow to a height whereby they need to be trimmed. Once the policy is fully adopted, the Board will be considering two options for how to best maintain these newly-created LMZs: 1) By the homeowner, or 2) By the HOA.

With respect to the two LMZ trimming options, having homeowners maintain their individual LMZs may result in appearance and enforcement issues, as experienced by neighboring communities. Having the HOA maintain them will result in the most consistent and visually appealing LMZs. This approach would also minimize any potential compliance issues.

Lowest Cost Option = "Natural Shorelines"

The lowest-cost option for shoreline management is to install "natural shorelines" consisting of LMZs and shoreline aquatic plants. These shorelines will protect community property from being lost to erosion and will prevent the need for very costly engineered remediation. They also attract diverse wildlife, improve water quality, and create a stronger balance with nature. For more information, refer to our Website, rivendellcommunity.com/ponds.

In sharp contrast, the option of allowing erosion to continue will result in the necessity for a future engineered remediation at an estimated cost of $2-3 million (based on what has been paid by neighboring communities of similar size and age). These avoidable costs would have to be funded by substantially increased community fees or by assessments.

Come to Board Meetings to Hear More

The Board will be leading open discussions at many of the 2020 Board meetings in an attempt to decide the most prudent direction that should be taken. Please come to the board meetings in order to share your thoughts. A detailed presentation will be provided at this year's annual Homeowners' meeting on Feb 5th at 6:00p at the Lutheran Church. Please make the time to come by to learn more about the challenges that we face and why such an approach is in the best interest of Rivendell's future!