



Spring 2016 Avail only via email. Save or print to cherish forever.

COOL SANDS

Newsletter for Owners at the Sea Shell

Spring Break is Almost Over



The condo survived another bustling winter season. A recurring comment from guests was the great condition of the property and how nice the units are. Kudos to those Owners who have invested to make their units desirable vacation rentals. A big thanks for the fantastic job of keep our building and grounds in tip-top shape goes out to Paul and Patrick pictured in typical hard-working mode.



Change in Gate Security!

Woo Woo! On May 2 we are changing the age-old Columbus sailed the Ocean Blue “1492” vehicle gate code. And, we will continue to change regularly each year early May. What will the code be? How will you ever remember it? Our incredibly brilliant idea is: Reverse the digits of the current year. So in **2016** the code will be **6-1-0-2**. In **2017** it will

be **7-1-0-2**. **Pop Quiz--For all you mathematicians—in 29 years it will be _ _ _ _**. (Answer in next paragraph.) Please make sure you notify your renters, contractors and note the new # in any written instructions you distribute.

What a great location for a condo at the #1 beach in USA

At peak times the line of traffic to get onto the key stretches past #41. The line of cars up and down Midnight Pass Road goes way up to the public beach, coming or going. People staying at condos in either direction have to wait in traffic to get to a grocery store, restaurant or bar. The convenience factor for those at Sea Shell is priceless. Get off and on the island in minutes. Walk to anything you need. Answer to Pop Quiz: regarding the new gate code---“in 29 years it will be...“broken”. No way this will last that long.



New TV system recap

Whoa! This was quite a challenge—making a state-of-the-art digital TV system (without needing cable boxes) with HD channels work on 40 year old internal wiring and multiple brands of “less than quality” TV’s. The project began last October before the Owners’ Meeting. It took a few weeks to get all the bugs worked out with wiring. Every unit had the original thin RG-59 coax cable with hex crimp-on connectors and unshielded splitters. In most units a splitter and wad of cable was

stuffed into a metal wall box damaging the cable. From a technical standpoint this was not a pretty picture. Today's digital systems use RG-6 with no kinks and compression fittings.

After the new digital and HD TV system was installed a log of problems was created to size up the situation. Next, a team of technicians went unit by unit, TV by TV, wall plate by wall plate, connector by connector and replaced every part imaginable that was accessible in the units. New jumper cables were installed between the wall outlets and TV. The only remaining parts are the inaccessible original old RG-59 cable within the conduit and walls. For these, new compression fittings were installed on the old wiring. Thanks to Maria, Paul and Patrick for their help with the wiring technicians in this very tedious and sometimes frustrating process.

Let 'er rip!

The internet is "substantially faster" and complaints have subsided. It is very difficult in commercial/hospitality to match what someone may have at home on an individual account without incurring a huge expense. Instead of each Owner buying his own \$50/month account, it is included in our maintenance fee. Many units have smart TVs. Guests have smart phones and Ipads. All are being used simultaneously at peak times 6-10PM. A couple months ago our in-house internet system that runs on the same coax TV wiring was



not getting the speed we should have received. The problem was traced back to the cable modem from Comcast providing just 20Mbps of the 150Mbps bandwidth we were purchasing. Bandwidth is shared within the building with a cap-per-unit to prevent bandwidth hogging. Having multiple premium movie channels minimizes streaming because there is an alternative with "good things to watch."



Internet speed on a device is twofold—1. What actually comes into the unit, i.e. what do you get when plugging an Ethernet cable from the modem into a laptop and 2. The wireless connection between the wi-fi portion of the cable modem and the device. A fast #1 does not necessarily mean a fast #2. (and we all want a fast #2. There was a guy sprinting off the beach the other day about #2 and we don't think he wanted to use the internet). Therefore, we are evaluating replacing the 7 year old cable modems in each unit with newer, more robust models.

Need a new TV?

Stick with Samsung or LG as these brands have known good tuners. Stay far away from Westinghouse, Element, Seiki, Deiki or Docki, etc.. The QAM tuners in bargain TVs are terrible (sometimes even in good brands) so the only way for a cheapo TV to tune all the channels is to use a separate decent set-top box.

Recap: Samsung, LG--GOOD. Deiki, Docki--BAD.



Drip, Drip, Flood

How dry I am,
How wet I'll be,
If the condo above
leaks on me?"

In the words of most 800# help desks, "This is veddy veddy bad". Redoing ceilings, fixing floors, displacing renters, losing rental income. Many Owners have been leaked upon in the past from units above and this has caused a lot of grief.

The water shutoff system in the building works in layers:

1. Master shutoff at street —the entire building
2. Stack shutoff—103,203,303,403,503
3. Individual unit

It is important each condo has the ability to **turn the water off** within the unit in case there is a problem. If the shutoff is old and corroded, the stack master for 5 units must be turned off. If the stack master valve is non-

functional the entire building must be shut down. (yes, this happened) Needless to say every shutoff valve must work. Each Owner is responsible for being able to shutoff the water in their unit and for damages they may create to others from within their unit.

The Association will be replacing Main Stack Valves that have not already been replaced--those serving 2,4, and 6. Target time frame is September (unless an issue occurs). These 4 valves are corroded. Without this repair it would be necessary to shut down the entire building should an incident occur in one of those stacks.

Prior to June 1, the board has instructed our maintenance staff to inspect each condo and “gently” confirm the shutoff works. If there is any indication there is a problem within a unit, it is an Owner responsibility to have a licensed plumber replace the valve. At that same inspection, the date of the water heater will be recorded into a log the office will maintain. Broken water heaters are a mess for everyone. Typical lifespan for a Siesta Key water heater is about 7 years or slightly more. Therefore the Board has adopted a policy that when a water heater becomes 7 years old it must be replaced within 30 days. This pint of prevention is better than 20 gallons of cure. Be proactive and save yourself and everyone around you a lot of money. Those units which are on the Rental/ internal Management program may participate in the coordination and group rate for plumbing upgrades.



Real Estate Update

Unit #309 was our most recent sale at \$525,00 according to county tax records. We extend a “warm” welcome (after all, it’s Florida) to the new owners, Cheryl Hill and Edward Vickers of Cincinnati, Ohio. Sea Shell condo #210 is on the market for sale currently. According to SRQ housing statistics, there has been an overall average 11% rise in real estate values, and condos were up 15.5%. The amount of transactions has increased 6.7%. Record sales are being driven by a perceived stronger economy with many purchases made by “future retirees.” As expected, low interest rates and an older population are fueling the fire.

Unit Door Locks—proximity readers

The wristband hard key is still the method of choice at about every condo on the key. At Seashell, the key number is different than the unit # but this is not the most secure idea. We have not had any issues that come to mind but we can improve what we do. There has been much progress in the way of electronic locks for hotels in the past few years. We looked at magnetic swipe cards in the past and this would not have been a reliable method on the beachfront. We are investigating the new Proximity Reader locks whereby a fob gets next to a sealed weatherproof reader on a deadbolt. Since we have good wifi coverage at all units, operating a system like this is more feasible now. Stay tuned on this subject. If completed it would be Fall 2016 or 2017.



Parking is often challenging during peak time

There is 1 space assigned to each unit. We have 9 overflow spots and 5 staff members. Because of our limitations we cannot accommodate local owners, their families and friends who are looking for a convenient place to park while at the beach when we are busy. If you own a condo, there is a dedicated spot for that condo. If a renter is using your spot you will need to find another place to park. Summer is often worse as many Floridians drive and have multiple cars. Each car

requires a parking pass.

Late Fees—The Sea Shell is An Equal Opportunity Employer

Questions occasionally come up regarding late fees. Most Owners pay their maintenance fee on time, some are habitually late, others may just have an occasional brain fart. Our condo declaration requires every unit to be treated equally and the Board has instructed our office staff to abide by those rules so there is no perception of favoritism. Once a “favor” occurs for one, another favor is requested by another and then all

kinds of ideas are suspect. If you are hit with a late fee, it is not because the office wants to impose a late fee, but only to abide by the rules set for all so don't shoot the messenger. Many owners do a bank auto-pay for the maintenance fee and that makes it easy for all.



A new door coming to an Electrical Room near you

Salt air really takes a toll on fire-rated steel doors and frames. A Suma wrestler and big shoulder push is all that's needed to open or close ours. Yes folks..for the sum of \$2400 "plus a required building permit" we will be getting a door that actually opens and closes.

Annual Membership Meeting and Election Meeting



It was a pretty normal day in the neighborhood at the October Annual Meeting. This year we had an election of Directors since there were more suckers running for fewer available positions. Thanks to those who submitted their name but were not elected. You won! This Director stuff can be a lot of work sometimes. Seriously, thanks to everyone who volunteers or wants to get involved on any project. If you have an area of expertise, bring it on. The Director jobs are so high paying that some worry about jumping into a new tax bracket. Fortunately FL does not have a State income tax.

(boy were they disappointed. They thought they were seeing a movie)

Thanks to all Owners for their understanding of condo issues, rules, reasons for the rules and for putting up with things that at first may not make sense. When digging a few layers deep more facts come out, ramifications if "what if everyone did this at the same time" thought processes are used. Then decision-making has more clarity. We have to treat everyone equally. This is why for instance, allowing one Owner to bring a couple small pets can start a chain reaction of multiple issues with other Owners and renters.



Something must have gone wrong last year since the same Board of Directors was retained for 2016: Russ Weaver, Steve Sidwell, Estelle Debbane, Larry Thompson, Rick Briggs.



Fun Visitor Tip for Owners

One "cool-to-do" is a paddle through the mangrove tunnels off South Lido. If you haven't done this, you or your family need to. All ages. Any time of year. The kayak rental place behind Capt Kurt's will coordinate, meet you there with kayak, and take you on a 2 hour guided fun trip. The water is shallow and safe. You will think you are in wild Africa. Super interesting. Put it on your Siesta Key bucket list.

Holidays at the Sea Shell

These pix are coming a little late. Sorry about that. What a nice job of decorating by our staff to welcome owners and guests. We even had lighted deer grazing in our park near the beach.



Beachfront Planning

On April 12 we are meeting with the Sarasota County Department of Environmental Planning to discuss procedures and permitting to learn what “might be accomplished” to improve our beachfront presence within the Coastal Protection Area. Lots of rules and 3 different governmental bodies to deal with. Our building is already about 1/3 into the CPA. Goal: a more tropical resort like appearance, more shade and better utilization of the BBQ and overgrown SW corner. Step 1—get the scoop on procedures. Step--2 find an architect/engineer for concept ideas and budgeting. Step 3—RFP for bids. Step 4—have the guy that owns our Gulf Penthouse pay for it. All in favor-Aye? All opposed?..... Did someone hear Russ Weaver say something? Static...noise.....interference...breaking up.....bad cell phone connection.



General concept. Permanent vinyl roof fake tikis. More shade. Bigger BBQ area. Q's—how far out can we go? What permits and variances are needed? What about those crawly turtles?

Reserve Study & Maintenance Fee—are we really accurate?

This year we will be conducting a study in the various reserve categories to make sure our funding and replacement estimates are accurate. This is a vital portion of the monthly maintenance fee. We do not want to unnecessarily increase the fee just to be “safe”, and we definitely don’t want to short ourselves when the time comes to pay the piper, the plumber, or the elevator replacer. By the 2016 Owners Meeting, we will have results and the board will use that information to determine 2017 Maintenance Fee. Drum roll please....

SSVR Rental Committee

For any newcomers to our building, Sea Shell Vacation Rentals(SSVR) is our internal unit management and rental program. The office takes care of all of your internal maintenance, books your unit and simplifies your life. Each time the unit is rented a 15% (10% owner assist) commission is charged to pay for these services. You still have flexibility to use your unit whenever you want, advertise, book your own rentals, etc. but the office handles all the tedious back end stuff, cleaning, and takes care of renters while on site. It’s a total relief and benefit if you do not have the time or patience to market, book, rent and manage this on your own. Any questions how it works or the benefits—contact the head of the Rental Committee Larry Leyser, owner of 207 via email at: Seashellcondo207@gmail.com.

Every owner who rents their unit is encouraged to participate as the benefit of having the onsite program is immense. True, Owners who rent on their own and have the time (and patience) to do this as a part-time job can save a modest commission (after all someone has to do it.) However, if you are using an outside 3rd party rental company does that really make any sense since keeping it in-house is hands-off easy and better for renter convenience?

Every year most Owners receive solicitations. 3rd parties ALWAYS promise millions of rental income to get you to sign up, but at the end of the day their costs are generally more, they put the lower end tier of renters in your unit which creates excess wear and tear, income is less and your renters have difficulties since they cannot get help onsite. Horror stories abound over the years on 3rd party placed rentals since they have no idea who they are placing in your unit and are not onsite to police.

To compound things—from an overall condo management perspective--most of the “unusual” guest issues that adversely affect everyone (guests doing things they shouldn’t) are caused by 3rd party placed rentals. These problems included excessive # of cars, illegal parking, multiple beach chair reserving and hogging, pets pooping and in violation of no pet policy, after hours noise, etc. Often a renter placed from a 3rd party agent comes to the front office needing some internal help within their unit. Our staff is polite, but unfortunately they have to inform the guest they would need to speak to whomever they rented from.

If you are the Owner, and you or an outside source places rentals in your unit, please make sure everyone understands Sea Shell policies apply to every unit all the time. Thank you for help on this.

As part of our increased marketing, the rental committee is developing additional value-added benefits for guests who rent through SSVR. Marketing is different today. Web and social presence is critical. Since some of our internal efforts have not executed as planned, we may be recruiting some additional help.

Conclusion & unadulterated sales pitch to join SSVR: *“No worries, mate. Get a new plan, Stan. At just 10% and 15% it’s a deal, Neal. Hop on the bus, Gus, and leave the driving to us.”*

2017 Rates are published

The website will be updated shortly with new rates. Basically we added \$100 to most rental periods, added \$200 to Xmas/New Years and July 4th. These peak times are generally sellouts so putting more money in Owners’ pockets makes sense. We also are giving Owners the option to offer either a 5% standard or 10% increased discount for monthly rentals and commission charged is on the net amount. Early January is pretty slow, so we will be pushing a January discount. Our marketing will also be focusing on increasing Sept-Oct-Nov dead time rentals.



Another change is the differential rate between Gulf Front units. 101—501. Compared to other properties we were leaving money on the table. These units can command higher rate—good for those owners, and also good for others since some renters may not want to pay much more.

(Pictured: front office staff who book and assist guests.
L to R-- Rachele, Maria, Dawn)

One of the irritations with many Owners who use our rental program is rate undercutting. That is the reason commissions are charged on the published rate or the special at hand for everyone. Some not on the rental program undermine the integrity of the program by undercutting rates \$50 to \$100 to look better to prospects. But, it’s a free country, permissible. The Sea Shell has the least restrictive program on the island. Think about it.....Without the rental program, there would be no standardized pricing, no website, and as a contradictory benefit--no condo prices to undercut....so the rental program is important to everyone and it is important we have participation to keep it viable.



C'mon down for a visit. Enjoy your investment!

Your Board of Directors and our Sea Shell Staff hope you have a great Spring and Summer. As matters arise requiring some communication we will keep you in the loop. Most of our BIG nasty projects are completed, so despite global warming, this might be a chill year at the Sea Shell. We sure hope so.

Adios, Amigos.

Rick Briggs

President
Sea Shell Condo Association

