

Southern Bluffs

Homeowners Association Newsletter
Our Investment. Our Community.



Happy Fall!

UPCOMING EVENTS

HOA meeting: Oct 19 9AM
at the Clubhouse

You may have noticed the Fall decor at the gatehouse and monument which has sparked a festive touch to our neighborhood. Thank you to resident Natasha Connell for the cute decor. Along with the decorations, the weather has had its influence on the mood of our neighborhood. Please be aware of potential freezing temperatures during the month of October and the need for sprinkler system services and maintenance.

Please join us for the HOA Membership Meeting October 19, 9AM at the Clubhouse. Agenda and further details in the Letter from the Board have been mailed to all residents.

Clubhouse

The Movie Night was a fun evening hosted by the Clubhouse Committee for HOA members and their families. Inside Out was screened as a fundraiser for the Clubhouse. Fifteen people attended, raising \$75 with an extra \$10 donation.



Q & A

Have a question? Send it to secretarysbhoa@gmail.com and the board will respond in this section.

Q: How are meetings supposed to be conducted?

A: Please see Conduct of Meetings document on the SBHOA website. It was approved November, 2020. In order to conduct business in a timely manner and give everyone an opportunity to share their suggestions, each member will be given up to 3 minutes to speak. All members are expected to behave in a respectful and civilized manner. Those who do not after one warning will be asked to leave. Please understand that effective communication is best accomplished when all parties speak calmly and respectfully.

Financial Overview

Money is a necessity and something that does not seem to go as far as it once did.

Food costs exponentially more than some other necessities so when the cost of something else increases, people have strong feelings and opinions on the matter. Increasing prices affect us all, and the increases never seem to end. The HOA is also experiencing increases in utilities, landscaping, and road maintenance.

The Board has been diligent in saving money every way it can. It has been successful in conserving water by carefully adjusting the number of days and length of time each zone is watered; however, while progress has been made, we know that the cost of water will continue to increase.

The clubhouse manager and committee have made great efforts in promoting and marketing the clubhouse for rentals, but we are not yet where we want to be in covering the costs to maintain the clubhouse.

The Board heard ideas at the last board meeting presented by some members about other ways to offset costs and help keep dues low. These ideas can be discussed further, but for the immediate future, we need a more rapid increase in funds to cover HOA expenses. The Board has voted to increase HOA dues by 50%.



Pictured above is the completed xeriscape section funded by Turf Replacement program applied for by EJ White and residents' donations.

That will change dues to \$75 per month for homes, \$30 for lots with infrastructure, \$30 for tracts without infrastructure, and \$3.75 for lots without infrastructure. Thankfully, our dues are still well below the average HOAs in Colorado which is \$400 per month. Details of the proposed 2025 budget will be discussed at the October meeting.



We Are All In This Together

George Cheney

It may sound cliché to say that a neighborhood is a community, but in many ways it is. It doesn't mean everyone will be friends with everyone else, but it does mean we share a lot of common goals as well as space on this little mesa top. The more collaboration the better, in lending a hand to a neighbor, helping with a project, or serving as an officer.

The Southern Bluffs Homeowners' Association was established as a non-profit in 2006, shortly after the subdivision was created. The HOA, like all organizations, isn't perfect, but it is important to all of us for the self-governance and operations of this neighborhood. As a non-profit, the HOA must have an unpaid, volunteer board. For many years, growth in the number of homes and residents was slow, but since 2018, especially, construction has accelerated. There are now 85 homes. But that's not all, of course. We have extensive common areas, which are community assets to care for and make good use of.

Complicating the situation, there are undeveloped lots to our west and east. This means that there are non-residents and non-homeowners who have certain interests in the decisions and direction of the HOA, even if they are distant geographically and not involved on a day-to-day basis. Another challenge, as we all understand well from the past few years, is that we own and maintain our streets.

Even though the vast majority of us weren't part of the set-up of Southern Bluffs, we all become HOA members when we purchased homes or lots here. Then we became part of something larger than our households, with certain benefits but also with certain responsibilities.

I'm pretty sure that no one is happy with every aspect of the neighborhood, but then when is that ever the case? There are many things to celebrate about living here: natural beauty, good homes, close proximity to city services, relative quiet, comparatively safe streets, and folks being friendly and kind to one another.

An all-volunteer board doesn't preclude hiring others for clubhouse management or certain parts of maintenance, bookkeeping, etc. We are fortunate that residents have come forward to do many other things for the community, with landscaping, fire mitigation, water conservation, street repair, and more. The only practical alternative to the current arrangement is to hire a management company--at great cost, and that's assuming we could find one we liked!

The board has recently led the HOA through some major challenges: such as negotiating with the City of Cortez for two years about the streets, building up critically needed reserves, replacing old equipment, making record keeping more systematic and transparent, attending to landscaping and xeriscaping needs, addressing fire risks, and getting a handle on water use--that until this year wasn't controlled internally. Still, disagreements within a group this size are inevitable, and discussions of differences can be productive if they come from a place of mutual respect and understanding.

As we approach another general meeting, it can be helpful for everyone to reflect on what benefits we all enjoy as well as other things one might do for the community. Most any task that needs to be done can become fun and the results gratifying when we're working together in a spirit of cooperation.

Board Member

Roles and Duties

Our volunteer-elected leaders generously offer their services and individual expertise to ensure the smooth operation of our business, the preservation of our hard-earned investments (our properties), and the maintenance of fiscal responsibility throughout the process

President

1. Presides over the board meetings.
2. Sets the agenda in concert with the rest of the board.
3. Runs the meetings and ensures they proceed smoothly.
4. Oversees the board's operations; works with the board to develop a strategic plan.
5. Oversees the financial status of the HOA, collaborates to develop short and long range financial plans, monitors the budget and sets financial priorities.
6. Serves as a liaison between the board and the community.
7. Ensures that the board fulfills its duties.

Vice President

1. In the absence of the President or in the event of his/her death, inability or refusal to act, perform all duties of the president and when so acting, shall have all the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon the President.
2. Performs other duties as assigned by the President or the board.

Secretary

1. Keeps the minutes of the proceedings of meetings of the members and of the board (available at southernbluffshoa.com).
2. Sees that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of the bylaws or as required by law.
3. Is custodian of the association records, guaranteeing that all documents are made available to the public by posting on the website.
4. Keeps a register of the post office and email addresses of each member which shall be furnished to the Secretary by such members.
5. Keeps the board informed of Colorado Statutes, CCRs, Bylaws, and Responsible Governance Policies that govern its decisions and behavior.
6. Monitors the secretarysbhoa@gmail.com account, answering messages or forwarding as appropriate, sending out messages of convenience to members such as sightings of bears, lost pets, and found keys.
7. Drafts a variety of documents, pending review and revision by other board members. These include the bi-annual letters from the board to members, correspondence with attorneys, and communication with members about a variety of issues.



Volunteers

Thank your neighbor!

Our volunteers are the heart of our organization, and without them we could not function. Thank you volunteers!

Many roles with many hats:

John Sheek, Mel Elliott, Brad Ray, Steve Eberhart, Alan Thompson, Gene Williamson, Robert Stump, Preston Dillon, George Cheney, the Mornings, and Tanya Wilhelm.

ARC Committee:

Roger Fulks, Christina Myers, and Buford Greenfield.

Clubhouse Committee:

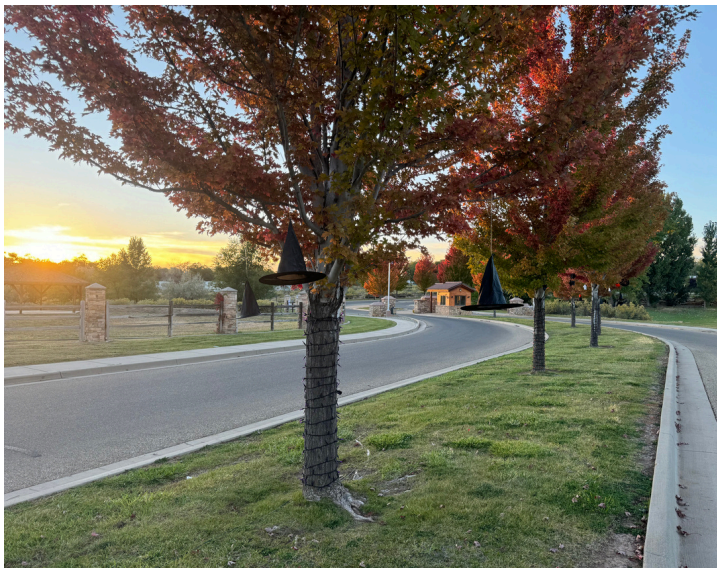
Melissa Morning, Jessica Schliesser, Lacey Ray, Jason Giacchino, and Mary Jo Batroff.

Treasurer:

Erica Jo (EJ) White

Board Members:

President: Karen Sheek; Vice President: Marilyn Zion; Secretary: Sally Planalp; Director: Cindy Elliot; Director: Crysta Connell



Board Member Roles Cont...

Treasurer: (not currently a board role)

1. Collects all mail from the 801 Bluffs Blvd box assigned by the post office.
2. Collects all invoices and pays vendors accordingly by check or use of the debit card. All invoices with the corresponding payments are sent to the accountant monthly. The Treasurer is responsible for obtaining a W9 for all new vendors and maintaining 1099 compliance with the accountant.
3. Is responsible for working with the accountant to make sure all transactions are recorded appropriately. They review all financial statements and the general ledger detail created by the accountant for accuracy. Works with the accountant to ensure homeowners are invoiced properly for their dues.
4. Works with the HOA Secretary and accountant to maintain an owner list with current and updated information. This is done via a shared Google Doc.
5. Works with all title companies to report/release any liens and dues owed on behalf of the seller at the time of closing during a proprietary sale.
6. Works with the accountant to make sure all DORA and SOS filings are completed on time.
7. Works with the board or our legal firm to follow all compliance procedures for collections on homeowners in arrears.
8. Creates the annual budget and presents it to the membership for approval at the October meeting. The Treasurer presents financial reports and addresses financial problems or areas of concern to the membership at these meetings.

Why Do We Need an HOA, Anyway?

Sally Planalp

As Secretary, I occasionally hear grumblings that we would be better off without the HOA; it takes our money and does nothing! Asking what would happen if the HOA were unable to function or disbanded is a reasonable question and worth discussion, but it is helpful when we all share relevant information before opening that discussion. This is my understanding of the situation.

The City of Cortez approved the Southern Bluffs subdivision on the condition that there be an HOA responsible for governing and maintaining commonly held property. For SBHOA, that means the clubhouse, park, streets, and medians. SBHOA was established in 2006, per the CC&R's (Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions). These are our governing documents, along with our Bylaws, Responsible Governance Policies, and 135 single-spaced pages of Colorado Law related to HOAs (see DOCUMENTS at southernbluffshoa.com). According to Colorado Law, anyone who buys property in the subdivision automatically becomes a member of the HOA, responsible for dues and is required to abide by the governing documents.

As best I can tell, if the HOA is dissolved, the process would be governed by the CITY OF CORTEZ LAND USE CODE, Current Version March 22, 2023, 6.08 - Mandatory homeowners' association (currently being updated) (https://library.municode.com/co/cortez/codes/land_use?nodeId=LAND_USE_CODE_CH6ADPR). Without an HOA, all property owners in the subdivision would still be responsible for the maintenance of commonly held property, but the City of Cortez would take over and charge owners for maintenance.

One option might be to sell all common assets so there is nothing to maintain: the streets, park, and clubhouse. At this time, we cannot pay the city to take over the streets, much less buy them. This would probably be the same for the park. We don't know if anyone else would want these assets and accept responsibility for them, but its hard to imagine who. Even if we could find a buyer, a least 67% of property owners would have to approve the sale, including those in undeveloped areas, many with whom we have no contact; quite an uphill battle!

In past meetings, it has been suggested that the clubhouse be sold. Although it may sound like a good idea, there are several issues. All the infrastructure for irrigating the landscaped areas is in the clubhouse. Moving it would require either fitting the guard hut for that equipment (if possible) or adding another small building. The clubhouse lot would have to be subdivided and replatted because it contains the area with the mailboxes. These problems could probably be overcome . . .

. . . but there are bigger issues: The subdivision would lose control of the clubhouse. What would it do to property values if, for example, it became a marijuana dispensary, or how would residents feel if a business with high volume traffic went in? It is also important to note that this subdivision is zoned MH (manufactured homes). Without an HOA, we would have no control over the types of housing in the subdivision (including houses with second floors), and the City has few or no regulations pertaining to landscaping, lawn signs, or RV's parked on the streets.

If the City takes control of maintenance of HOA property, it will be at their discretion and may not meet the standards residents have come to expect. Residents would also have no collective voice in negotiating what the city may charge to maintain these areas. Keep in mind that a significant amount of maintenance is currently done by volunteers. Based on the HOA Board's interactions with the City over the streets, my view is that the City would not be inclined to be generous with Southern Bluffs and perhaps even less so if burdened with maintaining what has become their property.

Southern Bluffs Owners Association

Proposed Budget: 2025

2025

Projected Income	
86 Houses @ \$75/month	77,400.00
Houses under construction	2,430.00
Vacant Lots	20,790.00
Vacant Tracts	1,080.00
Clubhouse Income	4,000.00
Mail Box Reimbursement	200.00
Construction Impact Fees \$800*2	1,600.00

TOTAL INCOME **107,500.00**

Projected Expenses:	
Bank Service Charges	(60.00)
Insurance D&O Lawn	(600.00)
Maintenance & Landscaping	(20,000.00)
Website/advertising State	(300.00)
License & Permits	(100.00)

Clubhouse:

Services & Labor (contracted cleaning, repairs, etc.)	(2,400.00)
Repairs & Maintenance	(1,000.00)
Furniture & Equipment	(200.00)
Supplies	(500.00)
Phone	(150.00)
Utilities	(3,500.00)
Insurance	(2,600.00)

(10,350.00)

Postage & Office Supplies	(740.00)
Professional Services	
Accounting	(5,000.00)
Legal	(500.00)
Repairs and Maintenance	(5,000.00)
Snow Removal	(1,000.00)
Utilities	(15,000.00)
Weed Control	(3,000.00)
Taxes	(450.00)
Street Maintenance	(25,000.00)
Reserve Account	(15,000.00)

TOTAL PROJECTED EXPENSES **(102,100.00)**

5,400.00