



# Soapstone Cluster Homeowners Association

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

**Date:** December 17, 2025

**Time:** 7:01 p.m.

**Location:** Virtual (Video Conference)

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at **7:01 p.m.** by **Sebila Raubacher, President.**

### 2. Roll Call / Establishment of Quorum

Board members present:

- **Sebila Raubacher** – President
- **Jeff Davis** – Treasurer
- **Adam Smith** – Secretary

A quorum was established.

Several residents were present and participated in the discussion.

### 3. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

The **November 2025 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes** had been previously reviewed and approved by the Board and distributed to residents.

**Motion:** To approve the November 2025 meeting minutes

**Moved by:** Jeff D.

**Second:** Adam Smith

**Vote:** Approved unanimously

### 4. Resident Open Forum

A resident expressed appreciation for recently installed pathway lighting, noting improved visibility and safety.

No additional resident comments were raised at this time.

### 5. Treasurer's Financial Report

**Presented by:** Jeff D., Treasurer

**Financial status and updates:**

- One Certificate of Deposit (CD) that matured in November was renewed for a 12-month term due to favorable interest rates.
- A second matured CD was moved into a more liquid money market account to support capital and operating needs.
- The Association is projected to end the fiscal year without a loss, in part due to the assessment increase approved earlier in the year.

#### **Assessment delinquencies:**

- Approximately eleven accounts were delinquent earlier in the fall.
- Five accounts have since paid.
- Three accounts remain in long-term delinquency and are in active lien status.
- The Board is working with legal counsel to pursue collections while complying with legal requirements.

#### **Collections and enforcement discussion:**

- The Board discussed possible use of third-party collection agencies and credit reporting.
- Legal counsel has advised that credit reporting generally requires a court judgment.
- Garnishment and lien enforcement were discussed, as well as the significant costs associated with foreclosure.
- Residents shared experiences from other associations that use contingency-based collection agencies.

The Board agreed to continue discussions with legal counsel to evaluate feasible enforcement options.

## **6. Draft Budget Discussion (Upcoming Fiscal Year)**

The Board discussed the **draft budget**, noting that it remains a work in progress.

Key topics included:

- **Assessment Levels:**  
The Board is considering a modest assessment increase (approximately 1–3%) to address rising operating and reserve costs while minimizing homeowner impact.
- **Snow Removal:**  
Early winter treatments have already resulted in expenses. Snow removal remains a variable and weather-dependent cost.
- **Bad Debt:**  
The inclusion of a bad-debt line item was discussed. The Board agreed to further evaluate whether legal and procedural improvements could reduce the need for this assumption.
- **Tree Care:**  
The Board discussed whether to budget approximately \$20,000 or \$25,000 for tree work.
  - Many high-risk trees have been addressed in prior phases.
  - Tree care remains a major liability and safety concern.
  - The Board emphasized the importance of careful evaluation, second opinions, and avoiding conflicts of interest when determining tree removal.
- **Landscaping Contract:**  
The current landscaping contract expires April 1, 2026. The Board plans to solicit competitive bids due to performance concerns and to evaluate cost and service quality.

- **Bamboo Removal / Invasive Species:**

Bamboo removal is not covered by the invasive species grant.

Environmental concerns and costs were discussed.

The Board will seek written estimates before determining next steps.

No budget decisions were finalized.

## **7. Discussion: Maintenance & Inspection Procedures**

The Board discussed proposed **maintenance and inspection procedures**, which have been circulated to residents for comment.

Key points included:

- The goal of creating a **fair, consistent, and transparent inspection process**.
- Inspections would be conducted **by the Board**, not by individual residents, and generally limited to once per year.
- The procedures are intended to align with **Reston Association requirements** while providing a clearer internal process.
- Residents raised concerns about subjectivity, enforcement scope, and whether structural items should be included.
- The Board emphasized that the procedures are meant to **help streamline enforcement** and reduce arbitrary complaints.

Comments are open through **December 31**, and the document will continue to be refined.

**No motion was made, and no adoption occurred.**

## **8. Discussion: House Number Standards**

The Board discussed **draft house number standards**, developed using Fairfax County visibility guidelines and Reston Association input.

Discussion highlights:

- Visibility and readability from the street were emphasized.
- Proposed standards focus on size (approximately 4–6 inches), placement, and visibility, rather than aesthetics.
- Existing **blue plaque house numbers** would be grandfathered.
- Residents raised concerns regarding installation challenges, particularly with Hardy Plank siding.
- Nighttime visibility and lighting conditions were discussed, with agreement that wording may need clarification.
- The Board clarified that the intent is not to require immediate changes but to reduce future compliance issues, especially during property sales.

The draft standards have been submitted to Reston Association for review.

**No motion was made, and no adoption occurred.**

## 9. Action Items

- **Board / Treasurer:** Continue consultation with legal counsel regarding delinquency enforcement options, including collections agencies and credit reporting.
- **Board:** Continue refining the draft budget, particularly tree care, bad debt, and landscaping projections.
- **President / Board:** Solicit competitive landscaping bids for the upcoming contract term.
- **Board:** Obtain written estimates for bamboo removal and assess environmental considerations.
- **Board:** Continue refining inspection procedures based on resident feedback.
- **Board:** Await Reston Association and resident written feedback on house number standards before considering formal adoption.

## 10. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately **9:00 p.m.**