

Valleyhi Community Club, Inc. Newsletter

valleyhicomunityclub.org

May 2021

Reservoir Replacement Project

While many businesses and activities have been shut down or curtailed due to covid restrictions, including monthly Valleyhi meetings, the Board has been working to procure funding for our reservoir replacement project. Our 23,000-gallon reservoir was built in 1978. It has functioned amazingly well for 43 years. Those of you who live above playground level know that sometimes you do not have water just because the water level in the reservoir is so low. We know our reservoir is undersized. In 2017 we hired John Torrence of Torrence Engineering in Cashmere to complete a Project Report. He determined that our community needs a 131,000-gallon reservoir. Based on the construction estimate from a reservoir-building company, we could have a 150,000-gallon reservoir for slightly more money than the required 131,000 gallon one.

Our last construction project—replacing all main and distribution lines in our system and installing water meters—was completed in 2009. We received a 20-year loan from Washington State's Department of Health (DOH) in the amount of \$734,000, with a 1.25% interest rate. We have been paying approximately \$45,000 per year in payments. That loan will be paid off in 2028.

We began talks with United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA RD) in 2018. We had several meetings with a Rural Development representative. DOH required updating of our Small Water System Management Plan (SWSMP). That work was completed in 2020. We explored applying for an additional DOH loan. Once the preliminary reservoir construction estimates were gathered, the reservoir was estimated to cost a minimum of \$425,000. Our Board could not saddle our community with that additional debt load, so we did not apply for a second DOH loan. We are resuming talks with USDA RD and are assured of receiving at least a 45% grant. We are applying for a pre-planning grant with USDA RD, which needs to be submitted by July. We are asking for \$30,000 to be used for engineering work, specifically an engineering report and an environmental report. Next, we will apply for a construction grant and loan, due July 2022. Once approved, we will begin reservoir construction in 2023. We are assured that our project will be approved.

Welcome, New Members. We look forward to meeting you.

Joseph & Lisa Estey, 3536 Hansel Lane

Scott & Caitlin Huson, 3309 Hansel Lane

Shelby Render, 3419 Ingalls Lane

Jason Ringel, 3504 Hansel Lane

Gregorio Romero & Marina Guzman, 3582 Hansel Lane

Andrew Rigazio & Kimble McCraw, 3156 Hansel Lane

Moria & James Gebhard, 3346 Allen Lane

Water System Maintenance Fee and Community Dues

The annual statements for our water system maintenance fees and community dues have arrived in our mailboxes. These payments are due by May 31st. The water system maintenance fee is \$670.35, and the community dues are \$66.00 for a total of \$736.35. To avoid any unpleasant rebilling fees, interest charges, or in a worst-case scenario, a possible water shut-off, we all need to pay the full amount of \$736.35 by the due date of May 31st. Anyone wishing to make monthly, quarterly, or even biannual payments for *next year's fee* can send the payments to: Valleyhi Community Club, Inc., P.O. Box 292, Peshastin, WA 98847. Many members have already taken advantage of these payment plans. Please remember that our Treasurer cannot take any payments; they must be sent to the address above. Also important to remember, members with outstanding balances when voting begins at the annual meeting, will not be eligible to vote.

2021 Annual Membership Meeting

Covid restrictions have made it difficult to find a venue for our annual meeting. We couldn't find anything for our usual time in June, but we were able to book the Ingalls Creek Center for Sunday, September 26th at 2:00 PM. Depending on what restrictions may be in place at the time, the number of people that can occupy that space could be severely limited, so we will continue to be on the lookout for something bigger to open up. Because we did not meet last year, we have four trustee positions to vote on instead of the usual one or two. The Sale of Lot 1 and Motorized Vehicle Use in the Park will also be on the ballot. If you would like to be a candidate for Trustee, please call the secretary, Peggi Lopez, at 548-0594 by August 13th. If you decide you would like to run after that date, you can still run as a write-in candidate. You will receive an annual meeting mailing near the end of August. Included in this mailing will be a Proxy Form. The Proxy Form is not a ballot. Please read it carefully. The Proxy Form is for members to use when unable to attend the meeting. It enables members to choose someone to cast their vote for them by writing in the name of a person they know will be at the meeting. Sign and date the form, and return it in the envelope provided. **A completely filled out form is necessary for the proxy to be valid.** The importance of either voting in person or by choosing a proxy to vote on your behalf and returning your proxy form cannot be stressed enough. In order for a vote to be valid, we must have a quorum. This quorum is established by the number of members present in person plus the number of members present by proxy. If we do not reach a quorum, a second election and a second mailing for that election will be required. Again, the importance of either voting in person or by choosing a proxy to vote on your behalf and sending in your proxy form cannot be stressed enough. Thank you for participating by proxy if you are unable to attend the meeting in person. Remember, members with outstanding balances will not be in good standing and will be ineligible to vote. We usually have a potluck after the meeting, but due to all the issues with the pandemic, there will not be a potluck this year. See you in September if covid restrictions allow!

Volunteer Opportunities for Trustee Positions

There are four more opportunities for volunteers. Four trustees are up for election this year on the Board of Trustees. Terms are normally for three years. However, because we couldn't meet to vote last year due to the pandemic, two of the positions will be serving only the remaining two years of the terms. Currently, meetings are taking place every month. They usually last about two hours and are held the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 pm. Our bylaws outline the responsibilities of officers and trustees. Like everyone, all of our Board members are aging, some are older than 70. We could definitely use some younger blood. If you are interested, please contact our secretary, Peggi Lopez, at valleyhiboardcontact@gmail.com.

Snowmobiling in the Park

My backyard is adjacent to the community common area. We've owned the place over 10 years, and I'm retired and hunkered down here because of Covid. I am writing to discuss the concerns of the increasing number of snowmobiles in the community common area. The high-pitched noise has kept me up late and up early, more than once. The concern for the speed at which they ride, the close proximity to my yard, where my grandchildren play, and the disregard for the "no motorized vehicles" signs is highly concerning. I also have a concern about the legal liability that Valleyhi and its members have regarding when an accident occurs on the common area property. I say "when" because due to their speed, riding at night, playground equipment, and disregard for people walking out there, it is only a matter of time.

When the snowmobilers appear, they are out there for hours or days at a time. Two days ago, some (I think 3) were out there until almost 11pm. I spoke to the secretary of the board last year and she suggested I call the sheriff about the noise. I have, in fact, called the sheriff about four times now. My daughter also called once when a snowmobile buzzed her toddler in the playground last year. I spoke to a deputy last night who suggested I try speaking to the snowmobilers, as Valleyhi common area is private property, so he can't do anything. The sheriff said the HOA handles it. So, I tried to speak to the snowmobilers. The first one wound up riding by while giving me the finger. The second group I spoke to at least listened, in the beginning. I told them there are signs posted stating no motorized vehicles are allowed on the playground area. He replied that he never voted for that and would continue to ride here whenever he felt like it. I mentioned that this is a residential area with children and the disturbance to the neighbors and children is pretty bad. I also mentioned the possible pond damage caused by riding around in the pond. I said that it probably wasn't good for the pond walls to be riding snowmobiles in it. He said he only uses the pond to turn around, but I have seen them – airborne – jumping their machines out of the pond. I said there's a snow-park just up the road. At that point he just roared off.

The only thing I accomplished was they now scream by my backdoor faster, louder, and closer. One of them did give me the finger.

The narrative you have just read is from a fellow community club member who is concerned, and rightly so, about the potentially dangerous problem with people snowmobiling in Valleyhi's common park area. If someone were to be injured as a result, each and every lot owner in our community could be held financially liable. Add to that the intolerable noise level, the awful fuel smell, property damage to the pond, dock, and playground equipment, and private property damage. Because of all that, this issue will be on the ballot for this year's annual meeting in September. This issue was discussed by the membership at our last annual meeting in June of 2019. The general consensus was that for all the reasons mentioned above, snowmobiling in the park is dangerous and should not happen. Hopefully, each of us will carefully consider this issue and be ready to vote on it in September. There are other places close by for people to ride their snowmobiles.

Contacts for water emergencies or concerns

For Water Emergencies

Jason Williams, Water Distribution Manager, 509-885-6920

Jim Wolf, Trustee, 509-548-7498

**(If emergency work is performed on the homeowner's side of the system,
the homeowner will be responsible for all charges incurred.)**

For Water Concerns

Mike Weil, Trustee, 509-548-4610

Water System Maintenance Fee Increase

Prior to our last fee increase in 2020, we had not had an increase since 2010—ten full years. The 2010 increase was the last in a series of four increases we had to commit to in order to qualify for the Department of Health loan needed to fund our first construction project. Instead of choosing to raise fees by \$60, as we did in 2010, our Board has decided we need to build in a 5% percentage increase to our water maintenance fee every year. That 5% percent increase equals \$33.52 for 2022. This amount will be added to our current maintenance fee of \$670.35, making the yearly maintenance fee \$703.87 for the 2022-23 budget year. A yearly increase will allow each of us to build this amount into our budget and is necessary for our community club to afford the funding for our new reservoir. We thank all of you for your timely maintenance fee payments.

Opportunity Knocking

Our Valleyhi residential development is comprised of a combination of both private property (individual lots) and community property (common area spaces). The common area spaces include several designated walkways, the large field, playground and pond area, plus two separate neighborhood lots.

One of these lots is easily recognizable and often used, located on Allen Lane and on record as Lot 18 within the Valleyhi plat map. The area has a sign that invites all to use it for access to Peshastin Creek, it is mowed and maintained by the Valleyhi Community Club board members and volunteers and includes a lovely path down to the creek and a mini-beach area. There is a second, less recognizable property on record as Lot 1 of our VCC development. This lot is located closest to the Ingalls Creek Bridge and provides a much more challenging access point to the creek. A pathway development project of this lot which could potentially make it a viable area for community members would require significant cost to our membership and may not add any value to the development as a whole; we already have an established creek access point in the center of our community.

Recently, the owners of Lot 2 have inquired about the potential to purchase Lot 1 from the VCC. The purchase offer is especially appealing at this time, when our Trustees are actively seeking funding sources to facilitate the cost of a much needed new water reservoir. The cost of the needed new reservoir is about \$200,000.00 at this time; the current economy has construction costs rising. Potential funding solutions for this project under consideration include seeking grant money, low interest loans, and unfortunately passing on a portion of the expense to our residents through a special fee assessment. While the sale of Lot 2 will not spare us from all other options, it will decrease the amount of money that may need to be passed on to our own private pocketbooks.

The sale of community property within Valleyhi Community Club does require the majority vote of the membership, we hope that you will all consider this option as we prepare for our next Annual Membership Meeting where the Board of Trustees intends to put the issue to a vote by the membership.

Volunteers

How delightful to welcome new members into our community and have those members volunteer to work on community projects. Some of the projects we need volunteers for are the following: help build a new bulletin board at the entrance, help mow the playground and around the pond, do a spring cleanup on our community lot by picking up, and help with some ongoing painting projects. If you are able to volunteer your time, please send an email to our secretary, Peggi Lopez, at valleyhiboardcontact@gmail.com and let her know what projects interest you. Thank you, fellow community members.

FIREWISE

Steep slopes, limited road access, excess fuel on public and private lands, and distance to additional firefighting resources put our Valleyhi community at risk from wildfire.

In September 2012, due to an extreme fire season, individual wildfire risk assessments were conducted on almost all the homes in our community. The vast majority of those risk assessments identified properties in Valleyhi as having a High or Extreme Hazard rating. Some of the rating factors such as climate and steep slope cannot be helped, but there are things you can do to reduce the hazard rating of your property. Fuel reduction around your home – creating a defensible space – is one action within your power to reduce the risk to your home in the face of a wildfire.

Because we live in a fire community, we must take responsibility for minimizing damage to our properties from wildfires. The **first 30 feet** around your home is of the most concern. It should be well irrigated. Plants should be lush or low to the ground. Choose plants that won't catch fire easily. Junipers and arborvitae aren't good choices as they are very combustible. If you have trees on your property, prune them so that the lowest branches are 6-10 feet from the ground. A very important part of minimizing the damage is yearly **maintenance**, because after you have pruned your trees and bushes, they do grow back.

Most homes don't burn with the initial fire front. It usually happens 24-48 hours after the fire danger has passed because of the burning embers left behind. These embers can take flight and land on debris around your home such as wood piles, pine needles, leaves, and other debris left in gutters, on your roof, under the eaves, or under the deck. Keep the area around your home free of all debris. Remove anything stored under your decks or porches. A Firewise checklist of many more things you can do to protect your home and property and informational handouts are available at the monthly Board meetings, which are held the third Thursday of every month.

Something easily overlooked in a wildfire situation is the inside of your home. For instance, did you know that the heat coming through your windows will cause your light, lacy curtains to catch fire inside your home? These will need to be removed before you leave your home in the case that you are asked to evacuate, and overstuffed furniture should be moved to the center of the room. And then there is the issue of your garage. You will need to close the garage door and remove anything from inside that is combustible. Wildland firefighters cannot go inside your home. Again, handouts with information on what to do to be prepared for a wildfire situation are available at our monthly Board meetings. Another resource is www.firewise.org.

Firewise

We all know it's just a matter of time before the next wildfire threatens our community and the surrounding wilderness. Being "fire-wise" will help us to understand and withstand that threat. We need a volunteer to get a Firewise Program for Valleyhi off the ground. Responsibilities include a community assessment, working with wildland/urban specialists, organizing a cleanup of fire dangers in Valleyhi, communicating and working with local fire professionals, maintaining the Firewise Program, and reporting annually to the community. If interested in taking on this critical task, contact the secretary, Peggi Lopez, at valleyhiboardcontact@gmail.com.

Valleyhi Board Meetings

In order to make it easier for you to attend the Valleyhi Board meetings, we are now conveniently meeting at 97 Rock House, right across the highway from Valleyhi. Also, because the Board hasn't been able to meet for a while due to covid restrictions, the meetings are taking place monthly instead of bimonthly. The day of the meetings is still the third Thursday of the month, but the time has changed to 6:00 PM. Please come and participate as we tackle the difficult task of finding funding for the reservoir. This is also your opportunity to discuss the things that are important to you and to meet other community members. Notice of the meetings is posted on the bulletin board and the website, which is: valleyhicomunityclub.org.

Contact Your Board of Trustees

Trustees:

~Tom Freeburg @ 425-306-9290

~Susan Raley @ 548-7903

~Mike Weil @ 548-4610

~Jim Wolf @ 548-7498

One Position Currently Vacant

President:

~Karl Ruether
@ 888-2757

Vice President:

~Danielle Small
@253-722-9859

Adopt-a-Hydrant

Volunteers are needed to keep Valleyhi's eight fire hydrants clear of snow during the winter months. Look to see if there is a hydrant near you. If you would like to adopt a hydrant, please contact the secretary, Peggi Lopez, at valleyhiboardcontact@gmail.com. When volunteers agree to keep the surrounding snow away during the winter, our volunteer firefighters are free to attend to other work.

Official Valleyhi Community Club Website

Back in 2012, Kimiko Nalle suggested that Valleyhi Community Club, Inc. put up a website in order to keep the membership informed. The website was up and running by summer of that year. We honor her memory. There is so much valuable information on our site, but very few people visit it. Check it out, please, and let us know how we might improve the content to include what you would like to see or read about: valleyhicomunityclub.org.

2021 Annual Spring Cleanup Day

A small group of volunteers gathered on the morning of Saturday, April 24th. Many people had completed the following jobs before that Saturday and some were completed afterward. The area around the outside of the pond was burned in preparation for filling the pond with water. The trail up to the Allen Creek diversion was cleared. The diversion was cleaned of mud and debris. Cleaning the screens has to be done frequently throughout the spring and summer. New swing seats were installed. Branches from fallen trees and bushes were cut and dragged to the burn pile. The hops were weeded. The snow poles were collected and stored. Garbage was picked up in the pond area and around the playground. The pile of chips above the baseball diamond was leveled and spread out. Roots were pulled up from the fallen Hawthorne at the corner of the pond parking lot. Thank you to all the volunteers -- the new members and longstanding ones. It was a productive day.

**“There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving,
and that's yourself.**

~ Aldous Huxley