Our home is important to us. It is a place of refuge to share with family, friends and for some, our four-legged companions. For most of us, it is our most valuable asset. Living in a small planned community such as ours, we all share responsibility to maintain both our home and the complex as a whole.

The current economic climate has posed challenges for each of us and for the HOA. Prices in the Phoenix metropolitan area have increased approximately 13% and for some expenses, even more.

Over the past two years, the Board has negotiated with both current and previous vendors to ensure that contractual obligations are met and expenses are kept in line. Through this process, the Board has been able to reduce certain charges and has obtained about $5,000 from vendors for non-performance. We have also continued to request bids for ongoing services to determine if there is a possibility for savings without losing the quality of service. We have found that there are less vendors even willing to bid the work. In other words, the Board has done and will continue to do everything within its power to control HOA costs.

*After a comprehensive analysis of the proposed budget and very difficult discussions, consistent with the Board’s fiduciary responsibilities under the CC&Rs, the decision was made to increase the monthly assessment by 10% to $396. This is below the average increases experienced by the HOA of 13% to 18%. The increase will be effective January 1, 2023.*

The decision to increase the monthly assessment was not made lightly and every attempt was made to prevent an assessment increase. The current assessment could not be maintained without jeopardizing safety, maintenance of the complex and property values.

Homeowners ask, how is my monthly assessment used? In summary, here is what your assessment is used for:

* 41% Landscaping & Common Area Maintenance and Repair
* 14% Pool
* 19% Utilities
* 11% Insurance, Administrative and Professional Services
* 15% Reserve

Some homeowners may ask, why not just reduce the reserve? Professionals recommend that HOA keep a minimum of 3 to 6 months of expenditures in the reserve. For our HOA, this means approximately $17,000 to $34,000. Think of the reserve as insurance against unanticipated and needed expenditures. In the past three years, reserve funds have been used to resurface the pool and the street and well as for tree and plant installation.

The Strawberry Hill reserve is currently about $31,500 but there are $7,500 in prepaid assessments which leaves the balance at $24,000. With a complex almost 50 years old, the infrastructure wears out or breaks down and must be repaired to maintain property values as well as quality of living. To date, the Board has been able to complete necessary projects without the need for a special assessment. *This is not to say that there will not be a need for a special assessment in the future.*

The Board will continue to carefully monitor expenses and vendor performance. HOA funds will continue to be handled with care and respect. We are all members of this unique HOA complex and are committed to keeping this a good place to live and enjoy – and to be proud of!

Your Board of Directors – Carol Patterson, Carol Shutt and Mary Elizabeth Tack