

Soapstone Cluster HOA

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: April 15, 2026

Time: 7:04 PM

Location: Virtual (Microsoft Teams)

I. Call to Order & Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM. A quorum was confirmed with all Board members present.

II. Resident Open Forum

A. Grant Terms & Mulching Clarification

A resident requested clarification regarding the terms of a prior conservation-related grant, specifically:

- Whether mulching is permitted or prohibited
- The geographic scope of the grant area
- Whether past mulching activities were compliant

Concerns were raised that:

- Documentation is not currently maintained in HOA records
- Practices in the area appear inconsistent

Board Response / Action:

- Board will request and obtain official grant documentation
 - Documentation will be added to HOA records
 - Future decisions will be guided by confirmed grant terms
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B. Erosion, Drainage, and Ground Conditions

Residents and Board discussed ongoing erosion and muddy conditions in multiple areas, including:

- Between Upper and Lower Hearthstone
- Behind homes in shaded areas
- Near drainage infrastructure

Key Issues Identified:

- Heavy foot traffic contributing to erosion
- Poor drainage and runoff from downspouts
- Lack of vegetation in shaded areas
- Mud accumulation creating safety concerns

Discussion Points:

- Wood chips vs. mulch (durability vs. aesthetics)
- Extending downspouts further into wooded areas
- Use of shade-tolerant, deer-resistant plantings (e.g., ferns, ground cover)

Actions:

- Fairfax County contacted to inspect and clean drainage infrastructure
 - Board to evaluate extending downspouts
 - Continued use of wood chips in high-erosion areas
 - Explore planting solutions for shaded areas
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III. Financial Report

A. Annuity Funds

- Annuity liquidation finalized in January 2026
- Funds remain in operating account pending allocation
- Approximately \$7,300 in tax liability identified

Issue:

- Determination needed on allocation between operating and reserve funds

Decision:

- Board will consult with auditor before making final allocation decision
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B. Reserve Investments

- Reserve funds invested in CDs at approximately 3.95%
 - Maturities extend into late 2026 and early 2027
 - Board noted current investments are performing well
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C. FY2026 Preliminary Financials

- Approximate operating loss: \$2,300 (preliminary)

Key Variances:

- Snow removal over budget
 - Legal expenses increased due to collections
 - Administrative costs increased (resale packets)
 - Interest income exceeded expectations
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D. Delinquent Accounts & Cash Flow

- Approximately \$15,000 in unpaid assessments
- Majority attributable to three homeowners

Actions Underway:

- Legal action initiated against all three homeowners
- Liens filed
- Potential garnishment or foreclosure under review

Discussion:

- Ongoing cash flow challenges due to delinquencies
 - Operating shortfalls currently offset by prior retained earnings
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IV. Investment Policy (Draft)**A. Purpose**

The Board presented a draft Investment Policy intended to:

- Establish clear guidelines for investing HOA funds
 - Prevent inappropriate financial decisions
 - Provide continuity across future Boards
 - Allow for improved returns while maintaining safety
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B. Core Principles

- **Preservation of Principal** (primary objective)
 - **Liquidity aligned with reserve needs**
 - **Investment time horizons tied to reserve study**
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C. Risk Discussion

- Board acknowledged wide variation in resident risk tolerance
 - Emphasized HOA funds require **very low risk exposure**
 - Concern raised that even temporary losses could create resident concern
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D. Draft Policy Concerns

- A provision allowing higher-risk investments such as securities (“fourth bullet”) was discussed
- Feedback indicated it may conflict with preservation of capital

Consensus:

- Provision will be removed
 - Added Municipal Bonds as one of the allowable investments
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E. Governance Importance

- Policy will:
 - Guide future Boards
 - Prevent unilateral decisions
 - Protect Board members from liability
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F. Outcome

- No vote taken
- Draft remains under review

Next Steps:

- Revise draft based on feedback
 - Circulate updated version for further review
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V. Tree Management**A. Arborist Assessments**

- Two independent arborist evaluations completed
 - Priority work estimated at approximately \$21,000
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B. Resident Concerns

- Concerns raised regarding:
 - Removal of potentially healthy trees
 - Impact on wooded character of community
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C. Board Position

- Decisions based on professional arborist recommendations
 - Effort made to:
 - Obtain multiple opinions
 - Prioritize trimming over removal where possible
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D. Compliance

- Tree removal subject to Reston Association (RA) approval requirements

Action:

- Board to confirm and provide documentation of RA approvals as needed
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VI. Landscaping Contract**A. Vendor Selection**

- Blake Landscaping selected following competitive bidding
 - Approximate savings: \$10,000 annually
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B. Service Issues

- Residents noted incomplete debris cleanup

Action:

- Board to follow up with contractor to address outstanding cleanup
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C. Landscaping Challenges

- Increasing areas of bare soil and mulch

- Difficulty establishing vegetation due to shade and deer

Next Steps:

- Explore shade-tolerant plantings
 - Utilize available budget savings for improvements
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VII. Inspections

- HOA inspection procedures previously adopted
- **Inspection Date:** June 7, 2026

Details:

- All homes to be inspected in one day
 - Focus on visible exterior maintenance
 - Residents to receive advance notice and follow-up if needed
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VIII. Fence Design Standards

A. Review of Draft Standards

- Board reviewed updated Fence Design Standards
 - Updates primarily clarify existing requirements and expand color guidance
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B. Resident Concern

- A resident expressed concern about being “out of compliance” under updated standards

Board Clarification:

- Existing fences with prior DRB approval are expected to be **grandfathered**
 - Board will **confirm this interpretation with Reston Association**
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C. Decision

- Board agreed to **submit the draft Fence Design Standards to the Reston Association Design Review Board (DRB)**
 - Submission is for:
 - Final review and approval
 - Inclusion in official HOA design standards
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IX. Key Action Items

- Obtain and archive grant documentation
 - Follow up with county on drainage and erosion issues
 - Evaluate downspout extensions
 - Contact landscaper for debris cleanup
 - Confirm RA approvals for tree removals
 - Follow up with attorney on collections actions
 - Proceed with audit engagement
 - Issue inspection notices to residents
 - Revise Investment Policy draft
 - Submit Fence Standards to RA DRB
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X. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned following completion of agenda items.