Plumwood Terrace Building D Meeting

Tuesday, May 14, 2019

Board President Scott Caldwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Board members present: Scott Caldwell, Jan Laue, Kent Taylor, Ward Leete. Also, John Ruppe, Building D Liaison; Randy Snider, Rochon.

Scott introduced Randy Snider for an update on Building D.

Randy reported on the structural design failure. Doug Wells hired Kari, an engineer from Sebern Structural, who has admitted making a mistake. This is the first time this has happened to her in 15 years. The weight of the building has caused the joist to deflect, and it is not structurally sound to move forward and add any further weight. To fix the problem, they will have to install 42 I-beams down the central bay area. These will become the new structure. They will do a review and when it is stable, the work will continue. Rochon recognizes the hardship on the residents. They are making progress, but it is unfortunate that this would happen. They are working to get to the solution and get back on track.

Q & A followed.

Q: Does the slab need to be replaced?

A: Not at this time. I-beams will be shored individually to create a level slab. It will be raised 1/8” at a time. The raise will be gradual and will be inspected. The whole slab definitely will not need to be replaced.

Q: Is it cracked?

A: There are some hairline cracks, but none are structural.

Q: Who is doing the work?

A: They are hiring a company that does this, a steel erection company that has a lot of experience. They gave good advice on the process and it has been cleared with a structural engineer.

Q: What percent is the likelihood of success?

A: Can’t really answer in terms of a percentage, but Randy has never had this happen in over 30 years, although others in the metro area have been successful.

Q: When will it be finished?

A: Randy hopes to have a timeline by the end of the week. The part that is most unpredictable is the turnaround time for the insurance company.

Q: When will they start?

A: They are waiting for the design from the architect to determine the cost and submit it to insurance. They hope to get it by Thursday and get a timeline. They are not going to do anything until they get a check, but don’t know how quickly that will go.

Q: What is the process for checking the framing?

A: The framer will send in a crew to check the framing after the slab is stabilized. Doors, walls, windows, etc. will be checked, and necessary changes will be made.

Q: How long will it take to get steel?

A: Steel is expected 3 weeks from ordering. Randy explained how they will weld the beams. 24-ft. I-beams will go from east to west down the center.

Q: What about the ceiling in the garage?

A: The beams in the center will conflict with some plumbing lines, so the ceiling needs to drop a couple inches.

Q: Are we going to go after State Farm or Wells for causing the delay?

A: We will be discussing this. Last week the board submitted a letter to the engineer notifying them that we would be taking legal action to recover damages on behalf of the Building D owners. We are working with new legal counsel to address all unreasonable delays. The rebuild is bigger than one year, but should have been less than 2.

Q: How did we pick the attorney?

* A: Our attorney has been with us for a very long time. We met with him several times early on. When it seemed to be taking too long for the architect’s plans, we had him write a letter to Wells. Wells then immediately submitted plans, but they were inadequate for the bid. By the end of July we finally had plans that could be bid. Bids were in by August 15. John explained that five companies were asked to bid, but two declined. Hubbell, Balmer-Erickson and Rochon submitted bids. Hubbell was quite a bit higher, with Balmer-Erickson and Rochon submitting similar bids pricewise. Rochon, however, had a shorter timeline and was awarded the bid in early September. Randy said they ordered the steel even before they got the permit. The city of Urbandale made a change in the basement ceiling which added 3 more weeks. We are told our attorney is retiring, so we are looking for a new attorney who is experienced in construction and will probably be more expensive.

Residents commented that we need to help each other. We expect a lot from a board that is volunteer and doesn’t get paid. There is a vacancy now due to a death. Others should run for the board, and recognize that being on the board comes with responsibility.

There was much discussion concerning vendors. Many vendors didn’t seem to know what they were dealing with. Some didn’t return calls. Some owners need to submit invoices for upgrades to their insurance companies by June 30, although claims for others are not closed until they move in. Randy will put together a detailed selection list and vendors, but he needs to know what people want so he can communicate that to the vendors. There were questions regarding “good, better, best” choices. There will be one-on-one meetings and Randy will bring samples to Plumwood for owners to make selections. Wells is supposed to be drawing up the brick and tile options for fireplace surrounds. They are still waiting for a 2nd bid on pricing for enclosures.

It was suggested that the biggest problem is communication; residents want to be notified immediately and in writing. Choices by owners, vendors, etc. need to be in writing.

Owners are responsible for free-standing appliances, which can be moved in at occupancy. Nebraska Furniture Mart was cited as a vendor who will work with residents and seems to offer a good deal. Installed appliances are GE from Ferguson Factory Direct, but owners can get credit if they want something else.

Additional questions:

Are we underinsured? We are insured for replacement value at current code.

Can dues for Building D Residents be reduced or waived? Bylaws state that all owners pay an equal amount.

Has the board discussed other ways they can help? Nancy Squires volunteered to inquire about agency resources, but was not able to find anything substantive that would address residents’ issues.

Will the board provide proof of insurance? This was provided a year ago.

Did State Farm or the board withhold payment to Wells? At a previous meeting State Farm said they withheld money from Wells, but it “backfired.”

Has the engineer who made the structural error submitted her mistake in writing? No.

Do we have confidence in the correction plan being done by the engineer? Randy has not experienced such an error in over 30 years, but he has heard of others in the area that were all corrected successfully.

Has there been discussion about “Time to Salvage” vs. “Time to start from scratch?” Randy said the mistake would be corrected. To tear down and start from scratch would constitute a huge delay and greater expense.

There was more discussion on communication. Some want every piece of information on the website, but not everyone has access to the internet. It was suggested that they should have an official source—someone who has e-mail who can relay the information. A phone tree was also suggested.

One owner mentioned that State Farm selected Wells as the architect, but they were obviously too busy to handle this project. Wells was the architect that was hired for Building A in 2010. State Farm has dropped us as of April 1. We now have Auto Owners through the Dana Company.

A question was raised regarding bad publicity. Have we considered public relations? We need a follow-up story that is positive.

A question was also raised regarding Plumwood residents getting approval for home loans. Neither the pending construction on the building nor the elevators in B and C are a lien on individual owners.

Meeting was adjourned.