



Highlights From Recent Town Hall Meeting

By Sue Ready, Board President



Members gathered at the Town Hall meeting listened to the Board's presentation and asked questions.

This year's Town Hall meeting began with a brief state-of-the-coop message from the Board President. This was followed by an update on the Pilot Program and a peek at the future Homes Improvement Program presented by Board and Buildings Committee members. The presentations were greatly enhanced by slides and graphics prepared by Lauren Cummings and her able team of Tom Jones and Johanna Goderre. The last hour of the meeting was reserved for responding to members' questions.

Pilot Program Update

The Pilot Program is entering its third and final stage. All envelope improvements have been made to the homes which are testing these various elements, including crawl space sealing and insulation, attic sealing and insulation, exterior wall insulation and new vinyl siding, windows and doors. At this writing, we are still in the midst of the 2013-14 heating season and continue to gather data on the results of

these envelope upgrades. Our consultant, Home Innovation Research Laboratories (H.I.R.L.), should deliver a complete analysis of these results this summer. Preliminary data show that the most dramatic results are being experienced in frame homes. Air leakage has been reduced between 24 to 61 percent in individual frame homes. Energy consumption has been reduced an average of 28 percent in frame homes and an average of 21 percent in all homes. New heating systems should be installed this summer and tested over the winter of 2014-15.

Homes Improvement Program

Information gathered from the Pilot Program will help the membership make informed decisions about the work to be undertaken during the Homes Improvement Program. Some improvements (such as, replacement of windows and doors on all homes and vinyl siding on frame homes) are covered by our Replacement Reserves fund and will definitely be completed. Other improvements (such as sealing and insulation of crawl spaces, attics and walls, and siding for block homes) are not covered and would require the membership to decide whether or not they should be undertaken. Similarly, replacement of baseboard heaters is covered by Replacement Reserves. More costly alternative heating systems are not covered and would require a membership decision.

The co-op will need to borrow money to fund any member-approved improvements that are not covered by Replacement Reserves. Members would repay their fair share of any such loan as an addition to their monthly coop fee. Membership meetings are being planned for the fall of 2014 and 2015 to present Board recommendations for membership vote. The coop is scheduled to begin installing envelope improvements and heating systems starting in 2016 and finishing in 2020.

For a more detailed explanation, including illustrations, please visit <http://ghi.coop/content/town-hall-meeting-was-success>. Questions and answers from the Town Hall meeting will be posted on the website soon, as well as distributed with a future issue of the *Communicator*.



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Maintenance Corner

GHI Water Heater Planned Replacement Program Kicks Off in 2014

By Matt Berres, Director of Maintenance Operations

GHI's replacement reserve program is funded by member contributions and provides for the replacement of many long-lived components of your GHI home. One such component is the water heater that generates heated water for your daily use.

Water heaters have an anticipated lifespan of 12-18 years and GHI schedules planned replacement of heaters when they reach 15 years in age. In 2014, GHI will be reaching out to members with heaters installed in 1999 to conduct inspections and schedule planned replacement.

Staff anticipates replacing approximately 250 heaters in 2014. Members will be notified by door hanger at least one week in advance of when their heater is scheduled for an initial inspection. Staff will coordinate with members for the subsequent replacement visit. Members can check the GHI sticker on the outside case of the heater which indicates when it was first installed.

- A typical replacement will require four hours. All water service will be turned off for about two hours and hot water service will not be available until the replacement is completed.
- Members should remove all personal items from around the heater to provide unblocked access from the heater to the door.
- New heaters will be approximately the same size but current plumbing code requires an expansion tank to be installed (about the size of a gallon of milk). In some cases, modifications to closet door trim and/or closet shelving might be necessary.
- Some pipe repairs or modifications might be necessary at the time of the replacement.
- GHI will remove old heaters, pans and piping for recycling.
- To make efficient use of time and GHI resources, in most cases staff will be coordinating the replacement of multiple heaters within a row of homes for the same date.
- You need not be home for GHI to conduct the replacement.

If you have questions, please contact Matt Berres, Director, Maintenance Operations, at 301-474-4161 x132 or mberres@ghi.coop.

SAVE THE DATE

Ice Cream Social, April 6, from 2pm-5pm at the GHI Administration Building

Hosted by the Nominations & Elections Committee

Date Change for Spring Plant Swap

The Member Outreach Committee will host a plant swap on **May 3rd at 10:00am** in front of the GHI Administration Building. Arrive at 9:30am with plants, tools, gardening books, etc. to swap. Please label all plants. If you have nothing to give away, come and grab something!

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held at the GHI Administration Offices on Hamilton Place, and are open to all GHI members. Dates are subject to change.

April

2	6:30 pm	Investment Committee
2	7:30 pm	Finance Committee
5	11:00 am	Pre Purchase Orientation
6	2:00 pm	N&E Ice Cream Social
7	7:00 pm	Marketing Committee
8	8:30 am	Yardlines Committee
9	7:30 pm	Architectural Review Committee
10	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
11	--	OFFICE CLOSED*
14	7:30 pm	Special Membership Meeting
15	7:30 pm	Companion Animal Committee
15	7:30 pm	Nominations and Elections
16	7:00 pm	Member Outreach Committee
16	7:00 pm	Woodlands Committee
21	7:00 pm	Pre Purchase Orientation
23	7:00 pm	Buildings Committee
24	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
25	--	OFFICE CLOSED*
28	7:00 pm	Communications Committee
29	8:30 am	Yardlines Committee

* Emergency maintenance service is available outside of normal hours or when GHI is closed. Call 301-474-6011.

What is the Homeowners' Property Tax Credit Program?

By Joe Perry and Bruce Mangum, GHI Staff

The State of Maryland has developed a program which allows credits against the homeowner's property tax bill if the property taxes exceed a fixed percentage of the person's gross income. In other words, it sets a limit on the amount of property taxes any homeowner must pay based upon his or her income.

This plan has been in existence since 1975 when it was known as the "circuit breaker" plan for elderly homeowners. The plan was called circuit breaker because it shut off the property tax bill at a certain point just like an electric circuit breaker shuts off the current when the circuit becomes overloaded. The Maryland General Assembly has improved the plan through the years so that now this program is available to all homeowners regardless of their age, and the credits are given where needed based upon the person's income level. To be eligible, your combined gross household income cannot exceed \$60,000.

The Homeowners' Tax Credit is not automatically granted and each person must apply and disclose his or her income. You must apply every year by no later than September 1 on a standard application supplied by the Department of Assessments and Taxation. **However, it is to your advantage to submit the application by May 1 so that any credit due you can be deducted beforehand from the initial July tax bill.**

To see a chart outlining the tax limit by income level or to obtain the application form, visit <http://www.dat.state.md.us/sdatweb/htc.html>. You can also pick-up a hard copy form at the GHI Information Center at the Administration Building on Hamilton Place.