

the Telegraph

News from Telegraph Landing

An urban village at the base of Telegraph Hill

150 Lombard Street at Sansome

San Francisco, CA 94111

March-April, 2009

Volume 33, Number 1, Page 1

From the Board:

The President's Letter



I was speaking with a friend last week and we were discussing the continued strained state of our economy. We shared things we are trying to do to help stretch our personal finances in light of potential job insecurity, uncertain future income, rising expenses, increases in taxes, and the instability/uncertainty of the stock market hoping to gain some insight into other ideas we each could adopt.

Telegraph Landing faces many of the same uncertainties individuals are facing. Although our current financial status is stable and we are fortunate to be facing minimal delinquencies in our monthly dues, the Board is ever mindful of the potential for future problems. One thing always in our minds is the impact to our individual owners.

Within our community, we have long-term owners who are now on fixed incomes. We also have newer owners with high mortgage and property tax responsibilities who may or may not be facing job insecurities. And we have many owners at various points in between. Managing our expenses to help control increases in monthly HOA fees is something we all have a role in.

This all came to mind as I sat down to write this month's letter. Although it could be perceived as a bit depressing, my intent is to get all of us thinking about ways to be proactive with regards to our Association finances.

It is true that many of our expenses are not under direct control of us as individual members of the Association. Some are based on our contracts with our vendors - Management, Security, Janitorial Services, Landscaping Services. The Board has worked closely with management to find the best values for these services keeping in mind both quality and price. Others relate to supplies, repairs, and maintenance of our property. All are discussed in open Board Meetings and members' opinions are valued by the Board during these discussions

Yet there are areas in which each of us can make an individual impact. Small changes in some of our habits hold the potential to save significant money in our Utilities budget line. Terri Quile, our Facilities Director, has changed light bulbs in the common area fixtures to compact florescent lighting (CFL's) and we have seen a significant decrease in our electric bill. What bulbs are in your unit's fixtures? If every unit had CFL's in every possible lighting fixture, we would see further decreases in our electric usage.

How many devices in your unit are "always on"? Modern electronics - TV's, DVD players, stereos, computers, etc. - each use small amounts of energy when plugged into active outlets. Collectively, this adds up quickly - particularly when you consider that we have 189 residential units. Most of us think about turning off lights, the TV, the heater when leaving our units, and this saves energy. Adding the items are not in use will result in a further decrease in our overall electrical usage. Each time we decrease electrical usage, we save the Association money on our monthly bill.

A second area in which we can individually affect expenses is in sorting recycling from trash and placing each in the appropriate bins in the garage. Are you unsure of what can go into the recycling? The Web Site, www.sfenvironment.com, has complete information on what should go into the recycling bins and what still must go into the regular trash.

The higher the percentage of appropriate waste that goes into the recycling bins, the lower our garbage bill. Our monthly garbage bill is based on the frequency of collection and the number of bins collected. Recycling is picked up for a basic, monthly fee - regardless of the amount. The more we can shift from trash to recycling, the more money the Association can save. The City of San Francisco has set a goal of 75% of waste being recycled - Telegraph Landing is currently recycling only around 29% on a monthly basis. That leaves us a great opportunity.

Management has placed signs over the bins in the garage, indicating which are for recycling (the four bins to the left as you face them) and which is for trash (the one bin to the far right). Despite the signs, make a trip down to the bins and you will often find large amounts of recyclable items (newspapers, cardboard, plastic bottles) co-mingled in the trash bin. A simple change in habit to tossing items into the appropriate bins, which are immediately adjacent to each other, could save us on our monthly garbage bill. A side benefit to increasing our recycling is that in addition to saving us money, it helps our environment by keeping these items out of our landfills.

Management and the Board are in the process of looking at the possibility of installing a trash compactor to assist in decreasing our monthly bill by allowing us to cut back on the number of trash pick ups each week. No decisions have been made and there are still issues to discuss prior to a final decision. Even if the final decision is to purchase the compactor, it is to supplement an increase in recycling, not to replace recycling. Compacted trash still sends items to the landfill that do not decompose and have an effect on our environment.

The third and possibly most important area in which each of us can help save Telegraph Landing money is in water usage. With an ongoing drought in California and a high possibility of water rationing looming, it is important that we each are strategic in our water usage. If San Francisco institutes water rationing, failure to meet the goal will result in the excess water usage being billed at a much higher rate. With the collective metering of our water usage as opposed to individual bills, it can be very easy to lose track of how much water we use in a given day.

Unless showers and faucets have been changed to low flow models, the average shower uses 5 gallons per minute, the average faucet 3 gallons per minute. (continued, p. 2)