

November 2006 Newsletter

Wall-Flashing Repair on Test-Unit 545 # 105 Underway

Culbertson received a Building Permit from the City of Alexandria on October 19, 2006 and began wall-flashing repairs on the exterior perimeter of test-unit 545 # 105 on October 22, 2006. As the builders are replacing ineffective flashing located four inches behind the brick facing of the Tower walls and six inches below the Plaza-Tower interface, Culbertson has dug out the Plaza deck bricks immediately around the unit and carefully removed four courses of brick at the base of the Tower walls at 545 # 105. Culbertson has been asked to keep good records of the work. This is because repair costs at the test-unit will serve as a reference for the much larger 2007 wall-flashing project involving the balance of the perimeter of the three residential Towers. Longtime Colecroft Station homeowners will remember that the Association initiated a similar test repair in 1998 prior to embarking on the larger re-pointing project in 1999-2001 to stop water soaking through the walls of upper level units. The test-panel of the 545 Tower gave contractors a better idea about what the project of re-pointing all three Towers would involve. Colecroft Station benefited from more competitive bids as a result.

Once the perimeter of test-unit 545 # 105 is secured from water intrusion – in about one month – the Association will rebuild the interior, which was torn up by Seal Engineering for the destructive test-flooding of the concrete sub-floor that provided critical information about the source of the water intrusion and what needed to be done to stop it. Once the test-unit interior is completely refurbished, Director Tom Manor and Susan Hayash will take receipt of it and we will move them back from the apartment the Association is renting for them in the 505 Tower.

Environmental Tests of Plaza Level Units

Kynoch Environmental Management (KEM) tested four units with known water intrusion issues at the Plaza level on September 9, 2006 following a weekend of heavy rain. The test results were very good. Three of the four units had mold-spore counts of 1.4%-4% of the 9,547 spores per cubic meter in the outside air. The ‘worst’ result, found in test-unit 545 # 105, is still good although the mold-spore counts were higher, at 13% of those outside. KEM believes that the higher readings in the test-unit reflect the torn up condition of the apartment and a poorly functioning HVAC system that had not been filtering and dehumidifying the indoor air for many months. KEM is confident that counts in 545 # 105 will fall to the typical very low levels of the others when the test-unit interior is rebuilt and the HVAC is reconditioned. The KEM tests highlight that mold-spores are all around us, particularly when we walk outside. Low readings inside our units are a result of well functioning HVAC systems that filter and dehumidify the air – whether at Plaza level or on upper floors. The KEM results also highlight the importance of replacing filters monthly and leaving the HVAC running when we travel or leave for work.

New Elevator Contract

A recent appellate court decision against XEROX has broken the monopoly control of manufacturers over the after-market sale of proprietary parts. OTIS now has a competitor in the

Washington Metro Region. No surprise, OTIS dispatched two senior managers to persuade us to renew the maintenance contract with an offer some \$13,300 less than that of 2006. How so? Our elevators, known by the acronym S-60, cost double the standard \$50,000 per cab in 1989. OTIS developed the S-60 specifically for the condo market with top-of-the-line traction and a special power supply that gives the motors twice the working life of the norm, lower running costs and a very low probability of breakdown. The lower contract cost reflects OTIS' (and their competitor's) evaluation of our S-60s true service needs.

The S-60 elevators are also very safe. A separate computer checks all systems continuously and shuts the elevators down if anything is amiss. Alas, our elevator doors were standard issue and the shutdowns we have experienced lately are due to wear and tear anomalies in the door mechanisms that the ever-vigilant computer detects. OTIS has recently overhauled the door mechanisms and has proposed a \$7,500 per cab upgrade of these components to equal the quality of the S-60 elevator itself.

The Board accepted the OTIS maintenance proposal and will need to decide whether to upgrade the door mechanisms in 2007. Upgrading the elevator doors makes a lot of sense – especially if the Association need no longer plan on replacing our S-60 elevators in 2015, at a cost of \$840,000 as programmed in the Repair and Replacement Study.

Thank you, Holly Hess!

Last year's successful Board Candidate, Greg Corbett, was unexpectedly sent to Germany, just before the 2005 AGM, for a then-undetermined number of months. In his nomination letter to the Association, he stated that he had asked retiring Director-Treasurer Holly Hess to act as his proxy on the Board during his absence, should the Membership choose to elect him as a Director. Following Greg Corbett's election, Director-President Richard Calderon acceded to his request and appointed Holly Hess as Interim Director as required per Section 4.1 of the Bylaws. Loyal and hardworking Holly Hess postponed her retirement and served superbly as Director-Treasurer in 2006. Implementing Greg Corbett's election promise to focus on the Budget, and despite generally rising operating costs, she brought in a 2007 Operating Budget cut by 1% over 2006, with improved service levels. Her secret was to empower Colecroft Station staff, Orlis Cueva and Marlene Jose, who have done a splendid job in negotiating better deals and contracts for the Association – notably those for Trash Removal, Plumbing and Elevators – at a saving of just over \$25,500. Greg Corbett has now returned and Holly Hess has gratefully returned the baton.

Colecroft Station's debt to Holly Hess is great. As then Director-President, she initiated the first Repair and Replacement Study in 1997 and used her deep experience in facility planning with the Prince William County School Board to guide the Association safely through the major re-pointing projects of 1998-2001. As Director-Treasurer, she guided the Decorating Committee in a very frugal, but elegant 2002-2005 renovation of the lobbies with new lighting, carpets, wall color and furnishings that captured the Italianate design of Colecroft Station yet reflected the pride and patriotism of a post 9-11 America. Thank you, Holly, we shall all miss you so much!

Manor-Hayash Lawsuit

Colecroft Station Counsel, Chadwick Washington, is preparing a point-by-point rebuttal, supported by extensive documentation, to the Manor-Hayash lawsuit alleging ten years of Association negligence in attending to water intrusion between 1995 and 2006, and callous treatment of themselves. Chadwick Washington Attorney, Sheyna Burt, will attend the November 16, 2006 AGM to field Members' questions on this high-interest topic.