



TOWER TALK @ PARK TOWER CONDOMINIUM

November 2013– January 2014



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That's it. No problem is too big or too small. You can also use the same e-mail address to initiate work orders for repairs in your unit.

Emergency situations, however, should still be handled by calling the front desk at 773-769-3083. Similarly, matters that require immediate attention –such as complaints of smoking, excessive cooking odors or noise rules violations – should be addressed by calling the front desk so security can verify and intervene.

Don't hesitate to report problems or concerns. Do not assume someone else already did. And don't worry about bothering anyone. Management wants to know. We all care. And e-mail is the easiest, fastest, most convenient and most accurate way of reporting problems.

By Tom Wartowski



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Please contact your Management Office with any questions

ROOFTOP TOUR



Tim Patricio, Park Tower Condominium Association Manager, inspects the northwest corner of the mechanical penthouse atop the roof of Park Tower. Above the 55th floor are two floors housing mechanical systems for water supply and elevator operations.

Photo by Tom Wartowski



Managing a condo association is a tough and often thankless job BUT DON'T DO IT, TIM!

CONTENT

See Something, Say Something	Cover
Roof Tour	Cover
The Cost of Water	Page 2
State Fire Marshal Backs Down	Page 2-3
Service Elevator Trash	Page 3
Volunteers, Anyone?	Page 3
Window Washing	Page 5
Bike Sharing Comes to the Neighborhood	Page 6
Bike Storage	Page 6
Ventra Transit Card	Page 7
Holiday Season: Time To Share	Page 7
Did You Know? The Financial Process: PTCA Financial Statements, Auditing and the Budget	Page 8-9
50 th Anniversary of the Illinois Condo- minium Property Act	Page 8
"Front Yard" Fix-Up Postpone	Page 9
Riser Replacement Update	Page 11

THE COST OF WATER

You might recall that the city of Chicago is drastically raising its water rates. Park Tower has reduced its annual water use by 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ % since 2011, but our costs continue to climb.

Part of this reduction is from replacing the building's original, high-water use toilets with redesigned, water-conserving units. These units are being installed as bathroom risers are being replaced, saving time and labor along with future water consumption. (Please see elsewhere within this issue for the current schedule of riser replacements.) Part of the reduction, however, is also from residents more closely monitoring water usage in their own homes. And a large part of that is simply reporting dripping water faucets to the management office.

Whenever possible, fixing a dripping faucet will be done at minimal charge to the unit owner. There will be no labor charge unless working with a complex, non-standard faucet. There will be an at-cost charge for replacing parts, ranging from \$4 for replacing a rubber plug to \$60 for a bathtub diverter spout or \$55 for replacing a bathroom pop-up drain assembly. But for most common replacements (stems, aerators, and washers), the repair is done at absolutely no charge at all. And no

chargeable repairs will be done unless you authorize the work, so there will be no surprise bills.

Please save yourself the annoyance and save the building some money. Call the management office to report any dripping faucets.

By Vince DiFruscio

STATE FIRE MARSHAL BACKS DOWN

In the last issue of Tower Talk, Park Tower Manager Tim Patricio encouraged residents and owners to write to their state legislators to oppose the Illinois State Fire Marshal's proposed rule changes that would trump Chicago's home rule. These rules would have required the installation of fire sprinklers, hallway pull alarms and a number of other alterations to over 600 high-rise buildings built before 1975, including Park Tower.

On August 2nd, Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis withdrew the proposal before JCAR - the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, under pressure from Governor Quinn and the thousands of letter-writers who lobbied against the costly measures. Thanks to all whose voices were heard.

Many legislators also opposed the rule changes because they didn't believe the fire marshal had the authority to introduce state rules that would have such a huge impact; they believed those changes should go through legislation.

Chicago already has an active fire safety program for high-rises: the Life Safety Evaluation. The purpose of the LSE is to demonstrate that the building can provide a reasonable level of safety from fire for its occupants. After an initial inspection, an overall numerical score was issued which rated the building's level of safety. An individual compliance plan was developed to address deficiencies to bring the score above the minimum requirement without the installation of sprinklers.

As Manager Tim Patricio explains, "Very simply, we have been working for ten years now to come into compliance with the Chicago Life Safety Ordinance. Very close to

(Continued on page 3)



STATE FIRE MARSHAL BACKS DOWN (continued)

\$750,000 worth of work including the installation of the one way/two way voice communication systems, fire stopping, replacement of the stand pipe hoses, improvements to the smoke tower, and the annual program for inspecting door closers have been completed. The building is safer and more prepared than ever to handle a fire or emergency situation."

He expects our LSE to be completed and our certificate of compliance issued in October 2013, well ahead of the January 2015 deadline. So how does Park Tower compare with other buildings? An August 6th Chicago Tribune editorial reported: "Only 47 of the 725 residential buildings that are taller than 80 feet and were built before 1975 have completed all the required fire safety upgrades, according to Chicago Buildings Department spokesman Bill McCaffrey. Another 385 are making upgrades to come into compliance. The rest are ... still completing their fire safety upgrade plans."

The Chicago Fire Department is also testing new equipment that is designed for fighting fires on the upper levels of high-rises; ground based streams can't reach above the 12th floor of most buildings – and an adjacent rooftop isn't always available as it was with the December, 2004 LaSalle Bank building fire. According Lieutenant Michael Wieglat of the Chicago Fire Department, writing in *Fire Fighter Nation* - the High-rise Emergency Response Offensive Pipe (HERO Pipe) is a new tool that allows firefighters to access fires safely from the floor below the fire. It is secured to a window sill, and extends up eight to fourteen feet, delivering up to 900 gallons per minute through its remotely controlled nozzle. There is more information at www.TheHeroPipe.com.

Fire safety is a shared responsibility, and it is reassuring that Park Tower and the City of Chicago are doing their part to assure our continued protection.

By Bob Pierce

SERVICE ELEVATOR TRASH

This empty six-pack of Corona beer is one of scores of various items that are frequently found by the trash chute in the service elevator areas of at Park Tower. Park Tower Condominium Association encourages recycling but asks residents to take the extra step of dropping recyclables at one of several locations in the building. A recycling center is located right inside the laundry room door on 1P; recycling bins are also located across from the service elevator doors on 2P, and a large recycling dumpster is located in the garage on 1P. Non-recyclables that won't easily fit the trash chute should be taken to the dumpster in the back of the Park Tower building, just south of the docking area.

By Tom Wartowski
(Photo by Tom Wartowski)



E-MAIL UPDATES

Stay informed. Submit your e-mail address to the Management Office to receive electronic Park Tower updates. Newsletters are also distributed electronically.

VOLUNTEERS, ANYONE

The Newsletter Committee, which puts together **Tower Talk**, is looking to add additional members. The committee generally meets four times a year to decide on the next issue's stories and divvy up reporting responsibilities. Publication is quarterly: February, May, August, and November. Committee members must be unit owners (not renters). Committee members should be interested in contributing story ideas, and willing to research and write on a variety of topics. Requisite computer skills are minimal – e-mail, MS Word, and Adobe Reader. If you'd like to join, or if you have further questions, e-mail the management office:

parktowercondo@draperandranger.com

By Bob Shamo

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WINDOW WASHING

Living at Park Tower is often all about the view. That's why the association attempts to have the windows washed four times a year, weather permitting. In addition to the dirt, grime and bird droppings, the window washing also temporarily wipes away cobwebs and spiders. This year Tim Patricio, manager, has asked the washers to use a special solvent that might actually get rid of the spiders. "It will be cost-efficient if it works," Patricio said. Residents are keeping their fingers crossed.

Photo by Tom Wartowski





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BIKE SHARING COMES TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

You must have noticed them, those bright blue bicycles piloted (more or less) by folks with broad smiles on their faces. Yes, these are the new DIVVY bikes. Chicago thus joins New York and other big cities in promoting bicycles as an attractive transportation and recreational alternative. Bikes can be used “round trip” style or they can be taken from and returned to different stations, the latter being ideal for regular commuters.



The city will soon have “divvied up” 4,000 bikes among 400 stations, one of which has recently been installed at Broadway and Berwyn, on the Jewel corner. Another station will arrive at Sheridan and Foster in the spring.

These bikes are sturdy creatures with step-through frames, adjustable seats, three internal gears (speeds), a bell, front and rear-flashing LED lights, fenders, chain guard, and a handy front rack. Bring your own helmet; which is recommended but not required. Stations are solar-powered with docking “ports” sufficient for likely demand. Very cool!

The occasional user goes straight to a bike station where for \$7 users buy a 24-hour pass (bankcard, not cash). This pass entitles the user, for the next 24 hours, to ride any available bike for 30 minutes. Checking in a half hour or so late adds modest charges, but the system discourages rides longer than 90 minutes by gradually increasing those overtime charges.

Those intending to ride regularly, such as commuters, would opt for an annual membership, which can be purchased online for \$75 and entitles the user to unlimited 30 minute rides.

Overtime charges are even less than with the 24-hour pass but are still structured to discourage rides in excess of an hour

and a half.

Details of the program, including an instructional video, can be found at DIVVYbikes.com. Find out too, how much of a discount you’ll get if your employer or group has a corporate or community membership; how to get help should you need it at a station; and how much your credit card will be charged if you fail to return the bike!

By Bob Shamo



BIKE STORAGE

Our bike room has plenty of storage available. For \$50 per year, you get a convenient and safe place to store your bicycle out of the elements. The bike room opens conveniently to the back dock. No more jostling it in the elevators or walking around it in your home! The room is fob-accessed and is on closed-circuit camera for security. You do need to provide your own lock, and the association accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage to your bike.

By Vince DiFruscio

EDGEWATER BIKE ORDINANCE

Biking on side walks is not permitted. Please use the street, bike lanes, and the bike path in the park.

VENTRA TRANSIT CARD

Ventra™ is the new fare system developed by the CTA and Pace. It's a tap-and-go system intended to that speed up boarding, allow users to manage their transit accounts online, and minimize the hassle due to lost, stolen and damaged cards. Rollout should be complete by the end of the year, so riders should be using up their balances on existing Chicago Cards, magnetic strip cards, and the like. Down the road, Ventra will allow some bankcards and certain cell phones to touch-and-go. But for now, all riders other than those using cash will need the new Ventra card or a compatible pass. Seniors, students and the disabled will continue to ride for reduced fares and may expect their new passes (with the old photos) to arrive by mail between now and Thanksgiving. Everyone else can act now, either ordering their Ventra cards online or by phone (free if loaded with \$5 or more of transit value), or purchasing them direct at CTA stations or retailers. The card costs \$5 when purchased direct – for instance, at our own Park Tower Market – but that amount is credited toward the next transit value purchase, \$300 being the maximum the card will hold.

When ordered online or by phone, cards are automatically registered with personal information. A card purchased directly must then be registered online if you wish to maintain a given minimum balance of transit value or, in the event of loss, theft or damage, to have its transit value transferred to a replacement card.

A word about cash: at CTA stations and retailers, riders can use cash to purchase the cards, to add value, to buy single trip train tickets and multiple day passes. And you can still use correct change to board buses.

Finally, the new Ventra Cards can be used as debit cards, although there are significant fees for doing so. Ventra's own website, www.ventrachicago.com, is an excellent primer, comprehensive and complete. A nicely organized summary can be found at www.transitchicago.com/ventra. Phone assistance is available at

1-877-NOW-VENTRA
(1-877-669-8368).

By Bob Shamo



Update: Since this article was written, the Ventra rollout has experienced delays and setbacks. Agents are being added to handle phone inquiries and deadlines are being extended. Once you become a registered user, with your own transit account, do go online occasionally to confirm the accuracy of charges against that account.

HOLIDAY SEASON: TIME TO SHARE

We're approaching the time of year when everyone is asked to contribute to those in need and to show thanks for the service we are given.

Watch for details on charity donations this season. Because of problems with food donations the past few years (garbage tossed into the bins, food that has expired), it is likely that we will NOT conduct a food drive again this year. Instead, be prepared for a coat & jacket donation to help keep folks less fortunate warm during our infamous winters. Watch for details later this month.

And, as always, please contribute to the holiday fund for Park Tower's dedicated staff. Rather than giving each employee an individual holiday tip, this fund provides an easy way for your gift to be distributed amongst our maintenance, engineering, garage, health club, front door, and office staff. That's a lot of employees (37 to be precise), so please give generously. Write out a check to "PTCA Employee Holiday Fund" and drop it in the drop box by the front door or at the management office.

Although a part of our community, building security and our dry cleaning & package pick up services are not run by Park Tower employees and these people are therefore not covered by your donation. So if you wish to give them a thank-you gift, you will want to do that separately.

By Vince DiFruscio



DID YOU KNOW? *The Financial Process:* PTCA FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, AUDITING and THE BUDGET

As we previously announced, the Park Tower Board of Directors accepted the audit of the association's financial statements for the 2012/2013 fiscal year, at the August 2013 board meeting. (Copies are available for owners on the website at www.dkcondo.com or by contacting the management office.) Since that time, we have had some questions about the financial statement process and annual auditing. Also, with budget process which began in September for the 2014/2015 fiscal year - it is good timing to help owners better understand the process.

It all starts with the budget.

Throughout each fiscal year, the management company (DK Condo) and office staff are responsible for recording financial data related to the income and expenses of Park Tower. The budget is used as a guide for what is brought in and what is spent to run and maintain the building. This is tracked and compiled on monthly financial statements that are distributed to members of the board of directors and Budget and Finance Committee. At the end of each fiscal year, a separate and certified public accounting firm (presently Picker and Associates) is hired by the board to audit the financial statements to check for errors, verify internal controls of our funds and spending, and determine that there are no misrepresentations. This firm then issues an opinion on whether they believe the PTCA statements are accurate, fair and complete. If the firm were to report any anomalies or questions, management is expected to provide

an explanation and make any necessary adjustments.

Every month board members and members of the B&F Committee receive the financial statements, which include a balance sheet, illustrating our assets and liabilities, and an income statement, which shows all income and expenses for PTCA. In addition to these two basic statements, management also provides other financial reports which point out different aspects of the financial health of our association. These statements are typically 45 – 50 pages in length, with detailed explanations of variances and expectations for future results. Presenting these statements is a major obligation of DK Condo and our management office team, which have the sophisticated software and training required to handle this responsibility.

That understanding of the finances then carries over into the annual budgeting process. The B&F Committee meets regularly to review the financial statements and ask questions of management. **Owners are welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings** (watch bulletin boards for dates and times). Throughout the fall, the committee goes over every line item of the budget and asks for input from management and other professionals (again in open meetings). Management generally pulls together information on the building's needs and operations from our engineers, vendors and other firms we rely on to help maintain the building. The committee either accepts the re-

commendations of management or edits it based on discussion or new information that may become available throughout the process. Then it makes a recommendation to the board. Usually the committee will meet once or twice with the board to review the budget, before it is accepted and forwarded to unit owners. Unit owners have 30 days to review the budget after which is scheduled a special meeting where owners can address any questions they have with the board.

Tim Patricio and Mavis Mather from the management office plan to attend every B&F Committee meeting and usually two or more board members also present, including the treasurer Dave Nicosia who acts as a liaison between the committee and the board. Any owner of the building is welcome to sit in on the meetings, even if they are not members of the committee. The chairman, Paul Groeninger, is always willing to address questions from owners in the audience with the exception of the meetings scheduled to review and edit the budget. Due to the length of time it takes to go line by line through the budget, and get the work done on schedule for the budget to be mailed out in a reasonable fashion for owners, questions are only taken at the budget meeting from members of the committee or board. However, management is always available to answer questions – and submits written questions from owners to the

Continued on page 9

DID YOU KNOW?

The Financial Process:

PTCA FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, AUDITING and THE BUDGET (continued)

committee for budgeting. So no one is ever left out of the process.

So, to sum it up, the monthly financial statements track and report on PTCA's financial progress compared to the budget, the audit insures the integrity of that reporting, and all the information and oversight cycles back around with the drafting of the budget for the next year. That process is going on right now, and we welcome and encourage every owner to join the discussion. Budget meeting dates will be posted, so please attend. Stay tuned...

By Tim Patricio, with help from B&F Committee member, Jean Shamo

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ILLINOIS CONDONMINIUM PROPERTY ACT

July 2013 marked the 50th anniversary of the Illinois Condominium Property Act. In the beginning it was pretty rudimentary, but it laid the ground work for the shared ownership arrangement we have today. Originally it mostly dealt with converting apartments to condos, but over the years it has refined condo associations' powers, obligations and operations. Amendments were passed mandating reasonable reserve requirements – you can't have a maintenance-free lifestyle without paying for it, and recently it required the licensing of property managers – ensuring we have professionals running operations. Our manager, Tim Patricio is licensed; staff members Jacquie Smith and Mavis Mather have recently completed all the certification requirements.

Two amendments to the ICPA took effect in 2013. Both amendments modernize the ICPA so that internet service is treated in the same manner as cable TV service. Condominium boards are now authorized to enter into bulk service contracts for high-speed internet service to units, as has been the case for many years for bulk video services. As with bulk video services, the law now allows cost of bulk internet service to be included in an association's budget (and thereby charged to owners on the basis of each unit's percentage ownership interest) or assessed to each unit on an equal cost basis (so that larger units pay the same monthly bulk internet service fee as smaller units). The other change allows the granting of easements for installation of high-speed internet cable by a majority vote of an association's unit owners, paralleling the requirement for easements for television service cabling. The law has changed with the times, and continues to evolve fifty years later.

By Bob Pierce


"FRONT YARD" FIX-UP POSTPONED



As you have no doubt noticed, the expected reconstruction of the front plaza and driveway did not take place this fall. It would have been necessary to rush through the tear-down and still most likely have left the plaza unfinished until next spring. So expect the work to begin once things begin to warm up, most likely March of 2014.

This is not just a cosmetic fix-up. The work goes down to the membrane which has for over 40 years been both a "floor" to the patio and a "roof" to the garage; it is overdue for replacement. This will also be the perfect opportunity to create an ADA-compliant ramp for wheelchairs, as the slope currently in place is far steeper than guidelines require.

By Vince DiFruscio



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RISER REPLACEMENT UPDATE

Here is the current schedule for replacing remaining risers. Note that this is subject to change, specifically during any overlap with the outside plaza/driveway redo planned for spring of 2014. Remember that Park Tower's fiscal year begins in March.

2014/15 fiscal year:

Floors 30-55: '12 & '14 bathrooms
Floors 3 - 29: '06 guest bathrooms & '07 kitchens
Floors 3 - 29: '01 guest bathrooms & '03 kitchens

2015/16 fiscal year:

Floors 3 - 29: '01 master bathrooms & 02 bathrooms
Floors 3 - 29: '14 & '15 kitchens
Floors 3 - 29: '05 bathrooms and '06 master bathrooms

2016/17 fiscal year:

Floors 3 - 29: '03 & '15 bathrooms
Floors 30-55: '01 guest bathrooms & '03 kitchens
Floors 30-55: '10 kitchens & '11 guest bathrooms



2017/18 fiscal year:

Floors 30-55: '07 & '08 bathrooms
Floors 30-55: '06 kitchens
Floors 30-55: '02 kitchens & '04 bathrooms

2018/19 fiscal year:

Floors 30-55: '05 bathrooms & '06 master bathrooms
Floors 3 - 29: '09 & '10 bathrooms
Floors 3 - 29: '04 & '05 kitchens

2019/20 fiscal year:

Floors 3 - 29: '06 kitchens
Floors 3 - 29: '10 kitchens & '11 guest bathrooms
Floors 30-55: '11 master bathrooms & '12 kitchens

2020/21 fiscal year:

Floors 3 - 29: '08 & '09 kitchens
Floors 30-55: '09 & '10 bathrooms
Floors 3 - 29: '12 & '14 bathrooms

2021/22 fiscal year:

Floors 30-55: '01 kitchens
Floors 3 - 29: '11 kitchens
Floors 3 - 29: '07 & '08 bathrooms

2022/23 fiscal year:

Floors 30-55: '01 master bathrooms & '02 bathrooms

By Vince DiFruscio

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DATES TO REMEMBER 2013-2014 BOARD MEETINGS

All owners are invited to Board meetings.
7:30 p.m. in the Party Room

November 11, 2013
December 9, 2013
January 27, 2014
March 10, 2014
April 14, 2014
May 12, 2014
June 9, 2014 (Annual Meeting)

MANAGEMENT OFFICE HOURS

Monday, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Thursdays
8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE (Office Closed)

Thanksgiving—November 28, 2013
Christmas—December 25, 2013

Join the Park Tower E-mail Group for electronic news, meeting dates, and announcements. Just e-mail a request to parktowercondo@draperandkramer.com.

MALL BUSINESS CONTACTS

Suite 101	PTCA Market 773-275-9130
Suite 103:	Aynot Enterprises, Inc. (Salon—Spa Contractors) 773-728-6486
Suite 103A:	Dralyuk Real Estate 773-275-8520
Suite 103A:	Healing Center of Chicago Tony Hollenback, LCSW (Integrative Care: Counseling for the mind, body and the spirit) 773-255-9234
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Suite 106:	Dr. Shirley Roy (Internal Med.) Dr. Robert Reeves (Adult Psy.) Dr. Robert Brinkman (Internal Med.) 773-878-5151
Suite 107:	Park Tower Management Office 773-769-3250
Suite 109:	M & J Care, LLC 773-878-1032
Suite 110:	Elizabeth Todorovic (Real Estate Attorney) 773-271-2110
Suite 111:	Blackstone ATM (ATM Company) 312-515-0112
Suite 113:	Chicago Pain Clinics 708-344-1234

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Newsletter Committee Members: Vince DiFruscio (Writer/Photographer), Robert Pierce (Chairperson/Writer), Bob Shamo (Advertisement Director/Writer), Nancy Smith Ledvina (Writer), Betty Terry-Lundy (Board Liaison/Formatter), and Tom Wartowski (Writer/Photographer)