TOWER TALK @ PARK TOWER CONDOMINIUM

May-July 2012



CONTACTS:

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Garage 773-271-8859

Market 773-275-9130

Cleaners Recv. Room 773-784-3353

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WHERE IS YOUR MONEY?

For a piece of paper, a lot rides on money. Our livelihood depends on it, our pleasures require it, and it has the power to reduce stress levels for many. So, given the value we place on money, do you know where your money is? Most of us rely on conventional means for storing our funds: saving accounts, CDs, mutual funds, bonds, stock, annuities, and other retirement vehicles. Park Tower Condominium owners have put a portion of their money into property investment. Each owner pays assessments for the purpose of maintaining the building facilities. Do you know where your assessment money goes each month, every year?

Assessment funds are used for operating expenses and reserve expenditures. Operating expenses cover day-to-day and on-going costs, such as, personnel salaries, insurance, employee benefits, utilities, maintenance, repairs, recreation, and garage cost. A portion of our assessment dollars are set aside for the reserve fund which is used for planned short and long term projects. These funds are held in CD accounts until they are needed. You may ask, "Why are we putting our money in a CD account when the interest rates are so low?" You are right, at the moment CD accounts are usually below a 1% interest rate. However, the Board of Directors are required by law to invest/save funds without risk. This is in our best interest even when the rates are low.

Five and ten years plans have been drafted to incorporate projects based on need or urgency. You will see your funds hard at work during the 2012-2013 budget year. The new lobby, which was paid for out of the 2011-2012 budget, should be in place by the end of May. The following projects reflect 2012-2013 reserve spending for approved projects:

Branch Lines: \$8,250

 Building pipes are replaced with copper pipes, now mandated, in all kitchens and bathrooms when owners remodel their units. Canopy Roof: \$5,000

• The canopy roof is located above the columns as you enter the building into the main lobby. The upkeep of this roof occurs as needed.

COM Cooling Tower Drain: \$7,500

 Maintenance was necessary for the commercial (mall) cooling tower because of the poor condition of the drain assembly which caused leaks. This project has been completed.

Garage Pipe Insulation: \$15,000

 This is the first phase of pipe replacement in the garage to eliminate leakage problems. This project is already underway.

HVAC 2/3 Valve: \$12,000

 Heating and cooling valve replacement is necessary to ensure our comfort.

Life Safety: \$30,000

 This is a preliminary figure for additional items required by the City of Chicago based on their initial inspection. Our Life Safety System is in place and we are in the process of implementing changes identified by the city during their inspection.

Life Safety Voice Com: \$10,000 (balance from 2010 budget)

This figure reflects our remaining funds from our 2010-2011 budget for the installation of the Life Safety System. This system enables fire personnel to control elevators, have direct voice contact to corridors on each floor, and include light and sound alarms The Life Safety System is mandated by the city.

Lobby Improvement: \$32,000

• The cost of the lobby redesign or improvement was in our 2010-2011

(Continued on page 7)

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CONSERVING WATER IN THE BATHROOM

The prior issue of Tower Talk held information on how to save water in the kitchen. In this issue, we slide over into the other "water" room in your home, the bathroom. As a reminder, water rates across the city have gone up 25% this year and are expected to rise a total of 50% in the next three years. This is important stuff. Saving water not only helps keep your assessments lower. but also makes a positive impact on the environment. Everybody wins.

Let's start at the sink. How do you wash your hands? I had been taught to turn on the water, grab a bar of soap, and lather up under warm or hot water. Times have changed. According to the Mayo Clinic, you should first wet your hands with running water, then apply soap and lather thoroughly, rubbing for at least 20 seconds, -awayfrom the water. Then rinse well. You need no water for the main part of hand-washing.

So consider just running the water briefly to moisten your hands, then turning it off before lathering up. Once you are ready to rinse, turn the water on again. I've been doing this for the past few weeks, and I've noticed a positive difference: without the water running, I'm actually lathering longer. I must have felt compelled to finish quickly while the water was running. Try it and see for vourself. (As a side note, the Clinic also suggests not using antibacterial soap: "It is no more effective at killing germs than is regular soap." They add that the main result is creating bacteria that are harder to kill.)

This same philosophy can work in the shower. It is well-believed that showering uses much less water than bathing. This depends, of course, on the length of the shower, the gallons-per-minute rating of the shower head, and the size of the tub. Let's assume a standard 40-

A standard shower gallon tub. head uses 10 gallons of water per minute. This means that if your shower lasts more than 4 minutes, vou were better off bathing. But if vou use a low-flow shower head. you're only using around 2 gallons per minute so your shower can last 19 minutes and still be more efficient than a bath.

However, think about this: How long during your shower does the water need to run? Using the same philosophy as hand-washing, you might consider running water at the beginning of the shower to moisten up, then turning it off while lathering. This is known as a "navy shower" because of its use to save fresh water on ships. If you use shampoo or hair conditioner that you leave on your scalp for a few minutes, consider using that as a cue to turn off the water and lather up your body. When it's time to rinse off, turn the water back on again. I've done this now for several weeks and again believe I lather more thoroughly and end up cleaner while using about half the water I otherwise would have.

Of course, there cannot be a thorough discussion of saving water in the bathroom without discussing the toilet. There has been an ongoing discussion for decades about when to flush. Raised in south Florida where fresh water is always in short supply, I grew up with the saying "if it's yellow, let it mellow." This is a very personal topic, and nobody is going to issue any regulations on the subject, but do consider how often you flush vs. how often you need to flush. If you live alone, perhaps you might consider not flushing during the night. If you are partnered and if you're both coming back from an evening out, why not wait and flush after you've both finished? A little discussion beforehand might be a good idea, though! You could consider a system where a closed lid indicated less-than-fresh water. so someone entering the bathroom knows to flush if they want a fresh bowl.

Saving water can be as easy as investing in a low-flow toilet. The toilets standard to Park Tower use 3.5 gallons per flush. Low-flow toilets use less than half that. Although the first models didn't flush very well, many now are engineered to work as well as, if not better



than, standard toilets. Park Tower Management and Board are working together to attain recommended low-flow toilets to be made available to owners for replacing your old, water-wasting facilities. If vou coordinate the replacement of your toilet with the reconstruction of your bathroom for the riser project, there will be no charge for installation.

And, of course, the easiest way of all to save on water: report any dripping or leaking faucets to Park Tower Management. They will work to fix the leak at no cost to you.

By, Vince DiFruscio

OUR ELECTRICITY CHOICES

For a few years now, businesses and institutions in Illinois have been able to select from a number of energy providers. PTCA takes advantage of this opportunity whenever it renews its contracts for gas and electricity, and because those contracts cover the common elements in our building, residents share that cost in their monthly assessment.

Now the Illinois Commerce Commission has authorized the same choice for homes and apartments, the result being that PTCA residents can, if they wish, "shop" for (Continued on page 4)

RESPECT OUR SHARED SPACES AND FACILITIES

The Park Tower maintenance staff works diligently to dispose of trash, and keep the halls and lobby clean, while specialized contractors keep our elevators and laundry machines operating. We all expect these shared spaces and facilities to be clean, available and operating when we use them, but that only happens if the residents abide by the rules for their use, and pro-actively alert maintenance when needed. Here are some guidelines and reminders to help everyone enjoy the use of our shared areas:

• Elevators may be reserved in advance for movein and move-outs, so check the schedule in the management office when you are expecting a delivery – try to arrange a time when you won't interfere with those who have paid for reserved use of the elevator.

• Don't hold the elevator door - use the button; forcing the door open can knock it off the tracks, and take it out of service.

• Tightly bag refuse and put it in the trash chute. Don't leave items on the floor in the service vestibule. If you want to dispose of over-sized or heavy items, call maintenance for assistance. Never put construction debris down the chute.

 Break down and flatten cardboard boxes for recycling. Cut or tear into smaller pieces that will fit in a paper grocery bag along with other paper items, and put in the bins in the laundry room. You can comingle all recyclable items, but rinse bottles and cans so they don't attract bugs.

• Keep laundry tables and machines clean – if you spill detergent, softener or bleach please clean it up, so other don't accidently soil their freshly cleaned clothes.

• Report spills, accidents and tracked-in messes in your hallways to maintenance – they would rather quickly vacuum or mop to prevent it from being ground into the carpet.

• Report flickering or burned out bulbs, and chirping smoke detectors – maintenance will respond quickly to these safety-related requests.

Residents can make a difference in the quality of life at Park Tower by respecting our shared spaces and facilities, and aiding maintenance with cooperation and pro-active reporting of maintenance issues.

By, Robert Pierce

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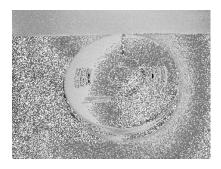
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FIRE SAFETY: WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU

We had a visit from the Chicago Fire Department this past February to discuss high-rise fire safety. One of the surprises in store for us was a new understanding that if the smoke alarm in your unit is older than its expected lifetime (approximately 7 years), your insurance may refuse to pay any damages from a fire-related claim, even if the detector was operating normally.

Another eye-opener was that that although electric ovens do not directly produce carbon monoxide (CO), combustion of any material does. If something is burning, it produces CO. Your oven's self-cleaning cycle cleans by burning the material coating the sides of the oven (using heat as high as 900°), creating CO in the process. For this reason, the Chicago Fire Department encourages CO detectors in every home. (Park Tower's attorneys have looked into this and have determined that there is no legal requirement to have a CO detector.)



For these reasons, you might want to look into replacing your smoke detector. There are two types of smokedetecting technologies: ionization smoke alarms, the most common, are excellent for fast flaming fires but often set off false alarms because of cooking smoke. The are also very poor at detecting slow-building, smoldering fires (like from a burning foam-filled cushion). Optical, or photoelectric, smoke alarms are less sensitive to kitchen cooking and are best at sensing a slowbuilding fire, but are actually slower to detect fast-flaming fires. The ideal alarm is "dual sensor", having both technologies within.

You might opt for a long-life, lithium battery-operated smoke alarm. The batteries in these units are set to last as long as the unit itself. This means all you need to do is install it, test it once in a while, and replace it when it expires. You can also find stand-alone lithium batteries to use with a detector; although longer-life than traditional batteries, there's no guarantee they will last 7 years.

A dual-sensor lithium-battery detector might be your best choice. Consider the First Alert SA340B, for sale for around \$20 at many online retailers. Should you decide to also test for CO. you can get a single unit that detects CO as well as both kinds of fires. An example is the Kidde KN-COSM-XTR-B. selling for less than \$40 online. This device runs off of AA batteries. If you want to combine smoke and CO detection with a lithium battery, check out BRK Electronics' SC02LB, costing about \$30 - \$40, but be aware this only tests smoke via ionization, not photoelectric as well.

Also read your manual for best suggestions on placement of the alarm. Surprisingly, one of the above manuals suggests not placing your alarm in the kitchen and also not too close to your bathrooms as moisture can be a concern. Instead, it should be near the entry to your bedroom so the alarm will quickly wake you up.

And remember these pointers should you have a fire in your unit. You should own a home fire extinguisher, but do NOT keep it in your kitchen. Keep it somewhere away from probable causes of fire so that you can easily locate and operate the device without injury to yourself. If the fire cannot easily be extinguished, call 911. Leave your unit, door closed but unlocked (so the fire department can easily enter), and knock on your neighbors' doors to alert them to the danger. You might also ask a neighbor to call the front desk so the door staff is aware of the situation and ready for the fire department's arrival.

By, Vince DiFruscio

OUR ELECTRICITY CHOICES (continued)

cheaper electricity in their individual condos. The dozen plus companies that have registered so far to be alternative suppliers are competing mainly on price, but typically they also offer a variety of "green" initiatives and account management options. Commonwealth Edison competes with the others while supporting their presence in the marketplace. In fact, regardless of who you buy the electricity from, ComEd will be delivering it over their wires, billing for it, handling any problems, and getting a share of your energy dollar.

Confused? The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) was created by the state of Illinois to represent the interests of residential electric consumers. Its website,

http://www.citizensutilityboard.org lists alternative suppliers in a chart that makes their current offers easy to compare with ComEd. Among CUB's observations:

- 1. Many of these offers beat Com-Ed's price in the short term because demand for electricity has been waning in this slow economy. But as ComEd's longterm contracts come up for renewal, its prices also will reflect market conditions.
- 2. Read the fine print. The green energy option, for instance, refers to a supplier's total product, not to the electricity delivered specifically to your residence. Would a deposit be required, are there additional monthly fees, can you get out of a contract without paying an exit fee?
- 3. ComEd is planning significant hikes in delivery charges, which will apply regardless of who you buy the electricity from. (CUB is protesting.)
- CUB claims that the average residence can save \$100 a year by using the energy saving techniques described on its website.





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COMBINED UNITS

If you have physically combined condo units at Park Tower, the Board has recently approved procedures to allow you to legally combine your units under a single Property Index Number (PIN). The PIN is the legal description of your property used for real estate taxation. Currently, owners must pay an individual tax bill for each PIN. This may be advantageous for owners who qualify for property exemptions as those exemptions can only be applied to one individual property. If you combine PINs, your exemption will apply to your entire combined property.

The process begins when the owner applies to the Board requesting an amendment to the condominium instruments- the Declaration and Plat of Survey. The Association's attorney will prepare the amendment and the owner should engage a surveyor to prepare a plat showing the new boundaries of the unit with any assigned limited common elements. Attorney's fees would be capped at \$350, plus tract search and recording fees of \$152. A majority of the Board must approve the transaction, and it becomes effective when it is properly recorded. See the Management Office for more detailed instructions.

Combining PINs will have no effect on monthly Association assessments. Everyone's tax situation is different and separating combined PINs is equally arduous as combining them; so consult with the Management Office and tax and real estate experts before you decide if this is right for your situation. But be aware that the option is now available and in some situations could result in tax savings and enhance the resale value of your property.

By, Robert Pierce

LOST AND FOUND BOX

Bea Steiber lost her prayer book which she left in error by the low rise passenger elevators in September of 2011. This book has great sentimental value to her since she has own it for 50+ years. The book has Robert Steiber and Temple Emmanuel on it. Please submit the book to the Management Office or call 1-773-769-3250 if you found it. Bea would extremely grateful.





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FROM THE MANAGEMENT DESK



Recently, we posted and delivered a letter to Unit Owners from the Park Tower Board President, George Pauley,

regarding the results of an inspection by the Illinois State Fire Marshal. Among other potentially costly and invasive changes, the inspection report indicated the building would need to install fire sprinklers. A topic of frequent and at times very politically heated debate in the City of Chicago.

The Association is appealing the findings of the report. We believe the State has no jurisdiction over buildings such as Park Tower. The Association's attorney and life safety consultants agree, primarily due to a concept called "Home Rule". The building is subject only to relevant life safety and building codes in the City of Chicago due to this rule. This makes sense - it is the City authorities who approve plans for new construction and issue occupancy permits for new buildings. Also, the City conducts extensive planning in preparation for emergencies based around their code requirements. And it is the City's first responders - police, fire and paramedics - who practice for and then respond to incidents. I certainly have never seen the State Police rolling up the driveway during any major incidents. It also does not make sense that the State would try to enforce codes that conflict with the City's, such that the City could assess fines. It is an impossibly frustrating paradox.

Owners have asked me a lot of questions about this, ranging from the obvious concerns about the potential cost and safety implications to my opinion about insurance ramifications and just how invasive construction would be. These and other questions are worthy of consideration. I do not want to push them aside, but I do want to urge owners to await the outcome of the appeal. We will update everyone once we can better gauge the effectiveness of our arguments against the State Fire Marshall. Of course, the Board and Management are committed to addressing any legitimate and reasonable safety considerations that are raised or legally required, while at the same time balancing the financial and structural realities that the Association, its owners and its residents are living with.

By, Timothy Patricio, Property Manager

JULY 4th CELEBRATION

Renamed in honor of its most spirited participant, the 1st Ruth Posternack Annual 4th of July BBQ will happen this year on the holiday itself, Wednesday, July 4th. Come celebrate - food, music and fun on our Second Floor Sun Deck from 5:30 to 8:30 pm - with truly spectacular fireworks to follow, thanks to our neighbors at the Saddle and Cycle Club. Residents attend free but must sign up with the doorman between June 15th and 3:00 p.m. the afternoon of July 4th. Guests are welcome so long as they accompany the resident who buys their tickets. Guest tickets, available at the management office beginning June 15, are \$10 each, with kids age 8 and under free, and last-minute guests are asked to pay \$15 at the door.

By, Bob Shamo



WHERE IS YOUR MONEY? (continued)

budget. It has been carried over to this year with approved lobby remodeling plans. You should see a new lobby in May.

Lobby and Mall Mats: \$21,000

 New mats in the lobby and mall are already in place. They are wider than the previous ones. Most importantly, they are safe and void of rips and torn edges. Additional mats will be placed in the lobby after the new desk is installed.

Masonry: \$25,000

 Brick repairs/replacement is necessary to the wall on the 2nd level, outside of the party room and over the mall area. Bricks in the current wall are crumbling and bulging out of alignment in various sections.

Riser Project: \$525,000

 The Riser Project began in 2011 and will continue through approximately 2019. New hot water risers will be installed in all kitchens and bathrooms. This cost will continue to appear in our budget for the coming years. The Board continues to preplan for this expense through assessments and investments to avoid special assessments.

Second Floor Roof: \$90,000

 Repairs to the northwest gravel roof adjacent to the Party Room, and above the corner mall offices on the northwest side of the building will occur this year.

Terrazzo Sealing: \$18,000

• The terrazzo, which is original to the building, requires resealing to prevent leaks.

During the 2012-2013 budget year you will see repairs and improvements to Park Tower which are advantageous to our quality of living and future property value. Your patience is appreciated. By, Betty Terry-Lundy

THE GRILL IS OPEN!

The Park Tower Board recently voted to make our two grills available to residents of the building. Grill hours are expected to be from 11 a..m. - 9 p.m. from May 1st to Labor Day, dates determined by weather. The grills will be located at the far east end of the 2nd floor rooftop patio. The cost is \$10 for up to 3 hours of use, payable by check or charged against your assessments. There is also a refundable deposit of \$40, held in case of damage or lack of cleaning.

You may reserve a grill by calling the management office during regular business hours or the front desk after hours. Grill reservation forms, available at the front desk, must be signed before using the grill. You have 15 minutes from your reservation time to check-in at the front desk; after that time has expired, your reservation is no longer valid and the grill will be available for same-day use until the next reserved period on file.

Please follow these rules for your safety and minimize any inconvenience to your fellow residents:

- Food must be transported to/ from the grill area in covered containers, using the service elevators.
- Food may be eaten on the patio, but not in the pool area; you are responsible for cleaning up after eating, or else your deposit will not be returned.
- Do not leave the grill unattended while lit, even for warming up.
- Follow the grill operating instructions available with the grill.
- No one under 18 years of age may sign for or use the grill.
- Beverages must be in sealed plastic containers and may only be consumed in the deck area. Glass containers are prohibited.
- Turn off the grill when finished.
- Clean the grill immediately after use to avoid a \$40 clean-up fee.

- Dispose garbage in the area trash receptacles before you leave.
- Notify the front desk when you have finished using the grill.



• Do not drink any alcoholic beverages while using the grill.

By, Vince DiFruscio

48th WARD MASTER PLAN

Alderman Harry Osterman launched the 48th Ward Master Plan process in February of 2012. This process looks at the current conditions to determine future priorities for developing neighborhoods and communities in the 48th Ward. This process includes community residents' participation throughout 2012. The following eleven committees have been formed to address various facets of our community living.

- Arts & Culture: Improve visual and performing arts in the commercial district.
- **Community Outreach:** Identify ways to broaden community outreach and engage stakeholders.
- Economic Development: Focus on the long term vision related to the commercial future of Broadway Street.
- Education: Create new relationships with schools, parents, and educational groups.
- Environment and Health: Determine focus on water and air quality, community gardens, recycling, environmental friendly transportation, renewable energy, parks, energy efficiency, and long-term sustainable development.

- Housing: Focus on affordable and subsidized housing, building codes and violations, and landlord and tenant issues.
- **Public Safety:** Identify goals for improving safety throughout the community.
- Sheridan Road & Lakefront: Envision street scape design between Bryn Mawr and Devon to improve traffic flow, land scraping, streets and signage, including issues affecting beaches and biking.
- Social Services: Access current situations and make future recommends in regards to the homeless, nursing homes, care for the aging population, and disabled individuals.
- Transportation: Develop a plan for strengthening community transportation structures ranging from specific to "big picture" issues.
- Youth & Recreation: Improve and create positive options for the youth.

The initial launch meeting was conducted on February 23, 2012 at Senn High School. Subsequent committee meetings are held monthly through December of 2012. Your participation and ideas are welcomed. You may attend as many of the committee meetings as you wish. You can stay in touch with commuhappenings on-line nity at www.48thward.org and sign up for electronic announcements or call 1-773-784-5277. Together we can become a positive force for growth and improvement in the 48th Ward. You are invited to join the conversation.

By, Betty Terry-Lundy



CHANGES TO CHICAGO BATTERY RECYCLING

The City of Chicago revised its Battery Recycling Program as of January 1, 2012. The Illinois EPA now recommends that alkaline batteries be disposed of with regular household trash. They contain no hazardous waste and little recyclable materials. Previous hazards with alkaline batteries were due to their mercury content, but federal law has phased out the use of mercury in alkaline batteries, so the hazard has been effectively eliminated.

<u>Rechargeable</u> batteries such as those in laptops, cell phones, cordless phones, digital cameras and camcorders, toys and tools <u>should be</u> recycled. They contain chemicals such as Ni-Cd, Ni-MH, Li-ion, Ni-Zn and Pb, which are hazardous to the environment. Radio Shack at 5409 N Broadway, is a partner with the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation, and will accept your dis-

carded rechargeable batteries free of charge. They will also take any wireless phone, with or without the charger to be refurbished or recycled.

By, Robert Pierce





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Pizza Party

Tuesday, May 15th

6pm to 8pm

Party Room on 2nd Floor



Come enjoy Lou Malnati's Pizza and meet **AWB!**

Lindy Cain from American Wireless Broadband (AWB) will be on hand to answer any questions on the internet service available to the residents of Park Tower.

DATES TO REMEMBER 2012 BOARD MEETINGS

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

May 14, 2012 June 11, 2012 (annual meeting)

BOARD CANDIDATE DATES

May 11, 2012 Deadline for Candidate Submissions

May 21, 2012 Office Notice of Annual Meeting with Candidate Forms

> May 29 , 2012 Meet the Candidate Night

June 4, 2012 Meet and Greet the Candidates

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.

MANAGEMENT HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Memorial Day – May 28, 2012 Independence Day–July 4, 2012 Labor Day– September 3, 2012 Thanksgiving Day–November 22, 2012 Christmas Day–December 25, 2012

MALL BUSINESS CONTACTS

Suite 103:	Aynot Enterprises, Inc. (Salon–Spa Contractors) 1-773-728-6486
Suite 103A:	Dralyuk Real Estate 1-773-275-8520
Suite 103A:	Healing Center of Chicago Tony Hollenback, LCSW (Integrative Care: Counseling for the mind, body and the spirit) 1-773-255-9234
Suite 105:	Lettuce Entertain You (Gift Certificate Purchases) 1-773-924-4438
Suite 106:	Dr. Shirley Roy (Internal Med.) Dr. Robert Reeves (Adult Psy.) Dr. Robert Brinkman (Internal Med.) 1-773-878-5151
Suite 107:	Park Tower Management Office 1-773-769-3250
Suite 109:	M & J Care, LLC 1-773-878-1032
Suite 110:	Elizabeth Todorovic (Real Estate Attorney) 1-773-271-2110
Suite 111:	Blackstone ATM (ATM Company) 1-312-515-0112

E-STATEMENTS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!

1. Go to www.dkcondo.com

- 2. Select the "For Homeowners" tab just above the main picture and click on "Association Portal"
- 3. Select your Association
- 4. Click on the blue link "Resident Website Registration Link" *Please note that all owners will need to register for this new feature. For those of you already registered to pay assessments online, you will need to register for this service the first time. Please use the same user name and password as you have for assessment payments.
- 5. Follow the easy instructions and your assessment statements will begin arriving electronically.