

THE BIRCH LOG

May 2005

WWW.BIRCHWOODLAKES.ORG

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

John Cirenza

It is almost ten months since the storm that has caused so much damage to our homes and our community. I appreciate the patient support of the community and the hundreds of hours our board members, committees and volunteers have given to the many projects we have been faced with. Their hard work in filing applications for loans and grants, reviewing and selecting engineering firms to perform the studies and sampling to arrive at cost estimates that will satisfy lenders and most importantly you, the resident of Birchwood Lakes.

Now you need to know the facts.

Timberlake Dam has been greatly improved due to the quick response and effort by Medford Township. Their response and investment will make bringing Timberlake Dam up to NJ DEP Dam Safety standards much less time consuming and costly for Birchwood residents.

1. Birchwood Dam has been stabilized and is repairable.
2. Timberlake and Birchwood Dam will cost approximately \$1,100,000.00.
3. The lake bottom sediments are **CLEAN**. Meaning that there are no dangerous compounds that exceed levels allowed for disposal in the Pinelands Preserve. Our engineer reports, **"In fact, Princeton Hydro has encountered these specific families of contaminants in almost every lake they have analyzed. It is further emphasized and reiterated that the contaminants detected are below the NJDEP Residential Direct Contact Criteria (in most of the samples, an order of magnitude below these standards) and as such are not considered a health risk to the community. The only exception is arsenic whose cleanup standard is based on the naturally occurring concentrations that are found in a number of areas throughout the State of New Jersey."**

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

Monday, May 9th @ 7:30 PM

At the Clubhouse

The Birchwood Lakes Officers and Directors will be addressing the issues affecting our community. Members are encouraged to attend. The Officers and Directors will be making decisions for you. Why not express your ideas? For detailed info on the meeting format and future meeting dates, go to our website and click on "Board Meetings".

Nonmembers who wish to join the Birchwood Lakes Colony Club are encouraged to come to the meeting. Their application will be taken at the meeting.

4. We are soliciting estimates from contractors for removal costs of the sediments.
5. Volume of sediment is approximately 100,000 yards.
6. We hope to start work on final repairs this winter and have our lakes restored for 2006.
7. The lawsuits continue. We are well represented by our insurance company and attorney. We will maintain our right to seek legal remedy for damages we sustained.

Special Meeting.

I want the community to understand that we are fast approaching the time when we must decide as a community how to proceed and how to pay for what

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2005 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President	John Cirenza	953-8912
Treasurer	Vivian Heiler	654-5507
Secretary	Sandy Scott	953-5640
V.P. Finance	Tom Jenkins	654-0786
V.P. Lakes	Mike Maher	654-4760
V.P. Property	Bill Brown	654-9291
V.P. Recreation	Michelle Swift	654-6268
Financial Sect.	Jim Whipple	953-1937

Directors

Tom Andreacci	11/2007	654-7922
Chris Bradley	11/2007	654-2567
Carol Kontos-Cohen	11/2007	714-2203
Christina Fennimore	11/2006	654-5292
John Rothwell	11/2005	654-4678
Joe Russomanno	11/2005	654-1991
Kevin Wall	11/2006	654-6431

Committees

	Clubhouse	
Chairperson	Valerie Wall	654-6431
Sandy Scott	Kevin Wall	
	Lakes Restoration	
Chairperson	Tom Andreacci	654-7922
	Membership	
Chairperson	Patty Yulick	953-2734
	Communications	
	Website	
Webmaster	Al Homann	953-3222
	The Birch Log	
Editor	Al Homann	953-3222
	Birch Log Distribution	
NW Lakeside Dr	Bill Bielec	654-1761
SW Lakeside Dr	Joe Zurzolo	953-2734
Upper Lake	Sandy Scott	953-5640

The Birchwood Lakes Colony Club

PO Box 382 Medford, NJ 08055

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SOFTBALL ANYONE?

Members interested in playing softball Sunday afternoons in May and June, can call John Rothwell at 654-4678. These would be pick-up games with new team captains each week. Games would start at 2 p.m. If the response is sufficient to field two teams, there will be a kick-off BBQ at 1 p.m. prior to the first game scheduled for Sunday, May 1st, 2005. The BBQ will be B.Y.O.Bs (Bring Your Own Burgers, Buns and Beverages). The grill will be ready to go and to honor all the great Dutch softball players of years past, there will be a keg of Heineken on tap.

PAST BIRCH LOGS

Over 25 past Birch Logs are now available on our website. To view or print, click on 'Birch Log Newsletters'. This month's Birch Log is also there and from now on, every Birch Log will appear on the website several days before being distributed.

OCEAN CITY, NJ SUMMER RENTAL

"America's Greatest Family Resort"

3 BR/2BA (sleeps 8) - New construction May 2005. Convenient downtown location is just steps to cafe's, shops, galleries and restaurants on Asbury Ave. Only five blocks to the beach and boardwalk. Sunny-neutral decor; pleasant view; W/D;DW;MW;AC; large furnished balcony overlooks the garden-park across the street. Select weeks available in July and August. Call Bill or Kerry Brown. 654-9291.

CLUBHOUSE RENTAL

The rebuilt Clubhouse is back in business sans our beautiful lake. The Clubhouse is in better shape than ever and Kevin Wall informs us he's ready to process reservations. Summer is coming and if you are having a family get together, why not at the Clubhouse? Call Kevin at 609-654-6431.

The Birch Log is published just prior to each monthly meeting and before any special meeting. Materials for the newsletter should be received 12 days before the meeting. Meetings are held on the 2nd Monday of each month, at 7:30 PM, in the Clubhouse. Material may be faxed to 609-953-8429 but the preferred method is by e-mail to AHomann@aol.com. Your e-mail will be acknowledged within 48 hours. If you receive no acknowledgement, call 609-953-3222.

CHECKERS, ANYONE?

In the past several newsletters I have tried to keep you informed as to what and who we are as an organization, what we are doing, and where we are headed. There continues to be a little confusion, even among the better informed of our board and members, as to exactly what the BLCC is and what it can do. Maybe it will help if I give you my opinions on what the Colony Club is not, and what it cannot do.

The Club is not a country, state, county, or municipality. I am not trying to be a smartzzz, I just want everyone to realize and understand our limitations. We cannot pass or change laws. We cannot hire police or an army to enforce our rules. We cannot appoint public officials or Planning/Zoning Boards. In short, we cannot MAKE anyone do ANYTHING in those areas. Our system charges our elected officials and the people that they hire with that responsibility. They make the laws & rules, raise monies and keep order. We cannot initiate or enforce our own rules in conflict with any Federal, State, County, or Municipal legislation. We do not have the power to change deeds as an example. We have to rely on the competence, good nature and good intentions of our elected officials and their administrators to provide fair, just, and honest government or, we have the option to throw the rascals out at the voting booth. To be blunt, the BLCC Officers and Board do not have the authority to tax and spend or encumber you in any way. If you go along with the Club's plans it will be voluntary on your part. If you do not participate and do your fair share, the TWP may be able to encumber you, and probably will, but the BLCC cannot. The Club must only rely on unpaid volunteers to do its work except where professional help is required. Your dues go to pay for those services as well as goods and services associated with such things as gas, electric, sewer, etc. Again, no members of our Club earn any money from our dues. We cannot afford to pay anyone!

Why am I telling you this? Well I think the next 90 days are going to be very, very important around here. A few months ago I asked, that when needed, you be ready to help. Well, I believe that NOW IS THE TIME! I am confident that we have most of the leaders that we need. What we really need are some CHECKERS, worker bees, helpers, foot soldiers, you get the idea. I believe in the next 2 to 4 months, we will need significant help in the following areas:

Communications:

Two years ago the board created a position of Communications Chairperson. That important position has been unfilled for at least the last year (give or take.) The position was chartered to facilitate the following:
Develop an emergency action & day-to-day communications strategy, possibly utilizing:

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SPRING ED ECK DAY

THIS Saturday, May 7th 2005 - 8am to 12 noon

Please mark your calendar for Birchwood Lakes bi-annual community clean-up day.

Coffee and doughnuts will be served at the clubhouse where a job list will be posted. Some of the jobs will include raking the clubhouse grounds, painting the beach fence and painting the trim in the clubhouse. Members are asked to bring rakes, tarps, shovels, wheel barrows, etc. If you have a job that you feel should be addressed please feel free to call me.

Your Birchwood Lakes Colony Club Board of Directors, Officers and others have been working very hard, devoting many volunteer hours to the enormous task of restoring our lakes to pre-flood condition. Ed Eck Day is a great opportunity for all members of our community to help out, work with each other and take pride in our wonderful neighborhood. Thanks. Bill Brown 654-9291

- (1) Phone trees
- (2) Email broadcasts
- (3) Facsimile broadcasts
- (4) Website
- (5) Section leaders

This important position was supposed to be of assistance to Al Homann and his work with the Birch Log. Al has done a wonderful job with the website, (you should visit it) so that part is done. While Al and I have tried to do some of the other work, the position and responsibility remains largely unattended. The emergency action plan is a state requirement for dam owners. This committee needs a leader and 4 to 6 members, sort of emergency section leaders. This group might morph into a neighborhood watch kind of thing.

Human Resources:

In the next several months we will very likely need to hire some people for our building and construction projects. The sources of these contractors and individuals will likely come from both inside and outside of our ranks. It is not easy to hire people. Most professionals do it as a group and even then use headhunters or consultants for assistance. You can get fooled when you are on your own and you do not have a system. You do not want to be fooled when you are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of other peoples' money. We need to decide how we will go about interviewing and screening applicants, who will do it, how we will do background and reference checks, and how we will conclude the activities (we always need to be polite, it never hurts). It is an important short-term job and probably will require 3 to 5 people. We need a plan and we need it soon!

Legal:

This committee, while probably a little less intensive from a time standpoint, will be more ongoing. Again, decisions on policies, procedures, and administration have to be recommended to the board in a number of areas:

- (1) How to manage the three existing (there may be others) lawsuits.
- (2) Signoffs on right-of-way and hold harmless agreements may need to be completed prior to any construction, lake bottom cleaning, or bulk heading type activities.
- (3) Initiation, or actions to preserve our right of initiation, of any future lawsuits for recovery of flood damages (A last resort in my opinion).
- (4) Coordination of our insurance companies defense.

John Cirenza and Ross Alber have already made significant contributions in these areas, but it is much too large a job for any one or two people. We need 3 to 5 people, minimum, for this effort, we will need some board representation as well.

Membership:

This committee has a LOT more to do than welcome people to the neighborhood. This committee needs to make recommendations to the Board on how to resolve issues with non-members and probably the power to resolve them. We need 100% membership, if at all possible! Membership issues are undeniably linked to any loan repayment strategies. We need answers to questions on how or whether the membership base should be increased. Should other communities be invited to join Birchwood Lakes for example? Should associate memberships be offered to supplement any unfilled membership positions? We

need to develop a timetable and strategy for member contact and we need it soon! While this committee's work will be concentrated in the next couple of months, its ongoing importance is immeasurable. Christina Fennimore and Joe Zurzolo have offered to co-chair this effort but they need at least 5 to 7 more helpers.

If you have questions or suggestions regarding any of these important assignments, I (and other members of the Board) will try to help you. Please be patient, this is new to all of us and no one has all of the answers.

In the new news category:

Financial Apportionment Committee (FAC)

(If you like that name, I just made it up)

At the April meeting, some important business was handled. Among other things, a 2005 budget was approved. Additionally, a new committee was formed under the auspices of the Lakes Committee. The purpose of this new group will be to explore repayment options for dam repair and lake bottom cleaning and make recommendations to the Board. This committee will provide grist for the mill, so to speak, for the proposed special summer general membership meeting to be held on the broad topic of financing. Our Old Faithful, John Rothwell along with Ross Alber, Steve Strauss and Steve Wilus are heading up this new committee. They will need a broad cross section of members to be effective. The apportionment plans that this committee will explore will be the most important and probably most contested of any of our decisions. I have a great deal of confidence in this group and I hope you will give them your RESPECT, understanding and gratitude during this very, very difficult assignment. When you help them in this effort, you can be an important part of the process and make your voice heard. My advice: do not let anyone else make these important decisions for you.

In the sad news category:

My old, er, make that my long time friend Jim Whipple has tendered his letter of resignation due to his and his wife Beverly's impending move to a nearby community. For almost 20 years, Jim has quietly handled the BLCC financial secretarial affairs with extreme good nature, integrity and competence. When nothing goes wrong, you never hear about it. Of all the people on the Board, no offense to anyone, I am not sure who would be the most difficult to replace. Jim or Vivian Heiler (they handle all of the money.) I have been continually amazed how any one can do so much work, for so long, and make so few mistakes. I am usually a "the bottle is half full" type person, but in this case, I am uneasy about the BLCC future without Jim's steadying influence, intelligence, patience, courage, and common sense. What does give me hope is that Jim has taken on the challenge of finding his replacement. A tall, tall order! I guess I will leave the subject of succession planning for another day.

I will leave you with another Tom Jenkins' Seniorism, "If you are going to get in trouble, get in trouble for doing something, don't get in trouble for doing nothing."

Stay tuned, keep the Faith, and do not forget the brave people in our Armed Services in your prayers. Compared to their problems, ours are a piece of cake.

Tom Jenkins

we decide. The residents must decide how to proceed with the information and cost estimates collected to date. You will be notified in accordance with our bylaws the date and time of this very important meeting.

Your Ideas on equitable assessment.

Our Lakes Committee has created a group to gather and consider ideas on how to pay for the repairs voted on by our residents. These meetings of the Assessment Subcommittee are open to all who want to attend. The subcommittee wants input from all residents of Birchwood Lakes. They have created a post-card that will be distributed. **Please take time to consider the options presented and feel free to recommend ones that you believe are better.**

I thank you all for the support and patience you have shown the Colony Club, volunteers and myself. I thank all my neighbors in Birchwood for their contributions to making this a special place live.

John Cirenza, President, BLCC

BLCC Board Opening: Financial Secretary

As I am leaving the Birchwood community, the Colony Club needs a new Financial Secretary. I have been the Financial Secretary for many years and found it to be a really comfortable and manageable job.

The following is an excerpt¹ from The Colony Club By-laws definition of the position:

1. Shall keep a list of all Club members.
2. Shall be responsible to bill and collect the dues of the association.

The Financial Secretary mails the annual membership bills, receives the payments and deposits them into the Club's account and reports the status of those activities to the Board of Directors. The Financial Secretary then distributes the beach tags to the paid up member households. The Financial Secretary is a voting member of the Board of Directors. The full By-laws job definition is on our website.

I have computerized the record keeping and automated the reporting and distribution processes to make both the billing, reporting and distribution functions easy using Microsoft Excel and Word and will share all of the files. You could use a database system if you prefer. One of the beauties of the position is that you can perform the tasks at on your own time schedule so long as the records are up to date for reporting to the board of directors.

Please consider volunteering for the position and call me at 953-1937 or contact any board member. I will be around for a while and will not be far away after I move and will work with you to assure a smooth transition.

Jim Whipple

¹ Full definition on our website. Click on 'Constitution and By-laws.'

REPORT ON LAKE RESTORATION EFFORTS

Lakes Committee
Birchwood Lakes Colony Club

April 30, 2005

The Lakes Committee has been meeting each Wednesday for the past two months in an effort to achieve the goal of restoring the three Lakes within the Birchwood Lakes Community. Some members are contributing a considerable amount of time meeting with contractors, conducting research and talking with government officials.

Progress has been made on the steps required prior to restoring the lakes. Some major achievements include:

- The completion of a sediment study by Princeton Hydro. The results of the study indicated that no heavy metals or toxics were found in the lake bottom sediment. This is good news because if community decides to clean out some of the lake bottom sediment, its disposal will be much less expensive than disposing of contaminated sediment.
- The Hydrology Report, being conducted by McCormick Taylor Associates, is scheduled to be completed by the end of May. That report includes an assessment of the composition of the two spillways and dam materials. Preliminary results indicate no problems with either. The report also will include a hydraulic analysis of the Lake capacity during different water flows. Lastly, the report will describe the repair alternatives for each dam and the estimated costs.

This Hydrology Report is required as part of the application package to request federal grants or loans from agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

A subcommittee has been formed to look into possible funding options for the restoration effort. A survey will be mailed to the general membership (see John Cirenza's letter, page 1) providing information and asking for replies to include in our repayment plan. All members should provide their input. Several funding sources have been pursued and options still remain to be explored.

Tom Andrecci

FOR RENT: Completely renovated single family home in Avalon. Three bedroom, two bath, sleeps seven, central air, front and back decks, outside shower, gas grill, off street parking, just two blocks from the beach. A few weeks still available. Call NOW! Call Nora Zurzolo for details, 953-2734.

FOR SALE: 40' wood extension ladder. For info, call Jim Whipple, 953-1937.

Reminder!

The BLCC Spring Fling!



Come out and enjoy the evening! This year's party will be on Saturday, May 21st beginning at 7 pm at the clubhouse. We plan to make this a "Wine Tasting" event so bring a favorite spirit (doesn't have to be wine) that you would like to share. We are also asking that you bring an appetizer or dessert to accompany your bottle.

This event will also be a fundraiser for our lakes. The cost will be \$5.00 per person at the door. There will also be a 50/50 drawing during the party. Tickets will be \$1.00 each, 6 for \$5.00 or 15 for \$10.00. So plan to be generous! It's for a good cause and who knows, it could be your lucky night.

Please RSVP to Michelle Swift at 654-6268 by May 16th with your number attending and what you will be bringing, appetizer or dessert.

***Coffee and cold beverages will be supplied**