

**DATE:** November 13, 2017

**TO:** Wisteria Park Eastside Maintenance Provided Homes

**FROM:** Donna Burbidge – Wisteria Park HOA

**SUBJ:** 2017 EVALUATION OF WEST BAY SERVICES

**COPY:** **WISTERIA PARK HOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Mike Zelle, Bob Harcourt, Gail Larose, Steve Moyer;  
Nicole Banks – Sunstate Management Property Manager

**BACKGROUND:**

During 2017, West Bay Landscape maintained Wisteria Park Common Area Landscape/irrigation and provided landscape services and irrigation services for 72 “maintenance provided” homes on the Eastside of the Wisteria Park. On November 1<sup>st</sup>, I met with Mike Zelle, President of Wisteria Park HOA, Nicole Banks, Sunstate Property Manager, Ron Sikkema, President of West Bay Landscape, and Ed Coil, Account Management for West Bay Landscape. This memo is summary of my review. Notes in bold are West Bay’s responses.

**AREAS WHERE WEST BAY PERFORMED WELL:**

- West Bay has smaller equipment and is better able to mow smaller areas without damage. This resulted in fewer complaints from homeowners than in the past.
- West Bay did an excellent job in managing the reclaimed watering cycles for common areas and the “maintenance provided” homes during the extreme drought in the earlier part of the year. In past years, low water pressure damaged many lawns during dry spells. Lawns throughout northwest Bradenton showed significant die off while the managed lawns in Wisteria Park generally were green with a few exceptions.
- Dennis Oertel conducted monthly walking inspections of common areas and Eastside “maintenance provided” homes in Wisteria Park. These inspections provided enhanced communications on upcoming services, identified diseased trees and shrubs and alerted us to other problems such as potential irrigation problems or damaged covers. This is a significant upgrade in services to our community.
- West Bay Landscape promoted establishing a no-mow zone around ponds as a way of reducing erosion on the banks of the ponds, and reducing grass clipping in the ponds which enhanced the health of the ponds.
- West Bay Landscape responded to removing trees/shrubs damaged in Tropical Storm Emily and Hurricane Irma in common areas and clearing roadways of debris.
- Dennis Oertel showed innovation in coming up with a solution to a homeowner’s problem with Bermuda grass growing up in low jasmine ground cover.
- West Bay Landscape severely trimmed back overgrown and damaged ficus hedges and helped re-establish healthy attractive hedges.
- Dennis Oertel has tried to support individual homeowner requests (within reason) in the “maintenance provided” section with special requests such as not trimming certain shrubs.

#### **AREAS FOR WEST BAY IMPROVEMENT:**

- Palm trimming of palms under 15' in height: West Bay Landscape has done a good job of trimming palms away from the roofs and sides of the houses in the "maintenance provided" homes. However, they are not trimming the smaller palms that are located away from the house. These palms were allowed to be overgrown with seed pods and seed branches. When the landscapers were asked why these trees were not being trimmed, they said management told them not to trim them. **West Bay didn't openly agree, but the contract says these palms will be trimmed 7 times. Self Pruning palms are exempt. We will watch this closely next year.**
- Hedges/ shrubs should be trimmed so house numbers are not blocked. Some homeowners complained hedges/shrubs are minimally trimmed if they are not present to ask them to shape them. Also there should be a space between the hedge and house. **Agree this should be done.**
- Hardwood canopies were to be lifted to 8 – 10' (depending on the height of the trees) in March and September. However, during the growth season they sometimes were only two feet off the ground. There isn't a lot of growth between Sept and March. It would be better if the hardwood canopies were lifted in June (midway through the growth season). **West Bay said overgrown hardwood branches which are hanging low before the September trimming, should be trimmed.**
- The no-mow zone is trimmed every other week during the fast growing season. This has resulted in the abundance of weeds growing up to 18" in some areas and spreading into the mowed lawns. Homeowners along the ponds have complained about the appearance of the no-mow zone. It is recommended trimming be done weekly during the fast growth season, or weedkiller being applied in an area between the lawn and start of the no-mow area. **West Bay will hand weed the no mow area so the weeds do not grow up above the grass between clippings.**
- Some homeowners are complaining grass is being blown into their lanais and pools, or landscape beds. The mowers need more training in mowing to keep the clippings away from those areas. In addition, clumps of grass are not being spread around. **Mowers try to blow the grass away from landscapes/lanais but if the mowing area is small, such as between a palm and landscape/lanai, it is sometimes difficult to mow in the other direction.**
- During walk around inspections, it was noted that significant palm leaves and debris are ending up in the landscape beds or around shrubs and are not being picked up during mowing. In addition, sometimes areas are missed for mowing. Someone should be checking after mowing that debris is picked up and taken away and all areas have been mowed. In addition, this person should note when it appears there are irrigation issues (dying areas in the lawn, broken irrigation heads, etc), and not waiting for the monthly irrigation inspection. **West Bay agreed workers should be picking up debris and should report suspected irrigation issues. Will work on improving.**
- The contract notes that hand-weeding is being done once a month along with spraying for weeds in the landscape beds. However, it appears very little hand-weeding is actually being done and there is a reliance on spraying which carries dangers of the wind carrying the spray to

plants and flowers in the landscape bed. Pictures of overgrown weeds were shown. **West Bay said this was not acceptable and promised to improve.**

- The contract says there will be cleaning around irrigation heads, but grass and weeds have been allowed to grow within the rings around the irrigation heads. This makes it difficult to see sprinkler heads that are stuck in an up position and then get severed by the lawn mower. **The irrigation systems are 6-10 years old and dirt around the heads can cause them to stick in the up position. The irrigation company during their monthly inspection do check to make sure the heads are not blocked around the rings.**
- When there are disputes with homeowners, such as the lost rear lawn at 1727 86<sup>th</sup> St NW, West Bay has sometimes been slow in responding. The problem was identified in an inspection in April and the lawn proceeded to die out. A homeowner request to talk to Dennis' manager has gone unanswered. In addition, there has been some slow response to irrigation issues where homeowners had to repeatedly contact the property manager about severed irrigation heads, or dying lawns. **We had a discussion on how best to proceed to make sure irrigation issues are immediately brought to the attention of the irrigation company. West Bay will attempt to have all repairs completed before the next watering cycle. West Bay will follow-up with the homeowner on 86<sup>th</sup> St NW.**
- The contract states a supervisor will be available any time work is being done so that if there is a problem, the property manager (Sunstate) can be notified and any matter can be attended to immediately. Was this process followed when the trimming of palms over 15' began on the Eastside. Almost immediately there were complaints of damaged bushes from the machine forcing its way between houses, sprinkler heads damaged from the machine, as well as a home's outdoor lights damaged? **West Bay recommended that anytime a homeowner has a problem with work being done by them, they should call or email Nicole. Nicole will immediately contact the supervisor (Dennis Oertel) for follow-up. West Bay agrees the palm trimming subcontractor did not do a good job in handling their equipment and will investigate further. They will follow-up with homeowners on complaints.**
- At the time cost estimates are approved, we need to have a date when work will start and be completed. In addition, it takes a considerable time between requesting a cost estimate and receiving it, and between approval and beginning of the work. Can the timing be shortened or communication be improved? **West Bay agreed they can put a tentative date for work to begin on estimates.**

#### **West Bay Contract Comments:**

- The West Bay Maintenance contract for **Eastside Maintenance Provided homes** for 2018 will increase from \$6120 per month to \$6300 (about 3%) to cover cost of improving services/increased cost. This covers the cost of landscape services and monthly irrigation checks but does not include the cost of trimming tall (over 15') palms, mulching, irrigation repairs or Sunstate Management fee allocation. The estimated monthly cost in 2018 to provide all of these services to "Maintenance Provided" Homes is \$115. This is in contrast to an average monthly cost of about \$130 - \$150 if these services were contracted on an individual basis, *plus* the cost of tall palm tree trimming and mulching. **Hence, we are providing real value to our Eastside homeowners.**
- West Bay Common area contract: no change in price vs 2017.