**Watermark Rental Group Meeting**

October 19, 2019

Present: Donna & Kirk Maupin (103), Deborah Malone (104), Donna Schuiteman (105), Jayne & John Allision (202), Sandy & Bill Dunn (203), Nancy & Jim Greene (303), Bill Biedenbach (306), Barb Ayash (402), Ron Laramy (404), Judith & Mark Maler (502), Sherri Daniel (602).

**Welcome**

Bill D thanked Kirk & Donna, Bill Biedenbach and Kay McCabe for their Hurricane Dorian help; also, Kirk and Tom Wall for their work on the new WiFi… and Rental Group owners for the cooperation that helped get it all installed before the snowbirds arrived.

**Managers Report**

* 18 members rent in summer; 24 in winter [for which we have a waiting list of 101].
* Hurricane Dorian refunds and other storm-related cancelations amounted to $12,854.
* Kirk phoned Oct/Nov renters to advise them of the potential for a less than relaxing stay due to painting & restoration work. Thus far, only one renter cancelled.
* 4th of July in 2020 will fall on a Saturday, pressing some tenants to rethink their travel.
* Occupancy rates fluctuate year to year, but here’s a look at 2019:

January – March -- 100%

April [what was one of our stronger months lost some popularity]

May -- 77%

June -- 83%

July -- 79%

August -- 32%

September -- 14% (affected by Hurricane Dorian)

October (12 of 19 available weeks are booked)

November -- relatively full

December – slowest month… as people prepare for the holidays.

**Website visitors top 6000**

The site had 6,072 visitors in 2019 (up from 5,700 last year) … 3,485 “new” visitors (about 400 more than last year). The Top 10 places these visitors live: Florida, New York, Virginia, Georgia, Ontario, Ohio, California, Maine, Illinois and Nebraska.

**Survey shows no change needed on cleaning fees**

Donna said that based on a cleaning fee survey she conducted recently, our fees were “right in line” and don’t need to be adjusted at this time. She advised us to stay ahead of the curve to keep from losing good people. In that regard, she expects fees will need to be raised next year.

**Rental rates to be put to a vote**

Issues related to rates were discussed without reaching a consensus … As a result, we agreed to poll the Rental Group members. The choices will be:

* Maintain existing rates
* 3% increase [across the board]
* 5% increase [across the board]
* 5% increase of monthly rates only [mostly affects Winter 2021 “Snowbirds”]

**[To vote, please use official ballot below**]

Regarding rates, here are some key considerations that were discussed:

* Rates were raised 5% last year, with some support for another 5% bump this year.
* This year’s increases were met with a handful of complaints [in 3 seasonal categories].
* In a new rate survey of 11 older condos whose units are larger like ours, the Watermark ranked 6th, behind 5 competitors, all of which are located on the car-free beach. This ranking put the Watermark rates as the highest on the driving beach.
* About a third of our 24 rental units have undergone renovations over the past 5 years, which makes them show especially well – both online and when prospective renters visit to choose a unit. That leaves 2/3rds that have been slow to make updates.
* Donna stressed the connection between this difference and the topic of rates: In order to keep our most loyal return renters feeling comfortable about paying more year to year, they do expect to come back to units where worn-down furnishings and basics such as linens, bedspreads, pillows, towels & appliances have been steadily replaced.

**Several new must-haves… and one we can retire**

In our ongoing effort to keep rental unit requirements realistic, Sandy and Donna have recommended we remove placemats from the “minimum requirements list” and add extra batteries for TV remotes, a small supply of specialty light bulbs [the office has standard bulbs on hand when a tenant needs one, but owners must provide spares for any non-standard bulb.]; also, a few basic office supplies – paper notepad, pens, scissors, paper clips and Scotch Tape. Beach towels have been added as an optional suggestion. *The complete list of 100 must-haves can be found in the owners-only area of the website.*

**Beforehands & afterwords**

Kirk has been toying with the idea of a newsletter as a way to keep in better touch with renters throughout the year… Members who’ve remodeled are reminded to update their website photos… The office can arrange the shoot for only $50, including getting the fresh images put on the website… Each rental needs to be deep cleaned before the snowbirds get here (please schedule with the office)… Bill & Sandy will be co-chairs of the Rental Group for another year… Next year’s rental meeting will be on Saturday, Oct, 17, 2020.

**Compiled by Sandy Dunn (#203)**