

Sands Ocean Club Newsletter

September 2015

HOMEOWNER LUNCHEON scheduled for Friday, October 23 at 12:30 PM. in Sandals' Lounge.....

You are cordially invited to attend a luncheon on Friday, the day before the Annual meeting in Sandals' Lounge. We will be serving Deli Sandwiches and all beverages of your choice. Our brief agenda includes the following:

- A look-back at the 2015 Season and forecast for 2016.
- Presentation of New Amenity concepts being considered by Sands Resorts, the In-House rental Group.
- A discussion on proposed By-Laws amendments.
- Ideas and thoughts from Owners.

NEW WEBSITE FOR SOC OWNERS

We have created a new website for our owners; **socowners.com**

We are hopeful this site will provide an avenue for all owners to be aware of what's happening and to give us their feedback. There is also a direct link to RAMRESORTS.com giving you access to important HOA documents and info.

SOCOWNERS.com includes the following features:

Newsletter – Your monthly newsletter, including a copy a copy of this letter.

Gallery – This is an open gallery of photos, including ongoing projects, improvements, areas needing improvements, events, and other images that might be of interest to you.

Blog – Here you can post your thoughts, comments, criticisms, and praises – and view those of your neighbors and management.

Who Does What – A detailed description of the responsibilities of the HOA Board of Directors, the property management company (RAM), and the in-house rental company and commercial owner, Sands Resorts (Island Resort Company). This also includes a description your responsibilities as a unit owner. We hope this is helpful in giving everyone a better understanding of the management and operation of Sands Ocean Club.

Contact Information: Email and telephone numbers for department heads at your property management company (RAM) and Sands Resorts and contact information for each member of the HOA Board of Directors.

Condominium Buy and Sell – Owners can list a unit for sale by Owner or In-House Broker or can list their interest in buying a unit. This is free to all owners.

The October, 2015 Newsletter will be the last to be mass mailed to all owners. Starting in November, the newsletters will be published online at socowners.com. If you are unable to receive information online, please write to me at Lee Rawcliffe, 9550 Shore Drive, Myrtle Beach, SC 29572. Please provide your name and the address you wish to have newsletters mailed to and we will continue to send them to you through US mail.

PROJECT REPORT.....

The Board has approved the landscape renovation project and it is currently underway. We will be posting progress photos on the Gallery at socowners.com. We look forward to your comments. The new North Tower elevators have made a huge improvement to service and reliability. Renovation of the elevator car interiors is expected to be part of the proposed hallway and ground floor renovations. Discussions and information on the proposed renovations will be a subject at the Annual Meeting and a good reason to plan to attend.

PROPOSED AMENITY ADDITIONS

One of the major topics at our luncheon will be two new amenities being considered by Sands Resorts for the property. Both are designed to attract new business with an emphasis on shoulder seasons and the off-season. If either or both are adopted, they would be paid for by Sands Resorts, who would also lease space from the HOA, actually providing income to the HOA.

The first concept involves constructing a retractable enclosure over the lazy River and connected to the south tower. Additionally, both the pool and the enclosure would be heated and amenity features would be added to the lazy River to create a mini waterpark. Lighting and sound would be installed in the retractable enclosure to provide environmental entertainment. Beverages and snacks would be served from the west counter of ocean of Ocean Annie's. Only one other facility on the Grand Strand offers a similar amenity and they have been hugely successful in attracting shoulder season and winter business, particularly on the weekends.

The second concept would create a rooftop bar on the roof of the South Tower. This would be accessed from the 17th floor corridor. We know of no other such facility on the Grand Strand, but demand for such a facility seems very high. The bar would offer table seating, incredible views, hot tubs for couples, and firepit cocktail tables. Again, the facility would incorporate a retractable roof area to provide four-season usage. Together with our renovated indoor pool and our unique enclosed corridors, the opportunity to attract getaway weekend business seems very plausible.

At our luncheon we will be asking for your views and comments on both of these possibilities. Please feel free to float these ideas with some of your friends and share your feedback.

TRIP ADVISOR REVIEWS

As we stated in last months newsletter, Sands Resorts has made a concerted effort to improve housekeeping reviews. They report making significant investments in more personnel and higher wages. The results of their efforts have been reflected in recent trip advisor reviews, which site very few complaints relative to housekeeping. However, negative reviews do continue and there should be a cause of concern for all of us. Despite the questionable editorial policy of Trip Adviser, the impact of their reviews is a significant factor in our ability to attract new business and also has an impact on the resale of condominiums at our resort.

By far, the main criticism we read about concerns dated and/or worn furnishings. Additionally, we also see some negative comments concerning the outdated condition of our corridors. Proposals currently being considered by your HOA Board of Directors, If a dopted, should more than solve the problem concerning our corridors and common elements. Upgrading and/or replacing furniture and fixtures within individual homeowner units is strictly the prerogative of each individual owner. Accordingly, Sands Resorts will be providing new incentives and assistance programs to motivate and help homeowners whose unit(s) is in need of improvement. This will be a topic of discussion at our luncheon on October 23. Another good reason to make an effort to attend !!

In a traditional hotel, it is common to find all units furnished alike and all units in a very similar condition. Accordingly, when they read a poor review concerning the condition of the unit, they quite often assume that it is representative of all units in the resort. Many of you are aware of this and have complained that it is unfair to those of you who have invested in making your units attractive and up-to-date. Sands Resorts has complained many times to Trip Adviser

and other review sites about negative reviews on units not associated with the Sands Resorts brand, but reviewed under their name. This would seem unfair to any business. We are currently working on a trade name distinction program that would correct this problem. If successful, we will actively seek the cooperation of ALL entities engaged in rentals. Obtaining good reviews should be a primary effort of all owners and our Association.

SPORTS TOURISM

Many of us have been concerned about the loss of shoulder season rentals due primarily to a continuing loss of interest in golf. This is not just a Myrtle Beach issue. It has been a challenge to country clubs and even public courses across the country. We have seen nearly thirty courses close locally in recent years and the trend continues.

Community tourism leaders have been working hard to develop new markets for Myrtle Beach tourism. To date, the biggest success has been in youth softball, baseball, and other team sports. We have seen dramatic growth over the past four years. This fall, Sands Ocean Club will be hosting many teams and their families as we continue to focus on this market. Mr. Williams with Sands Resorts, reports that team sports bookings for the spring of 2016 are showing very strong growth and we are optimistic about the future. We should certainly be mindful of this when considering improvements and additional amenities.

Towards the end of this month you will be receiving your official notice of the Homeowners Association Annual Meeting on October 24th. We encourage your attendance at all functions if possible.

Thanks for your kind attention,

Lee J. Rawcliffe