

## **Paulina Court Condominium Maintenance Reminders and Tips for Owners**

So you've got some time on your hands and you want to be a good neighbor but don't know what to do? In a big place like Paulina Court Condominiums, there's almost always something that needs attention. Listed below are some suggestions, along with the directions on what to do, how to do it, when to do it and where to go if you need help.

Maintaining our building is an on-going responsibility to keep things in good repair and to keep our property values high. Remember that we voted to do this work ourselves, to keep our assessments low. This isn't just for a few of us to do – it's for all of us to do. So find an area that interests you and pitch in!

### **Outdoor Maintenance**

***Start by Plugging In -- electrical outlets*** – There is only one outdoor electrical outlet and it's located near the bottom, inside, north side of the front gate. Use it to plug in the holiday lights, snow blower or other equipment. If you've plugged in and don't have power, or if you see that the light is out above the gate and have already changed the bulb, push the red button in the ground fault interrupter and see if that resets things. If you have tried this and there is still no power, then notify a Board Member.

***Changing Light Bulbs*** – Outside as well as inside lights will need to be replaced periodically. Note that all outside lights are on sensors except for 5912 which is on a timer. (The mechanism to change this is in the basement of 5916.) All light bulbs are kept in the basement of 5912. (Did you know that the new energy-saving bulbs are a 50% savings over regular bulbs?) A really tall ladder is in the basement of 5924. Please replace it when you are done as it belongs to one of our owners.

***Painting Porches, Power Washing Decks*** – Painting your porch is the owner's responsibility and you must use only the approved white color. Please adhere to the color chart posted in the entry way of 5912. You may purchase paint at Thybony paint store on Clark Street. Be sure you get masonry or outdoor paint to ensure that it will stick to the bricks. All metal railings must be painted black. Power washing decks is also the owner's responsibility. You can find the power wash equipment in the basement of 5912. Feel free to power wash any mold or moss you see growing on the building. This is an ongoing battle but we can prevail!

***Sprinkling the Grass and Plants*** – We have two connections for hoses – one in the middle of the court between 5912 and 5916, and the other on the north side of the building. Hoses are attached to both in the summer and should be disconnected in the winter. Sprinklers are placed nearby. In the summer, the lawn, trees, and plants should be watered every other day. When the weather gets extremely hot and dry, watering

should be done daily, in the evening or early morning. This is something everyone can pitch in and help with. No experience is necessary.

***Trimming Bushes*** – We basically have three types of bushes that have different types of trimming requirements.

1. The ones with the lowest maintenance requirements are the ones inside the stones by the front gate. These should be left a little shaggy so their natural shape can take over and droop over the stones. Please don't trim them.
2. The small yews that stay green all year can be trimmed once a year if odd branches appear. We can keep them in basic rounded shapes but should allow them to grow larger. Please don't trim the yews in front of the building as we are trying to allow them to grow taller.
3. The bushes that need the most attention are those that grow under peoples' decks in the courtyard. Trim them back to about 6 inches below the decks then just "square them off". Don't worry about cutting off too much. They grow quickly.

Tools are in the basement of 5912.

***Sweeping and Trash Detail*** – Feel brain-dead after a hard day at work and want to be out in the fresh air? Pick up a broom and go sweep. It's great mindless activity. Sweep off the front sidewalks, inside courtyard and even the parking lot and the tunnel that leads to it. Pick up and throw away trash, old newspapers, extra circulars and pizza ads. It's amazing how good you will feel and how great our property will look. Don't forget to pick up the trash in the street and gutter in front of our building.

***Weeding*** – Grab a knee cushion, a pair of gardening gloves and a digging tool and dig out dandelions. It's not enough to pull them out with your hands – they are tough little critters and need to be pulled out by the roots. If you aren't sure what's a weed and what's not, ask Judi, Sam or Kathryn for a quick lesson. For those of you more interested in weeding with mass destruction – use the high powered chemical spray for the weeds in the parking lot. Tools are in the basement of 5912.

***Mowing the Grass*** – The lawn mower is in the basement of 5912 and should be moved through the back basement door by using the board as a ramp to get it up the steps.

Here's how to get it working:

- Fill up the tank with gas from the container in the basement.
- Take off the left shute – no need to attach the leaf catcher bag.
- Push the red plunger 5-6 times to prime the motor.
- There are two bars – one above and one below the handle.
- Hold down the top bar and pull the rope on the right a couple of times until the motor starts.
- Keep holding the top bar down as you walk and mow. If you'd like the mower to be self-propelled, also grab the bottom bar as well.
- To stop, let go of the top bar.
- Clean off loose grass from mower and put back into basement.

## **Unit Maintenance and Owner Operations**

A person's home may be their castle, but when you live in a condo, what you do in your house often affects your neighbors. Below are some tips and suggestions for how to be a responsible home owner.

***Cleaning Your Laundry Vent*** – For maximum efficiency in your dryer, be sure to clean your dryer screen before or after every load. You might even try vacuuming out the vent area as much as possible or use a brush to clean it out. Take advantage of the professional vent cleaning service (at a nominal cost) that the Condo Board arranges. Keeping our vents clean will minimize the potential for fires.

***Dodging Raccoons*** – Raccoons in the neighborhood love to feast on the tasty garbage in our dumpsters in the evening and early morning hours. They are aggressive and not easily frightened. Please plan your garbage dumping times accordingly.

***Using the Exterminator*** – About once a year the Condo Board brings in an exterminator to take care of insect problems. This service is free to the owners if you sign up in advance. If you are not able to be home for the scheduled day, ask one of your neighbors to let the exterminator in your unit for you.

***Moving Air Conditioners*** – If you need help moving your air conditioners, ask a neighbor for help. Our clean up weekends are a good time to put them in and take them out. Please be extra careful if you are working in a window over someone's car! Also, please comply with posted dates (Nov. 1) for removal of air conditioners in the Fall. This is a large source of heat loss for our building.

***Using Your Storage Space*** – Every owner is assigned a basement storage space for their own personal use. It is your responsibility to keep it reasonably neat and clean, and free of hazardous materials. You must also keep all your personal belongings within the confines of your storage space. And mind the smell! Be a good neighbor and get rid of your smelly items in storage – it fills up the entire enclosed space.

City fire code regulations demand that areas surrounding furnaces and water heaters be kept clear of boxes, debris and litter. Unmarked personal items that are left in public basement areas will be donated to Brown Elephant or discarded.

***Minimizing Heat Loss*** – In order to keep our heating costs down and your assessments low, we all need to do our part to minimize heat loss in the winter. The best way to do this is to remember a few simple tips:

- Remove all air conditioners by November 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Close all outer doors tightly.
- Turn off radiators in some rooms rather than opening windows if your unit gets too hot.
- Uninsulated back porch areas get particularly drafty – put in an area rug, hang insulated drapes, fill in cracks under the door jam.

***Preventing Pipes from Freezing*** – When the temperature dips down, take some simple measures to keep your pipes from freezing:

- On really cold days, leave the cabinet doors open beneath your sinks to let in the warm air and leave your faucets trickling to prevent pipes from freezing.
- If you have a refrigerator against a back wall → it's important to keep warm air moving around any water lines. Open your cabinet doors and know where your refrigerator water line is located.

***Preventing Water Damage*** – There are two simple ways to prevent water damage from occurring in your unit:

- Check the caulking around the edges of your bathtub. If it is cracked, dried or old pick up a new tube at the hardware store and apply a new coat. It's an easy way to avoid a costly repair.
- Make sure all your windows close tightly and that the locks are secure. This will prevent water damage as well as ensure the security of your unit.

***Changing Smoke Alarm Batteries*** – Use the changing of the clocks as a reminder to check your smoke alarm battery. If you don't know how to do this, ask a neighbor or a Board Member for help.

***Maintaining the Hallway*** – Although we have a monthly cleaning service, if you notice a mess on the carpet or hallway in your building, please clean it up. Vacuum the carpet outside your door, clean the glass in your doorway, throw away junk mail. When phone books are delivered, either take your copy up to your unit, or throw your copy away.

***Caring for your Radiators*** – In the summer, turn on all the radiators in your unit – even if there are some you haven't used in the winter. This will help the water drain out of the radiators so the metal won't corrode. Also, in the winter, turn the radiator all the way on or all the way off to avoid leaking. Resist the urge to turn it on only part way. If your unit is too hot, just turn on some of the radiators and leave some off.

***Minding the Drain*** – It's great to take pride in your unit and keep it sparkling clean. But be careful what you do with that dirty water. What looks like a drain in the floor, may in fact just empty onto the basement floor. So when you are watering your plants, washing your porch, or bathing Fido, please don't dump your water down the porch drain.

***Accessing the Roof*** – Third floor owners who have roof access privileges must not lock access to the roof. We must keep these doors open for maintenance purposes at all times.

***Protecting your Property*** – Please don't keep any personal property in the area just inside the gates next to the alley. This provides a tempting target for passers-by.

***Working the Parking Gate*** – Running late and find that the parking gate isn't cooperating? Here are a couple of things to try:

- If the weather is cold, warm up your clicker in your hands for a few minutes (or better yet, don't leave it in your car at all). Remember to replace your battery regularly.
- Go into basement of 5920, find the public electrical box.
- Flip the "parking gate" switch off. Count to five. Flip the "parking gate" switch back on.
- If this still doesn't work, contact a Board Member and call a taxi.
- If at all possible we try to schedule repairs on a weekday to avoid over time charges on the weekends.

Also, when the weather is particularly cold and icy, the lock on the gate between the parking lot and the tunnel leading to the courtyard freezes, so please just prop open the gate so people don't get stranded.

And most importantly – **please be sure that you close the parking gate every time you come in or go out.** This means whether you are jogging, driving or taking out the garbage. This is security issue along with making sure that the front door to your stack is always closed and locked behind you. Be sure you are doing your part to keeping our home safe and secure.

## **On-Going Building Maintenance**

Because we live in a building that is over eighty years old, we face the challenge of making on-going repairs and investing in preventative measures to keep our home in good repair. Here are some of the items that are on the Board's maintenance list.

***Repairing Lintels*** – Lintels are the metal bars and bricks located above the windows. Through years of weather, and wear and tear on the building, cracks appear in the mortar surrounding these elements. Water can get into these cracks and cause damage to ceilings and walls. In the past few years, we have been repairing these damaged lintels by replacing bricks, patching the mortar and damaged ceilings, and occasionally replacing metal strips. This will continue to be an on-going maintenance item, with a few lintel repair projects being completed each year.

***Gluing Bird Spikes*** – To eliminate a messy pigeon problem, we glued rows of spikes to the corners of the roofs of 5916 and 5920. Periodically these spike strips need to be re-glued and volunteers are needed to assist with this job.

***Resealing of Parking Lot*** – Every couple of years, we will need to reseal our parking lot. This activity will help extend the life of our blacktop and is usually done during one of our semi-annual clean-up days.

***Ventilating the Furnace Rooms*** – Doors to the furnace rooms must stay open for ventilation purposes. The Board has plans to replace the glass in the basement door of 5916 with screen to better circulate the heat in that stack.

***Preventing Icy Downspouts*** – A few years ago, we fitted our downspouts with heat tape so they wouldn't freeze up. While they have thermostats, someone (usually the Board President) still needs to go out about the time of the first snow, and turn on the heat tape switch in every building. This heat tape keeps ice from building up and saves us about \$70 per service call. At some point, we will need to replace our small sized gutters with larger, industrial size gutters like our neighbors to the north have.

***Checking the Sump Pump Switches*** – Another exciting task for our Board President is to regularly check that the sump pump switches are always on. An area of consideration for the Board is the installation of a battery back-up for the sump pump.

***Finding Gas Meters*** – Ever wonder where your gas meter is?

- Meters for 5912 are in the door beneath 5912 1e, access off the alley
- Meters for 5916 are in 5912 storage area
- Meters for 5920 are in 5924
- Meters for 5924 are in 5924 right side

***Bricking Basement Windows*** – Many of the basement windows are covered by boards and could represent significant heat loss. We will investigate the cost to replace these boards with glass blocks or bricks to conserve our energy costs.

***Crumbling Masonry*** – We have ongoing maintenance issues to repair crumbling masonry on the roof, along the parapets, and at ground level along the north wall and alley, and in the tunnel leading to the parking lot. Periodically we will need to have bricks replaced and tuckpointing done.

***Replacing Wood*** – The Board will schedule a time in the future to repair or replace the wood in the arch of the tunnel that leads to the parking lot.

***Refurbishing Stack Doors and Entry Hallways*** – We will be refurbishing the entry hallways to repair and replace wood and hardware of the doors and tile on the floors in all four stacks.

***Replacing Rusting Conduits*** – The Board will be adding to our list of future maintenance items, the replacement of electrical conduits that are located at the rear of the building.

***Painting Hallways*** – The Board will be scheduling the painting of hallways for all stacks in the near future.

**Basement of 5912 – Headquarters for:**

- Gardening tools, soil, gloves
  - Rakes
  - Brooms
  - Lawnmower
  - Snow shovels
- Book exchange
- Holiday lights
  - Light bulbs
  - Paint guides