

# HOW RESERVE STUDIES CAN MINIMIZE DUES

## *The Timing of Capital Projects*

By Tim Wentzell, PE

As a condominium ages, one of the most important and difficult decisions that an association board needs to make is the timing of major capital projects. The importance of these decisions can be illustrated by the question of when is the appropriate time for the re-paving of roadways and parking areas, because the postponing of this process can often result in a significantly more expensive repair. If an association undertakes a re-paving process before significant amounts of cracking occur, it is often appropriate to do what is called an overlay in which new paving is placed on top of the existing paving and the existing curbs and drains can remain.

If an association postpones this task, the pavement frequently continues to deteriorate and the level of cracking and other failure mechanisms, such as “alligatoring” or settling, can occur. This continued deterioration will make it necessary for the roadways and parking areas to undergo a much more extensive

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process. Typically, this then requires a process called “re-claiming”, whereby the existing pavement is ground up and mixed with the existing base, then re-graded, and new pavement installed. This process costs between 2 and 2.5 times as much as an overlay. The spreadsheets on the facing page are excerpted from an actual reserve study and modified to show these two different options. Option 1 is where the overlay is done. Option 2 shows the cost if this project is postponed for an addition-

al five years. It can be seen from this that the less expensive alternative is the overlay process which results in an annualized savings over the 15-year-period of approximately \$52,000. This is definitely one of the long-term benefits of having a reserve study, or life-cycle analysis, prepared to assist the board in recognizing the savings associated with appropriately timed maintenance practices.

In order to make an accurate determination of whether an overlay or a pavement “re-claiming” is appropriate, an inspection of the existing pavement would need to be done, as well as making core cuts to determine the thickness of the existing pavement and the type of base on which the previous pavement was installed. Once this determination and a review of the existing pavement condition is done, an appropriate repair plan can be initiated. ■

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