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Trouble in Paradise



Two recent break-ins here at The Quintet have forced many of us to realize that our lovely property – which has always seemed a safe haven – is vulnerable to those inclined to thievery.

In two recent occasions – in the early morning hours of Dec 23 and again on Jan 10 – thieves have used stolen entry fobs to enter our buildings, garages, Clubhouse and business offices. They stole packages, rummaged through unlocked vehicles, and in the 2nd instance, on Jan 10th – broke into the business office and stole the office laptop, a truck key and our maintenance staff's cell phone.

In retrospect, we've failed to recognize the weak security of our business office. With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, it's obvious we've been vulnerable there for quite a while.

For example - we probably all have a deadbolt on our front door. But over 30 years, dozens of HOA Boards, hundreds (thousands?) of owners and years of property management, no one has thought it important to install one in the business office.

We have smart people on the newsroom staff, for instance - but none of them thought of it. Until now. Duh.

No easier to explain than – why did it take us until the Fall of 2001 to see the potential danger of box cutters on commercial airplanes?

Not to compare this with that, but you get the drift.



The following is based on a report written by one of our Board members – Ken Rinehart – who took the time to sit down with Maria, review all the security videos, prepare a timeline and write a detailed report of the two events. Many thanks to both of them for doing that. That detailed report is to be released on the Kin Living portal.

A Brief Summary:

At 04:32 on Dec 23, two men in a white truck parked in the Clubhouse parking lot, walked over to the kiosk and ripped a hangar/storage bar off the kiosk wall. They then busted open one (or more?) of the lockboxes hanging on that bar. Using a stolen entry fob, they drove through the gate and spent the next hour stealing packages and rummaging through cars in Dogwood, Cascade and Maplewood.

At 04:30 on Jan 10, two men in a small, beat-up looking sedan parked in the

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Clubhouse parking lot, walked over to the kiosk and busted open a lockbox assigned to a utility company (giving them access to all five buildings and the Clubhouse.) They used that fob to enter through the gate, drive up to Oak Pointe and spend over an hour methodically going down the hill - entering all five buildings – stealing packages from the mailroom, taking them into the elevator to rip them open off-camera.... and roaming through garages looking for unlocked cars.

And on this occasion, they use the fob to enter the Clubhouse - at 05:36 - and use a screwdriver (or similar tool) to disable the simple doorknob lock into the business office.

10 minutes later the two men are seen carrying stuff out the front door of the Clubhouse to their car. Most fortunately, Jose arrives three minutes later (05:49) and parks next to their car (sensing something is amiss.) The two thieves fast-walk to their car and drive away.

After a quick survey of the scene, Jose dials 911 and a Washington County deputy shows up shortly thereafter.

Who wasn't all that helpful, to be honest. Filed the report, gave Maria the case

number and his business card, and left shortly thereafter.

The Deputy didn't think to even search the Clubhouse for thieves possibly hiding out - but did so when asked. He saw no point in taking fingerprints – dismissed the idea as being a waste of time.

We have most of the activity on video, except in the office itself. No cameras were mounted in the office when our video security system was installed in 2020.

While the resolution of the building and Clubhouse cameras is quite good, the individuals wore hats and remained masked at all times – the cameras were easily thwarted.

The cameras outside at the kiosk did not provide an image good enough to identify license plates or faces. The license plates may have been covered – it's impossible to tell. We have a good side shot of one the burglar's heads, but the image is of poor quality and not very useful.

It's very difficult to tell if the perpetrators of the Dec 23 break-in are the same perps involved on Jan 10.

How much damage was done?

In the big picture, we may have gotten lucky. While the thieves stole a truck key, they didn't steal the truck (probably because Jose arrived and scared them off.)

The stolen cell phone was immediately reported and removed from our account.

Our Treasurer is working with Maria and Kin Living to assess potential issues arising from the theft of our office laptop. *It is password protected.* Standby for more info concerning the laptop.

Our Finance Committee has a long-planned meeting Tuesday evening (Jan 18) at 6:00.....this may be an item for discussion.



Making the business office more secure seems fairly straightforward. To that end, the Board of Directors has directed Kin Living to seek three proposals, from three different vendors, for the design and install of a security system in the office.

While we don't yet know what such a system will look

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like, it might include better locks, decorative bars over the windows, a large commercial grade/fireproof vault or safe, motion and audio sensors, and video cameras. Perhaps monitored 24/7 by a company that can dispatch a response team.

Our security problem doesn't originate with the vulnerability of our business office, though. The problem in these two instances begins with our entry fobs. More specifically, how secure we keep them.

And like the security of our business office, we've been a bit lax in keeping our fobs secure.

For many years we've been leaving entry fobs and keys down at the gate kiosk, stored in what many would think of as a "realtor" lockbox. Any resident has been able to buy one of these lockboxes (\$30 and up on Amazon) and leave an entry fob and door key down at the kiosk – for a health care worker, a pet-sitter, or whatever.

Alongside these are other lockboxes with entry fobs – left for utility companies, project vendors, realtors.

In both instances, the burglars busted open one of those lockboxes, grabbed an

entry fob and used it to gain access onto our property.

It seems clear that we need a more secure way of leaving fobs and door keys accessible to non-residents who legitimately need them. For now, they're being kept in the Clubhouse while our options are being explored.



With the benefit of hindsight, learning from these two incidents, we should be able to make substantial improvements towards the safety and security of our lovely property.

The Board has taken an important step, to explore better options for our business office.

On down the road, hopefully we'll review the vulnerability of our buildings to unwanted entry. In a scene captured by one of our security cameras, the thieves are seen opening the front door of a building using just a screwdriver or similar tool. No fob needed.

And it seems in once instance, when their stolen

fob wouldn't open a front door, one of the thieves shimmied up the front wall of the building to the 2nd floor corridor, then went downstairs to open the front door for his accomplice.

Now, how do you prevent *that*?

Several neighbors have told the newsroom they have seen (legitimate) workers during the day do something similar.....they run down to the truck for a tool, the door closes behind them and they get locked out. Shimming up the wall is the quickest way to get back to work.

As both these events occurred about 4:30 in the morning, the gates were closed. The stolen entry fobs allowed access through the gate and onto the property.

We're still assessing the damage done, and what can be done to better prevent a break-in in the future. More to follow. If you have suggestions, please send them to Kin Living and/or the Board of Directors.

The next meeting of our HOA Board of Directors will be held via Zoom on Monday, Jan 24 at 6:00 pm.