

The Right Decision

Hager Meadows called SPS for expert help with their building envelope. Here's what happened.



How do you know if you're making correct decisions about your property's aging building envelope?

"You won't," says Phil Lambert, "unless you're working with the right partners and following the right process."

Lambert speaks from experience. He recently retired from a long career in property management helping condominium associations manage building envelope problems and projects. Last year, in his capacity as president, Lambert helped guide his own association, The Village at Hager Meadows in Marlborough, Mass., through a multi-million dollar building envelope replacement project.

**The Village at
Hager Meadows
Marlborough, Mass.
2019**

- ☐ SPS Savings BluePrint
- ☐ SPS30® Building Envelope Replacement
- ☐ SPS30 Enhanced Manufacturer Warranties

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Hager Meadows was built in 1988. Lambert, an original owner, says leaks were a problem from the start. “We weren’t alone,” he says.

“Our property was typical of the condominiums built at that time,” says Lambert. “Buildings went up quickly. Construction quality was inconsistent. And building materials were not as advanced as they are today.”

Still, the association was diligent about exterior maintenance. “We followed the standard playbook,” says Lambert. “We painted every five years. We replaced any rotted wooden clapboards and trim before we painted, and every painting cycle the siding got worse,” he says. “The scope of spot repairs kept growing, the cost to maintain the siding kept growing, and so did the number of people complaining about window leaks.”

We Needed a New Approach

The turning point, says Lambert, was when trustees began talking about replacing the roofs on the association's ten buildings. “We had been dealing with leaks from ice dams for years. There was no question they needed to be replaced,” he says. “But I was concerned we were making a mistake by focusing only on our roofs without looking at the siding. One thing I’ve learned about building envelopes over the years is that a piecemeal approach to maintenance doesn’t work. You have to look at the big picture.”

Lambert’s suggestion was met with concerns about cost. “Completely understandable,” says Lambert. “Money matters, and no board of trustees wants to spend more than necessary. But I kept saying we had to look at the siding, and we struggled over this point for several meetings.”

The stalemate was broken when Lambert opened the association’s books. “We added up the total cost of our painting cycles for the last 20 years,” he says. “It turns out that we had spent about \$2.25 million on painting and spot repairs. At the end of that 20-year journey all we really had was a lot of paid invoices.”

Hager Meadows needed a new approach, says Lambert. “We agreed that it didn’t make sense to replace the roofs until we knew what was going on with the siding. That’s when I called Thomas Daniel at Scherneck Property Services.”

Seeing Is Believing

Scherneck Property Services (SPS) offers a complete suite of building envelope solutions for condominium communities — from project planning and production to an exclusive annual inspection and enhanced manufacturer warranty plan.

“We guide clients through a fact-based approach to making decisions,” says Vice President Thomas Daniel. “The first step is to determine the condition of the building envelope with a series of invasive inspections.”

SPS’s findings at Hager Meadows confirmed Lambert’s suspicions about the siding. Years of water penetration had caused substantial rot to framing and plywood sheathing. The damage was particularly bad around windows and beneath rear decks.

“Seeing is believing,” says Lambert. “When SPS presented their report, the evidence was clear. Both the roofing and the siding were at end-of-life. Everyone on our board of trustees knew we had to go forward with a complete building envelope replacement.”

A Step-by-Step Planning Process

A building envelope replacement project can feel overwhelming, says SPS’s Daniel. “These are large scale projects with big budgets. Careful planning is essential for success. That’s why we created the SPS Savings Blueprint.”

The SPS Savings Blueprint is a collaborative, step-by-step planning process that makes it easy for clients to compare their options and choose the highest-

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value building envelope solution. “The end result is an actionable plan,” says Daniel. “If your Savings BluePrint includes a building envelope project, we also help you develop a complete set of project specifications.”

Hager Meadows trustees and Dartmouth Group property manager Gina DeFrancesco worked closely with SPS to customize their new SPS30 building envelope with long-life, low-maintenance materials. The new roofs featured architectural shingles, new skylights, and additional waterproof membrane to prevent leaking from ice dams. Specifications called for new construction windows to replace original and failed replacement windows. PVC trim was used to replace pine trim. And to replace the cedar clapboard siding, Hager Meadows chose Everlast — a premium composite siding that looks like wood, never needs to be painted, and is more durable than vinyl.

SPS30 building envelope replacement projects are built to last for at least 30 years. Making sure a project also addresses a community’s financial situation is a key planning consideration.

At Hager Meadows, trustees turned to The Dartmouth Group for help with financial analysis and modeling. “There was no way our reserves could fund this project,” says Lambert. “A one-time assessment wasn’t a viable option, either. Ultimately, we agreed that the most flexible and affordable strategy for homeowners was to finance the project with a 30-year loan.”

Trust but Verify

The trustees decision to hire SPS was based on experience, value and trust, says Lambert. “When you hire a contractor for a major project, it’s easy to confuse price with value. There is always pressure to go with the low bid,” he says. “Instead, you’re better off choosing the right contractor for your project first, and then making sure the pricing is fair and reasonable.”

The reason, says Lambert, has to do with the scale and complexity of building envelope replacement for condominium properties. “I know a lot of good contractors who do quality work. But building envelope replacement is a specialty. And no one has a better track record or delivers greater value than SPS.”

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The difference is SPS’s collaborative approach, says Lambert. “It’s more than the customized planning and the detailed proposal. SPS gives you the support you need to keep moving forward,” he says. “They are all in — whether it’s showing up to meet with trustees, or at homeowners Q&A sessions to explain how the different components of a building envelope are connected.”

These projects are challenging, says Lambert. “You have to work with people you trust, because trust is the glue that holds everything together. We knew SPS was the right contractor. But we still needed to be sure we could trust their numbers.”

Hager Meadows hired Building Enclosure Science (BES), an independent construction consulting firm, to verify SPS’s pricing using market sources. The rigorous process included an audit of project scope, specifications, materials, quantities and labor hours to make sure SPS’s pricing was fair and competitive.

Trustees also asked The Dartmouth Group’s Bob McBride to conduct a separate price verification using historical labor and material costs from other condominium communities in the firm’s portfolio. “Bob walked everyone through the math line by line,” says Lambert. “The integrity of SPS’s pricing was beyond doubt.”

“That’s Why You Hire SPS”

Project management is a hallmark of SPS30 building envelope projects. Pre-project planning includes a collaborative site management plan that addresses start and stop times, staging of building materials, homeowner notifications, and other key project logistics.

During production, SPS meets weekly with trustees, property management and other members of the project team to review progress and financials, preview work schedules, and make decisions to keep the project moving.

At Hager Meadows, SPS Vice President Mike Scully was responsible for meeting production goals and client expectations.



“Mike and his team were outstanding,” says Lambert. “SPS crews are known for being efficient and productive, but success isn’t just about staying on schedule. You also need great people skills. You have to care about doing the right thing. That’s Mike Scully. And that’s why you hire SPS.”

Property manager Gina DeFrancesco agrees. “I’ve worked with SPS on different projects for different communities,” she says. “What sets them apart is their

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willingness to go the extra mile to fix a problem. If they see an opportunity to make something better, SPS brings it to your attention,” says DeFrancesco. “Those details matter because they can add a lot of value to the outcome of your project.”

Advice for a Bright Future

Hager Meadows’ new SPS30 building envelope has transformed the property, says DeFrancesco. “The property looks fantastic,” she says. “The difference is night and day, and people noticed.”

As soon as the project was complete, owners saw an immediate increase in market value, says DeFrancesco. “I know of three homes that sold overnight,” she says. “Open house on the weekend, and it’s gone.”

Lambert credits the project team for Hager Meadows’ fresh start — and for a bright future. “We came to see this project as an opportunity to create a 30-year master plan for our financial health and peace of mind,” he says. “Our new SPS30 building envelope is the cornerstone of that plan.”

Lambert’s advice for associations managing an aging building envelope is simple: “Get expert help so you can focus on the facts and make informed decisions,” he says. “And the sooner you start, the better.”

SPS30® Enhanced Manufacturer Warranties

SPS30 building envelope projects deliver enduring value, longevity, and peace of mind. SPS30 projects use only the highest quality materials, backed by manufacturer warranties only available to SPS30 clients.

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