

MERIFIELD ACRES NEWSLETTER

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Service District Status. You should have received a April 12, 2000 letter from the Board asking your support for establishing a Service district for Road Maintenance. Please act on this letter and return it to MALA as soon as possible. Getting a Service District established is vital to maintaining our roads and our property value (which depends on the quality of our roads).

Individual Community Contributions. In the January MALA Newsletter I described a plan to develop a compilation of the existing rules and regulations that we need to ensure that Merifield continues to be the community we all want it to be. We believe that this will assist the Merifield Acres property owners in avoiding some of those prohibited activities that detract from our enjoyment of Merifield Acres. I noted that the composition of the group charged with developing this listing was key to the success of this effort and asked for volunteers to assist in this effort. To date I have received exactly ZERO responses. I find this lack of response disturbing particularly in light of the past criticisms that I have heard to the effect that many property owners feel they don't have a voice in matters affecting MALA. This is an opportunity to change that feeling. We're not looking for rocket scientists or industry executives, although they are welcome. What we really need is a small group of people who are typical of Merifield property owners and who want to make Merifield Acres a better place to live. Whoever you are and whatever your background, if you like living in Merifield and want to make the community even better, this is your chance to make a contribution.

Before leaving the subject of volunteering, we are receiving help in some areas. The beautiful spring flowers at the entrance are a result of *The Green Thumb Gang of Two*, Shirley Greenhalgh and Donna Wendt. The newsletters and invoices (ugh, dirty word) are compliments of Pat Wells, Midge Morgan, Claudia Lockhart, Brenda Mould, and Jane McPherson. A lot of you are stepping forward to help but we need more of you to help out, each in your own particular way. Don't wait to be asked. Give one of the MALA officers a call and tell them that "you're available".

Serving the Community as a Member of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is the policy making body that sets the standards for our community. They also are the ones that have to make the hard decisions when there are conflicting issues. The Board members represent the membership in the administration of our association and as such have a duty to serve as your spokesperson in all MALA-related matters. I encourage you in the strongest terms to use the Board members to present your thoughts, opinions, and recommendations. The Board meets bi-monthly, normally on the 2nd Tuesday of every other month at 7 PM.

Property owners in good standing (i.e., their assessments are paid) are eligible for election to the Board for a term of three years. One third of the Board is replaced each year, with elections to the Board held at the Association's annual meeting. For the first time in a long time, the 1999 Annual Meeting saw more candidates for the existing seats than there were vacancies on the Board, and we had a number of nominations from the floor as well! This is

good because the membership is then able to vote for the candidates they believe will serve the community most effectively.

The purpose of this discussion is to solicit candidates for service on the Board. If you have a desire to make our community better than it already is, please don't wait for someone to "discover" you and ask you to be a candidate, volunteer. A phone call (804-374-0148) or E-Mail (palau@kerrlake.com) note to me is all that's necessary. I'll pass your name along to the nominating committee when it's formed. You will be asked to draft a short paragraph describing your background and interests so that the voters will know something about you when it comes time to vote.

Covenants. Previous newsletters addressed the fact that we are attempting to manage MALA without a single, consistent set of rules that applies to the entire community. We also addressed the problems of covenant enforceability. Unfortunately most of you only have copies of the covenants applicable to your own property and are unable to compare all the different covenants so I'll have to ask you to accept as a matter of faith, that our covenants ARE a problem. So what do we do about this? The easy answer is, "Change the Covenants." But that, while easy to say, is less easy to do, for a number of reasons, not the least being a general sense of indifference to the problem. But if a majority of us could agree that we would have a much smoother functioning, more harmonious, community were there a common set of rules governing our community, then I think there is a process that may lead us to that more ideal state. This process, however, to be successful, must be one that the entire community is comfortable pursuing. Here are a couple tentative ideas that may be useful for starters. I'd welcome your ideas too.

1. We have to be able to describe what we want our community to be and this means developing in fairly specific terms what we want from our community. Perhaps this should even include what we are willing to contribute to our community.

2. Having defined our vision of Merifield Acres we are then in a position to commence drafting a set of statements that will assist us in realizing our vision. These statements will then serve as the basis for our common covenants that, when ratified by the property owners, will apply uniformly to all sections and properties in Merifield Acres

3. Because conditions change over time, we must also incorporate a change process in the covenant document that permits future amendments with the concurrence of a majority of the entire community (but prohibits change (or secession?) by individuals or groups of individuals.

E-Mail Addresses. To date we have collected some 122 MALA member E-Mail addresses. Obtaining as complete a list as possible is important for two reasons, to keep you better informed about MALA news and happenings and to reduce to a minimum the cost of getting this information out in a timely manner. The cost to print and mail a four page newsletter to the members is about 50¢ each. I realize that not all MALA members are on the internet, but there are many of you out there who are and we need to know who you are. If you are one of the 15 who sent your address in, we've got you and if you've sent me an E-Mail note, we've got you as well. If you have a home in Merifield, we've probably got you too but check the recently issued telephone directory to make sure. All the others should visit our web site (<http://www.kerrlake.com/mala>) and send an E-Mail note to MALA using the web page to generate the message. Be sure to include your name in the message since many people use aliases in their E-Mail address.

Merifield Residential Districts. In order to facilitate the distribution of MALA activity announcements, newsletters, etc. to Merifield Acres residents (and to avoid the mailing costs), we've divided Merifield into eight districts with each having about 27-30 homes. In each district we're going to ask one person (initially, a member of the Board) to serve as the "District Representative" who will be responsible for delivering flyers, etc. and for face-to-face meetings with the residents to ascertain community sentiments on topical issues. This newsletter may well be their first hand delivery.

Merifield Acres Hangar Decision. At the April Board meeting, the Board voted to demolish and remove the old aircraft hangar and adjacent concrete pad. This will be accomplished in an orderly way as resources can be programmed. The board also addressed the issue of permitting property owners to erect private hangars (at the owner's personal expense) on Merifield acres common property in the vicinity of the landing strip. The Board found that there was insufficient detailed information available concerning the details to make an informed decision, and referred the issue to the Aviation Committee for further research.

Political and Environmental Liaison Committee. The Board of Directors has recently approved the establishment of a Political and Environmental Liaison Committee for the purpose of keeping the Association informed on political and environmental matters and to express MALA's support and/or concerns as such matters may arise. The committee will receive MALA policy guidance from the Board of Directors.

Sunday Afternoon Outdoor Socials. I'm sure that many of you older immigrants from northern cities remember the block parties that used to be held periodically where entire neighborhoods would block off a street and have a "block party" where neighbors could "eat, meet, greet, and dance in the street". We're going to try a Merifield Acres version of a block party. Commencing in April, and monthly thereafter into the fall, on the last Sunday of the month (weather permitting), we're going to hold a Sunday afternoon no-host MALA outdoor social from 3:30 to 5:00PM at Oak Park. All Merifield Acres property owners and residents are invited. These monthly outings are casual and informal and are intended to provide an opportunity for Merifield Acres property owners and residents to get acquainted, to shmooze a little, and even provide an opportunity for Board of Director wannabees to do a little campaigning (See page 1). People attending should provide their own beverages and an *hors d'oeuvre* to share. The 3:30-5:00 PM time was selected to permit weekend residents to attend before heading back home Sunday evening. There's no need to notify anyone that you're coming, just come and enjoy. Children are welcome.

Merifield Acres Telephone Directory. A revised Merifield Acres telephone directory has been prepared (thanks to **John and Judi Harris, Buddy Hairston, Jane Lyon, and Kristy Ikenberry** and distributed to the permanent residents. Non-permanent residents may obtain a directory from one of the MALA officers or from **Ken Hensley's** office on US 15S (just south of the True Value hardware store). Corrections or additions to the directory should be passed to Pat Wells (374-2925) or to MALA via E-Mail (mala@kerlake.com).

Facilities Manager. Judging from comments received over the last few months (and especially during the snow storms) there seem to be differing understandings of what **Dennis Hayes**, MALA's Facilities Manager, is responsible for doing. In sum, he is responsible for maintaining 12.5 miles of roadways, mowing almost 60 acres of common areas (Entrance area, tennis court area, airstrip, and Oak Park) eight

to 10 times a year, and maintaining MALA's dock, barn, pedestrian walkways, fences, signs, etc. Road maintenance includes snow and storm debris removal, cutting back tree limbs and other vegetation hindering or impeding road usage especially by emergency vehicles, cleaning ditches and culverts, repairing roadway potholes and pavement cracks, applying herbicide to and grooming road shoulders to prevent road edge deterioration, installing and maintaining traffic signs, and supervising the performance of outside paving contractors. Hayes meets with the Roads Committee chair weekly to review work accomplished and to establish work priorities for the coming week.

MALA is not Dennis Hayes' sole employer. He is a public contractor who performs construction and maintenance work for MALA as well as for individual homeowners in Merifield. These non-MALA contracting efforts do not conflict with or interfere with his performance under his contract with MALA. If you see him clearing snow from someone's driveway, you can rest assured that he has been hired by that person and that his responsibilities to MALA have been satisfied. Property owners and residents are encouraged to report situations of an emergency nature (trees/limbs blocking the roadway) directly to Dennis Hayes but routine reports of maintenance-related requirements or deficiencies should be reported to the Roads Committee chair or in his absence, one of the MALA officers. Performance compliments should go to Dennis directly; Complaints, if any, should go to the Roads Committee chair.

Attention All Dock Owners. As a result of a fatal boating accident last year (not in Buggs Island Lake) The Corps of Engineers has adopted a safety requirement that boat docks coming up for Dock Permit renewals will be required to have 3" reflectors mounted on the outboard corners of the dock. Amber reflectors are recommended but red ones will satisfy the requirement. In another dock-related matter, the Corps will be issuing a bulletin in the near future announcing that the requirement for docks to be moored using ground embedded mooring posts/anchors (vice trees/vegetation) becomes effective on December 1, 2000.

Dogs, Dogs, and More About Dogs. This Newsletter wouldn't be complete if we didn't have something to say about our four-footed canine friends. Recently I received a letter from a property owner chiding me (and the Board) for not doing enough to resolve the loose running dog problem. I told the complaining owners to review the minutes from our Board meetings and previous newsletters for what has been (and is being) done. What I didn't say, and should have, is that the responsibility for solving our MALA dog problem belongs to everyone, dog owners (especially), and residents who are bothered by dogs running loose. We have to attack this problem one dog at a time. By that I mean that if you are harassed by a dog that's outside the owner's property, you must report the incident to me or one of the other MALA officers immediately, together with details as to the nature of the incident, the time, date, location, dog description, dog owner, and other witnesses, if any. You also have to be prepared to make a court appearance as a witness should that become necessary.

Memorial Day Pig Roast. We're going to have a Merifield Acres community pig roast over the Memorial Day weekend. Additional details will be forthcoming. Check the MALA web homepage *Coming Events* section regularly for details.