

MERIFIELD ACRES NEWSLETTER

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Fire. I think I speak for the entire Association in saying that we all share in Mike and Jane Lyon's suffering and sadness over the destruction of their beautiful home by fire on the evening of June 24th. Theirs was the beautiful brick home located at the Vee in the road where Merifield and Lakepoint Drives come together. The fire began in the garage from an electrical fault in the wiring of their recently purchased riding lawn mower. Fortunately Mike and Jane escaped without injury. This tragedy should give us all cause to think through how we would react should any of us be faced with a similar event. Get yourselves out first, but then, if you can only save one other thing beside yourself, what will it be? We all need to have a well thought out emergency evacuation plan. Here's another one to ponder. Look at Mike and Jane's trees in the immediate vicinity of their home - What would have been the implication for our entire community if we had been in the dry season with lots of leaves on the ground and high winds?

Covenant Change. Subsequent to the fire, there have been a few property owners who have suggested that our covenants are overly restrictive as pertains to the construction of out buildings for the storage of lawn mowers, gasoline, etc. As I said at the annual meeting, changing covenants is a very difficult process and ought not to be undertaken unless there is a reasonable chance of success. If there are 15%-20% of our property owners in favor of attempting to amend the covenants and a volunteer willing to spearhead the effort, then the Board would support such an effort. Send a note or E-Mail to MALA (mala@kerlake.com) and let us know if you feel strongly that the covenants should be amended to permit out buildings.

Covenant Violations. Willful disregard for the covenants has become a serious problem. Please read and heed the letter that is included with this Newsletter.

New Board Members. Welcome and congratulations to the newly elected/re-elected Board members; **Gloria Bauer, Jerry Billingsley, Cindy Carter, Phil Hart, Jerry Madura, Clarence Neese, Don Sinkiewicz, and Laura Thompson.** We had an exceptionally strong slate of candidates this year and I am confident that the entire Board will continue to serve our community well. The members on the Board are your representatives. Talk to them and give them your thoughts about how we can better manage our community. The Board meets on the 2nd Tuesday of every other month (Oct., Dec., Feb., Apr., June, and August) at 7 PM at the Clarksville Library. Our meetings are open and we welcome observers.

Association Officers and Committee Chairs. The newly constituted Board of Directors re-elected **Paul Lautermilch** President, **Phil Hart** Vice President, **Garry Wilburn** Treasurer, and **Pat Wells** Secretary to serve for the coming year. The standing committee chairpersons remain the same except for **Jerry Billingsley** who relieved **Matt Dillon** on the Common Facilities Committee and **Matt Dillon** relieved **Frank Clippinger** as Chair of the Roads Committee. We all owe Frank a debt of gratitude for the superb manner in which he managed MALA's road maintenance over many years. Dillon has been serving as Frank's understudy for the past year resulting in a smooth transition in this critically important area.

Annual Meeting and Absentee Ballots. The minutes from the Annual Meeting have been posted on the MALA web site, E-Mailed to those on the Internet, and enclosed with this Newsletter for those not on the Internet. Attendance at the Annual Meeting was a disappointment in that only ten percent of our property owners attended. We used absentee ballot voting this year for the first time and everything seemed to work well. I hope that the availability of the absen-

tee ballot was not the cause of the low number of property owners attending the annual meeting. Eighty property owners used the absentee ballot.

Speed. On Thursday, October 11, the county radar speed detector/recorder was installed on Lakepoint Drive for 11 hours from 7:15 AM to 6:15 PM for the purpose of monitoring the speed of vehicles on our roads. Of the 479 vehicles monitored, 10 percent (46) were driving 40 mph or more with 2 vehicles clocked at a speed of 51 mph (and one of these had a cell phone stuck in her ear at the time - was she speeding to a physician to have the phone removed from her ear?). Half of the cars were at a speed of 31 mph or less. What can we conclude from this one day sampling? Most of the cars using our roads are traveling at a prudent speed, but given the nature of our roads, the number of walkers, joggers, and bikers, and the ever increasing deer population, we've been very, very fortunate that we've had as few incidents as we've had, considering the number of vehicles traveling at high speeds. And speaking of deer, as they say in the movies, "We've got a problem, Houston".

Deer. Because of the greatly increased number of deer that seem to have taken up permanent Merifield Acres residency, we asked Mr. W. Matt Knox, the VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries Deer Program Supervisor to visit Merifield and advise us in ways to manage our white-tailed deer residents. He, with Mr. Cale Godfrey, a wildlife biologist spent a half day in Merifield observing our deer and their environment. They promised to return and meet with the Board in December to share their conclusions. In the meantime they did leave us with a list of vegetation most liked/disliked by deer and this list is attached [Note that hostas don't show up on the most liked list!]. They also gave us two internet addresses that might be helpful. <http://wildlifedamage.unl.edu> and www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/wild/wildlife/prevent.html. More on this subject after our December meeting with these gentlemen.

Service District Status. The county attorney has determined that the agreement between MALA and Mary Fran Lewis made in the early 1990's (which excused her from paying annual assessments on certain properties she acquired through a Trustee Sale in exchange for deeding certain properties to MALA) could not be recognized by the county if the Service District is created. The County Board of Supervisors then asked Ms Lewis if she still supported the creation of a Service District. Because of the acreage held by Mary Fran, MALA must have her agreement to the Service District proposal in order to satisfy the statute requirements that more than half of the property owners *owning more than half of the property* support the creation of the Service District. A MALA committee composed of **Richard Allen** and **Phil Hart** has met with Ms Lewis to develop a suitable adjustment to the earlier agreement. Allen reported that Ms Lewis wants to support the creation of the Service District and is willing to agree in exchange for certain concessions by MALA, which the committee deems to be generous on her part. Her attorney is preparing a proposed contract which, if found acceptable by the Committee, will be presented to the MALA Board for approval.

Assessment Collection Policy. The Board recently approved a statement of MALA's assessment collections policies which is attached to this Newsletter. Currently there is some \$13,000 in unpaid assessments outstanding, 40% of which is owed by four property owners. Filing warrants in debt and ultimately having a lien placed on ones property is not something any of us enjoy, but as a matter of fairness to the large majority of property owners who do pay their fair share in a timely manner, there is no other recourse. Paying your assessment is a matter of responsible citizenship just like paying ones taxes marks a good citizen. We have a great community in Merifield Acres but it does require money to sustain the quality of our community.

P.S. If you retrieved this newsletter from your snail-mail box and are an internet subscriber, you are causing an unnecessary administrative expense. Please let us have your E-Mail address today! Send it to mala@kerrlake.com.