



The Acorn

The Acorn is written for and by the owners and residents of Springfield Oaks. This is not an official organ of the homeowners association or the Board of Directors.

<http://www.springfielddoaks.org>

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President's Corner

By Ken McCreless

A lot has happened since my fall article in the Acorn. The annual meeting of the membership was held at the Saratoga Elementary School in October. Our residents elected two new Board members. Congratulations to Vivian Drake and Megan Fila, who join the Board for three-year terms.

Additional highlights from the annual meeting included:

- A letter from Armstrong Management Services, our managing agent, was distributed to the membership advising that Armstrong was exercising the contract option to terminate their relationship with Springfield Oaks effective December 31, 2006;
- Director Nick Firth gave a presentation regarding the most current Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) proposal and how the addition of approximately 20,000 new jobs at the Ft. Belvoir Engineer Proving Grounds will affect our community;
- Mr. Thomas P. Davis, of JCE Real Estate Development, gave a presentation on behalf of the Rolling Oaks Development regarding an agreement to build a sound attenuation fence near Blue Oak Court;
- I advised the community of VDOT's plans to add a fourth lane to both the southbound and northbound lane of I-95 between Route 7100 (Fairfax County Parkway) and Route 123 (Occoquan). This widening will require the removal of the old sound barrier and the construction of a new barrier beginning in October 2007.

Thanks to the Blue Oak Court residents who provided feedback forms regarding the sound attenuation fence near your homes. Based upon your feedback and Mr. Davis' presentation, the Board decided that the Association does not need to make a decision at this time

until the affects of the BRAC proposals on the widening of Rolling Road become clearer.

The annual meeting was marked by vigorous discussion of several issues. The Board needs the active participation and involvement of the entire community to move the democratic process forward.

The Board of Directors would like to thank all the residents who attended the Special Meeting of the Board on Tuesday, December 7th. The Special Meeting was held for two specific purposes; select a new management agent and approve a 2007 budget. Both purposes were accomplished.

The Board considered proposals from seven management companies, two companies sent representatives who made presentations and answered questions from the Board and attending residents. The Board selected Sequoia Management Company, Inc. as our new management agent. The transition between Armstrong and Sequoia has been completed. You have received information directly from Sequoia. Our new property manager is Rhonda Murray, who is ably assisted by Katy Morabito. We enjoyed meeting them at the January meeting, and look forward to working with them to make our community a great place to live in Northern Virginia. Their contact information is listed in the directory section of this newsletter and on our association web site.

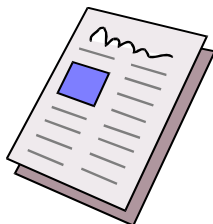
Also at the Special Meeting, the Board approved an Association Budget for 2007, and we are pleased to announce that even though there are still some unknown costs associated with hiring a new management company, the Budget will not require an increase in the annual assessments. Your monthly dues will not increase for 2007.

In addition, the Board elected officers for the coming year at the November monthly meeting. I was re-elected as President, Ron Manning was re-elected as Vice President, Vivian Drake was re-elected as Secretary, and Pennie Ziepol was elected as Treasurer. Please do not hesitate to contact us or any other members of the Board with issues or concerns that need to be addressed by the Board.

Newsletters—A Valuable Tool

By Pennie Ziepol

As the new editor of I see our newsletter as tool for educating and owners and residents.



the Acorn, a valuable informing My job is

to communicate with each of you and provide useful and current information. The Acorn will:

- Announce items pertaining to Springfield Oaks.
- Inform owners of upcoming meetings and events.
- Share information about the Board of Directors with names and titles of these individuals. Also, provide owners with important contact telephone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses.
- Publish new Rules and Regulations.
- Encourage owners to become involved
- Inform owners with Board/Committee Member submissions to the newsletter.
- Inform owners to be on the alert due to crime in their area.
- Inform owners of what is going to be happening at upcoming Board Meetings.
- Give tips to maintain and enhance the community
- List local charitable and social events.

When owners are educated and informed about their association, they typically have fewer complaints. Communication is a key to a well run community and a newsletter is a great way to start!

Speed Limit Not Being Observed

Our children are out early in the dark waiting for the school bus. It is important that we, as drivers, observe the speed limit.

Committee News



Greetings from the Architectural Review Committee!

By Diane McCreless/Ann-Marie Wilson

A recent brochure from a local realtor contained an article title "Sitting on a Gold Mine." The article discussed several reasons why homeownership is among

today's best investments. However, the article echoed the caution being heard recently from business publications such as Money Magazine, Forbes, and Smart Money that real estate may be experiencing a "Bubble" similar to the stock market bubble of a few years ago. Fortunately, the Northern Virginia area is still experiencing a good real estate market which is being driven by location and historically low mortgage rates. However, as we have experienced in the past, real estate prices move up and down with fluctuations in interest rates and in the economy. When the inevitable contraction occurs in the real estate market, prices shrink and buyers become pickier and look for the best quality homes and neighborhoods for their hard-earned cash.

As residents of Springfield Oaks, we have not worried about the "curb appeal" of our neighborhood in the last few years because the market was so good that we did not have to compete with other neighborhoods. As a result, our neighborhood has lost some of its sparkle and shine. Participation in our Homeowner's Association had fallen, and the Architectural Review Committee had not issued any ARC reminders to homeowners in several years. In the spring of 2006 the ARC passed out flyers door-to-door to remind all residents about the ARC guidelines and how to get projects approved. Later the ARC conducted a neighborhood walk-through, and issued notices to 180 homes covering a whole range of problems. Please understand that our goal is to work together as homeowners and members of the community to make our neighborhood a place where others will want to live. If you did get a letter, and you have already taken care of the items outlined, then let us know. If you are planning to make any changes or enhancements to the exterior of your property, please consult the Springfield Oaks Homeowners Architectural Standards to see if your project requires review by the ARC. The idea is not to intrude on your home improvement projects, but rather to maintain the standards, which keep our community attractive. A copy of the SOHA Standards may be obtained by going to the association website: www.springfieldoaks.org and click on the documents section. The Architectural Review Committee meets once a month and homeowners are welcome to attend. We are happy to address any questions and listen to comments and suggestions. The date and time of the meetings will be posted on the Springfield Oaks website listed above. Thanks for your cooperation in making our community beautiful.

Parking/Streets Committee

By Elena Psarakis

The Street and Parking Committee has been very active this past year with a variety of activities thanks to the

help of volunteers and increased resident interest. Due to the change in insurance coverage for association officers, the Committee had to temporarily suspend activities. However, these activities are being resumed.

Please remember that the signs posted by visitor parking spaces clearly indicate the visitor parking regulations. If your car is towed, it will cost you \$100 if picked up in the first 24 hours and \$25 for each additional 24 hours thereafter. Virginia law states that cars must be reported after the third day which will cost \$185. Owners who do not pick up their vehicles within three days will receive a certified letter regarding a storage lien. After 30 days, the vehicle will be disposed of. As a courtesy, vehicles have been ticketed with a warning to move, however, vehicles with previous violations may be towed without warning.

If you have a visitor coming in for an extended period of time or are parking in visitors to accommodate a guest, please contact me at catabbi@verizon.net or click on the "Send a Message to the Board" link on the association web site, www.springfieldoaks.org with the license plate number, general location it will be parked and duration requested prior use.

Barrels of sand have been placed around the neighborhood which has come in handy during the past weeks. Street cleaning will be done in the spring to remove this sand from the parking areas.

The Committee has reviewed the neighborhood for sidewalks and curbs in need of repair due to cracks or broken areas. Additionally, we have reviewed all mailbox areas for updating the look with pavers and addressing areas where grass has been worn or cement areas have been broken. Paving designs will vary to accommodate each area while ensuring that tree roots are not disturbed or damaged. Mailboxes that need to be replaced or moved by the U.S. Postal Service before paving will be addressed. We are hopeful that both of these projects will be done in the warmer months.

If you have a street light out in your area, please email either of the above email addresses and this will be reported to Dominion Power. Feel free to call Dominion Power at 1-888-667-3000.

The Committee is always looking for volunteers. We would love to hear from you if you have any concerns about paving, parking, street cleaning, sidewalks, lighting, or other issues related to our streets and sidewalks.

Please drive safely in the neighborhood since we have many children out playing on weekends and evenings when it gets dark earlier.

Creating a



Winter

Wonder Lawn

By Vivian Drake

Winter is an important time of year for maintenance of your lawn that will help see it reach peak condition in spring. With a revitalized root system being free to breathe and absorb nutrients your lawn will be ready to produce strong vigorous growth in spring. This is the last chance to take care of some of these details. Consistent care is the key to best lawn results. The effect is dramatic and beautiful. Home lawns and entire neighborhoods are more attractive, useful and valuable today. If not already using a professional lawn service, consider finding one with a seasonal plan. Many will let you pay by service or pay in advance for the year. Talk to your neighbors about joining in the plan and sharing costs.

Hopefully, you were able to use the last warm days before the winter snow to mow the lawn one last time preventing long grass from laying over on itself because of the pressure of the snow and reducing air circulation from around the plant. This also prevents snow mold, a destructive early spring disease, which can become a problem in your lawn. It can cause large areas of grass to die, or at least weaken in vigor.

It is still not too late to make sure that leaves are all raked up. Most weeds grow slowly in winter. If you have a few weeds, dig them out with a hand weeder removing the roots from the ground. For more severe weed problems, try a weed wand with glyphosate (roundup), carefully touching the weeds only, or if the grass is growing actively, use a lawn weed-and-feed spray that won't harm your lawn grass.

Light, slow-release fertilizers is good over winter to assist in helping winter color and help your lawn reach its peak for spring. Spread evenly and follow up with a good, deep watering. A dressing of lime during winter will help to reduce acidity. Too much lime encourages clover and other weeds to flourish.

If you have any perennial plants that have gone dormant, cut back the brown tops. February and March are the proper time to trim crepe myrtles in our region.

Avoid salt damage to your lawn when using salt to de-ice snow from sidewalks by using "ice-melt" products that contain potassium chloride which has a lower burn potential than ones that contain sodium chloride. Sand and kitty litter will work to prevent someone from slipping on the ice, but not as well as an "ice-melt" compound. Most of the products do not "melt" the ice as much as break the bond between the ice and the surface below it. Once the ice is loose, it can be removed much easier. It is usually not a good idea to use regular

rock salt, as it will damage the surrounding grass and plants easily, and it can damage concrete and blacktop. If you store your "ice-melt" products near the door for future snow, make sure you store in a plastic bucket to prevent damage from sitting on the surface. Normal rainfall will usually wash the salts deep into the soil. Constant repeating of the activity will increase the concentration levels, which leads to more severe problems. Prevention and modification are the best approaches to reduce salt damage.

Make sure you remove snow and de-ice as quickly as possible to prevent it from being compacted by walking and turning into a sheet of ice. Many homes have stairs and long sidewalks which can be very dangerous for you and your guests. Consider it as a good source of exercise from sitting indoors so much.

Outdoor furniture should be covered or brought indoors. Clay pots and other outdoor statuary should be brought in doors to keep from breaking. Alternating freezing and thawing of these items could cause them to crack. If they are too large to move, cover them with a plastic tarp.

Winter is also a great time to get your mower tuned and blades sharpened or replaced before the rigorous demands of summer set in. Drain the gas tank or add a few drops of a stabilizing agent to the tank of your lawn mower to keep the gas from getting "old". It is also a good time to change the oil, clean the underside of the deck, and replace the spark plug and air cleaner. Be sure to disconnect the spark plug wire before attempting any repair on your mower, regardless of the time of year the maintenance or repair work is performed.

Actions Underway by the Board

- Reserve Study
- Annual Budget
- Parking
- Completion of Tot Lot
- Tree Removal

If you are interested in any of these subjects, attend our next board meeting, held the 4th Tuesday of each month.

Springfield Oaks Directory/Information

Board of Directors

Ken McCreless	President
Ron Manning	Vice President
Carlos Almodovar	At Large
Vivian Drake	Secretary
Nick Firth	At Large
Shawn Davison	At Large
Megan Fila	At Large

Committees

Please contact the association web site for meeting schedules.

Architectural Review	Diane McCreless
Budget	Pennie Ziepolt
External Affairs	Doug Wilson
Landscaping & Grounds	Christine Karnes
Streets & Parking	Elena Psarakis
Neighborhood Watch	Anthony Conte
Newsletter	Pennie Ziepolt
Social	Coreen Harney

Miscellaneous

Fairfax County Police non-emergency	703-691-2131
Dominion Towing	703-440-8392

AAA Rainbow Trash	703-818-8222
Trash pickup: Monday and Thursday and by appointment. Call to schedule a day for free large trash item pickup.	
Recycling pickup	Thursday

Management Firm

<p>Rhonda Murray, CMCA, AMS Community Manager Sequoia Management Company, Inc. , 13998 Parkeast Circle, Chantilly, VA 20151-2283, 703-803-9641 (Office), 703-968-0936 (Fax), rmurray@sequoiamanagement.com</p> <p>Katy Morabito, kmorabito@sequoiangmt.com</p> <p>Please include the name of the community, Springfield Oaks in any email messages.</p>

Advertise in The Acorn!

Pricing information below:

- \$10 for 1/8 page each issue
- \$20 for 1/4 page each issue
- \$40 for 1/2 page each issue
- \$80 for Full page each issue

Newsletter Information

If you have any information you would like to share with the community, please send your articles for submission to Pennie Ziepolt at PZiepolt@MicroLinkLLC.com. Please put Springfield Oaks newsletter in the heading.

I would like to thank the volunteers who delivered the fall newsletter. Their help was greatly appreciated. If you wish to help out in delivering the newsletter, let us know. The next newsletter will be published in April.