

Frenchtown Woods

FRENCHTOWN WOODS MAINTENANCE ASSOCIATION



February 2011 Newsletter

News From The Board

The 2011 Board is made up of eight core members, with most having several years of service to the community. Even with stable membership, each year we share the responsibility of leadership by passing the offices of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, & Secretary on to other members. This has allowed the Frenchtown Woods maintenance association to grow and become more solidified in its objectives to provide quality service to our community.

We welcome you to join us at our monthly meetings to learn more on what's going on in our community and how you can help to mold our future. We have in the past been able to schedule representatives from government and other community agencies to attend our meetings. The intent of invitation is to keep Frenchtown Woods in the forefront of our elected officials, provide a two-way means of information exchange on community impact issues and to leverage available funds & services provided by these agencies.

If you are not able to attend but want us to address a concern of yours, please contact our property management consultant: BC Communities @ 234-7710, who will forward us your issue. We will either address your issue or pass it along to the appropriate agency. Either way, we commit to providing feed back to you.

The board meets the second Thursday of every month, in Room 209 of the Glasgow Medical Center on business 896.

The meetings are open to ALL residents and as agenda topics concern/impact the community, let your voice be heard!

We look forward to seeing you at the next meeting!

Valuable Contact

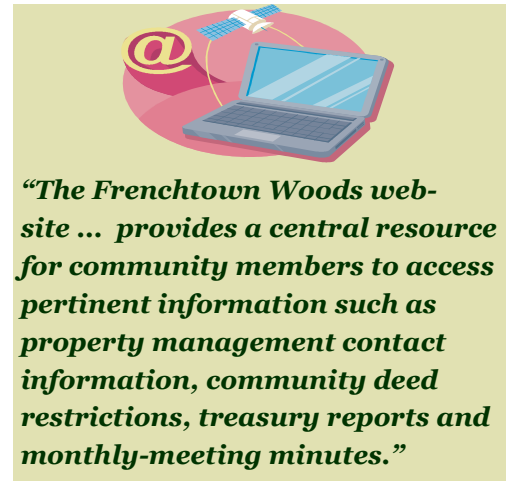
Information:

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Police, Fire, Ambulance | 911 |
| Police-Non Emergency | 573-2800 |
| New Castle County | 395-5555 |
| DE Crime Stoppers | 1-800-TIP-3333 |
| Christiana Hospital Emergency Room | 733-1000 |
| Glasgow Medical Center | 836-8350 |
| Newark Emergency Room | 738-4300 |
| Child Abuse Reporting Hotline | 1-800-292-9582 |
| CONTACT Crisis Counseling | 761-9100 |
| DE Helpline | 211 OR 1-800-464-4357 |
| Domestic Violence Hotline | 762-6110 |
| National Substance Abuse Hotline | 1-800-662-HELP |
| Poison Information Center | 1-800-222-1222 |
| Delaware SCPA | 998-2281 |
| DelDot Maintenance (sinkholes, storm drains, etc.) | 326-3523 |
| DNREC — to view contaminants in the community register at: www.dnrec.state.de.us | |
| BC Communities | 302-234-7710 |

Come See Frenchtown Woods on the Web!!!

The Frenchtown Woods web-site, through Neighborhood Link, provides a central resource for community members to access pertinent information such as property management contact information, community deed restrictions, treasury reports and monthly-meeting minutes. Additionally, the site will keep a calendar of events, links to area schools and county offices, as well as community newsletters and details of happenings in-and-around Frenchtown Woods.

As we continue to upload content the site, we encourage any Frenchtown Woods Maintenance Corporation member to submit suggestions and ideas that you feel should be shared with your fellow neighbors. Chances are if the information is of value to you, it would be of equal value to your neighbor. Guest articles are certainly welcome!



To access the Frenchtown Woods Website, simply type the link below into any internet web-browser

http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/frenchtown_woods/home

The Importance of Architectural Review



It is very important that when making any exterior changes to your home, you submit an ARC application to BC Communities. If you make any changes to the outside of your home without prior approval, you may be legally forced to remove any changes that were made. If you have questions, please contact Frank O'Brien at BC Communities, 302-234-7710.

Snow Accumulations Stress FTW Budget

The record snowfall from the winter of 2009-2010 put a major stress on the Frenchtown Woods annual budget. In fact, fees for snow plowing represented 40% of the budget in 2010, and expenses resulted in a \$17,000 increase over the prior year.

The board was proactive in applying for county reimbursement to offset a portion of the costs associated with the removal. However, rising costs in gas and utilities force contractors to pass along price increases from time to time.

In addition to review of annual snow removal bids, the board is often faced with the task of determining if the annual assessment needs to be increased. Each neighbor of the community can do their part to make sure we maximize our dollar spent when the trucks do arrive to plow. By keeping cars on the driveway, and not on the streets, plows can make a clean pass during snow removal. They can get the job done right the first time, without having to come back. Also, shoveling or pushing snow into the streets makes it inconvenient for your neighbors to drive through, and necessary for the board to have the crews plow the streets again. We will always err on the side of caution when it comes to neighborhood safety.

Please help us by doing your part to make snow removal safe and efficient.



Parking



There is an abundance of parking along the streets that makes navigation difficult. This is especially the case for commercial vehicles. Some residents cannot readily get out of their driveways because of all the street parking. Please be considerate of your neighbors and avoid parking behind driveways and in front of mailboxes.

The parking of any motor vehicle or off-highway vehicle other than on a surface treated and hardened to accommodate motor vehicles is prohibited. It is in everyone's best interest to not park on sidewalks. Residents and their guests are urged to refrain from parking on residential and common area sidewalks. It can cause damage to the slabs which will need to be repaired. In the case of common area sidewalks, this repair is paid at ALL residents' expense (possible increase in annual maintenance fees). Sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of each homeowner, while the common areas are the responsibility of all homeowners. NCCO Councilman Bill Powers informed the community at the 2010 Annual Meeting that this is a county violation and that residents should call the police to investigate, enforce & ticket.

Anyone Interested in Forming a Civic Association???



Is anyone in the community interested in forming a Civic Association? A Civic Association provides a forum whereby residents meet monthly to organize community events such as picnics, holiday festivities, etc; organize and advertise community garage sales,; among other activities. This group would function independent of the board and assist in promoting a “neighborhood” atmosphere in our community.

The New Castle County website has the following information on steps in forming a civic association. Here is an excerpt for your review:

Suggested Steps for Forming a Civic Association

Begin with a nucleus group of community residents, if community is divided in sections or phases, try to include someone from each section or phase.

Identify three or four areas of possible concern, or activities that may benefit the overall community. Meet a few times as a group, before expanding it to the entire community. You want to get a feel as to, the level of interest at the nucleus level, before rolling it out to the entire community.

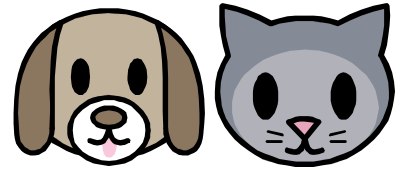
Set a date to meet with the community, and prepare a flyer announcing the meeting. The flyer should state that, “the purpose of the meeting, is to discuss the formation of a Civic Association”. Highlight three or four hot topics. Invite a guess speaker, from New Castle County, Office of Community Governing, or your Civic Umbrella group, to talk about the function of a Civic Association.

The flyer should be hand delivered to each home, to demonstrate a serious effort is underway to organize.

The first meeting should be short and have only a few objectives.

Anyone interested in joining the civic association please contact BC Communities as soon as possible.

Pets



Animal excrement is not only a nuisance, but a health hazard. Please be courteous of your neighbors and pick up after your pets. It is a violation of New Castle County not to do so. You can also be cited by NCC Code Enforcement for large amounts of dog/cat excrement in your yard. We want to ask pet owners to please be courteous to your fellow neighbors and pick up your pet's waste. The deed restrictions do not address pet waste, however, New Castle County Code addresses it. New Castle County Code Part 11, Chapter 4, Article 2 Animal Control—Section 4.02.001, states:

Every owner of or person responsible for one (1) or more dogs or cats shall take all reasonable measures to prevent accumulation of animal excreta in the area in which such animal are customarily kept. No such owner shall allow animal excreta to accumulate so as to create obnoxious or offensive odors. Any person who fails to correct a violation of this subsection within twenty-four (24) hours following receipt of notice of such violation and order by the Office of Complaints or any person who opposes or impeded an officer or authorized agent or employee of the Office of Complaints in the execution of his or her duties under this subsection shall be deemed to have violated this Section.

Any person who is the owner of or who has responsibility for one (1) or more dogs or cats shall immediately remove, in a sanitary manner, any fecal matter deposited by such dog or cat upon any street, sidewalk, or park, or upon any property without the consent of the owner or tenant of such property. It shall not be a violation of this subsection if such fecal matter is removed within one (1) hour. This subsection shall not apply to any person who because of loss or impairment of eyesight is accompanied by a dog described as a Seeing Eye dog or any dog educated by a recognized training agency or school and which is used as a leader or guide.

If you witness such behavior violating the above article, please contact New Castle County at 395-5555.

Any complaints regarding barking dogs, please contact the New Castle County Police at 573-2800.

To address loose dogs in the community, contact our local SPCA at 998-2281.

Finally, if you have a lost or missing pet, you are welcome to post on the Frenchtown Woods Website.

Where does my money go?

As a community, Frenchtown Woods has one of the lowest annual assessments of any of the surrounding communities. The assessments collected are used to maintain the common spaces in the spring and summer, i.e. mowing and planting of flowers, shrubs, trees. In the winter it is used to pay for plowing of our streets and salting of the roads, which can be very expensive. The rates for plowing are determined by the amount of snow we get and may be several thousands of dollars. The salt/sand mixture that is placed after the plowing is an additional charge based on tonnage used.

Trash Removal

Trash disposal is a fact of life. We have several different trash removal vendors in our neighborhood on several days of the week. Why don't we all have one vendor on one or two days per week? We have tried to get a majority of homeowners to consolidate trash vendors over the years. It was difficult to even get enough responses, forget about a majority. So we have to live with the current situation. We can follow a few tips to make it more palatable for our neighbors:



Only put your trash out on the night before or the morning of pick-up.

Make sure your trash is secure and in trash cans or strong trash bags. On windy days our neighbors to the east get loads of unwanted trash. Kitchen garbage bags are easily picked apart by wild animals, pets and birds. On that note, thanks to those residents who pick up trash while walking through the neighborhood!

Make sure you put your trash in front of your own home. Many trash haulers charge by the bag and charge extra fees if you are over a limit. Adding your garbage to a neighbor may incur additional costs. Trash haulers are similar to a utility. You wouldn't run an extension cord to your neighbor's electric outlet, would you?

Annual Assessments

The annual assessments were mailed to each resident in early December 2010. Second notices are sent within sixty days from the due date. If you have not already paid your assessment, please make sure you submit payment as soon as possible to avoid accruing further interest on your account. As property owners in Frenchtown Woods all of us acknowledged the fact that being a member of this community meant paying assessments. This acknowledgement should have taken place as part of the process for closing on your house at settlement. If you visit our website, you can see the itemized budget for 2011. These are expenses that are – and should – be shared equally amongst us. No one is exempt from paying. The 2011 process for assessment cost, billing, schedule and late fees is as follows:

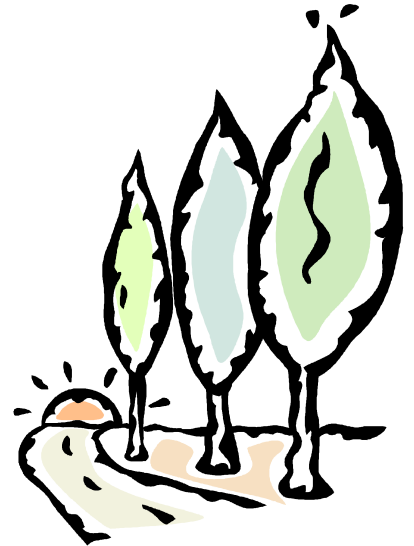
- 2011 assessments are \$115 *no change
- The first billing is due in thirty days
- If payment is not received by the due date, interest begins to accrue at an annual rate of 12%. Interest is applied in monthly increments at 1%.
- Thirty days later a second notice is mailed.
- Thirty days later a certified letter – last warning is sent.

If you are unable to pay in full, please call BC Communities @ 234-7710 so that they can work with you to arrange a payment schedule over time. The Maintenance Corporation is not interested in pursuing residents who are clearly trying to make payments. However, if residents do not pay their assessment, the Corporation is required to take actions as dictated in the by-laws that govern Frenchtown Woods. The Board has worked hard to establish a fair and equitable collection policy in keeping with the governing documents. If, unfortunately, we must send your case to the attorney, the by-laws specify that you are responsible to pay all fees associated with collection (demand letters - \$50; court fees—\$280). Collection fees can quickly grow well beyond the assessment cost! Please make your payments or schedule payment arrangements right away.

Town Tidbits

Tree Planting

The 2009/10 tree planting project on the east and west berms along Rt 40 have been completed. The trees have been doing well over the winter and we will continue to expand on these plantings and in other areas in the next year. It is hoped that over time these trees will serve to buffer the noise from Rt 40 for our community.



New Castle County Road Repairs

As a way to restore our infrastructure, New Castle County has surveyed roads in our community and surrounding areas. As a result of this survey, several of our roads were determined to be in need of repair. Currently, we are waiting to see if, first the money will be appropriated for the repairs by the state, and lastly, and most importantly, if our roads have been approved for the repairs. We should have some indication as to whether we are approved by April and will notify the community via the website. Repairs will begin in the new fiscal year (beginning July 2011).

No Solicitation Signs

There have been a few complaints regarding vendors soliciting door to door. The board has had signs posted at each of our entrances in an attempt to deter vendors from approaching our residents. As we know, this is not always a deterrent to some of the more persistent vendors. When this is the case, YOU, as the home owner have the right to ask the person to leave your resident and if they refuse, can call the police to have them removed.

Crime Report Information

Please contact the New Castle County Police Department to report crime anonymously. Remember, we as a community, are our best defense against crime. The New Castle County non-emergency and DE Crime Watchers phone numbers are on the first page of this newsletter. The Block Watch program is also an opportunity to eliminate crime in the community, but requires volunteers. If you are interested in the Block Watch, keep reading this newsletter to learn more. As always, if you see any emergency situation please make sure you call 911 immediately.



Community “Block Watch”

The goal of a neighborhood block watch is to promote community safety through heightened awareness. Although recognizing suspicious activity in the neighborhood is everyone’s responsibility, the organization of a “block watch” creates a procedure to report valuable, time-sensitive information to the police from the safety of your own home. This is not a vigilante program, by any means.

In a typical neighborhood block watch, a community is divided into “blocks”. Captains of each “block” work with residents in their block to coordinate events, disseminate information, and recruit interested neighbors into the block watch. Block captains serve as liaisons to the block watch coordinator. If crimes or suspicious activity is recognized by a block watch captain, the captain can notify police and other captains of areas that may be affected. The captains will also receive monthly reporting of criminal activity reports. The police will provide detailed training on the use of “9-1-1” and proper reporting techniques.

It has been demonstrated that neighborhoods with an active block watch have less crime than neighborhoods without one. The NCCPD would provide “Block Watch” signs for display in Frenchtown Woods to serve as deterrents to would-be criminals looking to victimize our community.

We are looking for a number of volunteers to serve as block captains in an effort to create a Frenchtown Woods “Block Watch”. If you would be interested in getting involved with this endeavor to make Frenchtown Woods a safer community, please call BC Communities at 302-234-7710 to register your name as a possible block watch captain. Thank you!

New Castle County “Instant Ticketing” Program

On July 1st, 2008, New Castle County implemented an Instant-Ticketing program that is being used to assess fines on homeowners for property maintenance infractions. Under the Instant-Ticketing program, a complaint can be filed with the Office of Code Enforcement. After a letter and brochure, explaining the infraction, is sent to the homeowner, they have 10 days to resolve the issue. An inspection officer will then decide if the infractions are still in violation. A \$50 fine is assessed to the homeowner, payable within 30 days. If payment is not received within 30 days, it is doubled to \$100. Complaints may be filed with the County by calling Customer Relations & Assistance, at 302-395-5555, or via the internet at: <http://www.nccde.org/landuse>. The top violations reported are:

High grass and weeds (in excess of 8”); Accessory structures (sheds, fences, etc.) in poor condition; Inoperable and/or unregistered vehicles; Parking on grass; Oversized vehicles; Outside storage of household items/furniture; Not having trash in proper waste container; Accumulation of rubbish, garbage or debris; Unsanitary swimming pools, or empty pools not covered; Overgrown shrubs or trees that extend beyond sidewalk or right of way.



We wish everyone a safe and happy 2011!

