

Seneca Whetstone Homeowners' Assoc. Inc.

P.O. Box 2825 ♦ Gaithersburg, MD ♦ 20886-2825

NEWSLETTER

May 2005

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SWHOA email address:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/swhoa>

GREETINGS FROM THE SENECA WHETSTONE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

IMPORTANT DATES:

NEXT BOARD MEETING:	Tuesday, May 24, 2005	7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Place:	6 Montgomery Village Ave. 5 th Floor Training Room Montgomery Village, MD	
Future Board meeting dates and times:	Tuesday, July 12, 2005	7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
	Tuesday, October 11 th	7:30 – 9:00 p.m.
Annual Meeting:	Tuesday, December 6 th	7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Place:	To Be Announced	

Message from the President:

Hello neighbors:

Spring is here and many of us are looking forward to the change it brings and all that is associated with the warmer weather. Please read through this newsletter for important information about the trash collection proposal (meeting on May 24th at 7:00), the Badger Drive HOA, collection of assessments and other pertinent updates.

I would like to take this opportunity to ask each household to consider volunteering their time as a Board member or a committee member. By December, I will have spent over two years doing what I could to help the community. I have enjoyed my experience on the Board but I don't plan on continuing in an elected position next year. It is likely I will assist as a committee member or just help out from time to time. Residents have managed our community of 132 homes since it was established in the early 1980's. Some residents are original owners and have been active on and off over many years helping our neighborhood become what it is today. We are truly grateful for their efforts. Our community is small compared to most and it would seem we'd just get by as we have in the past. The concern I have is that there are important steps in maintaining an HOA and it can be overwhelming at times for a few volunteers who, like you, lead busy lives. NOW is a good time to attend meetings and participate on committees to see all that we do. Please start giving some thought to a nomination for the 2006 SWHOA Board and feel free to ask questions or offer feedback at meetings or by email. (continued)

There has been some discussion about hiring a property management company to take on many of the responsibilities of Seneca Whetstone HOA. This would likely result in the annual assessments increasing from the proposed \$135/yr. (including the trash removal contract) to over \$300 per year. Even if there is a property management company, individuals will be needed to fill the various director positions and act on issues impacting our community. This year we hired Community PaperWorks Inc. to help us meet our obligations and assist with policy and procedural matters. We expect to continue benefiting from this arrangement in the future.

Look for the minutes from the Board meetings and other important information on the Yahoo group site (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/swhoa>). Also, please remember to submit an application to the Architectural Control Committee BEFORE starting any improvements to your property.
Best Regards,

Peter Flandrau, President
Seneca Whetstone HOA

Trash Collection

The Board is attempting to obtain a contract with B&B Refuse for the entire community. Information and proxies were hand delivered over the weekend of April 23-24. The idea is to reduce the cost of trash collection by having the entire community served by one contractor. Approximately 90 of the 132 homes already use B&B at least once per week. We will have twice weekly trash collection (Tuesdays & Fridays) for approximately \$71 per year (quote for 2005). If approved, a bill will be sent out by SSWHOA to collect the prorated \$42 assessment to cover the contract for June – December 2005. This rate is a savings of \$78 - \$85 per year for **all** current B&B customers! **The meeting will be held Tuesday, May 24th at:**

Re/Max Realty Group
6 Montgomery Village Ave., 5th Floor Training Room
Gaithersburg, MD

There needs to be a 2/3 majority of homeowners (87 of 132 owners) voting in favor of the proposed increase in the assessment. You may bring your proxy to the meeting or follow the instructions and designate the SSWHOA Secretary or someone else to cast your vote. *The proxy also may be faxed to 301-309-9668 prior to May 24th.*

IMPORTANT NOTICE RE: TRASH COLLECTION

Please be aware that if the proposal is passed and you currently use another company, it will be **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** to cancel your account and seek any reimbursement from that company. B&B will bill SSWHOA for trash collection and homeowners should not receive invoices from B&B in June. You will receive an assessment from SSWHOA to be paid within 30 days. Homeowners failing to pay or make arrangements to pay the assessment will be considered delinquent and the Board will proceed with action in accordance with the covenants and bylaws.

Crime Report

No incidents have been reported to the Board. Please remember to keep garage doors closed, doors locked (even if you are outside in the yard) and report any suspicious activity in the neighborhood. The non-emergency number for Montgomery County Police is 240-777-2600.

Badger Drive HOA

The Badger Drive HOA is once again without any board members. It has been several years since they have had a full board of directors and access to their funds. Over the past few years, Nancy Jacobsen from Community PaperWorks Inc. has been providing her knowledge and many hours of time trying to keep Badger Drive HOA in compliance by filing necessary documents and speaking with homeowners. The bylaws of the SSWHOA and the Badger Drive HOA allow for anyone residing in the Seneca Whetstone community to be a board member. Anyone who is interested in helping the residents of Badger Drive organize would be a great asset to our community as a whole. Those interested in helping establish the Badger Drive HOA can contact Peter Flandrau at pflandrau@msn.com.

Seneca Heights

Peter Flandrau attended a meeting on April 15th at Seneca Heights. Linda Harrison from the Montgomery Meadows HOA was also in attendance. Seneca Heights reported that three out of the forty units for single adults have turned over. The families in the 6-9 month transitional program have averaged an 8.5-month length of stay. The tenant council is active and has developed a van service 2x's/week to take residents shopping or to other local appointments.

I asked for clarification on the wording in the response letter and attachments about the criminal history/background checks. I wanted to know if someone committed a burglary or assault, went to jail for 4 years, and was back in the community for 1-2 years, would they still be a candidate for housing? I was informed that the police assist with reviews of the criminal background checks and would help them identify these types of situations. I am attempting to get more clarification on this matter but it seems that Seneca Heights is being very cautious to whom they offer housing. If you have questions or concerns about Seneca Heights, you may call Alice Forcier, director, at (301) 519-2530.

Whetstone Run

What's that? A new 10K event? *Whetstone Run* is the name of the townhouse development approved in February for the site by Arrowsmith Ct., Badger Dr., and Old Game Preserve Rd. Information is available at the website for the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission from their hearing on February 10, 2005 (item #8- Site Plan Review 8-05010, Whetstone Run). You can search the site using the Case #: 8-05010 (www.mc-ncppc.org). The developer is expected to make a good faith effort to obtain a Public Improvement Easement (PIE) through the PEPCO right-of-way to Travis Ave. It appears they would also use Old Game Preserve Rd. and are required to make improvements from their entrance point to Travis Ave. A path from a tot-lot to Arrowsmith Dr. may be included in the plans. Check out the pages and pages of documents for more details.

Assessments

The annual assessments were mailed out and homeowners who have not paid will receive notification. The Board will take action to collect all assessments with interest in accordance with our bylaws and covenants. If a homeowner is unable to pay the assessment, they should contact the Board immediately to make a payment arrangement.

Street Lights & Sidewalk Repairs

Contact was made with the Department of Public Works and Transportation with a request to paint some of the streetlights that are showing their age. In addition, an attempt is being made to find out if our community is scheduled for sidewalk repairs.

Plans for a Warehouse

Peter attended the City Council Meeting at Gaithersburg City Hall on May 2nd, to listen to the plans for the lots up the hill from Arrowsmith Dr. The two lots are located between the new Fitzgerald Toyota Service Shop and the existing warehouses. A request was being made by Klinedinst Management, Inc. to rezone the property to a more restrictive use. Klinedinst already manages the building at the corner of Game Preserve and Rt. 355, which houses the roofing company and other businesses. The plan is for a two-story warehouse, which will likely serve small businesses in a storage and distribution capacity. There wouldn't be any automotive repair or food preparation services. There are some prospective tenants but the process is in the initial stages and work is not likely to start until possibly February 2006. A Planning Board member asked about the types of trucks making deliveries and was told it is unlikely there would be any 18-wheelers but mostly UPS type deliveries and maybe an occasional larger delivery truck. More information about the plans can be obtained by going to City Hall and requesting File Z-299.

Vehicle Parking and Home Businesses

The Board is reviewing the draft policies developed last year. The definition of a commercial vehicle needs to be determined. There was some discussion at the meeting on April 12th about the Board regulating how a person earns a living. Some residents have work trucks and vans used for their business. The concern is that there have been an increasing number of vehicles clearly used for construction and other business purposes being parked in driveways and on the streets. Homeowners have complained that this detracts from the overall appearance of the neighborhood. The Board has been informed it has the right to set policy regulating parking, as the streets were incorporated as part of the community and are not strictly County property. In addition, a balance needs to be struck between what is best for the community and an individual's right to earn a living. This is not an easy task, as the Board will have to take action against those in violation of its policy. There will be further discussion at the next Board meeting on July 12th.

Advertisements

Residents who want to have their business or services noted in the next newsletter should forward information to Lynne Sturtz, Vice President/Editor of the newsletter, at lsturt@osa.org. We cannot reproduce a glossy ad but are willing to mention your business or service. Although there is no charge for the ad, this may be a way to raise additional funds for the community. For now, we can dedicate one page to advertisements and will limit it to community residents only. The deadline for the next newsletter in August will be August 5.

Community Yard Sale

Don't forget! The Community Yard Sale will be held on Saturday May 21st from 9-2:00 (Rain date is Sunday, May 22nd). This is being sponsored by our own David Nichols with RE/MAX Realty, 301-921-2695 and online at www.davidnicholsgroup.com. Thanks, Dave!

Important Phone Numbers:

Abandoned Vehicles	301-840-2454
Animal Control	240-773-5960
Consumer Affairs	240-777-3636
Housing Code Enforcement	240-777-3785
Landlord-Tenant Affairs	240-777-3609
Police (non-emergency)	240-777-2600
Snow Removal/Potholes	240-777-7623
Street Lights	240-777-2190



REMINDER – ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL

The Architectural Control Committee must approve all exterior home improvement plans prior to beginning the project. ACC application forms may be obtained from our website or by contacting the ACC Chair. If you are unsure about whether or not a project needs approval, contact Dan Deist at 301-519-0611. He will be pleased to discuss the ACC application process and review the project with you.

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Curbing Your Dog

The Board has contracted with PUPP Inc. (Pick Up Poop Patrol) to send in an undercover team to monitor people whose dogs relieve themselves throughout the neighborhood. This will increase the annual assessments by another \$25 per house. Just joking!!! Seriously though, please make every effort to comply with the **Montgomery County law** requiring a pet owner to clean up the mess left by their pets. You can be fined **\$100** if someone is frustrated enough and calls the County (Not a joke!)

Montgomery County Code, Sec. 5-203 (a)(2):

An owner must not allow an animal to damage or defecate on property outside of the owner's property. An animal may defecate on public property or the common area of property in which the owner shares an interest if the owner immediately removes and disposes of the feces by a sanitary method approved by the Director.