

Seneca Whetstone Homeowners' Assoc. Inc.

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

NEWSLETTER

February 2006

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Dave Nichols

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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: March 16, 2006 7:30 p.m.

June 15, 2006

September 21, 2006

December 6, 2006

Place: TBA

Annual Meeting: December 6, 2006 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Place: Forest Oak Lodge
(Rt. 355 & Game Preserve Rd.)

Message from the President:

Hi Neighbors,

By the time you read this, it will be winter again, as it should!

According to tradition (and our bylaws) we conducted elections in December. I was late to the first meeting and...guess who became president!

Well, actually, I'm happy for the opportunity to contribute to our awesome neighborhood any way I can.

First, though, I want to thank the people who will join me on the new Board of Directors: Lynne Sturtz, Jay Long, Jim Casey, and Adam Heifetz. These wonderful people volunteered their precious time to join me in listening to and representing the 132 Seneca Whetstone neighbors—to ourselves, to other neighborhoods who want to collaborate with us, to the county and law enforcement administrators, and to others who can help us solve issues. This outreach is the job of the Board, and we pledge to do it to the best of our ability in the coming year.

I'd like as well to thank the outgoing Board: Pete Flandrau, Dave Nichols, Barbara Shapourian and Dan Deist, who really raised the bar on how to run this neighborhood and challenged us to follow likewise. This Board overhauled our Covenants, making them much more relevant and easier to understand, engaged county law enforcement and other services, clarified our cooperative responsibilities relative to Badger Drive members, and published FOUR newsletters last year. I hope we can keep up the pace, and moreover, I hope that these fine folks will continue to attend our planned neighborhood Board meetings. The section entitled "Important Dates" at the top of this page shows the scheduled Board meetings for this year.
(continued)

By now you'll have received your annual assessment. Please pay promptly, get it over with, and save us all the hassle of reminder letters. If you have not received your annual assessment, please contact Jay Long, who will promptly forward a new statement to you.

You should know that the Board voted to announce that our procedure for addressing a complaint requires that it:

“be submitted in writing either on paper or email in order for it to be addressed and acted upon by the Board. The person submitting the concern should be identified along with the date.”

So submit away in compliance. Please be assured that an email or letter submitted to any of us will quickly be circulated to the entire Board for prompt appropriate action.

Enjoy the rest of the winter, think global and act local.

Regards

Winn Gaynor

ACC MATTERS . . .

Maintaining a secure, safe, and appealing community requires all members of the community to trust each other and to follow expectations as defined by the community at large. This is the intent of SSWHOA architectural controls, which identify not only the expectations of the community but also recognizes the individuality of each household. Two concepts that can help us live together as one community in Seneca Whetstone are **respect and responsibility**.

All of us desire to be respected by others. However, respect is not automatic and cannot be demanded until one has shown a willingness to respect others. Each household in our community is distinct in many ways but the distinctiveness need not mean living separately from each other. Respecting each other and being willing to accommodate our different views can build trust and harmony in our community.

At the same time, all persons living in Seneca Whetstone are bound by certain expectations of the entire community. These expectations are identified in our *Declarations of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions*. It is the responsibility of every community member to abide by these expectations since these are the rights given to all households in Seneca Whetstone to live in a secure, safe and appealing community.

As the current chair of the Architectural Control Committee (ACC), I encourage each household in Seneca Whetstone to respect your neighbors by communicating with each other and to accommodate the diversity of views. Also, each household needs to exhibit responsibility to your neighbors and the community by following the expectations in our *Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions*.

As a reminder, all exterior alterations or modifications to any property in SSWHOA require prior approval of the Architectural Control Committee. Please submit an Architectural Improvement Application & Review Form (AIA Form) in three copies to the ACC chair at the address below at least 30 days before the planned start date of exterior alteration or modifications. The ACC will attempt to review the application and provide a response well before the planned start date. Forms are available on the SSWHOA Yahoo website or may be obtained from the chair upon request. You may contact me by email at the address below with any questions or comments.

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MEDIA SERVICES DIVISION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 10, 2006

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Police Remind Community to Properly Secure Homes and Cars

The Montgomery County Police Department would like to remind our community members of the importance of properly securing their homes and cars, in order to prevent theft and burglary. Theft and burglary are crimes of opportunity. Thieves are more likely to enter an unlocked home or car, than a home or car that is properly secured.

Auto theft is the number one property crime in the United States. The car that is the easiest to steal is the one that can be entered and driven away quickly. Many criminals roam through neighborhoods, checking for unlocked car doors. Especially attractive are those cars that are left running to warm up in the winter or cool down in the summer. Vehicles that have been left running with children inside are no deterrent to auto theft. Thieves will sometimes steal a car with the child still inside it, exposing the child to unknown danger.

In Montgomery County in 2005, there were a total of 64 cars stolen after being left unlocked with the car running. Car owners are inconvenienced by this crime, and left to deal with the personal trauma of becoming a crime victim. Stolen cars can also be used to commit other crimes. For example, stolen cars have been known to be used to commit armed robberies, in order to protect the identity of the criminal. Cars that are stolen can also be used by juveniles who drive recklessly, endangering other lives.

Owners of vehicles left running and unattended can be cited. Leaving a car running and unattended on a public street, highway, or public parking area is a violation of the State of Maryland Vehicle Law, Article 21, Section 1101 (a). The possible penalty for this violation is a \$60 fine and one point on the driver's driving record. The Maryland Vehicle Law requires that a driver turn the engine off, lock the ignition, remove the keys, and set the brake before leaving a car. Also, if a car is stolen with the use of a key, it could result in sanctions by the car owner's insurance carrier. These penalties can range from a premium increase to failure to renew the policy.

Residential burglary, like auto theft, is often a result of thieves finding the best opportunity to commit the crime. A burglar will typically choose the homes that are easiest to enter, such as those that have no alarm system, or where there are doors, windows, or garages left open and unlocked. The data for unforced residential burglary (where entry was made through an unlocked door, window, or garage) in 2005 for Montgomery County, indicates that there were 659 incidents that could have been prevented had these points of entry been properly secured.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice statistics, 85% of the time, stolen property taken in residential burglaries is never recovered, with an average value loss of more than \$1400 for each burglary. Homeowners are therefore urged to be especially diligent in locking garage doors, entry doors, and windows of their home, especially when not at home.

Burglary also causes inconvenience and sometimes hardship to the homeowner, who not only has to attempt to recover loss, but who may, depending on the circumstances, have to report the incident to their homeowner insurance provider. The victim may then have to pay a deductible out-of-pocket, causing further inconvenience and financial loss. Reporting the burglary and theft to an insurance carrier can also affect insurance premiums and coverage, and can sometimes cause homeowner insurance cancellation.

Although there is no law or ordinance requiring homeowners to keep their doors and windows locked in Montgomery County, police are asking the public to become more diligent when it comes to securing their homes. Please do not leave garage doors open overnight, and do not leave valuables inside the vehicle or in plain sight in an open garage. Taking these steps will go a long way in preventing crime, and send a message to would-be burglars that residents will not tolerate being a victim in their own homes.

Citizens who are proactive in protecting their own cars and homes from theft, can assist the Montgomery County Police Department and the police departments of our local jurisdictions in protecting and serving the community. If you would like additional information about how to keep your car and vehicle safe from criminals, please contact the Community Outreach Officer at your local or district police station. If you have information about criminal activity, please dial 911 if it is an emergency or the crime is in progress, or call the police non-emergency telephone number at 301-279-8000.

ANNUAL PICNIC

After a hiatus in 2005, the Annual Picnic is being planned for June 17, 2006 (Rain date, June 18th). Mary Kimball has kindly offered to chair this event. Those interested in volunteering to help Mary with this activity should contact her at 301-330-3663. Let's make this a great kick-off for the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer!

YARD SALE

Interested in clearing out those treasures you no longer need in your basement, attic, or storage shed? Ready to seek fabulous, new treasures to replace them? Spring is a great time of year for a yard sale, and one is scheduled to take place right here in our neighborhood on Saturday, April 29, 2006 (rain date Sunday, April 30). If there is sufficient interest in an autumn yard sale (October 21, 2006), we will need a coordinator for that sale as well. If you are interested in coordinating this event, please contact anyone on the Board of Directors no later than March 1, 2006.

COMMUNITY PRIDE

April is Community Beautification Month in Seneca Whetstone! During the month, Board members will be doing observations of our neighborhood in a walk-through to see if there are any outstanding issues or violations that need attention and/or correction. As the weather turns better and we all get outside again, please check to see if there are any items around your house and yard that need maintenance or updating (fallen fences, peeling paint, etc.) Seneca Whetstone is a lovely community and we are all proud of where we live. Let's do what we can to keep it that way!

Reminder...

Please remember that **Montgomery County law** requires a pet owner to clean up the mess left by their pets. You can be fined \$100 if someone files a complaint.

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.



Important Phone Numbers

Abandoned Vehicles	301-840-2454
Animal Control	240-773-5960
Consumer Affair	240-777-3636
*County Call Center	240-777-6000
*CPWI Resale/Mortgage Assistance	301-309-8977
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

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