



## Minutes of the February 2, 2009 Meeting

---

---

- **Call to Order @ 07:40p by Stephanie Tucker**
  - Stephanie's term concludes tonight after one year; most BoD officers have 3-year terms
  - Stephanie suggested that BoD terms conclude at different times to permit continuity
  - A vote will be taken in this meeting for a new president, replacing Stephanie

- **Introduction of New Board of Directors for 2009**

Primary responsibilities are the collection of dues and enforcement of the covenants.

- **Chairperson-elect – Keith Pulley**
- **Architecture Compliance – Scott Chastain**
- **Property Maintenance – George Edler**
- **Legal – Jennifer Sides**
- **Treasurer – Phil Sides**
- **Communications – Bruce McLendon**
- **Social Activities – Anne Levin**

- **Board of Directors Summary of Responsibilities**

Each officer was asked to describe their position and highlight their plans going into 2009

- **Architecture**

Scott Chastain described maintenance on behalf of George Edler and described architecture guidelines and maintenance: common area lawn cutting, common area trees, split-rail fences, and the like. The lawn maintenance schedule would continue on Fridays so the neighborhood would make its best presentation over the weekend.

Scott will periodically examine the appearance of the RCH II homes. By June, he will report to the BoD the State of the Neighborhood regarding compliance with painting, colors, and exterior modifications.

Scott displayed the exterior feature color paint sample to illustrate color requirements and indicated a walk-around inspection would be performed in the Spring to inventory compliance with the covenants. Scott mentioned need for project approvals by the BoD for exterior construction, as stated in the covenants. The perennial difficulty of enforcement of the covenants was briefly mentioned with more discussion at future meetings. These construction approvals would consider input from the immediate neighbors for any impact to adjoining properties.

Scott also noted that construction was completed in 2008 over a drain pipe in the common area known as "Sledding Hill". This was deemed a safety improvement and a step toward prevention of further erosion of the immediate grounds. The land around the drain pipe area was filled and graded in an attractive manner. However, the area remains a safety concern. A recommendation was made to assemble "chicken wire" around this area so that children and pets would be unable to fall through the bars of the grate over the drain pipe.

- **Legal**

Jennifer Sides discussed the RCHHA covenants and restrictions. Jennifer indicated the BoD intentions to enforce covenants. Copies of the covenants were made available at the meeting. The homeowners asked how they could change the covenants and it was described as requiring a vote of at least 2/3 of the members in good standing with proxy voting allowed.

Jennifer also introduced the subject of by-laws and their relationship to the covenants. They would represent the means, methods, and remedies The Board has at their disposal to enforce the covenants on homeowners and property that is not in compliance.

- **Financial**

Phil Sides' primary responsibilities are to collect the dues and spend the monies for any purpose deemed required for maintaining the neighborhood. Phil discussed the RCHHA budget status and plan. Copies of 2008 finances and 2009 budget were distributed and discussed. Our revenue is wholly dependant on 49 homes paying dues of \$150. This year (2008), we spent slightly more than the funds received (\$7,350). Further, if the original dues of \$120 were recalculated given the 177% inflation since 1980, today's dues would be \$200.

Phil indicated that there would not be a dues increase in 2009 but that we expect an increase in future years. An increase to \$200 per year was described as a possibility for 2010. A homeowner pointed out that there had only been one increase in the dues since the beginning of the neighborhood in 1979. A homeowner noted that, based on inflation since 1979, an increase to \$200 per year is reasonable. Especially when compared to other neighborhoods of similar size, age, and architecture.

The attendees discussed the impact of neighborhood upkeep on the budget. The discussion included the upkeep of street-side trees, the public land adjacent to I-495, and the stone walls, among items with potential budget impact. This prompted a homeowner to suggest adding a line item to the budget in the future, specifically for funding a reserve account. We have 30-year-old problems, some of which have not been addressed in those 30 years (e.g., stone walls, fencing, etc). Phil mentioned that the construction in the common area cost \$900. And this was a minor project completed for the safety and appearance of our neighborhood.

An alternate suggestion was made to place a percentage of the dues into a "reserve fund". Our treasury balance currently stands at approximately \$12,000 and is, for all intents and purposes, our "reserve fund", should the neighborhood require emergency funding for unanticipated events, natural or accidental. Clearly, \$12,000 might only cover one "incident". The BoD would then have to solicit all homeowners to contribute additional funding to cover standard operating expenses for the remainder of the year.

This discussion generalized and included a discussion of the "StreetScape" code by Montgomery County, regarding the nature of maintaining the presentation of our neighborhood. We are apparently 17 years behind the times, commented a homeowner. The BoD has to take responsibility for tree-trimming to permit various utility trucks and medical service vehicles to pass smoothly over our streets. This "reserve fund" could quickly escalate into a general maintenance fund, where there is a provision for this kind of expenditure.

- **Communications**

Bruce McLendon discussed BoD communication with homeowners including the construction of a website, flyers, more frequent eMail, a directory of homeowners, and a "listserv" (a mailing list server that contains forum-style discussions of topics of interest to the participating community). A homeowner suggested using the annual dues notice be

used for a place to poll for updated eMail address; Bruce indicated that a previous mailing returned 15 undeliverable addresses for the neighborhood.

Several attendees complimented the utility of the "list serv" when a raccoon and grey fox were spotted in our neighborhood last year. It heightened the awareness and vigilance of all who participated. Everyone commented that this "service" should be better publicized.

#### ○ **Social Activities**

Anne Levin discussed 2009 social activities and indicated likely activities around Memorial Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, Labor Day, and Oktoberfest. She publicly thanked Frank Gallo for his tireless efforts over many years of planning, preparing, and managing our outdoor activities. Anne stressed the need for volunteers at all functions.

As a note to encourage others, Anne mentioned several food-preparation contests that were held throughout all of 2008's outdoor events. This seemed to encourage additional attendance at the planned activities for 2009.

Anne presented the idea to possibly create a regular Friday afternoon neighborhood play date for neighborhood kids and their moms/caregivers at "Sledding Hill". This activity would not be related to any other HOA activities. This 'play time' is not intended to become a baby sitting service, but more of a social event for those attending. Additional clarification and input will be sought in future meetings and communications.

#### ➤ **Vote Taken for new HOA Chairperson**

Stephanie Tucker opened the floor open to nominations for replacement of herself as Board Chair. Stephanie's one-year term has come to an end. It was clarified that we were changing the term of the position to three years. Keith Pulley was the only nominee and was elected unanimously by show of hands.

Keith asked about his new responsibilities and was provided with the following statement of duties:

- The primary point of contact for/to county, state, and local organizations
- Oversees activities of the Board of Directors
- Calls homeowner meetings and Board elections

#### ➤ **Homeowner Discussion**

Stephanie Tucker opened the floor for homeowner discussion of any subject of interest. These subjects will be addressed in future private and public Board of Director meetings. The following is a list of the points made:

- It was suggested that a forum be created for submitting proposed covenant changes that would be voted upon for consideration.
- Lawn care coverage behind houses on Campbell Drive not backing up to the train rails has been neglected and the maintenance service needs to be reminded to take care of that common area. A homeowner noted that the area hasn't been maintained, and is still covered with leaves from last Fall.
- It was suggested that maintenance cover snow removal from sidewalks along common property. It was noted that there is a county ordinance about the requirement for homeowners to clear their sidewalks of snow.
- It was suggested that the BoD more actively communicate with rental managers of homes not owner-occupied to communicate the community expectations for renters. Concern was also expressed about partial home rentals and impact to the neighborhood. If a rental agreement is in place, the BoD should know its terms. Montgomery County

may also have a requirement that the leasor be registered as such and possibly pay some portion of the rental income to the county.

- Concern was expressed about dog owners not cleaning up common property after their pets have used it to relieve themselves. Pets seen with their owners that are not controlled by leashes was mentioned as a Montgomery County punishable offense.
- It was suggested that markers be placed around the catch basin at the base of the sledding hill in order to better mark its location (This has already been done since the meeting)
- Concern was raised about awareness of the speed limit in our community. Unposted community speed limits are believed to be 25 mph.
- It was suggested that the language and intent of The Covenants be modernized with today's needs for what makes sense and what does not. Dormers were introduced.
- A recommendation was made to create a form where homeowners could anonymously submit feedback regarding the covenants. This may be handled by the web site.
- A comment was made that our Home Owner Association has a relationship with the Maryland National Park and Planning Commission. This issue was raised from the observation that the Eastern side of the neighborhood (I-495) has become an untenable eyesore and is approaching the appearance of a jungle. There are issues of a deteriorating fence down the hill and its maintenance, child safety, and snow removal.
- The question was raised about absentee owners and how they should participate in our community. The BoD should investigate to learn their intentions as to the length of time they anticipate being an absentee owner. This aids BoD efforts with real estate issues.
- A homeowner recommended that the entire neighborhood be vigilant about protecting the virtue(s) of our community. This would include such items as discouraging partial-home rentals and external additions to the homes as violations of the covenants affect us all.
- A homeowner introduced a theme from Takoma Park named, "Air, Trees, and Water Governance". The intent is **not** to inflict damage to or obstruct the flow of these resources throughout our community and to respect these elements of Nature.

### ➤ Adjournment @ 8:50p

Many stayed for refreshments and conversation. A special "thank you" was given to Anne and Gregg for hosting this meeting in their home, in addition to the grand presentation of a wide variety of finger foods, snacks, and drinks.

Copies of the Covenants and current neighborhood directory were left on the main table for easy distribution to all in attendance.

### ➤ Addendum

As of February 8, 2009, the RCHHA's "home page" was published to - <http://www.rchha.org/>

Currently no links are functional. As material is developed, collected, and solicited, the content of the web site will be expanded with extended functionality. The RCHHA home page will be developed into a fully functioning web site as time and materials become available. This will be an on-going project.