

**JANUARY
2009**

RANDOM HILLS COMMUNITY NEWS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE:

Happy New Year from the Board of Directors! In 2008, it was a much better year financially with the RHCA budget and investments than it has been on Wall Street. Our budget is divided into two parts: operating and maintenance (O&M) and reserves. The monthly fee covers the O&M costs and the contribution to our reserves.

The O&M part of our budget is for everyday property upkeep and other costs such as garbage collection and landscaping. One of our major costs for O&M is the landscaping service for our community. Shenandoah Landscaping has done a very good job of keeping the community groomed and attractive at a very reasonable fee. They also were a major part of the tree pruning effort this past summer. We had to remove several trees by the pool house that had overgrown major parts of the building. Our community needed some serious initial tree and bush pruning, and it was accomplished with O&M funds. Then we had very high winds that required even more tree removal and pruning. Fortunately the snow removal costs were minimal last year, and there was some slack in our budget to cover some of these unexpected costs. Other items covered by O&M include the swimming pool operation and garbage collection. A complete list of all the O&M items and costs were provided to you with the annual budget sent to you in December with the new monthly fee. The consumer price index grew at about 5% average this past year and that led to the \$7.00 per month increase in dues. Overall our O&M budget is in very good shape, and we are able to keep our community looking beautiful with a very realistic monthly fee. Please note that we will continue to manage your budget with rigor and try to minimize the monthly fee increases consistent with the requirements and inflation considerations.

The other part of the budget is the reserves. The reserves are those funds set aside to cover the cost of capital investments for our community. This year a number of improvements were accomplished with reserve funds. These include a major update to the community irrigation system, refurbishment of the tennis courts, fence, gate and lock; and new globes for all of our street lights. The reserves are well invested, and the growth the past year, about 4%, has been much greater than the S&P growth. We will continue to aggressively manage these funds in terms of dollars you contribute, the return on our investments and the proper use of the funds for the required capital investments.

Want To Know More
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Random Hills?
Check out our
website at
www.randomhills.org

One last item. The Board of Directors (BOD) has established a Financial Working Group to provide oversight of the O&M budget and the reserves contribution and funds management. This group is led by me, the Treasurer, and I currently have one member other than myself. I would very much like to have two more homeowners join the Financial Group. We will meet quarterly for about two hours and provide quarterly funding recommendations to the BOD. I expect it will take about two hours of time each quarter, for about 8 hours maximum per year. I am very interested in any homeowner who has financial, banking, and/or investment experience to be part of this group. If you are interested, please send an email to me at BOD@randomhills.org.

Warm Regards,

Bob Beasley

RHCA BOD Treasurer



RESPONSIBLE PET OWNERSHIP:



There is no doubt that a well adjusted dog or cat can bring lots of joy in our lives. However, being a pet owner requires responsibility and

obeying some Fairfax County laws and RHCA Policy Resolution 5 regarding pet ownership. There have been some complaints lately about pets running around the community without a leash and pet droppings being left behind in neighbors' yards. Laws regarding animals are in Chapter 41 of the Fairfax County Code. The Fairfax County Animal Services Division is the branch of government that enforces these laws. A summary of the laws is available on the Fairfax County website, however, I wanted to focus on a few of them here:

Trespassing & Noise Violations:

"It is against the law to allow animals to trespass on, destroy or damage another person's property. Animals must not frequently and habitually make loud and objectionable noises or be kept in such a manner as to cause unsanitary conditions. Nuisance noises may be reported to the police department at 703-691-2131. A complainant may also request the owner to abate the noise violation...."

Pooper Scooper Law:

"The owner or custodian of any dog shall be responsible for the removal of waste deposited by such dog on other's property or public property ("pooper scooper" regulation).



Leash Law:

"It is against the law to allow animals to run loose on public property or private property of others. Dogs must be restrained on a dependable leash and controlled by a responsible person when off the property of the owner. Animal Control is authorized to pick up dogs at large. The agency also may pick up other animals that pose a public nuisance or threaten public safety or health."



Cats:

"Fairfax County Animal Control Officers may respond to nuisance cat complaints when the owner is known, as well as bite cases and rescue of injured cats or cats in distress.

Roaming cats cause injuries to themselves, wildlife and people. For the protection of your cats and the community, it is best to keep your cat indoors."



Source: *"Your Pets And The Law", online, www.linkspond.com/Pet%20Laws.pdf, 12/2/2008.*

Many homeowners want the Board to handle pet complaints; however, the Board prefers that the issue be resolved between the pet owner and the affected homeowner. This is the neighborly thing to do before the authorities are called.

If you own a pet, be responsible and follow the laws - for your pet, for you, and for harmony in our community.

Laurie Crum
Newsletter Editor





By thinning the "crown" you can also increase airflow through and around your tree, giving you a healthier plant.

One final reason to prune your tree is for the look of your yard and the good of the neighborhood. When you prune, you create a more pleasing shape and more sunlight, which stimulates flower and plant growth.

We replaced our fallen Maple tree with one designed for smaller yards and we're preparing to have it pruned for the first time. As I look around, I see that many of my neighbors are now running the risk we did in 2003. The trees are simply too large for the root systems and their limbs are encroaching on the property and views of other homes.

It's time to get your tree under control and be a thoughtful neighbor. Call a reputable tree surgeon and get started. Your yard, your insurance premiums, and your neighbors will thank you.

Bob Jacobs
11519 Rothbury Square

It's Time to Prune Your Tree. But Why?

After all the leaves have clogged your gutters and cluttered your yard, it's time to think about tree pruning. Many people don't know that it's important to keep the growth of that beautiful tree in your front yard under control. But why?

In a word – safety.

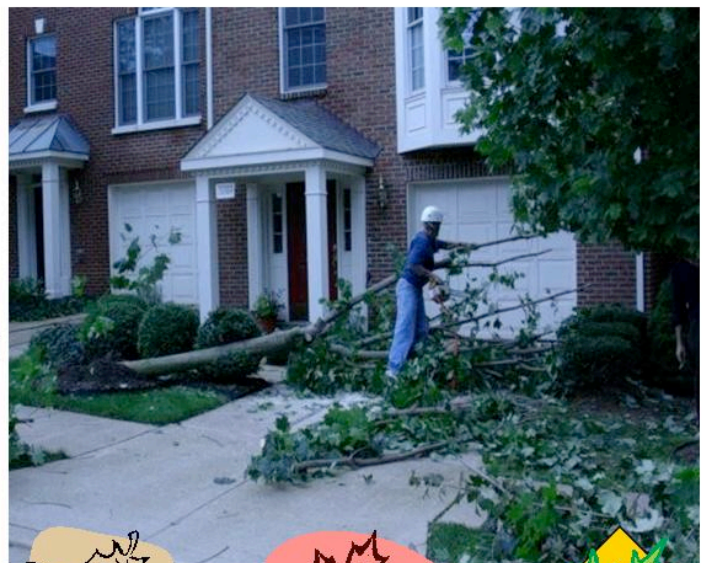
For our family, it was a hard lesson learned in September 2003. Our Maple tree was still in full bloom. Thanks to "better yards through chemistry," we had one of the largest trees in the area (another important lesson learned). It was beautiful. Then, Hurricane Isabelle swept up the east coast. My vast array of leaves turned into a giant canopy. The sustained winds grabbed our overgrown tree like a giant sail and slowly brought our yard centerpiece to the ground.

We were lucky, as were our neighbors. The tree fell at fortuitous angle and rested just against my next door neighbor's porch. It blocked the door but the downed tree didn't do any real damage, although my neighbors weren't too pleased that a 40 foot Maple was now a hazardous eyesore resting against their house.

As tree surgeons cut away the remnants they told me that the top of the tree had overtaken the root system. In short, we had not been pruning the tree as we should and it was only a matter of time before a windy day toppled our giant.

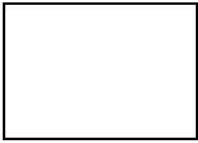
So why prune your tree, again? Safety! Tree limbs are heavy and when they fall or are torn off by bad weather, they can cause serious injury or major damage to property. It's bad enough if it's you or your property that gets hit. But if a falling limb strikes a neighbor or passerby, the results can be hazardous and expensive. Trust me, I know.

Also, think about the health of your tree. Removing dead, diseased or insect-infested limbs can save a tree's life and restore it to health.



Please help us save a tree and association expenses (a.k.a. your dues) by submitting your email address to us and receiving this newsletter electronically in the future. Email addresses should be sent to: webmaster@randomhills.org





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