



## MONTPELIER WOODS HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION

# January 2018

## In This Issue

- A Message from the HOA President
- February 2018 MWHOA Board Meeting
- Welcome to the 2018 MWHOA Board of Directors
- 2018 HOA Meeting Schedule
- Homeowner Annual Assessment
- Property Owner Electronic Communication Opt-in Form
- Appeal for Committee Volunteers
- Revised Supplemental Architectural Control Guidelines
- MWHOA Neighborhood Survey Results
- MWHOA Financial Report
- Prince George's County Snow Removal Policies
- Parking Concerns
- MW Common Areas "by the Numbers"
- New State Law for Smoke Detectors and Existing State Law for Carbon Monoxide Detectors
- Nextdoor
- Welcome New Neighbors
- MWHOA 2018 Budget

## A MESSAGE FROM THE HOA PRESIDENT

Greetings and Happy New Year to all members and residents of Montpelier Woods! On behalf of the Board of Directors (BOD), I would like to extend a special thank you to those who participated in the October 2017 election for the 2018 BOD. We appreciate the show of support and for trusting us to care for our homeowner association's (HOA) business affairs. Although a challenge at times, we are committed to ensuring our community remains a pleasant place to live and we find pleasure in serving for the common good. We look forward to working with each of you over the next year to make sure the community reflects the desires of the members.

To this end, we have reviewed the results of the community survey sent out to members and residents last fall and I have developed an agenda based on the feedback. In short, the priority areas for me, based on the survey results are: 1) covenant enforcement; 2) community beautification (to include common area maintenance); and 3) neighborhood security. It is my hope to be able to make some noticeable improvements in these areas over the course of the next year for the good of us all. While undoubtedly the Board will have many areas and issues to focus on over the next year, these noted areas will remain a focal point to guide our actions as we strive to make desired improvements in our community.

So, with a cheerful spirit, I hope that you all will join us in making improvements! Please, send us an email to say how we are doing. Drop us a line to indicate your needs. And mostly, please please let us treat each other well and let us all work together to ensure our community meets all of our needs. Again, on behalf of the Montpelier Woods Homeowners Association (MWHOA) Board of Directors, I thank you for your support and I thank you all in advance for your efforts to make our neighborhood a great place to live! Hope to see you at the next HOA Meeting!

Sincerely,

Will Bronson  
President, MWHOA

## 2018 Board Meetings

### At Deerfield Run Community Center

- February 26 7:00 pm
- April 23 7:00 pm
- June 25 7:00 pm
- August 27 7:00 pm
- October 22 7:00 pm

**\*\*No Meeting in December\*\***

### MWHOA Board Members

President	Will Bronson
Vice President	Tanya Holt
Treasurer	Paula Oas
Secretary	Synthia Jenkins
Member@Large	Gary Battel

### Committees and Chairperson

Architectural (Gary Battel)  
Common Area (Gary Battel)  
Communications (Anthony Murray)  
Covenants (Will Bronson)  
Financial (Paula Oas)  
Neighborhood Watch (Vacant)  
Nominating (Vacant)  
Welcoming (Vacant)

### Contact Us

P.O. Box 2645, Laurel, MD 20709  
Voicemail: 240-554-2438  
Email: Mail@MWHOA.com  
Website: www.mwhoa.com

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### February 2018 MWHOA Board Meeting

Please join the Board of Directors on Monday, February 26, 2018 (7:00 p.m. at Deerfield Run Community Center) for the first Board Meeting of the new year.

The BOD has been in contact with the Maryland-National Capital Park Police and P.G. County Police over the past several weeks. The Board believes it is imperative to involve and have an open line of communication with law enforcement because of past activities in and around **Pheasant Run Community Park and our community**. A member of the Park Police and the Parks & Recreation's Regional Manager for our area will attend the February 26<sup>th</sup> meeting to speak with our homeowners, hear your concerns and answer your questions about the park. **Please mark your calendars and join us**. Also, a P.G. County Police officer will attend a future Board Meeting to speak with residents.

This would also be a great opportunity for you to consider joining the MW Neighborhood Watch Committee. This committee coordinates and oversees efforts to promote safety within our neighborhood, while working with local law enforcement. Your help is always needed. If you are interested in joining this committee, please contact Synthia Jenkins ([synthia6@verizon.net](mailto:synthia6@verizon.net)).

## WHAT'S NEW?

### Welcome to the 2018 MWHOA Board of Directors

Congratulations to the 2018 MWHOA Board of Directors: Will Bronson (President), Tanya Holt (Vice President), Paula Oas (Treasurer), Synthia Jenkins (Secretary), and Gary Battel (Member-At-Large). The new BOD was installed during the November 27, 2017 Board Meeting.

### 2018 HOA Meeting Schedule

Hello fellow members and residents, please be advised, beginning in February 2018, MWHOA BOD will hold five (5) meetings throughout the year. Each meeting will occur every other month at the Deerfield Run Community Center, 13000 Laurel Bowie Road, Laurel, MD 20708, with the first meeting on February 26, 2018. The meetings will continue to be held from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. in the community room.

As many of you may recall, in previous years, the board meetings were held monthly, rotating between meeting at the community center and meeting in board member homes. Although there was some limited benefit to this arrangement, using board member's homes to hold community meetings provided more challenges than the benefit it provided. So, at the November 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board voted to move to bi-monthly meetings to be held at the community center. Although public, open, HOA meetings will occur bi-monthly, the Board may still meet as needed in between bi-monthly meetings to discuss sensitive HOA issues such as: consultation with our legal counsel on legal matters; discussion of individual homeowner accounts; potential criminal actions of members; and other issues that present specific homeowner privacy concerns. For transparency, please note, the BOD will provide a statement of the time, place, and purpose of any closed meeting, the record of the vote of each board member by which any meeting was closed, and the authority under this section for closing any meeting in the minutes of the next meeting of the BOD. We hope this change will actually encourage participation and reduce the amount of time we ask from each of you. Thank you for your flexibility as we make changes to better serve all of you.

## **Homeowner Annual Assessment**

The BOD approved the annual assessment of \$69.00 per household for the year 2018, which is due March 1st. Pay before April 1, 2018 to avoid incurring a late fee of \$15.00. The homeowner can pay by PayPal online at [www.mwhoa.com](http://www.mwhoa.com); by mail to P.O. Box 2645, Laurel, MD 20709; or by dropping in the MWHOA community mailbox located near the corner of Basswood Drive and Snowden Road.

## **Property Owner Electronic Communication Opt-In Form**

Homeowners should have received the Property Owner Electronic Communication Opt-In form that was mailed with your 2018 Annual Assessment. The BOD is in favor of changing our means of communicating formally with all property owners. Our preferred methods of formal communication will transition from postal mail to e-mail and community web site postings. We are required by the Maryland Homeowners Association Act to have your written consent to receive formal communications electronically and maintain this authorization on file. You may also request to continue to receive communications through the postal service.

We have asked all homeowners to return the form to formally notify us of your preferred method of communication. The form can be found at [www.mwhoa.com](http://www.mwhoa.com) on the Documents page. After completing the form, you can scan and email the completed page to [Mail@mwhoa.com](mailto:Mail@mwhoa.com) or by dropping it in the MWHOA community mailbox located near Basswood Drive and Snowden Road.

## **Appeal for Committee Volunteers**

Consider volunteering for one of the committees in our community. In an effort to create efficiencies and be more effective, the Board has shifted towards a committee structure to further the work of our community. Do you have some time and are you looking to serve your neighborhood and local community? If you are willing to assist and share your skills, the HOA is currently seeking volunteers to participate on the following committees:

- **Architectural Committee** - Oversees compliance with the Architectural Guidelines, works with residents to resolve issues related to these policies;
- **Common Area Committee** - Works to maintain and improve the common areas. Oversees compliance with the Covenants and works with residents to resolve issues related to common area policies;
- **Communications Committee** - Manages the website and coordinates website updates; oversees the editing and distribution of the Newsletter;
- **Covenants Committee** - Working to revise and revamp the Declaration of Covenants and the Architectural Guidelines governing the neighborhood;
- **Financial Committee** - Coordinates and assists with maintaining the financial records of the HOA, and handles details related to issues of purchase;
- **Neighborhood Watch** - Coordinates and oversees efforts to promote safety in our neighborhood;
- **Nominating Committee** - Coordinates and oversees the nominations process for the yearly Board of Directors election; and
- **Welcoming/Social Event Committee** - Coordinates greetings for new neighbors and coordinates other social events for both children and adults in the community.

We truly need everyone's help! Remember when our homeowners volunteer to assist on these committees it keeps the HOA Annual Assessments down. So please, if you are interested in any of the areas noted above, please contact Synthia Jenkins ([synthia6@verizon.net](mailto:synthia6@verizon.net)).

## **Revised Supplemental Architectural Control Guidelines**

Recently, everyone should have received an updated copy of the MWHOA Supplemental Architectural Control Guidelines (SACG). As you should be aware, supplemental guidance to the provisions of the MWHOA Covenants concerning architectural controls are published periodically by the Board of Directors for distribution to the general membership. The last one was published in May 1994 and we thought it time for an update as changes in building materials and in other areas have occurred.

Fundamental to the covenants is the requirement that all exterior improvements to homeowners' properties be reviewed and approved by the Association's Board of Directors or by the Architectural Control Committee (refer to Articles VII and VIII in the covenants, Page 9). Under the authority vested in the MWHOA by its governing

documents, the Board of Directors has latitude in determining the allowable exterior improvements to best maintain the community aesthetic. The Board also has the ability to determine exterior improvements that do not require specific approval, i.e. general shrubbery, tree and flower landscaping. In an effort to modernize our guidelines and make them more in line with the current needs and desires of our members, the Board has now revised these Supplemental Architectural Guidelines, based on the Covenants, and we are sending out to the community for your review. In an effort to be fully transparent, the Board wanted to provide you with these revised guidelines and allow comment prior to formalizing this policy. As we have developed these new policies, we have sought to poll the association's membership on the degree of controls desired for other types of improvements/changes to the exteriors of individual properties such as TV antennas, basketball backboards, etc. and believe our new guidelines to be reflective of your desires. The new guidelines provide more flexibility while maintaining the curb appeal of the neighborhood.

On February 26, 2018, the MWHOA Board of Directors will meet to vote on accepting the draft policies as final. This vote is for the Board to determine if these policies will go into effect, so community balloting is not required. However, we want to hear from you on this issue! Please let us know how you feel about these proposed changes. A copy of the SACG can be found at [www.mwhoa.com](http://www.mwhoa.com) on the Documents page. Feel free to send us an email at [mail@mwhoa.com](mailto:mail@mwhoa.com) or [montpelierwoodshoa@gmail.com](mailto:montpelierwoodshoa@gmail.com) or drop us a note in our community mailbox located in the common area on Basswood Drive near the intersection at Snowden Road and let us know your thoughts. We want to hear from you and we hope to see you at the February meeting!

## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

### **MWHOA Neighborhood Survey Results**

Greetings Fellow Residents/Members. As many of you know, in the Fall of 2017, the MWHOA Board of Directors implemented the first HOA resident survey for our community. Of the 348 homes we included in the survey we received 76 full, non-duplicative responses, resulting in a 22% response rate. While we would have loved to have an even higher response rate, it is important to note, an external (meaning nonemployee surveys) survey response rate of 15% is considered average. So, in sum, we did great for our first attempt! To those who participated we truly thank you! To those who did not, we truly hope to have your response on the next survey! We want to hear from and be responsive to all of our residents!

Please check out the survey results they can be found online at [www.mwhoa.com](http://www.mwhoa.com) on the Documents page. We will use these responses to help us guide our priorities and manage the HOA. For those who participated, please join us at the February 26<sup>th</sup> HOA meeting to see who will be selected as the winner of a \$50.00 VISA card as a participation gift. See you there!!!

### **MWHOA Financial Report**

If you're like most people, you think of the financial report as just a bunch of boring numbers on a piece of paper. Take a closer look, however. The financial report for 2017 continues a trend that has been taking place over the last 4 or 5 years. We spent over \$7,000 more than we collected last year. Our treasury now has about \$17,000 in assets. If we break down the costs, \$45 of last year's annual \$66 fee was spent in some capacity on the common areas – maintaining the grounds, cutting dead trees that could potentially harm residents' property, eliminating the highly invasive kudzu, taxes, and insurance. In fact, there is not much room whatsoever to cut expenses.

You are probably wondering why this is happening, and why it is happening only in recent years. The source of the problem stems from the beginning of Montpelier Woods. Our initial dues of \$25/year, established in 1977, were not raised to keep pace with inflation. \$25 in 1977 is equivalent to \$106 in 2018 dollars. Our current Bylaws prohibit us from raising our annual dues by more than 5% per year, which means that if there is no inflation whatsoever for the next 10 years (we all know that's impossible), and we continue to raise our dues at 5% per year, our dues will finally catch up with inflation in 2028. The other problem is that maintenance in our common areas was largely ignored for the first 25 years of our community, and so ultimately, it is more expensive to maintain them now than if we had attended to them continuously from the beginning. The other half of the equation is that there is probably a dozen or so people who don't pay their dues. Ultimately it costs us and them more money when the issue is resolved. (Thus, the legal services fees.) In 2018, we will make another attempt to change Covenants and Bylaws, which will not only bring them up to date, but also ease the financial burden on the Homeowners' Association (which is all of us). Hopefully, we

will obtain a large majority of people who respond to this attempt. For additional information, see Budget and Financial Information located on the last page of the newsletter.

Written by the MWHOA Financial Committee

### **Prince George's County Snow Removal Policies**

As the winter weather settles in, it is important that all Montpelier Woods residents are aware of the County's snow and ice control policies. As stated on the PG County Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T) website (<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/1041/Snow-Ice-Control>), when a snow emergency is declared, the DPW&T is responsible for providing "passable" conditions to ensure the safety of travelers. The agency prioritizes routes for service into categories: primary, secondary, and finally residential streets, including dead-end and cul-de-sacs. During a snow and ice event, residents are encouraged to wait 12 hours after the precipitation has stopped to call the Snow Information Center at 301-350-0500 or 3-1-1 to report emergencies or concerns about roadway conditions.

**In addition, each homeowner is responsible for clearing the ice and snow from their driveway and the sidewalk in front of their home. To assist DPW&T crews service our roads during snow events, residents should park vehicles in driveways whenever possible and if on-street parking must be used, cars should be parked only on the even-numbered side of the street. For medical emergencies during snow events, please call 9-1-1 immediately and DPW&T will work with the appropriate Fire and Police Departments on the emergency.**

### **Parking Concerns**

The BOD has heard from a number of residents about the number of cars and manner in which homeowners are parking those cars on the streets, to the point that vehicles can barely pass up and down some streets. The challenge for the HOA stems from our inability to take action, as no specific Covenant violations or PG County laws are being broken. Given our streets are publicly maintained, and public roads, we do not have the right to restrict properly licensed and tagged vehicles from parking on our streets. However, cars are not permitted to block driveways, sidewalks, or fire hydrants, and should accommodate the snow removal policies in the county. The BOD encourages you to call PG County's 311 line to report vehicles you suspect of being improperly parked and they will report the vehicle(s) to the proper enforcement entity. Please be considerate of your neighbors when parking on the street, we all share the roads. We not only want to ensure that our neighbors can drive safely through the streets, but we want to ensure service trucks and emergency vehicles can also easily maneuver through the streets to access our homes.

### **MW Common Areas "by the Numbers"**

During Saturdays in September, residents of our community pitched in to help clean up our common areas. Let us acknowledge the contribution of those volunteers who helped to better this community during the cleanup effort: Warren and Anita Cooley; Dave and Sue Straney; Synthia Jenkins; Paula Oas; Teresa Krikor; Gary Battel; Mark Stauffer; Erica and Erin Edelen-Barnes; Carolyn Hayes; Clifton Bell; John Luebcke; Will and Scarlett Bronson; Eric Graybill; Zane Huckabey; and Debbie Kelly.

I have always been a "numbers guy", so I thought I could best summarize our common areas by the numbers:

- Number of households in MW: 348. Number of residents who helped with the September cleanup: 19 (from 4% of the households).
- Number of volunteer hours expended to clean up "easy" debris: 33. Number of additional hours needed to complete the task: 7.
- We cleaned up only the "easy" debris (items that we could easily fit into trash bags). We also found "bulky trash", the ubiquitous "yard waste", and encroachment violations (using the common area to store their personal things, ranging from a wood pile to storage sheds to fencing). I consider these latter 3 items as "abuse of the common area".
- Number of households with land bordering a common area: 244.
- Number of households that "abuse" the common area: 144. In other words, 59% of the households that border a common area are abusing it in some way, mostly with yard debris. Number of these households that helped with the cleanup effort: 1. In other words, only 0.4% of the "abusive" households assisted with the cleanup.
- Number of volunteer hours needed to correct these abuses: 1,200. (Recognize that volunteers need to drag these items long distances through the woods and prepare them to be discarded, so it is more time consuming

and difficult than the resident who is dragging these items from behind the house to the front.) Working at a rate of 40 volunteer hours per year, it would take 30 years to restore the common areas to its pristine state!

- On the other hand, if every one of the 144 households corrected these “abuses”, it would take each of those households only 8 hours (on average) to fix the problem.
- Percentage of your annual MWHOA fees that are used to maintain the common areas (in the most minimal way possible – cut down dead trees that threaten your property): 60%. In other words, there is no money left to clean up the common areas, unless we have a drastic fee increase.
- Total size of common areas: 4 miles in distance; 14 acres in area.
- Cost to restore the common areas if we hire a contractor: \$40,000 (\$115 per household).
- Cost to restore the common areas if we rely on volunteers: \$150 for supplies. 30 years in time.
- Cost to restore the common areas if we all do it ourselves: \$0.
- Do the math.

Written by Gary Battel, Architectural Committee and Member-At-Large, MWHOA

### **New State Law for Smoke Detectors and Existing State Law for Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

A smoke alarm law that has been phased in gradually over the past five years in Maryland took full effect on January 1, 2018. All residences are now required to replace any battery only operated smoke alarm that is more than 10 years old with a unit powered by a 10-year sealed in battery. The manufacturer’s date is clearly marked on the outside of the unit. Additional information can be found here

<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/3644>).

On July 1, 2014, Prince George’s County mandated that most dwellings in the county must have carbon monoxide (CO) detectors installed. The requirements for installation and maintenance of a CO detector in a new or existing one and two family residential dwelling shall be at least one (1) CO detector installed on each level of the dwelling in close proximity to sleeping quarters in any residence constructed or to be constructed with gas heating system, fuel burning appliances, and/or an attached garage. Additional information can be found here

<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/3631>).

For further information on Maryland’s new smoke alarm law and any other life safety code requirements, please call 301-583-1830 during regular business hours.

### **Nextdoor**

Montpelier Woods is using a free and private social network called Nextdoor where our neighbors can share information. To join our neighbors on Nextdoor, visit [www.nextdoor.com](http://www.nextdoor.com), enter your street and email address, select Montpelier Woods neighborhood and you will be automatically assigned to our neighborhood group.

### **Welcome New Neighbors!**

- Derek & Edna Amadi - 10408 Balsamwood Drive
- Jonathan Arends & Claire Allen - 11221 Basswood Terrace
- Selvin & Ana Rodriguez - 12211 Amblewood Drive

## Budget and Financial Information

### MWHOA Financial Update

Balance Sheet  
As of 12/31/17



#### Assets

Bank, Savings & Investment Accounts

Checking – Bank of Am	\$ 809.24
Savings – Bank of Amer	\$5,950.78
CD - Risk Free - Bank of Am	0
CD - Reg. - Bank of Am	\$10,539.11

**Total Assets** **\$ 17,299.13**

#### Liabilities and Owners Equity

Prepaid Owner Assessments	\$954.73
Owners Equity	\$16,344.40

**Total Liabilities and Owners Equity** **\$ 17,299.13**

-- Paula Cas

### Income and Expense

	2017 Actuals	2018 Budget
<b>RECEIPTS</b>		
Household		
Assessments*	\$22,584.11	\$24,012.00
Late Fee Income	751.56	630.00
Resale Packages	225.00	195.00
Interest Received	12.72	5.00
Other -		
Reimbursements**	704.32	0.00
Other - Advertising & misc	<u>25.00</u>	<u>100.00</u>
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b><u>\$24,302.71</u></b>	<b><u>\$24,942.00</u></b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Web Site	119.94	500.00
Printing	867.76	700.00
Postage & Mailing	1,230.24	700.00
Grounds Maintenance	4,000.00	5,000.00
Tree Cutting	15,000.00	6,963.00
Kudzu Removal	660.00	467.00
Beautification	0.00	0.00
Insurance	1,784.00	1,784.00
Telephone	165.00	165.00
Office Supplies	128.47	100.00
Taxes	334.78	400.00
Legal Fees	6,490.67	6,400.00
Bank Fees & PayPal Fees	16.93	0.00
Community Events	370.88	500.00
Meeting Room Rental	217.50	210.00
Post Office Box	200.00	200.00
Special: Survey C. Areas	0.00	753.00
Other	<u>138.02</u>	<u>100.00</u>
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$31,724.19</u></b>	<b><u>\$24,942.00</u></b>
<b>Net Operating Inc. / Loss</b>	<b><u>-\$7,421.48</u></b>	<b><u>\$0.00</u></b>
 <b>Annual Assessment</b>	 <b>\$66.00</b>	 <b>\$69.00</b>