
Fairlington Commons Newsletter

3367 S. Wakefield Street, Arlington, VA 22206

August 2006

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Fairlington Commons Council of Co-Owners will be held Thursday, October 12th in the Cafeteria of the Abingdon Elementary School, 3035 S. Abingdon Street, beginning at 7:30 p.m. The primary purpose of the meeting will be to elect board members and to discuss topics of mutual interest to Commons residents.

Three seats on the Board of Directors are up for election, those held by John Sinks, John Rigoli, and Bernie Weaver. John Sinks has completed his three-year term, John Rigoli is leaving the Commons, and Bernie Weaver has been filling the balance of Wayne Winterling's term.

Anyone interested in serving on the Board should notify John Sinks by Sunday, September 17th in order to be included on the proxy ballot.

Mr. Sinks may be contacted by telephone at 703-931-2660, or by mail at 3367 South Wakefield Street, Arlington, VA 22206 - the mailbox at the pool. You must be a resident Co-Owner to serve on the Board. For additional information about responsibilities and time commitments, please contact a Board member with your questions. Formal meeting notification and proxy ballots will be mailed to all Co-Owners in the near future.

The Flood of '06

Beginning with the initial rains on Saturday, June 24th and continuing for the next seven days, the last week of June was a truly extraordinary one for Fairlington Commons. On Sunday, June 25th, a record-setting seven inches of rain fell between 9:00 p.m. and the early morning hours of Monday, June 26th due to a stationary front that stretched from New England to the Gulf Coast. By midnight Monday, June 26th, three more inches had fallen. Within three days, rainfall totals exceeded 14 inches, an amount that increased as showers continued through Saturday, July 1.

The amount of rain that fell is unprecedented – the National Weather Service classified the storm as a “once in 200 year” event. As a result, 52 units in the Commons reported some level of damage, more than from previous hurricanes and ice storms. Although the storm is now in the past, the repair and restoration effort continues.

Except for the efforts of John and Patrick Healy, Patrick McCloskey, Billy Anderson, and Chris Santos (Sanitech), things could have been much worse. Each of these individuals went well beyond any obligations to the Commons to assist in preventing additional damage and in repairing the damage that did occur.

(Continued on Page 4)

Doggie Depot Volunteers

Many thanks to Commons residents and dog owners Judy Barr, Cory Scott, and Jim Carbo, who have volunteered to maintain our Doggie Depots! Their spirit of community involvement is appreciated and will allow us to retain the Doggie Depots without incurring considerable additional expense for maintenance and upkeep.

Trash & Litter -Your Responsibility Also

Trash is collected Tuesday and Friday mornings, recycling on Thursday mornings. To ensure pickup, trash and recycling must be at the curb or designated pickup point no later than 7:00 a.m. Residents are permitted to place trash and recycling at designated pickup points after 9:00 p.m. the previous evening.

Please do not place your trash curbside or at the designated pick-up points after the truck has passed. They will not come back to get it. If you miss the pickup, it is your responsibility to carry your trash back to your house until the next regularly scheduled trash or recycling pickup or to otherwise dispose of it in an approved Arlington County receptacle. It is not to be left on your porch or "hidden" behind bushes where the rest of us have to look at it and where it can attract unwanted animals. Trash and recycling should be stored in your residence or patio prior to pickup – it is not to be stored in common areas such as outside your patio gate or back door.

Trash, and especially large items, should be placed curbside. The summer heat is hard

Fairlington Commons Newsletter

enough on the grass - we don't need to kill any more of it with trash bags.

Regarding litter – we can all help maintain the appearance of our community by taking a few seconds to pick it up, particularly those unwanted newspapers that keep magically appearing even though no one subscribes.

One last item – front porches are not storage areas. Shovels, shoes, boots, etc should be stored in your house, not out for everyone to see.

End-of-Summer Pool Party

The Fairlington Commons End-of-Summer Swimming Pool Party will be held Saturday, September 9th beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Swimming Pool on the Wakefield Circle. The rain date is Sunday the 10th, same time. The Commons will provide hot dogs, hamburgers, sodas, condiments and utensils; Co-Owners and tenants are requested to bring salads, desserts, and other dishes to share. Volunteers should contact Cathy Malin at 931-9260 if you'd like to help.

Season End Pool Hours

The pool will close for the season on Labor Day Monday, September 4 at 6:00 p.m. Weather permitting; it will be open Saturday and Sunday September 9 & 10, and again Saturday and Sunday, September 16 & 17. After the Labor Day weekend, the pool will not be open through the week. Of course, it will be open for the Pool party on the 9th!

So Long, Schusters!

On Friday, August 11th, an era ended as Bob and Georgine Schuster departed for their new home in Gainesville, Georgia after 33 years in the Commons. A former member of our Board, retired Marine, and Arlington Schools Sports Announcer, Bob's most visible contribution to our community was the flowers and American Flags that brightened our pool each summer.

Parking

The following is provided as a brief summation of a few important points regarding parking in Fairlington Commons. The complete parking rules are available at: <http://fairlington.org/CommonsParkingPolicy.pdf>

Co-Owners, residents, their guests, and service providers working in individual units or for the Commons may use our parking lots. **There is no assigned parking.** Street parking is controlled by Arlington County and enforced by the police.

Each vehicle parked in our lots must display a hangtag on the rearview mirror at all times while the vehicle is in the lot. Violators are subject to towing and storage at the owner's expense. Violators should be reported to a Board Member for action.

Parking Pass Applications are available at <http://fairlington.org/CommonsParkingPassApplication.pdf> or from a Board member. No more than two passes will be issued per unit. Applications should be submitted to the mailbox in front of the pool. There will be no exceptions to the two-car rule unless you make special arrangements with the Board for permissible use of the Upper Utah lot. Parking passes are the property of Fairlington Commons and must be

Fairlington Commons Newsletter

returned to the Board when the residence is sold or a resident moves.

Recently, threatening notes have been placed on vehicles legally parked in our lots and in one instance, a resident called a tow truck to tow a neighbor's car. **Only the Board of Directors or a vehicle's owner can legally authorize towing. Anyone else who directs towing of another's vehicle does so at severe risk, including felony criminal charges for grand theft auto and civil lawsuits!!!**

So Long, John!

A member of our Board of Directors for the past year, John Rigoli, his wife Cindi, and son JT will soon be leaving the Commons for their new home in Sterling, Virginia. During the past year, John has served as Board Secretary and as Vice President, and has helped steer us through some interesting times. Best wishes to John, Cindi, and JT in their new home!

“Today's Score”

The following musing was written on the lifeguard office whiteboard following a particularly hot and busy Sunday at the pool.

“Today's Score:

1 umbrella killed by thunderstorm

1 noodle killed by children

1 resident almost killed himself when diving

But except for these and about a thousand children in the pool during the day, it was cool to be here!”

Ondrej Karol

(Editor's Note – the resident scraped his face on the bottom of the pool)

(The Flood of '06 – Continued)

As in any extraordinary situation, there were things that went well, and those that did not. In the following paragraphs, we will take a look at those things as a way of assessing lessons learned and preparing for the next event that hopefully never arrives.

Gutters - cleaned this spring. On Sunday, June 25th, John Healy inspected each of our buildings for water running down the walls (a sign of blockage) and cleaned those gutters again. Some gutters were previously equipped with guards as an experiment, some of those became choked by late spring oak blossoms. In some instances, the volume of water simply overwhelmed the gutters. The Board is considering removing the experimental gutter guards, conducting additional cleanings as required, and increasing the size of the gutters in critical areas.

Downspouts and Extensions – cleaned this spring. Some were subsequently blocked, became disconnected, or were overwhelmed by the volume of water. Corrective actions will include increasing the downspout size if required, fastening sections with screws, and extending drainage as far as possible from buildings. Two traditional trouble-spot units didn't flood at all, thanks to newly installed underground PVC drainpipe.

Exterior Stairwell Drains - snaked and cleaned this spring. Only one did not flow properly. Where damage occurred, it was due to leaves and debris that flowed into the drain, causing water to back up into adjacent units.

Grading and Erosion Control – was largely effective in controlling flooding and preventing damage, although the volume of water overwhelmed some areas that normally would have been problem free. Accumulated mulch and settling of some areas did cause problems that have been addressed.

As is the case in any disaster situation, the human element was also a factor, both in mitigating and controlling the damage, and occasionally in exacerbating an already bad situation. Some Co-Owners recognized the seriousness of the situation early on and took positive steps to control or minimize damage by cleaning up the water, rolling back their carpets, running fans, air conditioners, and dehumidifiers, and immediately contacting the Board of Directors for professional assistance. Others were not so fortunate, and paid a heavy price in water and mold damage.

In a number of cases, Co-Owners were out of town during the flooding and for a week or more thereafter. In one truly egregious case, a tenant, who was home for the duration of the storm, failed to notify the Co-Owner, his management company, or the Board. By the time the Board was notified, the basement and all possessions were a total loss to flooding and mold.

While maintenance of the structures and general commons element is the responsibility of the Council of Co-Owners, individual Co-Owners and their tenants can and must participate to preclude damage on the scale experienced. Following are some simple steps that Co-Owners and Tenants can take to prevent or minimize damage should we experience another extraordinary rain event.

Report damage to gutters, downspouts, and downspout extensions immediately! Do not wait. Do not assume that someone else will do it. If it's crushed, disconnected, or otherwise damaged, let us know. The basement and possessions that you save may be your own!

Don't modify gutters or downspouts! One unit flooded because the previous owner directed the flow of water from a downspout into a stairwell drain. There is no way a stairwell drain can handle the flow of water from a roof, and the new owner paid the price. Similar problems have been discovered at other units, particularly where Co-Owners have blocked or impacted the flow of water from downspouts. Use caution and good judgment when making modifications in your patio that could change the drainage. In at least three instances we found changes that had been made which prevented water from flowing out of the patio.

Do not cut the carpet if your unit floods! There is a good possibility that Sanitech can save the carpet if it is intact and if they are notified in a timely manner. If you cut the carpet, it's destroyed for sure.

Get Insurance! Flood insurance is not available, but sewer backup insurance can be purchased for very little money, and will generally cover damage due to sewer, floor, or storm drain backups. Talk with your insurance agent. Two units filled with raw sewerage during the flood – fortunately, one of them was insured for sewerage backup.

Keep stairwell drains clean and clear!

A few minutes sweeping leaves and dirt and checking the drains during a heavy rain may well prevent having your carpet, flooring, and possessions destroyed by a flood. The same advice applies if there is a storm drain adjacent your unit. One storm drain backed up due to charcoal dumped over the fence by tenants!

Check your Unit. If you're going to be away, have a trusted neighbor check your unit if significant rain occurs. In one instance, a neighbor with a key to an adjacent unit didn't check the adjacent unit because their unit didn't flood. The adjacent unit did, as did the one next to it. And if you're the neighbor with the key – assume nothing! Just because your television isn't floating in five feet of water doesn't mean that your neighbor's isn't.

Report Standing Water. If there's a huge puddle of water adjacent your unit every time it rains, report it. It's only a matter of time before it finds its way from that puddle through your foundation and into your basement.

The Commons has not yet received bills for all of the work done after the storm, however, the amount of damage definitely exceeds any amount budgeted for such contingencies. While some money can be recovered from insurance and budget line item surpluses, (e.g., snow removal and paving), the Board has determined that only safety related and essential work will be undertaken until the costs of the storm are fully known.

Mark Your Calendars

Budget Meeting – Thursday, December 7

Your Community

For those of you who are new to Fairlington, this newsletter is the official publication of the Fairlington Commons Council of Co-Owners. If you have received this newsletter, it is because you are a resident of Fairlington Commons and need to be familiar with the benefits and services of your community, as well as the ordinances, rules, etc. that govern your activities here.

Fairlington Commons consists of the triangular area bounded by I-395, South 34th Street, and South Utah Streets. Although the second smallest of the six South Fairlington condominium associations, it is one of the largest in terms of real estate, with approximately 22 acres of land.

A five-member, volunteer, non-compensated Board of Directors operates Fairlington Commons on behalf of each of the 229 Co-Owners. We are a self-managed association, meaning that we do not employ a management company. The Board of Directors is responsible for hiring and directing the efforts of all contractors performing work on behalf of the Commons. A list of the members of the Board of Directors is included in this newsletter – residents and Co-Owners with questions regarding operation of the association should contact a member of the Board.

Maintenance Requests

As most of you remember from the flyer that was distributed throughout the Commons, Co-Owner and resident Eric Pamer was selected as the new Fairlington Commons “Service Coordinator,” replacing our former “Community Liaison.” When we signed the

Fairlington Commons Newsletter

contract with Eric mid-June, none of us had the slightest idea that within ten days the Commons would be facing severe flooding and damage caused by the rains that began on June 24th, and that Eric’s services would prove invaluable in dealing with the crisis.

As a reminder of the information that was contained in the flyer announcing Eric’s selection as our Service Coordinator, residents with maintenance requests, complaints, or questions should contact Eric for assistance. That contact information is:

Commons Service Coordinator
Eric Pamer
703-379-0027
CommonsService@Hotmail.com

Residents may also submit requests in writing by leaving a note at the pool mailbox to Eric’s attention.

Plumbing Emergencies should still be addressed directly to Billy Anderson for resolution. That contact information is:

William “Billy” Anderson Plumbing
703-836-4716

Fairlington Commons Board of Directors		
President	John Sinks <i>E-mail jsinks@comcast.net</i>	931-2660
Vice President	Vacant	
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Secretary	Bernie Weaver <i>E-mail WeaverBW@comcast.net</i>	671-7024
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