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# Fairlington Commons

## Newsletter

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3367 S. Wakefield Street, Arlington, VA 22206

March 2007

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### Winter Blues

It's been a winter - colder than those in the recent past, with more frozen precipitation and related issues. While hopefully the worst of the frigid weather is now behind us as the calendar marches toward spring, it is only fitting that we look back for an assessment of what went wrong, what went right, and how we can do it better next time.

#### *“What Went Wrong”*

In the “what went wrong” category was the response, or lack thereof, by grounds contractor Blade Runners to the Valentines Day sleet that covered every street, parking lot, roof, patio, sidewalk, and step with two inches of frozen muck. To say that the Co-Owners were displeased with their performance would be an understatement, displeasure that was expressed by the Board of Directors in a letter to Blade Runners corporate president addressing their performance, specifically:

- Failure to Respond in a Timely Manner. The storm was no surprise and was accurately forecast by area meteorologists, including time between the end of precipitation and the solid freeze that could have been used to more easily remove a majority of the sleet.
- Incomplete Clearing of Sidewalks and Steps. The letter emphasized that; in future occurrences, sidewalks and steps are to be given priority, particularly

those between parking lots and residences.

- Poor Plowing. Specifically cited was their failure to adequately clear the parking lots, plowing snow directly behind parked cars, obstructing spaces previously cleared by residents, and indiscriminately piling snow in otherwise usable parking spaces.
- Shoveling. In at least one instance, shoveled snow was piled in and on the window wells of a unit where it could have caused water damage or flooding.
- Misuse of Ice Melt. Ice melt was not spread evenly or properly. This is of special concern because over-application in the early years of the Commons resulted in extensive damage to sidewalks.
- Poor Communications. Contractor personnel were not available to coordinate snow removal and ice mitigation or to provide information.

#### *“What Went Right”*

In the “what went right” category, and to their credit, Blade Runners did take the Board's telephone, e-mail, and written displeasure with their performance to heart, providing an excellent response to the surprise snow of Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully those lessons will be remembered in future years, and the Board is taking additional steps to ensure that those lessons are, in fact, remembered.

## ***“How Can We Do It Better Next Time?”***

We’ve already taken the first step – documenting our complaints and expectations in a letter to Blade Runners that seems to have had its desired effect. The Board will also be meeting on-site with Blade Runners to walk the property and review our expectations and priorities for snow removal.

Communication and oversight is key, both in planning snow removal and in ensuring that it is properly accomplished. While it is impractical for a Board member(s) to directly supervise every aspect of snow removal operations, we will be closely monitoring to ensure that the critical areas of our community, particularly the sidewalks and steps between parking areas and residences, have been properly cleared and treated.

Plows can only push snow, not pick it up and move it - a negligible limitation in light snows but problematic with heavy snows. While residents can assist by trying to leave open areas at the ends of our parking lots into which plows can push snow, future heavy snows may see the use of a front-end loader to pick up, move, and pile snow in out of the way places.

## **On-Street Parking**

**W**e’ve discussed this topic many times in the past, but for those of you who are new to The Commons, and as a reminder for everyone else, there are some key points that bear emphasis.

Streets in Fairlington Commons belong to Arlington County, not to the Commons. Use of the street, and parking, are governed by Arlington County. You do not need a Fairlington Commons Parking Pass to park on the street. The parking pass is only required if you park in our parking lots, which we do own

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and control. With the exception of designated handicapped parking, there is no reserved on-street parking.

There are some steps that residents can take to improve the on-street parking situation, but they are voluntary. If you own two cars, park one in front of your unit, the other elsewhere (across the street or some distance away) to allow your neighbors the opportunity to park at least one car close to home. When parking, try to not leave excessive distance between cars, but allow the car in front or behind some maneuvering room to get out. Ideally, nobody should park in front of the stairs leading to the Wakefield Circle sidewalks, but if it’s the last available space, so be it.

And while we hope the snow is behind us, just because you shoveled a parking space on the street doesn’t mean that you own it, regardless of how many hours you worked or the number of lawn chairs with “reserved” signs you placed in it. Yes, we hope that everyone will be courteous and respect your efforts, but as was stated at the beginning of this article, it is an Arlington County public street.

## **Commons Parking Lots**

**W**e’ve covered Commons parking policy in past newsletters. It’s available, as are the past newsletters, on the Internet at: <http://fairlington.org/commonindex.htm>. Meanwhile, there are two things worth repeating in this article – every car parked in our lots must display a parking pass and, with the exception of a single marked handicap space in one parking lot, there are no individually assigned or reserved parking spaces in our lots.

## Parking Lot Volunteers

Several Commons Co-Owners have expressed an interest in monitoring our parking lots for parking policy compliance, and the Board is considering the establishment of a set of parameters under which such monitoring would be accomplished. If you are a Co-Owner interested in serving as a monitor in the parking lot adjacent your residence, please provide contact information to Board President John Sinks.

## Notes on Cars

Largely as a byproduct of frustrations resulting from the snow and crowded parking on the Wakefield Circle and in some of our lots, residents have left notes on each other's cars. Unfortunately, and in a majority of instances, the actions requested by these notes are non-compliant with our parking policy or with Arlington County law. So, unless you're leaving a note with your contact information in reference to the dent that you just accidentally inflicted on your neighbor's car, the practice of leaving any note is probably not a good idea - as illustrated by the following:

*"After the Valentine's Day storm, a Board member received a call concerning an incident in one of our apartment style buildings. As reported, a building resident had shoveled a parking space, went to run an errand, and returned to find a car belonging to another resident parked in the shoveled space. The resident left a note on the car. The car's owner, who is not a resident of the building, found the note, entered the building, and, standing in front of the note-writer's door, treated all of the building residents to a loud, threatening tirade."*

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Although none of the involved parties referred the matter to the Arlington County Police, the potential list of serious criminal charges (simple assault, disturbing the peace, and potentially others) that could have resulted is significant. Think twice before you write that note – or act on one.

## New Trashcan

Thanks to the efforts of Commons resident Jim Sharpe, a large trashcan has been installed by Arlington County on the Wakefield Circle between the Tennis Court and Pool. It is for the convenience of residents using the picnic table and tennis court and for litter. It is not for routine household trash.

Please do not deposit dog waste in the new trashcan. Two doggie depots (with sealed lids) are available on the Circle for that purpose, one adjacent the pool building, the other adjacent the tot lot.

Jim Sharpe has volunteered to manage the new trashcan; Judy Barr continues to manage our doggie depots. Many thanks to these volunteers for their service and for helping us maintain our community facilities.

## Service Coordinator

As a reminder, requests for maintenance or questions of a general nature should be referred to Service Coordinator Eric Pamer for action. Eric's contact information is:

<p><b>Commons Service Coordinator</b>  <b>Eric Pamer</b>  <b>703-379-0027</b>  <b>CommonsService@Hotmail.com</b></p>
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Residents may also submit requests in writing by leaving a note at the pool mailbox to Eric's attention.

## Plumbing Emergencies

**P**lumbing emergencies should be immediately and directly addressed to Commons Plumber Billy Anderson. Billy has been our plumber forever, and is more familiar with our water lines, sewers, and storm drains than anyone else. Be prepared to leave a message when you call – but count on a quick return call. Billy is also available to perform work for Commons residents on an individual basis, with the cost of services negotiated and paid by the individual resident.

**William "Billy" Anderson Plumbing  
703-836-4716**

## Paint Cans

**F**rom time to time, as it has recently, the question of how to dispose of empty paint cans comes up. So there is no misunderstanding regarding the appropriate disposition of paint cans, here are the pertinent facts:

### **AAA Rainbow does not accept paint cans for disposal!**

Not as recycling, and not as trash. It doesn't matter if the can is empty, the lid off, the paint dried, etc. They don't take them. They won't take them. Don't put them out. If you've hired a contractor to paint your unit, you are responsible for ensuring that your contractor doesn't put them out either. Task the contractor to dispose of them properly.

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### **Arlington County will accept paint cans at the Household Hazardous Materials Facility.**

The facility is located at 3155 South Fern Street, at the intersection of South Fern Street and South Glebe Road. Arlington County also provides for the appropriate disposition of other forms of hazardous or environmentally damaging materials. Please visit the Arlington County Web Site (<http://www.co.arlington.va.us>) for more details. Again, you will have to take the cans to the facility.

### **Arlington County Website and AAA Rainbow Provide Conflicting Direction!**

The Arlington County Website talks about placing paint cans out for trash collection. **DON'T DO IT!** Arlington County does pick up the cans, but only where they pick up trash. Arlington County does not pick up our trash, AAA Rainbow does, and they will not pick up paint cans!

### **Dispose of Hazmat Properly!**

Placing empty paint cans in front of the pool, or throwing them in the woods is unacceptable and illegal. Anyone observed engaging in this behavior will be prosecuted. Anyone observing a resident engaging in this behavior is asked by **Arlington County** to call the Arlington County Police at the non-emergency number (703-558-2222) to file a report.

### **Fairlington Commons Board of Directors**

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