
Fairlington Commons Newsletter

3367 S. Wakefield Street, Arlington, VA 22206

November 2007

Budget Meeting

The Budget Meeting of the Fairlington Commons Council of Co-Owners will be held Thursday, December 6th in the Cafeteria of the Abingdon Elementary School located at 3035 South Abingdon Street at 7:30 p.m. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss and approve the Commons budget for 2008 and any other topics of interest to Co-Owners and residents.

In accordance with our By-Laws, notification of the meeting was mailed via U.S. Mail to all Co-Owners of record well before the required 10 days prior to the meeting. If you are a Co-Owner and do not receive your notice shortly, please notify the Board.

Holiday Trash and Recycling Pickup

There will be no Christmas Day (Tuesday, December 25th) trash pickup. Recycling will be picked up on Thursday, December 27th, and trash will be picked up on Friday, December 28th.

There will be no New Years Day (Tuesday, January 1st) trash pickup. Recycling will be picked up on Thursday, January 3rd, and trash will be picked up on Friday, January 4th.

Christmas Trees will be collected on Wednesdays, January 2nd and January 9th and thereafter on normal trash pickup days. Trees should be placed at the curb with all trimmings removed.

Winter's Coming!

Winter's cold weather is just around the corner, which means that the time has come to take some very simple and easy steps that can help prevent outside faucets and associated pipes from freezing and breaking. Those steps include:

- **Disconnect all garden hoses or anything that would trap water in outdoor faucets,**
- **Turn off front and rear faucet shutoff valves** (*generally located under kitchen sinks for rear faucets and inside a hatch in the basement ceiling for front faucets – but they can also be in other locations as well*),
- **Open faucets to allow trapped water to drain.**

Electrical Service

Over the past several years, a small number of our units have experienced problems with their electrical service. These problems have included either a complete loss of power, intermittent power, or a situation where some outlets work and some don't, half the burners on the stove work and the other half don't, or the furnace, air-conditioning, and clothes dryer don't work.

A word of caution here – if you don't know anything about electricity, you may live a far longer and healthier life if you call a professional electrician to diagnose a problem in the event that one occurs! Electricity is not for amateurs, and even professionals can encounter problems in abnormal situations. Safety First!

The electrical wiring in your unit, including the circuit breaker box, is yours; it is not a

Commons responsibility. The Commons owns the wiring between your circuit breaker box and the meter; everything else is the property of Dominion Virginia Power. This is important because it determines who is responsible for resolving and paying for a problem, should one occur.

In the event that you experience a problem similar to those described above, and have a preferred electrician, please contact them and also the Commons Service Coordinator. The Commons does not have a designated electrician, but we have used Long Electric with satisfactory results.

Power (240 Volts AC) is carried into our homes on three wires. One wire (usually white) is considered a neutral wire. The other two (usually black) carry 120 Volts each. If you measure the voltage between the two black wires, it will be 240 Volts. The electrical load in your house is split – half of the outlets are connected between one black wire and the white wire, the other half between the other black wire and the white wire. The furnace, air-conditioning, clothes dryer, and stove are connected to all three wires (240 Volts).

The three wires that carry power into our homes from the meters are made of aluminum and are not in conduits. They are buried directly in the ground. Cycles of freezing and thawing and wet and dry cause the ground to move slightly, sometimes causing the wires to chafe where they enter the circuit breaker box, eventually leading to failure.

People digging have also caused failures, when shovels have nicked the insulation covering the wires. In this scenario, water eventually makes contact with the wire, causing corrosion and setting up a current flow into the ground that will eventually cause the wire to burn in half.

Fairlington Commons Newsletter

Most of our wiring is buried deeply enough that a Co-Owner planting flowers or shrubs should never encounter it, but in a recent incident, wires were discovered a foot below the surface. The lesson here is to be careful, think, ask questions, and if you have any doubt, have the area surveyed by Miss Utility of Virginia (1-800-552-7001) prior to digging.

There is one other incident that warrants recounting. A Co-Owner discovered that half of their circuit breakers had burned. They were replaced, only to burn again. Turns out that, in addition to the normal electrical load, this Co-Owner had installed a hot tub and several other devices that used a substantial amount of electricity without considering if the unit's electrical service was adequate to handle the load! The problem was finally resolved when the Co-Owner replaced the circuit breaker box with one that was adequate. Remember, our units were renovated in the early 1970s when the demand for electrical power (computers, televisions, etc.) was much less than it is today, and any significant increase in a unit's electrical demand could easily exceed the capacity of the existing electrical service (circuit breaker) box.

In conclusion – if you have an electrical problem, call a professional, and advise the Commons Service Coordinator of the situation. This is not a self-help item, so be safe, not sorry!

Maintenance Request or Question?

Contact

Commons Service Coordinator

Eric Pamer

703-379-0027

CommonsService@Hotmail.com

Television Reception

Once upon a time, in the early days of analog television, the only way to

receive a signal was with an antenna, assuming that you lived close enough to the transmitter to receive a signal at all. Even then, reception could be spotty, marred by weather, geography, and nearby structures that reflected signals and created ghost images. Today, television signals are available via cable, satellite, and hopefully soon, by fiber-optic transmission. And yes, the time-honored antenna still works, and with the advent of digital television, better than ever!

Most Commons residents use cable to receive their television signals, although satellite dish antennas are gaining in popularity. As everyone is familiar with cable, we won't spend a lot of time discussing it here, other than to say that while almost nobody likes to write that monthly check, cable still offers a universally available signal free from the effects of weather and geography.

While satellite dish antennas have become more prevalent in the Commons, their use is limited by a number of factors. For a resident to enjoy satellite programming, their unit must be geographically oriented to provide a line-of-sight shot at the orbiting satellite while allowing the dish installation to conform with our By-Laws, which clearly preclude attaching or hanging any type of antenna from the exterior of a family unit. While the Board has no objection to satellite dish antennas per se, such antennas are permitted only when they can be installed in limited common element (your patio) such that the top of the antenna does not exceed the highest elevation of the patio fence, and the dish is installed on a pole or post that is not part of the fence. Installation of satellite dish antennas in the General Common Element is not permitted.

We started by talking about antennas. They still work, and with the advent of over-the-air digital television, better than ever! Several Co-Owners have used attic-mounted antennas over the years for both analog and digital TV reception. And

Fairlington Commons Newsletter

no, a "special" antenna is not required to receive digital television and high-definition signals – a standard antenna works just fine! If you think that you may wish to try an antenna, consider the following:

- The higher the geographic and physical elevation of your unit, the better an antenna will work. An antenna on South 34th Street will probably work better than one at the bottom of the South Utah Street hill.
- A digital signal either works perfectly, or you get nothing at all. There is no in-between. With digital, there are no ghosts, fading, or noisy signals. With soon to be gone analog, all of the old bugaboos still exist.
- Most TV stations are located in Northwest DC or Baltimore. If your unit has a relatively unobstructed northern view, you'll get a better signal than if you're on the south end of a multi-unit building.
- We live in a major metropolitan area with an incredible amount of over-the-air programming available (ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC, The CW, PBS, etc.), although you won't find the specialty channels available on cable or satellite.
- The programming is free! You buy the antenna and the cable to connect it to your television, but there are no monthly payments!

So that's a quick look at the various methods that can be used to receive television signals in Fairlington Commons. Obviously there are a lot of variables, so when making a choice, be certain to determine what you want to watch, where it's available, how much you're willing to pay, and whether or not your choice is possible within the confines of your unit's physical location and our By-Laws and policies.

Trespassing

On Sunday, October 21, members of the “White House Hash House Harriers” passed through the Commons while conducting one of their many “hashes” or “hounds and hares” style-running events. The informal group, which bills itself as “a drinking club with a running problem,” entered the Commons from Utah Field, ran parallel to 395, then through our woods before disappearing down the lower Wakefield Street sidewalk. Although this group was relatively quiet and mannerly, a previous group in 2000 was anything but, with over 50 people yelling, blowing whistles, running over our lawns, and forcing residents off of sidewalks as they passed.

With the exception of the streets and immediately adjacent sidewalks, Fairlington Commons is private property and our By-Laws restrict their use to normal transit. This includes any sidewalks that are not immediately parallel to the streets, the circle, all of our open grassy areas, and the woods adjacent 395. In the 2000 incident, the presence of the Harriers was eventually traced to a Co-Owner who had exceeded their authority in granting the group permission to enter our property. When that Co-Owner failed to cooperate in resolving the issue, the matter was referred to our attorney for action. Word was also passed to the Harriers that a repeat visit would result in trespassing arrests.

An investigation is underway to determine the circumstances of this latest incident, and appropriate steps will be taken. Please remember, individual Co-Owners and tenants are not authorized to grant outside groups permission to utilize Commons property. Those who do so are subject to liability for any injury, damage or other issues, and participants in such events are subject to arrest for trespassing.

Fairlington Commons Newsletter

Holiday Tree Lighting

The annual lighting of the Fairlington Commons Holiday Tree will occur on Saturday, December 15th at 5:00 p.m. The tree is located on the Wakefield Circle adjacent the basketball court. The Commons will provide the lights; residents are welcome to bring a decoration of their choice to place on the tree.

A volunteer is needed to organize the event. Past volunteers have distributed reminder flyers, arranged for hot chocolate and cookies, and provided song sheets. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Board President John Sinks for details.

Check Your Tires!

With winter just around the corner, it’s a good idea to make certain that your car tires have adequate air pressure. Colder temperatures result in significantly lower tire pressures, increased rolling resistance, and lower gas mileage. Inadequately inflated tires can be dangerous. Be safe – take that extra minute next time you fill up to check your tires.

Fairlington Commons Board of Directors		
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