



# The Grove at Huntley Meadows Newsletter

Issue 12 -- October 2008

## In This Issue...

Lee District Update	2
Social Committee Update	2
Volunteers	2
Landscape Update	3
Satellite Dish Relocation	3
Doggie "Doo's" and Don'ts	3
Can You Dig It?	3
Meeting Schedule & Directory	4

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## A Message from the Board

By Meredith Elkins

Dear Neighbors,

Summer's over and the kids are back in school. I hope everyone enjoyed the summer and our new pool management company. We heard nothing but good things about the lifeguarding staff, so we're hopeful that the same team will be with us next year - in fact we've requested they return!

As we look towards the fall, I'd like to clear up an issue of concern for many homeowners: the letters some of us have received regarding violations to HOA covenants. Board members have heard from neighbors who were confused by the letters or angry to have been asked to "prove" they weren't in violation again. First, I'd like to apologize to the community for the errors made. It turns out that Cardinal conducted good inspections, but through data entry errors, many of the letters that were generated from the inspections reports were wrong. Another problem was an incomplete transition between the Sequoia and Cardinal Management companies: some of documentation didn't get transferred, which meant that some approved modifications had no paper trail to back them up. Cardinal is working to correct the problems and no fines, hearings or penalties will be assessed until the situation is resolved.

Why do we have covenants in the first place? We believe it's essential to keep our neighborhood standards as high as they were when our homes were first built. If everyone were allowed to do anything they wanted to their house it could lead to unusual colors, distracting satellite dishes, and oversized decks, among other things. We want to keep the area attractive to potential buyers so our home values stay as high as possible - something that's crucial in this economic environment.

Residents that cannot provide proof of previous approvals will be handled on a case-by-case basis, and may ultimately require some adjustment to get into compliance. We'll work with everyone to ensure a fair and equitable resolution to any issues that arise. (One big issue is improperly placed satellite dishes. In general these are mounted in the wrong place because installers don't want to make the effort to situate them in accordance with our covenants, even though they could. For more information on satellite dishes, see Satellite Dish Relocation on page 3.)

Every homeowner will receive a letter confirming their status before any hearings or fines are instituted. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work this out and ensure that Cardinal's records are complete and up-to-date.

As always, homeowners with concerns or questions are encouraged to attend the monthly HOA meeting. The meeting schedule appears on the back page of the newsletter and directions to the Mount Vernon Government Center are available at [www.gathm.com](http://www.gathm.com).

I hope to see you soon!

With warm regards

Meredith Elkins  
President  
GATHM HOA

## Lee District Update from Supervisor Jeffrey C. McKay

### Zoning Enforcement

Quality of life—it's hard to describe when it's good, but you know it when it's bad. When the property next door or down the block is in disrepair with overgrown grass, you can't ignore the community impact. Most of us work hard to be good neighbors, and we expect that those around us will share our sense of community. Sometimes, though, whether because of illness, age, geographic distance, or just plain irresponsibility, owners let their properties decline.

That's where government needs to step in and lend a hand. At the January 7 Board of Supervisors meeting, I introduced a Board Matter asking County staff to evaluate the legal tools that the General Assembly has already given us to address both residential and commercial blight. (In Virginia, counties may only pass laws and ordinances if the General Assembly has given them enabling legislation to do so.) Based on my reading of state code, I believe that we can take better advantage of tools that we already have. We must hold negligent property owners responsible for the impact their properties have on the community.

We have seen a steep increase in the number of complaints about overgrown grass and with the rising number of foreclosures; we expect to see these complaints continue to increase. The old County enforcement process which requires contacting a property owner in person or by certified mail no longer meets our community needs. At the January 28 Board of Supervisors meeting, Chairman Connolly and I pushed through code amendments that would streamline the grass enforcement process and levy large fines for violators. I am pleased to report that those improvements are now in place.

Keeping our neighborhoods healthy is as important to me as it is to you, so please don't hesitate to call my office if you have any concerns about overcrowding, zoning violations, overgrown grass, or neglect. I look forward to the day when these problems are rare—in the meantime, my staff and I will ensure that the County investigates and acts.

[Supervisor McKay may be contacted at (703) 971-6262 or [leedist@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:leedist@fairfaxcounty.gov)]

## Step Up! Things Get Done Through Volunteers

Our plea for volunteers in the last issue was answered by an overwhelming...zero people. Was it something I said? Is it my breath? Bueller? Bueller? Come on...we know you're out there. (We hear from you when you don't like something.) Remember the story of the Little Red Hen? She found some wheat and asked for help in planting it, harvesting it, grinding it and baking it, but never received any. However, when it was time to eat it, she had lots of volunteers.

Sadly, the parallels to our neighborhood are obvious. We all have busy lives with work, kids, and other outside activities, so it's easy to rationalize our reluctance to take even a little

more of our leisure time to do committee work. However, when there are things we want fixed or fun events we want to participate in, we rely on other people to do the "heavy lifting."



The math is pretty simple...the more people who help, the less each person has to do. I can't think of any of our committees that require more than just four or five hours of work per month (and most don't take that much); they're also a really great way to stay up on the latest developments in our development! So if you're willing to help out, send a note to our Meredith Elkins, our Board president, at [meredith.elkins@cox.net](mailto:meredith.elkins@cox.net).

## Social Committee Update

Thanks to Christina Pyles, our Social Committee is back up and running. She has released the dates for some upcoming events.



### October

#### 25<sup>th</sup> - Halloween Parade and Pizza Lunch 11:30am

Young and young at heart, put on your costumes and meet in front of the pool house at 11:30 am for pizza and treats, then parade through the community. RSVP by Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>. Email [social@gathm.com](mailto:social@gathm.com) for more info and to RSVP.



### November

#### 1<sup>st</sup> - Wine Tasting, 7 - 10 p.m , at Maridol Garcia's residence (7638 Audubon Meadow Way)

Bring an appetizer and, if you like, a bottle of wine to share. Enjoy an evening of good food, good company, and good wine with your neighbors. Whether you're into wine or not, we hope you'll join us!



Please RSVP to [social@gathm.com](mailto:social@gathm.com) by Oct. 31

## Landscape Update/Recap

The landscaping efforts are going better as the workers figure out which areas they're supposed to mow and manage. We've also seen better efforts by homeowners/renters with regard to mowing their own yards. Thank you! We know there was some initial consternation when we had to ask townhouse residents to mow their own lawns, but most of you stepped up and are doing a great job keeping your yards in good shape.

We'd like to recognize Bo Marlin for going above and beyond by mowing a neighbor's yard that was vastly overgrown. Apparently the home is unoccupied, but that doesn't relieve the owner of the responsibility to maintain a tidy appearance. Bo took it upon himself to "just do it" and his efforts are much appreciated by the rest of us who live here.

During our Board walkabout, we noticed several front yard lamps were out. Not only do our covenants require those lights to be on during periods of darkness, it's a huge safety issue. Criminals like darkness and shadows, so please make sure your post lights are on. Change the bulb if necessary, or replace the light sensor if that's the problem. Doing whichever one is required is cheap insurance to help keep residential crime rates low in our neighborhood.



## Satellite Dish Relocation

See this excerpt from the ARC guidelines:

- Antennas shall be installed in the rear roof of the home, below the roofline in the least visible location possible without impact to reception, shielded from view from the street or from other lots.
- In the rare instance where a mount on the rear of the structure does not provide the necessary line of sight needed for reception, documentation from a certified installer must be submitted with the application certifying that the signal quality will be diminished if installed in or on the rear of the house or townhouse.

Just a quick stroll around the neighborhood shows many dishes that weren't

put in the right place, and most of them could have been. These dishes must be relocated to the proper location and will require the installer to come out and move them. Yes, it's inconvenient, but unless the installer is willing to certify that reception will be impacted by moving the dish, it needs to be done.

We're looking at getting a satellite antenna engineer to come out and determine which locations really can't receive adequate signals, and if he tells us your antenna really could work in a more suitable location, expect a letter from us. If you're in this situation, please contact your satellite provider and have them come out as soon as possible. It'll really improve the look of our neighborhood.

## Doggie "Doo's" and Don'ts

Until we dog owners can train our dogs to use indoor facilities, we're responsible for the little (or not so little) presents they leave on the grass. This is one of the least attractive things about our pets, but it's also one of the things we have very little control over.

The thing we do have control over is what happens with that waste...at least we're supposed to. It's against the law to leave it in someone else's yard; it's also against the law to leave it in a public area. So, you can exercise what control you do have by picking it up and properly disposing of it with your trash.

Here are some reasons why this is a good idea:

- 1 You can be fined up to \$250 for leaving it
- 2 It smells bad
- 3 It's not attractive to potential homebuyers
- 4 It's not healthy
- 5 It attracts flies
- 6 It can be washed into our waterways, and affects our drinking water
- 7 Kids will invariably find it...let's just leave it at that
- 8 Your neighbors will appreciate it (and won't resent your dog)



You may have noticed that we've had two new doggie stations installed, one on Lindberg just west of the tot lot and another on Cyrene near the circle. PLEASE USE THEM! (And only for dog waste, nothing else, please.) I've found that newspaper bags also work great (the only reason I like the Post, but let's leave politics out of it.)

So, please do the right thing and clean up after your pet. We'll all appreciate it!

## HOA Meeting Schedule

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Mount Vernon Government Center, 2511 Parker's Lane. Upcoming meeting dates are:

**10/21 and 11/18.**

The 10/21 meeting will be held at Hybla Valley Elementary School.

The annual meeting is in December--- date to be determined.

Visit [www.gathm.com](http://www.gathm.com) for directions.

## HOA Directory

**Architectural Review Committee -**  
[architecture@gathm.com](mailto:architecture@gathm.com)

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**Social Committee -**  
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*This is an official publication of The Grove at Huntley Meadows Homeowners Association. Publication of resolutions, rules, regulations, and meetings duly adopted or called by the Board of Directors serves as official notice to the membership and residents of meetings or the adoption and implementation of these enactments of rules for the purpose of enforcement.*