



Greenbelt Homes, Inc.

COMMUNICATOR

Quarterly Publication of the Communications Committee

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The Other Important Election in 2012

By Rick Ransom, N&E Committee

Forget – for the time being – the presidential election on November 6. The first important ballot that you can cast this year is on May 17-18 to elect new GHI leadership to represent some 1,600 members. At our annual spring meeting, GHI members will elect four members of the Board of Directors, three members of the Audit Committee, and five members of the Nominations and Elections (N&E) Committee.



Why is this election important, and what do these people do, anyway?

- The nine-member Board of Directors makes decisions and policies for GHI. While most of the work is done during their regular meetings twice a month on Thursday evenings, Board members also participate in work sessions, special projects, member complaint panels, and serve as liaisons to GHI committees and task forces. Board members serve for a two-year term.
- The three-member Audit Committee independently oversees all aspects of the cooperative's operations, including management of GHI and actions of the Board. The committee is accountable to the membership and reports its findings each year at the annual GHI meeting. Audit Committee members serve for a one-year term.
- The five-member N&E Committee identifies candidates for available positions on each of these three elected bodies and conducts fair and expeditious elections. N&E Committee members serve for a one-year term.

Might you be one of the candidates this year? Serving as an elected Board or Committee member is certainly a large commitment, but it brings the opportunity to more directly shape GHI policy and to learn how a successful cooperative works. The rewards are great in knowing you have served as a leader of a large and historic housing cooperative. The spirit of cooperation is evident in GHI's many activities and projects, as well as in personal interactions.

Help keep that cooperative spirit alive by thinking about putting your name in for one of the offices described above. You also can help identify others with talents and vision that would benefit the GHI community. Nominations must be submitted by Thursday, May 3. Exact filing requirements and deadlines can be found online at www.ghi.coop (click on "Elections").

The members of the N&E Committee will be glad to talk with you about how to run for office or about members that you may suggest as possible candidates. To learn more, contact any of us: **Karen Yoho, kyoho@comcast.net (chair); Paula Clinedinst, cotteyterp@comcast.net; Don Dorsey, 301-474-4399; Henry Haslinger, hdhaslinger@comcast.net; or Rick Ransom, 301-441-1597.**



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Communicator Volunteers

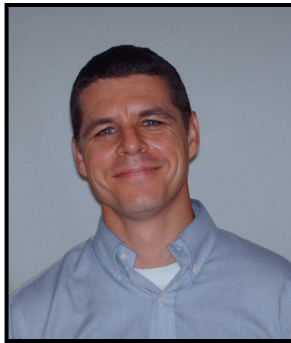
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**President's Message**

By Tokey Boswell

What Is Your Vision of GHI's Future?

It's an exciting time to live in Greenbelt and GHI. With this year's celebration of the city's 75th anniversary and a new general manager at GHI, the moment is ripe to think about the future. Isn't that one of spring's messages to us, to be hopeful for the future and be prepared to grow?

I hope that by now many of you have met General Manager (GM) Eldon Ralph and are aware of his vision for GHI to be recognized as the top cooperative community in the country. Read his updates on page 3. National recognition of GHI is a goal that we can achieve and a recognition that we deserve, and Eldon is the right person to lead us there.

The Board of Directors also has envisioned the future and has developed goals that we're working toward. We want the cooperative to be energy-efficient, welcoming to all people, and safe from hazards that GHI can remedy. The Board has put these and other goals into a strategic plan that we use to determine what projects we'll undertake in the near term, and which questions we need to answer before making decisions.

And we know that you, as members, have come up with some of the most creative ideas to build the GHI community. We welcome your thoughts about our future.

What's your vision of our cooperative's future? And how are you sharing it? I hope that you'll make it a point to talk with your neighbors and friends about what this place should be and how it should feel 5 or 10 years from now. After you do, then it's time to share those ideas more widely! By sharing your thoughts with GHI committees or the Board – or better yet by participating in those groups – you can work to make your visions become reality.

GHI has a wonderful history. We have to work together to make sure our future will be equally wonderful. Please join other committed members who are helping to move GHI forward.

For information on volunteering for GHI committees, see story on page 5 or call **Sheri Swaim at 301-474-4161, ext. 148.**

**From Your Volunteer Communicators**

Do you enjoy stories and photos that focus on the GHI community? The fourth Monday of every month, GHI members discuss, write, and produce the quarterly *Communicator* newsletter and the monthly *Greenbelt News in Review* page. The Communications Committee is looking for talented newsletter editors and writers—and especially managing editors—for upcoming issues of the *Communicator*. Managing editors produce one issue per year with the help of other committee members.

Consider donating your time and expertise by completing the volunteer form online. Go to www.ghi.coop and search for "Volunteer form." And feel free to stop by our meeting—we laugh and often have snacks!

GHI's new E-Newsletter includes the latest updates and any emergency alerts. To subscribe, go to www.ghi.coop and click on "I Want To...Subscribe to GHI E-News" in the center of the page.



Spring Brings New Growth and Perennial Projects

By Eldon Ralph, General Manager

Having completed almost three months as your general manager, I am happy to report that I am enjoying the challenges of my new job. We've prepared our 2012 budget and goals, and GHI staff is busy working on pilot project upgrades, a member satisfaction survey, enhancements to the addition maintenance program, and electrical inspections to enhance electrical safety. And I was pleased to see so many members attend our February 4 Town Hall.

Eldon Ralph at GHI Town Hall

Last fall the 28 homes in the pilot project for the community-wide upgrade received new vapor barriers and crawlspace insulation. New windows, doors, and wall and attic insulation will be installed this year. The Buildings Committee proposed this work to determine what obstacles must be overcome to ensure a successful community-wide buildings upgrade.

Later this year, you will receive a survey from GHI requesting your feedback on the quality of our services, so we can provide even better service!

Related to the maintenance of additions, a task force appointed by the Board has proposed a comprehensive survey of a sample of the 570 additions that are enrolled in the addition maintenance program (see story on page 6). The consultant hired for the project will use the data to calculate costs for replacing major components in those specific additions – and by extrapolation, all the additions in the program – over the next 30 years.

Enhancing electrical safety and system integrity is a key priority. Our maintenance staff has begun inspecting electrical service masts, meter panels, and grounding connections and correcting all observed deficiencies. This work started last year and will continue in 2012.

Thank you for your support during my 15 years as a GHI employee and for welcoming me to my new role as General Manager. Watch for future updates on GHI priorities and projects. I look forward to serving you in the years ahead, and your suggestions about ways to improve member service are always welcome.



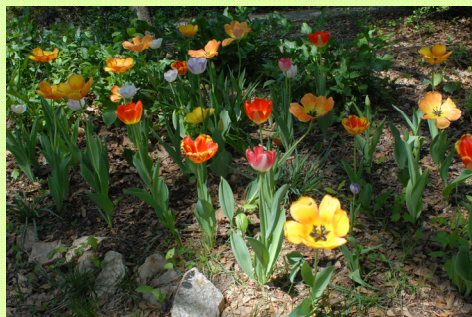
Nearly 200 members attended the Town Hall.

Photos by Eric Zhang

How Does Your Garden Grow?

To enhance your yard and garden:

- Test your soil (visit www.hgic.umd.edu).
- Remove invasive plants (www.ghi.coop/content/woodlands-links).
- Plant native – visit www.ghi.coop and search for "Native Plants."
- Avoid chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers.



- Leave mown grass clippings on your lawn to nourish the soil.
- Add mulch to your flowerbeds – it's free at Northway Fields.
- Compost grass clippings, leaves, and vegetable scraps (www.ghi.coop/content/woodlands-links).
- Install a rain barrel (www.ghi.coop/content/xxiii-rainbarrels). To order through GHI, call 301-474-4161, ext. 143.

Board Actions in Brief

Below are highlights of GHI board meetings on Nov. 3, Nov. 17, and Dec. 1, 2011; and Jan. 12 and Jan. 26, 2012.

Full minutes may be viewed in PDF format at www.ghi.coop/about-ghi/board-of-directors/minutes. Members may also stop by the GHI office to read the minutes.

The Board meets twice a month on Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m. at GHI. During the summer months, meetings are held monthly. Except for executive sessions, all Board meetings are open to the public. For details, see the calendar on page 8.



General Business

- Adopted the 2012 Annual Budget totaling \$9,364,349. To view the budget and the accompanying management report, visit www.ghi.coop and enter "2012 Annual Budget" as a search term, or contact the Finance Department.
- Approved yard plats for 11 Court Ridge and 1, 3, and 5 Courts Crescent.
- Appointed Bill Jones as Vice President of the GHI Board to fill the vacancy due to a board member resignation.

Rules

- Approved increasing the maximum size of wood-framed sheds for 1-bedroom homes from 60 to 64 square feet. Discussed proposed revisions to Member Handbook section IX, "Storage Shelters - Sheds" (to see current regulations, enter "Sheds" at www.ghi.coop). Directed staff to send out a request for member feedback on the proposed rule revision, with responses due by Feb. 29 (proposed revisions are available online or at the GHI office).
- Decided to form a task force to review subleasing as a whole.
- Did not approve a request to install a chain-link K-9 dog kennel at 11A Hillside.

Policies

- **Real Estate Tax.** Determined that if a substantial surplus or shortage exists in a member's real estate taxes collected as part of a member's coop fees (due to an assessment appeal, tax credit change, or other reason), GHI will refund the difference or charge the member; the Board may grant exceptions in unusual circumstances.
- **Investments.** Added language to the Investment Policy Guidelines to include loans to GHI and its subsidiaries.

Expenditures

- Approved \$4 million line of credit to Greenbelt Development Corporation for possible purchase of and repairs/improvements to Lawrence Apartments, if GHI's offer to purchase the apartments is accepted. Approved immediate issue of \$800,000, upon written request, from the \$4 million line of credit.
- Approved contract with Polkes and Goldberg Insurance Company for GHI's property and business owners' insurance package for 2012 in the amount of \$530,387.
- Approved contract with JAC Construction, Inc. for fall repairs of concrete sidewalks at 30 GHI sites at its bid, plus 10% for contingencies, for a total not to exceed \$19,921.
- Authorized the General Manager to enter into a contract with Gilbert General Contractor for repairs at 42M Ridge Road.



Photo by Cyndi Smith

Canopy Trees Help Wildlife – and Your Wallet

By Kate Bucco
Co-Chair, Woodlands Committee

Canopy trees in your yard can save you money. An oak, tulip tree, beech, or maple can make a dramatic focal point in your yard and boost your property’s value. Deciduous canopy trees also reduce cooling costs if they are planted on the south or west side of a house. A single mature tree of 30 to 50 feet can shade most GHI homes in summer and they last for decades.

If you like wildlife, you’ll want to have at least one canopy tree in your yard. In addition to providing nesting platforms, these trees produce buds and seeds that are staple food for a variety of birds, deer, and squirrels.

In GHI’s dry conditions, canopy trees are slow-growing (around six inches per year in their early years), but some, in the right conditions, can grow into majestic trees in 10 years. Expect these trees to last. Growth slows after the first decade, so it may take 50 or more years for a 40-foot tree to reach its full height. Many don’t mature for 50 years, but then live to approximately 90 years – hence the joke that 60 is middle-aged only if you’re a tree.

In autumn, the leaves from a large tree can fill a composting bin to decay through the winter and enrich the soil for the next summer.

Not every canopy tree will work in every location. Root systems differ. The roots of red maples are partly above ground, interfering with mowing and other activities. Some trees thrive in damp locations and some require full sun. Some will tolerate clay while others, like black walnut, love rich soil. Contact GHI for more information on these issues.

Monitor trees for signs of root rot, fungus, or sudden or early leaf drop, a signal of disease. Expect squirrels to bring down twigs as they build their nests. Alert GHI if you see larger branches that appear dead or if you believe that a tree has health problems.

Trees have been an important part of Greenbelt’s landscape since the city’s founding 75 years ago, and research demonstrates the value trees bring to a community. See GHI’s guidance on planting trees in the cooperative at www.ghi.coop/content/v-plantings-hedges-trees-etc. The Maryland Greenprint website calculates the economic and environmental value of a tree (<http://www.trees.maryland.gov/calculator.asp>).

A tree’s beauty, though, is incalculable.



Volunteer Opportunities at GHI

Why volunteer?
You’ll connect with talented and fun people and enhance your community.

search, 9 Research, 73 Ridge, 1 Plateau, 1 Northway, 59 Ridge, 21 Ridge, 17 Ridge, 11 Ridge, 2 Southway, 9 Southway

Marketing GHI at festivals and other events:
Setting up tables, sharing information about GHI, promoting GHI to prospective members

Activities that involve the membership: Setting up for the Annual Membership picnic and recruiting homes for the GHI House and Garden Tour

To volunteer, visit www.ghi.coop and click on “I Want to Volunteer” or call **Sheri Swaim at 301-474-4161, ext. 148.**

The following opportunities are available:

Communications Committee: Writers, editors, and photographers

Finance Committee: Committee members

Court liaisons for the following courts: 2 Crescent, 60 Crescent, 2 Eastway, 6 Hillside, 13 Hillside, 3 Re-

Task Force Reviews Addition Maintenance

By Kate Phelan, Chair of the Addition Maintenance Task Force

The Addition Maintenance Task Force is currently reviewing the Addition Maintenance Program (AMP) and will prepare recommendations to the Board to explore how to make the program even better.

The Board of Directors established the AMP in 1987 to provide the same routine maintenance service and replacement coverage for home additions that GHI provides for its main units. Enrollment in the program is required for additions built or houses with additions sold after 1988, but members may enroll their additions at any time. After a GHI inspection of the addition, members will be required to correct existing problems such as roof leaks or faulty outlets before the addition qualifies for the AMP.

If your home has an addition not currently covered under the AMP, the same peace of mind that comes with GHI upkeep of your original unit can be extended to your addition. Like the maintenance pro-

gram for the original homes, the AMP covers standard components, routine

maintenance, and long-term replacements. This means that GHI will not replace your Pella windows, but will provide the labor if you provide the windows. Just as with our main units, a monthly fee for the AMP is assessed to pay for materials and to retain qualified staff. The fee is based on the size and type of addition.

If you are interested in the work of the task force, join us at an upcoming meeting. For details about the AMP or to enroll your addition, contact **Kathie Linkenhoker** at klinkenhoker@greenbelthomes.net or 301-474-4161, ext.146.



Community Beautification Program Kicks Off May 1

By George Bachman, Assistant Maintenance Manager

Well-maintained yards keep our environment aesthetically pleasing, keep our community vibrant, and enhance property values. GHI's annual Community Beautification Program begins May 1, when Herb Jackson begins inspections to ensure that all yard areas meet GHI's minimum standards. Traditionally the program has prompted members working in their yards and gardens to visit with their neighbors after a long winter.

There is a bonus this year – GHI will advise members on landscape challenges and respond to your questions. Looking for information? Got an idea for your yard or your court? Have problem areas in your landscape? We may not have all the answers, but we'll do our best to assist you.

GHI also is stockpiling wood chips at the Administration Compound from our tree work to improve narrow walkways. These chips are not mulch. Members can pick up this material, as quantities are available, during normal operating hours. Contact the Maintenance Department for details.

Last year the beautification program issued a number of citations calling on members to make improvements in their yards, but concerns raised by individual members were lower than in previous years. We hope that the 2012 program will see a further reduction in citations.

If you have questions about your yard or would like more information on the program, go to www.ghi.coop/community, email gbachman@greenbelthomes.net, or call 301-474-4161, ext. 155 to speak with George Bachman or ext. 139 to speak to Herb Jackson.



Courtesy of Gretchen Schock, www.CocktailMom.com

So Many Playgrounds, So Little Time ...

By Lauren Cummings
 Recently I watched a television special and laughed along with the crowd as the 30-something comedian talked about playgrounds from her generation. I'm a product of growing up in the 1980s as well and I vividly remember playgrounds

with steel bars rising out of cement and climbing round metal rungs to the top of a scorching hot metal slide. Today's kids enjoy safe molded plastic and cushy tire mats to fall on.

As a kid I spent many hours at my neighborhood playground. When my parents bought us a swing set and mounted a zip line to it, I thought I'd won the lottery. Sadly, I quickly realized that my backyard was not the play haven for all of the other kids in the neighborhood – they would stop by, but the real action was still on the neighborhood playground.

One of the things our family loves most about GHI and Greenbelt is having so many playgrounds to explore – 20 altogether in Greenbelt. Our city repeatedly has been recognized as a "Playful City USA" for making play a priority and implementing innovative play programs. Only 141 cities and towns across the country have earned this designation.

One of the pleasures of GHI is living so close to a playground. The playground at Plateau Place and Ridge Road, a quick walk from our home, is full of neighborhood children after school each day. They enjoy the new playground spinner that whirls you around as you hang on and count your revolutions. With the city's renovation of the playground at 1 Court Ridge and Crescent and the upcoming 14 Hillside playground renovation, we'll have even more opportunities to spend time on playgrounds and imagine we're steering a sailing ship to a far-off continent. We'll also have more opportunities to meet neighbors and build community. Hope to see you on the slide!

Visit www.ghi.coop/content/parks-playgrounds for a list of all the GHI and city playgrounds in our community.

2012 GHI Maintenance Schedule	
Jan.–Oct.	Meter Panel Grounding Upgrades
March–April	Larger Townhome Inspections
March–April	Parkway Apartment Inspections
April–Aug.	Trim Paint (1/7 of town)
March–Nov.	Frame Porch Stoop replacements
March–Nov.	Masonry Porch Roof replacements
May–Sept.	Community Beautification Program

Report Court Light Outages



Pepco maintains the pole lights in GHI courts. If you see a pole light out in your court, please call Pepco's 24-hour outage line at 877-737-2662. You can also report an outage online at www.pepco.com/home: under "Alerts and Outages," click on "Streetlight Problems." Be sure to write down the pole number located on a metal plate on the pole, and the address and nearest intersection.



April Symposium Planned on Greenbelt History

A two-day symposium on "Sustaining Greenbelt's Legacy" is planned for April 26 and 27 in the Greenbelt Community Center as part of the city's 75th anniversary celebration. The event will kick off with an open house at the Greenbelt Museum and address topics including diversity, public transportation, Greenbelt's legacy, new initiatives. A British architect will speak on Greenbelt's connection to British garden cities. Advance registration is advised. Visit www.greenbeltmd.gov/75 for details.

Who's Who in GHI: Eric Zhang

By Marat Moore

A new GHI member is making Greenbelt history by documenting the city's life online. On Jan. 1 Eric Zhang launched his "Greenbelt in 2012" photo blog to chronicle the city's 75th anniversary year. He's everywhere now – at City Council, the Reel and Meal, GHI events, Artful Afternoons, and more.

Zhang, who moved into GHI just over a year ago, was inspired by the now-famous Depression-era photographers of the Farm Security Administration (FSA) – Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Arthur Rothstein, and others – some of whom documented the founding of Greenbelt.

"With this connection between the city where I live and the photographers I admire, I wanted to do a documentary project on today's Greenbelt in the style of the FSA photographers," he said.



This new artist on the Greenbelt scene offers us a fresh look at our local history—all year long. View his Greenbelt images and narratives at

greenbelt2012.wordpress.com.

It's a significant commitment for Zhang, a computer programmer who commutes to Bethesda and has a 3-year-old son and a year-old daughter.

Zhang says "community and affordability" drew his family to Greenbelt.

"I continue to be surprised by how affordable the houses are in GHI. A \$150,000 townhouse here can offer more amenities than a \$500,000 house somewhere else," he says. "The fact that GHI is a cooperative and members can have a say in how it is run is also empowering."

Celebrate International Year of Cooperatives

The United Nations has declared 2012 to be the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC). GHI is the largest of seven cooperatives in Greenbelt. For information about national IYC events, visit www.usa2012.coop. The official U.N. site for IYC is www.2012.coop.

WHAT'S HAPPENING!

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held at the GHI Administration Offices on Hamilton Place, and are open to all GHI members.

March

Fri	2	--	OFFICES CLOSED
Mon	5	7:00 pm	Addn Maintenance Task Force
Mon	5	7:15 pm	Pre-Purchase Orientation
Tue	6	8:30 am	Yard Line Committee
Wed	7	7:00 pm	Executive Session Board Meeting
Thu	8	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
Tue	13	7:30 pm	N & E Committee
Wed	14	7:30 pm	Architectural Review Committee
Thu	15	7:00 pm	Finance Committee
Fri	16	--	OFFICES CLOSED
Tue	20	7:30 pm	Companion Animal Committee
Wed	21	7:00 pm	Woodlands Committee
Thu	22	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
Sat	24	11:00 am	Pre-Purchase Orientation
Sun	25	1-3 pm	Woodlands Committee Spring Thaw
Mon	26	7:00 pm	Communications Committee
Tue	27	8:30 am	Yard Line Committee
Wed	28	7:00 pm	Buildings Committee
Fri	30	--	OFFICES CLOSED

April

Tue	10	7:30 pm	N & E Committee
Wed	11	7:30 pm	Architectural Review Committee
Thu	12	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
Fri	13	--	OFFICES CLOSED
Tue	17	8:30 am	Yard Line Committee
Tue	17	7:30 pm	Companion Animal Committee
Wed	18	7:00 pm	Woodlands Committee
Thu	19	6:45 pm	Investment Committee
Thu	19	7:30 pm	Finance Committee
Mon	23	7:00 pm	Communications Committee
Tue	24	7:30 pm	N & E Committee
Wed	25	7:00 pm	Buildings Committee
Thu	26	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
Fri	27	--	OFFICES CLOSED

May

Tue	8	7:30 pm	Candidates' Forum
Wed	9	7:30 pm	Architectural Review Committee
Thu	10	7:30 pm	Board Meeting
Fri	11	--	OFFICES CLOSED

(Dates are subject to change)

Maintenance service is available for emergencies only outside of normal maintenance hours or when offices are closed.
Call 301-474-6011.

COMMUNICATOR SUBMISSIONS: Would you like to submit an article? Send your ideas to Sheri Swaim at mgmtooffice@greenbelthomes.net. Articles are due by April 26 for the Summer 2012 issue.