



Greenbelt Homes, Inc.

COMMUNICATOR

Bi-Monthly Publication of the Communications Committee

Administration: (301) 474-4161 • Maintenance: (301) 474-6011
 E-mail: mgmtoffice@greenbelthomes.net • www.ghi.coop
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INSIDE

President's Message	2
Verizon FiOS Is Here	2
Board Contact Information	2
Handbook Updates	3
Board Highlights	3
2010 GHI Committee Highlights	4
How GHI Protects Your Personal Information	6
Money Matters	7
Fire at 61 Court Ridge Road	7
It's a Date	8
Maintenance Schedule	8

GHI COURT LIAISON PROGRAM

BY ANNA SOCRATES

John Henry Jones was the first neighbor I met. He came to my door bearing a green shopping bag full of information about my new community, with coupons to Chef Lou's, a keychain, a membership application to the Co-op grocery store and a copy of the *Greenbelt News Review*. He told me that he was the court liaison for the houses circling our parking lot.



After a serious accident took me away from GHI for a months-long recuperation, John Henry noticed my absence and asked the friend checking my mail about my welfare. When I returned, he encouraged me to go to the annual meeting and the members' picnic. He introduced me to other neighbors and called to see if I was OK during the snowstorms. And he and his wife Elaine sing "Happy Birthday" to me every year.

GHI established the volunteer court liaison program to give new members information about the community and a point of contact with the Hamilton Place offices. But in my description of John Henry as court liaison, it is clear that he is providing something more important than just an environmentally friendly shopping bag and a connection to GHI staff—he provides my court a sense that someone is, in the words of urbanist Jane Jacobs, "the eyes on the street," that are essential to a thriving community.

Of course not every court has a volunteer liaison—at this time less than half of them do—and not every liaison can be like John Henry Jones. Some liaisons, because of a lack of time and other responsibilities, can only deliver welcome packets. Some have, because more volunteers are needed, been given responsibility for many more houses than just one court. And all have mentioned the lack of training and guidance. John Henry noted that a list of names and addresses for our court would be a helpful tool. Cynthia Newcomer suggested a more extensive orientation for new liaisons. Corita Waters thought a list of required and optional responsibilities might provide some needed direction.

Continued on Page 6

Verizon FiOS is Here!
 Details on page 2.

GHI Members on Facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/ghi.coop>




Have an idea for a story?
 Send GHI your story ideas.
 See page 8 for details.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY SUZETTE AGANS

GHI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS:

Suzette Agans
President
(202) 460-1532
suzflower@yahoo.com

Tokey Boswell
Vice President
(319) 331-2144
tokeyray@netscape.net

Ed James
Secretary
(301) 345-8479
edjames@greenbelt.com
edward.james@gmail.com

Sylvia Lewis
Treasurer
(301) 474-3635
revs.lew@verizon.net

DIRECTORS:

David Morse
(301) 938-2909
Voxfatui@aol.com

Diana McFadden
(301) 474-6787
Bowregard2003@yahoo.com

Irv Wartell
301-345-1195
yorkies@peoplepc.com

Patricia Novinski
(301) 982-4488
novinskip@aol.com

Communicator Staff

Ann-Marie Saucier: Editor/Layout
Kristi Fletcher: Copy Editor
Marat Moore: Editor
David Morse: Editor
Anna Socrates: Editor
Brenda Lewis: GHI Staff Support

Questions? Contact 301-474-4161 ext. 152 or blewis@greenbelthomes.net

Happy Thanksgiving!

Recently some GHI members and staff were asked what they were thankful for about living in Greenbelt Homes, Inc. Here are some of their responses.

What are you thankful for about living in Greenbelt Homes? *GHI Members, Volunteers and Staff Respond*

Accountability

Plumbers on call 24/7 at no additional expense

The warmth of people here - and the dog community!

An opportunity to make a difference.

People willing to volunteer and spend lots of hours on behalf of GHI.

The location and the community events and the organizations.

Diversity of neighbors.

Community-mindedness.

It's a small town but close to everything. Our own little oasis in the DC metro!

Sharing movies with my neighbor.

GHI for me is a great time warp. It recalls a wonderful era and lifestyle that I grew up with in the '40s and '50s ...warm, caring neighbors.

The population of GHI is one of the most inclusive groupings of people I have ever seen.

Neighbors who help shovel walks and trim hedges.

A co-op that is financially solvent.

The services GHI offers and the infrastructure amenities of Greenbelt.

GHI staff who go beyond the call of duty.

Great committees to get involved with.

That GHI is a "learning community" — true with committee work!

Members who are willing to run for GHI office.

I am thankful for the trees, for being able to take interesting walks; for having stores, credit union, restaurants and theatres just across the road; for our friendly caring community, and most of all I am thankful for the lake that we get to share with all the other Greenbelters.

I add my special thanks for each person who attends an annual meeting, asks the easy and difficult questions, who volunteers little or lots of their time, who pays attention to how their coop fee is used, for caring and active fellow board members. And on a more personal level, I am thankful for the support and care my family by birth and my Greenbelt family provides.



Verizon FiOS is Here!

Verizon is nearing completion of a fiber network system within our community, making units ready for individual member subscription to its video, voice and broadband internet services. Verizon's contractors are currently correcting deficiencies on a punch-list that was generated by GHI staff. Any co-op member can now subscribe to Verizon's FiOS services by calling 1-866-526-1855.

BOARD MEETINGS AND HIGHLIGHTS

The GHI Board meetings are held in the Board Room of the GHI Administration Building. Meetings are usually held twice a month on Thursday evenings at 7:30 pm, except during the summer when meetings are held once a month. Please check the calendar on page 8 or the GHI website for details. With the exception of executive sessions, all meetings are open to the membership.

During July and August 2010, the Board took the following actions:

Policies

- Eliminated the working capital requirement of 1% of the purchase price for buyers effective August 1, 2010.
- Approved of owner financing of GHI-owned homes with a 5% or greater down payment for buyers with a credit score of 720 or higher. Terms would be for a 30-year amortized loan at current interest rates and a 5-year balloon payment.
- Approved of the payment of a bonus to buyer's brokers of GHI-owned homes up to \$2,500. The bonus amount is to be at the discretion of the General Manager.
- Approved of a proposed policy for unlocking crawlspace doors to include a liability release for members wishing to enter such spaces, and how crawl spaces will be accessed for utility workers and contractors.

Committee Reports, Referrals and Expenditure

- Allocated an amount not to exceed \$20,000 to be use for the consolidation and update of GHI's websites.

Contracts Initiated

- Repairs to 13U Ridge Road (Gehring Construction, \$13,100).
- Repair of units located at 53N and 53P Ridge Road (Michael D. Maxwell Painting and Wall Covering, \$12,650).
- Repair of underground sanitary sewage and storm drain utilities at four sites (B&P Utilities, Inc., \$20,384).
- Drainage system improvements at one location (B&P Utilities, Inc., \$7,677).
- Repairs to 8J Plateau Place (Gott Custom Contracting, Inc., \$26,894).

Revised Policy Regarding Unlocking of Crawlspace Doors

In order to improve the efficiency of maintenance operations, the Board of Directors recently revised the policy regarding unlocking of crawlspace doors. Refer to the insert in this newsletter for a description of the revised policy.

GHI Member Handbook Inserts

On September 10, 2010 by Board action, §X.B.3 of the rules and regulations in the Members' Handbook was removed. The change occurs to page 56-07 which is now renumbered page 56-10 and included with this issue of *The Communicator*. Please remove page 55-07/56-07 from your handbook and replace it with the new page 55-07/56-10.

YOUR COMMITTEES AT WORK: 2010 HIGHLIGHTS

Architectural Review

In the first three quarters of 2010, discussion of GHI rules occupied the agenda of the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) meetings 50% of the time, while the other half was used to hear, discuss, and make recommendations on member requests for exceptions. Of those cases, four were new active exceptions, two were repeat active exceptions, and five were passive exceptions. The distinction between active & passive exceptions is that active exceptions are sought in accordance with GHI rules prior to commencement of work, while passive exceptions are pleaded after unpermitted work is complete and GHI staff identifies noncompliance with GHI rules.

Buildings



The Buildings Committee has spent the last year preparing for major improvements to GHI homes that will be required in 2015. In preparation for those improvements (called the Community Upgrade), the Board has asked the Buildings Committee to design a pilot program that will test various options for improving the windows, siding, insulation, and heating elements of our homes. The pilot program is being supported by the National Association of Homebuilders Research Center, through a grant from the Department of Energy. We are in the process of choosing pilot homes now. The committee will keep GHI members informed of the status and results of the pilot program in order to make informed decisions on the upgrade.

Communications

In 2010 the Communications Committee produced six issues of the bi-monthly newsletter, *The Communicator* to keep members informed about their cooperative and its functions. Additionally, the committee:

- Worked with the Marketing Committee and reviewed recommendations and feedback on the GHI Website.

- Updated procedures for editing of articles for the *Communicator*.
- Held a very successful Haiku Contest.
- Had a communications table at the Annual Meeting.
- Held a Social Media Work session with the Marketing Committee.
- Conducted a Media Policy Review.
- Prepared Social Media Policy recommendations. Participated in the Website (Redesign) Work Group.

Companion Animal



- Researched information on disaster preparedness for companion animals; currently in the process of drafting a plan that will benefit the GHI community should a disaster occur. The committee anticipates taking its recommendation to the Board in the near future.
- Recommended that members in GHI not be allowed to house agricultural animals; the change in regulation was endorsed by the Board of Directors and distributed to the membership.
- Collaborated with the Woodlands Committee in finding ways to educate members about the consequences of allowing their cats to roam freely; wrote articles about the topic and focused on the issue during the Pet Expo and at the Annual Membership Meeting.
- Disbanded the CAC Grief Support Group due to declining attendance.
- Reviewed animal-related complaints and met with members to solve issues involving their barking dogs and providing training techniques.
- Submitted animal-related articles to the *Communicator*.

Finance



- Held monthly review of financial statements/receivables.
- Reviewed real estate tax assessment changes and made recommendations.
- Recommended funds for Community Upgrade pilot tools.
- Recommended RFP for Audit services of 2010 finances.
- Recommended changes in processing fees for home sales.
- Recommended sub-leasing policy changes.
- Recommended increase in user fees. Revised format for financial reporting to Membership.

Member Activities

- Held an appreciation luncheon for all committee volunteers and court liaisons.
- Staffed an "outreach table" at the annual meeting and encouraged members to become active in their cooperative through committee work.
- Held a spring yard sale.
- Sponsored a booth and float during the Labor Day Festival.
- Hosted the annual members picnic.

Woodlands

- Held two meetings with the Companion Animal Committee to discuss the problem of domestic free-roaming cats and sent a letter to the GHI board of directors alerting them to the issue and asking for their support in encouraging cat owners to keep their cats indoors.
- Built two additional bird houses. One house was placed in front of the GHI offices and the other near the community gardens behind the GHI offices. This brings the total number of Woodlands Committee-sponsored bird houses in GHI to five. The houses are occupied by native Carolina chickadees and house wrens.
- Held a forest inventory walk in Parcel B to find areas of high erosion and poor trail condition that could be targeted for future work days. Eight people attended.

- Led Naturalist trail hike on the Hamilton Trail in Parcel D/E to survey the trail condition, locate areas with invasive/exotic species, and educate people on plant and bird identification and ecology. Fifteen people attended.
- Conducted three work days to improve the health of the woodlands and the condition of the woodland trails on GHI property:
 - Parcel E in woods near GHI offices – removed invasive plants and picked up trash.
 - Parcel B between Plateau Place and Laurel Hill – removed invasive plants, picked up trash and removed logs impeding the trails.
 - Parcel X along northern extension of the stream valley trail – removed invasive plants, picked up trash, removed logs impeding the trails, improved trail condition to reduce erosion and increase safety.
- Staffed a booth at GHI Annual Meeting. Four kinds of plants were given away to members.
- Hosted two spring migration bird walks.
- Updated our Woodlands Committee strategic plan with both short and long-range plans.

Plans for October - December 2010 include:



- Collaborating with the Companion Animal Committee to encourage cat owners to keep their cats indoors and submit *Greenbelt News Review* article on the issue.
- Hosting a fall migration bird walk.
- Community Tree planting.
- Conducting a monthly Woodlands Committee sponsored activity to:
 - Assess the ecological conditions of forest or common areas
 - Improve the conditions of forest or common areas through actions such as removing trash, removing invasive species, controlling erosion, etc.
- Collaborating with the City of Greenbelt Forest Preserve Advisory Board on issues that would be mutually beneficial.

GHI'S COURT LIAISON PROGRAM

Continued from Page 1

Still with encouragement, some liaisons have expanded their role beyond "just being the messenger." Erin Gatewood organized a picnic for 2 Court Gardenway and invited other neighbors to join in. Marjorie Gray distributed a handout with suggestions and safety tips during the snowstorms, and she, Corita, and Cynthia regularly look out for members who might need assistance.

After a year of storms, power outages, and felled trees, GHI is considering ways to quickly and efficiently get safety messages out to members and alert them to available services, such as warming or cooling stations. A revamped and enhanced court liaison program is one way for the cooperative to get this program in motion. More importantly, a robust court liaison program encourages "eyes on the street" and contributes to a thriving community.

If you are interested in hearing more about the Court Liaison program call Joan Krob at 301-474-4161 ext. 138 or e-mail jkrob@greenbelthomes.net.



It's the members that help put together this complicated picture of life in GHI, but we're missing a piece--could it be you?

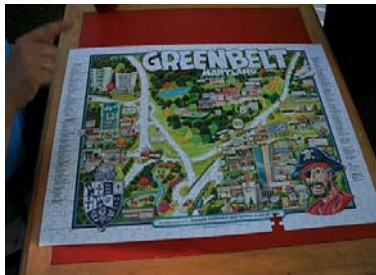


Photo credit: Zach Feris

SECURITY MEASURES TAKEN TO PROTECT MEMBERS' PERSONAL INFORMATION

BY GRETCHEN OVERDUFF, GENERAL MANAGER

Following the announcement at the Annual Meeting of the embezzlement of funds that occurred last year by the former accounting manager, some concerns were raised by members about the safety of their personal information. As a result, a number of steps were taken internally to limit access to members' personal information. These are as follows:

1. All application packages were pulled from the UDB (units data bank) file room and placed in locking filing cabinets, which are now housed in the warehouse. Only the management office has a key to these files. The warehouse is off limits to employees without supervision. The application packets contain social security numbers, birth dates, and bank account information, and may also contain other sensitive information. In rare instances, it has been necessary to access information in these files, therefore, staff elected (and was advised by Counsel) to keep these files in a secure place, rather than destroying them.
2. Brochures were ordered and delivered to each GHI member home on how to protect yourself from identify theft. Staff has not received any information from members to indicate they may have had unauthorized funds taken from their bank accounts or other identify concerns raised since the time of the theft.
3. A different screening company now is used to check the references of employment applicants. Pre-employment checks now include Nationwide Criminal Database Search, SSN Verification, Address History and Sex Offender Registry Checks. In some instances, county courthouse checks may also be done.
4. Social Security numbers will be masked in the Jenark software program. Staff requested Jenark's assistance several months ago in "masking" the numbers. We were advised that this could be done in the upgrade being installed. Upon checking, it was discovered that the numbers were not masked when doing the upgrade. Staff has again requested this step be taken ASAP. There are only four staff members who have access to the financial information in Jenark, including the Director of Finance. If Jenark is not able to or does not perform this requested task, the other option will be to manually delete all social security numbers in the system, which is labor intensive.

MONEY MATTERS: NEWS FROM THE GHI FINANCE COMMITTEE

BY SYLVIA LEWIS, TREASURER

The Finance Committee makes recommendations to the Board to safeguard the financial well being of GHI. It oversees current income and expenditures and makes recommendations for future budgets.

Financial Health. Because previous Boards took a long-term view of what was best for our cooperative, GHI has fared better than some of our neighbors in the current economic downturn. For example, the prudent practices of GHI's Investment Committee have saved our cooperative from suffering any loss to our reserve funds. In addition, strict financial requirements for membership have limited the number of foreclosures experienced by our members.

The Community Upgrade Program is another response to the need for looking at the long-term health of our community. The Committee has made recommendations for financing this program, pending the results of the Pilot Program.

Real Estate Taxes: State of Maryland changes in the assessment of housing co-ops means that in 2012, members' taxes will include an assessment of each unit. Moreover, each member must apply individually for the Homestead Tax Credit – and the member's eligibility must be confirmed by the General Manager. (Member Meetings will be held in the spring to provide more information and answer questions on these changes.)

A County error in assessing GHI taxes in 2009, resulted in a tax refund that will be distributed among members through their December 2010 co-op payment. GHI will send you a letter in November telling you the amount of your refund.

Annual Report: The financial data format for future Annual Reports has been revised to make it easier for members to understand the income and expenses we share in maintaining our cooperative.

For more on the activities of the Finance Committee, please see "Your Committees at Work: 2010 Highlights" in this issue.

FIRE AT 61 COURT RIDGE ROAD

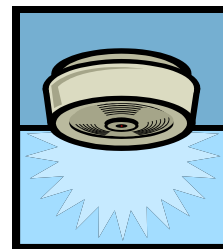
BY GRETCHEN OVERDUFF, GENERAL MANAGER

On the evening of September 22nd, a thunderstorm with blowing winds broke a large tree at the end of the building at 61 Court of Ridge, falling onto the electrical mast that carries the main source of power to the building. This created a huge short in the circuitry, causing a fire that ran through all 8 units. Fortunately, no one was hurt, and the fire was quickly extinguished. The building will not be habitable until the water and electric service are restored. Luckily, everyone affected has temporary shelter and all have been given a list of community support resources to assist them in a variety of ways.

GHI's insurance coverage on the master policy will pay for the cost of repairing the structure and systems throughout the building and cleaning as a result of smoke damage. Appliances and permanent improvements that existed at the time the member purchased will also be replaced or repaired, including wall-to-wall carpet, floor tiles, kitchen cabinets, etc. However, members' personal HO6 policy must be utilized to replace personal items, such as home furnishings and clothing. GHI has hired a contractor to make the repairs, which are being made as quickly as possible. The goal is to return affected members to their homes as soon as possible; however, work must be coordinated with PEPCO.

For information on full coverage provided by GHI in case of fire, please refer to the GHI website at ghi.coop/techservices/GHIinsurancecoverage.htm.

All members are reminded to check the smoke detectors in their units regularly to ensure they are working properly.



It's a Date: November/December 2010		
Nov 9	Yard Line Ad Hoc Committee	8:30 am
Nov 4	Board of Directors' Meeting	7:30 pm
Nov 6	Pre-Purchase Orientation	11:00 am
Nov 10	Architectural Review Committee	7:30 pm
Nov 11	Veterans' Day – Offices Closed	
Nov 15	Communications Committee Pre-Purchase Orientation	7:00 pm 7:15 pm
Nov 17	Woodlands Committee	7:00 pm
Nov 18	Board of Directors' Meeting	7:30 pm
Nov 30	Yard Line Ad Hoc Committee	8:30 am
Nov 24	Buildings Committee Companion Animal Committee	7:00 pm 7:30 pm
Nov 25-26	Thanksgiving Holiday – Offices Closed	
Dec 2	Board of Directors' Meeting	7:30 pm
Dec 4	Pre-Purchase Orientation	11:00 am
Dec 8	Architectural Review Committee	7:30 pm
Dec 14	Yard Line Ad Hoc Committee Pre-Purchase Orientation	8:30 am 7:15 pm
Dec 15	Woodlands Committee	7:00 pm
Dec 16	Board of Directors Meeting	7:30 pm
Dec 20	Communications Committee	7:00 pm
Dec 22	Buildings Committee	7:00 pm
Dec 23-24	Christmas Holiday – Offices Closed	
Dec 29	Companion Animal Committee	7:30 pm
Dec 31	New Year's Holiday – Offices Closed	

2010 GHI Maintenance Schedule	
Nov-Dec	Fall gutter cleaning
2011 GHI Maintenance Schedule	
Tentative	WSSC water line replacement
May-Sep	Community beautification inspections
May-Aug	Trim painting
May-Aug	Replace frame home porches
May-Jun	Spring gutter cleaning
May-Jun	Sprint concrete repairs
Jun-Sep	Slate roofs/copper gutters & downspouts
Jun-Jul	Addition roof repairs
Jul-Aug	Underground utility repairs
Jul-Sep	Parking lot repairs
Oct-Nov	Fall concrete repairs
Nov-Dec	Fall gutter cleaning

Maintenance Department Notice:

Maintenance reception desk is **CLOSED** for lunch between noon and 1 pm daily. You can reach the main front desk reception for emergency service during that time.



COMMUNICATOR SUBMISSIONS

Please submit information for the next issue to Brenda Lewis at blewis@greenbelthomes.net (do not submit to individual committee members).

November 20 is the due date for articles for the January/February 2011 issue.