



Flints Grove HOA Newsletter

P.O. Box 83505 - Gaithersburg, MD 20883



President's Report by Brian Taylor

This has been a great year for the Flintsgrove HOA. We have accomplished two major milestones: our walking path is now completely restored, and we successfully transferred maintenance responsibility for the stormwater facility to the County.

The walking path is a major asset for our community, but over time the path had fallen into disrepair from the effects of weather and tree roots pushing through the pavement. Two years ago, the FGHOA Board of Directors initiated the restoration by paving half of the path network. At the time, we considered that the cost of paving the entire path was too high for our limited resources and deferred the remainder of the project. This year, we decided it was time to complete the project and, after a competitive bidding process, hired Midkiff Paving to restore the 1900 linear feet of path between Pebble Hill Lane and Flints Grove Drive. Along with replacing the existing pavement, Midkiff installed three new culverts and widened the path from four feet to six feet. The Board is delighted with the results and we hope you are too. Our past Board President, Bob Koenig, did most of the work for both phases of the path restoration. Please thank him when you see him.

While we are pleased to have reached this longstanding goal, the effect on our finances was not good. We are now in a posi-

tion where we have to work hard to restore our more-than-depleted capital reserve. Rob Kemp's treasurer's report on page 4 provides the gory details. The good news is that we have now completed our backlog of major capital expenses and, with luck, will be on track to rebuild the reserve over the next few years.

Thanks to the determined efforts of Bob Koenig and others (see article on page 2), responsibility for maintaining the flood control mechanisms in the storm water pond adjacent to the Flintsridge townhouses now belongs to the County. This facility is designed to slow down storm water draining from our HOA and parts of Westleigh into Muddy Branch. While the HOA is still responsible for mowing and other surface maintenance, the considerable cost of keeping up the below-ground elements will now be handled by the County.

I'd like to offer my thanks to my fellow Board members and to the resident volunteers who help us keep our little patch of Earth a great place to live. Please do your part by knowing and following the covenants and by-laws for our community and treating your neighbors with kindness and respect. The quality of life (and resale value!) in our community depends on all of us doing our part. Have a great autumn and holiday season!

October
2006



Inside this issue:

Storm Water Facility Transfer Better Safe than Sorry	2
Community Notes Directory Available	3
Treasurer's Report Wireless Network Security	4

BOARD MEMBERS/OFFICERS

- Brian Taylor,
President
(240-453-9547)
- Jeanne Kahn,
Vice President
(301-762-4095)
- Rob Kemp,
Treasurer
(301-279-9449)
- Steve Kelley,
Secretary
(240-314-0688)
- Matt Rogers,
(301-762-1009)
- Richard Wallace,
(301-315-2295)
- Bob Koenig,
(301-424-1016)

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- Jeanne Kahn—
Community Relations
- Steve Kelley - Maintenance
- Bob Koenig - Directory
- Matt Rogers—
Architectural Control
- Richard Wallace—
Legal Advisor
- Hugh MacNeil—
Business Manager
(240-535-2203)

Storm Water Facility Transfer by Bob Koenig

Our HOA property includes a large storm water management facility adjacent to the Flintsridge town homes which was built by the Flints Grove developer in 1982. The facility includes a drainage system and earthen dam to control the release of water after heavy storms. Since its construction, the HOA has been responsible for both esthetic and structural maintenance which has been a considerable financial burden over the years. In the last eight years alone, costs have exceeded \$20,000 to make repairs required by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

In 2004, the HOA Board became aware of a Montgomery County program in which the County would assume the responsibility for structural maintenance of community storm water facilities. The County realized that maintaining storm water facilities was a significant liability for homeowner associations and that some were not being maintained in an optimal condition. The HOA Board decided that this program would be financially helpful to Flints Grove and began working towards completing this transfer last year. The process involved granting the County easements for access

to the facility and amended covenants making the County legally responsible for structural maintenance. The HOA still retains ownership of the property on which the facility is located.

Over the past two years, the Board initiated necessary repairs and provided all the legal documentation required and worked closely with the Dept. of Environmental Protection to insure a successful outcome. On September 27, the County advised the HOA that our application was approved. This means that the HOA will continue to mow the grass and keep the facility free from debris, but we no longer have to include structural maintenance costs in our capital reserve budget.

In addition to the current Board, I would like to thank former Board member Ed Myers and resident Harry Rosen for their work on this project.



Making Changes? Better Safe than Sorry!

By Matt Rogers, Architectural Committee Chair

Before you paint your house or start your new addition, you might think to yourself...

I'll add value to my home by replacing my OLD {insert external home item here} with a NEW {insert external home item here}. It's really going to look great! Why do I need to submit a request to the Home Owners Association?

The by-laws require Architectural Committee approval for external changes to your home to ensure architectural consistency throughout the neighborhood. This

requirement is intended as a check on the 1% of requests that, if implemented, would adversely affect the appearance of the neighborhood and reduce our property values.

If you are simply replacing an existing feature of your home, you do not need approval, BUT, if there's any question, visit www.flintsgrovehoa.org/by-laws or contact the Architectural Committee. Remember, better safe than sorry!

Dates to Remember



November 7th- Do the democracy thing and vote!

Community Notes

- The leaves are back! When you rake or blow your lawn, please take a little extra time to clear the gutter in front of your house, especially around the drains. This will ensure that the drains work properly if we get a lot of rain. Please note that in our neighborhood the County does not collect leaves that are raked into the street.
- The Flints Grove HOA Board of Directors has notified residents parking commercial vehicles at their residences that this is a violation of FGHOA covenants and the vehicles must be removed or parked in a garage.
- The white picket fence at the corner of Flints Grove Lane and Rich Branch Drive has been cleaned and painted. Thanks to Maintenance Committee Chair Steve Kelley for making the arrangements.
- For those of you who want to leave civilization behind, there is a very nice walking trail through the Muddy Branch Wilderness adjacent to our HOA. Just cross the rocks at the small stream opposite the bridge on the paved path and follow Muddy Branch as it winds along. One branch of the trail skirts the Pebble Hill townhouses and climbs a long ridge before dropping back down to the Muddy Branch near Quince Orchard Road.
- Proceed at your own risk. As we move into inclement and icy weather, the FGHOA Board of Directors reminds residents that we do not plow, salt or otherwise maintain the walking paths in winter. Should you choose to use them anyway, please use extreme caution on icy or slippery areas.

Have your own Community Notes to share? Please email your copy to the Editor,

Jeanne Kahn at
Jeanne.kahn@flintsgrovehoa.org.

Welcome New Neighbor

On Rich Branch Court

Monette Shuttleworth



Selling Your House?



If you have a settlement coming up, please advise your attorney to contact Hugh MacNeil for the required financial information at least two weeks prior to settlement. Hugh can be reached by phone at 240-535-2203 or by email at SAILMACUSA@aol.com. As the Flints Grove HOA is self-managed, we don't have a staffed office that can react immediately to requests from attorneys. Very often, Hugh or other Board members are on travel and need time to respond to these requests.

Community Directory Now Available!



The 2006 edition of the Community Directory was published this summer and distributed in August. If you missed your copy, please contact Bob Koenig. Any changes or additions to the Directory should be forwarded to Terry Farley at LLFTTS@aol.com. The Board is very grateful to Terry and Leo Farley, Jeanne Kahn and Cathleen Berthiaume for their efforts in producing this Directory. Also, many thanks to those residents who purchased ads in the Directory.

www.flintsgrovehoa.org

Treasurer's Report by Rob Kemp

In 2006 the Association undertook major maintenance projects such as finishing the walking path resurfacing and performing much needed tree work in the Flintsridge townhouse community. Our capital reserve was hit particularly hard by the path resurfacing project because the soaring cost of asphalt made the project more expensive than we planned. The association now needs to rebuild the capital reserve to prepare for future major maintenance projects in the community.

I'd like to thank everyone in the Flints Grove

Homeowner's Association for paying their 2006 Association dues. To ensure that everyone carries their fair share of our common expenses, we are committed to 100% compliance.

The 2007 assessment notification will be mailed to all members in November, 2006 and fees will be due by December 31st. It takes considerable Board and Business Manager time and effort when we have to chase stragglers, so please pay on time. A \$10.00 per month late fee will be applied to the accounts of residents sending in their payment late.

Wireless Internet Security by Brian Taylor

If you have a home with multiple computers or you like to work with a laptop in different places in your house, you may have, or plan to install, a wireless internet network. The network itself is not complicated; all you need is an "access point", essentially a two-way transmitter that sends the signal from your cable or phone system to your computer and back to your internet provider, and cards that you install in your computer that process the signal from the transmitter. With a typical setup, any computer or network device that's within a few hundred feet of the access point can be included in the network.

While it's a beautiful thing to have your computers, printers and other devices wirelessly linked together, the signal from your network can extend to adjacent homes and the street outside, putting you at risk of unauthorized network access. This access could be relatively harmless, for example, a neighbor who uses your internet account to avoid paying internet access fees, or it could be malicious if a criminal ("wardriver") detects your signal from the street and uses special equipment and software to steal your passwords and other personal information.

While a comprehensive review of internet security is beyond the scope of this article (and author), here are a few simple steps that you can take to help secure your network.

Stop broadcasting your network ID: There's no need to let the world know your network is there. You can set up your network so your computers can still see it but someone

with a standard access card cannot.

Change the SSID (Service Set Identifier): This is a designation for your system that comes as a default setting from the manufacturer. Hackers know the default settings. You should change yours to something non-obvious.

Enable encryption: With encryption enabled, your computer uses a password-like "key" to code your network traffic so only the intended recipient can read it. An older form of encrypting, WEP (Wired Equivalent Privacy) is being superseded by WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access). Depending on your equipment, you may see one or the other. It's worth upgrading to WPA if you only have WEP, but it's essential to use one or the other.

Change your wireless router administrator password: This is another situation where there is a default password from the manufacturer. Replace it with something non-obvious.

The information that came with your wireless access point (router) or computer will have the details on how to take these steps with your network for better network security. Please note that a power outage might reset your passwords back to the manufacturer's settings

