

November 2016

The M.E.C.A. MEADOWLARK

www.meadowbrookestates.org

Meadowbrook Estates Civic Association

P.O. Box 34303 • North Chesterfield, VA 23234

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Well here we are again, at the near end of another active year for us. As I come to the end of my term as your president, I reflect on our accomplishments as a proactive board and I couldn't be prouder. Under some tight time and budgetary constraints we have been able to refurbish the sign at Edgemere, reseed the median, conduct another neighborhood cleanup, and fight yet another battle with the airbnb (air bed & breakfast) proponents. All were concluded quite successfully, thanks to the community's commitment to itself.

My next and final act as your president is to oversee and conduct our Veterans Day celebration on November 10. Please join us as we give thanks to all of our veterans that have served our country so valiantly. This is always a joyous evening for those who attend, with much fellowship, refreshment and delicious cake.

Sadly much remains to be done. We have several important board positions that remain open, membership in M.E.C.A. has dropped a bit, a landscaper is needed as Mr. McNair and I can no longer maintain the Edgemere medians. I again urge our residents to help keep Meadowbrook the envy of other communities by staying active, volunteering to help where you can and most importantly if you see something happening that isn't right, lawful, or beneficial to our community or the county as a whole, let us know. We can and will do all that's possible to help rectify the situation. We are not immune to constructive criticism either; if you have an idea or concern, please let us know. We are here to help all that ask, and if we can't we'll find someone that can, if possible.

Regrettably we have listed our home for sale. Due to family needs and obligations we need to sell. This is a decision that was not made lightly. My wife and I love the neighborhood. When we purchased

our home eight years ago it was to be our forever home, but life being what it is, will toss you some curve balls. If and when we sell we'll be heading to Florida. If we don't sell we'll have to come up with a plan "B". What that is has not been determined as of yet, but it will entail staying in Meadowbrook.

As this will be my last "President's Letter" let me thank all of my board members for helping me lead the organization and a big "Thank You" to the community that gave me the honor to serve as your president.

Mel Diaz, President

Meadowbrook Estates Civic Association



MECA GENERAL MEETING/VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

Date: Thursday, November 10, 2016

Time: 7:00PM

Location: Meadowbrook Country Club

Speaker:

Felicia A. Brown, U.S. Army MSG (retired)

Please Come and Bring a Neighbor !

Reminder

There have been a few incidents of vehicle vandalism in our neighborhood recently, and a big problem is that they are left unlocked. Please be careful, and LOCK UP !

VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

MECA wishes to say THANK YOU to our Veterans in presenting our annual Veterans Day Celebration. Felicia A. Brown, U.S. Army, MSG (Retired) will be our speaker. Abigail Cordova will again be our soloist. She is a lovely young lady with a beautiful voice – and will be accompanied by Sharon Robertson on the piano. They have both been enthusiastic and loyal in participating in our Veterans Day Celebrations for the past several years. Abigail is now a high school senior, and brings so much joy to our celebration. We will again have Boy Scout Troop #2880 to post Colors. Dr. John Konopanos will close by playing Taps. Please join us as we honor our Veterans.



ANGELS IN MEADOWBROOK

My 'Angel in Meadowbrook' is Gilda Lewis. She is such a good neighbor!! Gilda walks every day and keeps an eye on the neighborhood. She knows quite a few people and keeps track of them. During her walks, she will place newspapers at the doors for those who have difficulty walking down their driveways. While I was in the hospital in May and June, she got my mail and newspapers and placed it on the front porch until my son could pick it up. She also watered my flowers on the front porch. Gilda is an AWESOME neighbor!!

Carolyn Bowman, Monza Drive

Mrs. Joyce Brown of Stornoway Drive, said that her 'Angel in Meadowbrook' is Ray McKinney. She said Ray has been so good to her and also to her neighbor across the street. She is appreciative of his gathering of litter – it not only enhances the inner streets of the neighborhood, but it greatly improves the appearance on Hopkins Road. (Be careful out there, Ray!)



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TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Please be mindful of Stop Signs and Speed Limit when driving through the neighborhood. Police are frequently setting up points of watch at problem areas. Please be safe and be mindful of the safety of others.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I get a lot of mail requesting donations. This year I took a harder look at those that related to supporting the police. I could not determine if the local police got any benefit from those organizations, so I asked. The one answer that made sense is that there is a local foundation that is close enough to Chesterfield Police to know how to best use their funds. I did not find anyone who disagreed. So this year that is where my donation will go. It can be found by going to <http://chesterfieldpolicefoundation.org/> then clicking the 'Donate' tab at the top.

Ben Thorp

COMMUNITY/POLICE RELATIONS WITH MECA

By Kathy Donovan

As a member of MECA since 1987, I have observed both positive and negative changes over the years. As an active member, I communicate frequently with our Chesterfield County Police officers. The following is the result of a series of emails between myself and Cpl. Fisher. Working with him and with other officers has been a very positive experience for me and for our community.

From Cpl. George Fisher:

"Please pass along a BIG Thank You to all of MECA residents that have kept me informed of issues within the community. Communication is the way to address quality of life issues"

I followed up this message from Cpl. Fisher by asking for some feedback.

How long have you been with CC Police?

"I've been with Chesterfield County Police Department for 38 years. The last 20 I've had the pleasure of being a community policing officer. My primary focus area was the Jefferson Davis Corridor. About two years ago the MECA area was added to my coverage area."

What are some of the changes observed in the MECA area?

"The downturn in Meadowbrook Shopping Center.... I'm pleased to see that positive changes are coming to the shopping center. The addition of Gold's Gym will help anchor the shopping center."

Negatives were shared by the following:

"The increase of rental residential properties vs. owner occupied."

Positives shared were the following:

"The strong ownership of Meadowbrook Apartments with management being a great partner to work with over the years."

"The Meadowbrook Country Club where my wife and I have attended a number of functions and have enjoyed each and every one of them."

Cpl. Fisher shared a unique twist in that he helped start MECA Neighborhood Watch many, many years ago with a meeting at Falling Creek Middle School. Harry Daniels was the Supervisor for the area at that time. Back then patrols used CB radios to communicate with each other. Now cell phones have replaced the CB's."

A final quote taken from his feedback is relevant to us presently.

"It takes determination of the central core to keep any Neighborhood Watch moving forward from year to year. If MECA quits being in existence, then crime is definitely going to increase."

Preliminary Lessons Learned from Recent Zoning Amendment Requests
by Ben Thorp

This is labeled preliminary as we hope to hear from more residents. Recently there have been two requests to allow a business labeled "bed and breakfast" to operate in an area zoned for single family residence. Zoning applications are often complex issues. Readers are urged to get the facts from multiple sources and to add to the preliminary learnings that are listed below. Both cases are quite different and each had its unique requests. Both failed to gain approval. This is an attempt to draw some lessons learned which are common to these cases. These cases have supporters and opponents and caused much discussion in the area. People had wide and varying opinions. The subjects are sensitive and this material is intended to respect that sensitivity.

If you want to apply for a zoning amendment there are steps that will upset or offend fewer people.

1-Network with county officials and with neighbors BEFORE you start renting rooms or doing business. Insure that all county and federal taxes are properly paid. The alternate approach raises huge suspicions and long lasting resentment.

2-Recognize that you are the one that will impact your neighbors. Most of them bought property because it was zoned single family.

3-Minimize your request. One request was actually for a multipurpose business that included services for guests and events which included joyful events like weddings but also included parties for large numbers of people. The broader the request the more neighbors you will offend and the more reasons the county will use for rejection.

4-Develop a business plan that shows that your proposal makes money.

5-Make sure your property follows all County codes and any covenants that may be applicable.

If you are a resident that supports or opposes the requested variance or simply want more information

1-It is critical to get the facts of the situation from the owner, the County Planning Department and especially from the latest version of the zoning application.

2-The zoning application can change numerous times and you must have the correct version.

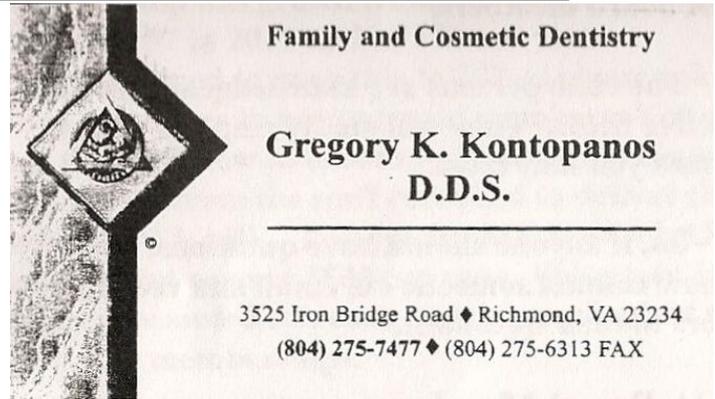
3-Any position needs overwhelming neighborhood support which needs to be displayed in several legal and professional ways. One important way is to obtain several hundred signatures on a simple petition. Another way is to get as many neighbors as possible to express their opinion and feelings at required public meetings, Planning Commission Meetings and Board of Supervisor Meetings.

4-One or two individuals cannot do this themselves so they need to form a committee, break the work to doable assignments and meet frequently to follow up on the work and to make sure that public opinion is not changing. On most occasions the time to get things done is short and organizing one or more committees is long.

5-The 4 learnings above show the value of having a functioning neighborhood association that is in constant communication with their constituency.

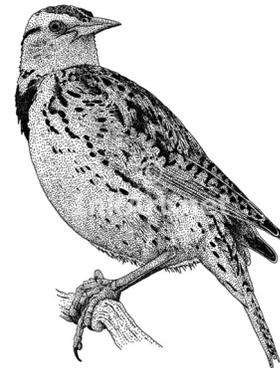
6-In all of the above there will be people on both sides so education of neighbors will be required.

- The zoning amendment process has many steps and victory or defeat in any step is not the final outcome. The outcome is only certain when the Board of Supervisors vote.
- Neighbors often take the label or title or the phrase used as the complete request. An objective outline of the full request must be communicated.
- The implications of doing any business in a single family setting are often not understood. These range from simple items like some guests will not respect simple traffic regulations to complex items like if the Board of Supervisors approves one zoning amendment they are likely to approve any similar requests.



Pet Owner Reminder

Most people like their furry neighbors as much as their people neighbors. As a safety reminder, please keep your dog leashed. As a courtesy reminder, please curb your dog.



WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD !

Hernando and Patricia Cosio
Tyme Road, October 2016

Crystal Fogg
Burnham Road, August 2016

Carl Torrence
Lake Hills Road, August 2016

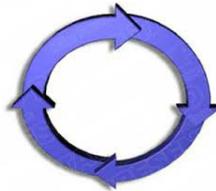
ADVERTISING IN THE MEADOWLARK

Our next Meadowlark will be in 2017. If you would like to place an ad in our newsletter in 2017, please contact Newsletter.meadowlark@gmail.com or call Brenda at 804.275.2958. The Meadowlark is published four times a year, and is distributed to more than 400 homes in the Meadowbrook Estates and Lake Hills neighborhoods. Business card sized advertisements are available for \$50 per year.

Contractors Doing Work at Your House

Be very careful of hiring contractors who knock on your door and tell you that you need particular work to be done, and they can do it. Do you know them? Has a friend recommended them? Are they driving a vehicle with the company name on it? Do they have a business card? Do they show you they are licensed and insured? These are all things to consider, and you probably will be better off to tell them you will think about it and will call if needed. There has been quite a bit of this in our neighborhood where the work has been shoddy and/or the resident has been significantly overcharged. Please be Aware and Alert.

FULL CIRCLE



Charlie Higgins of Southmoor Road, passed away on September 26, after his lengthy struggle with Alzheimer’s. He is survived by his wife, Diane, who lovingly took care of him, and struggled along with him to understand and fight this disease. Charlie is also survived by three daughters, Kathy, Kim, and Kendra. Charlie and Diane have lived on Southmoor since 1996.

Waverly Martin (Shocky) died on September 22. He and his wife, Myra, moved in their home on Cogbill Road in 1967. After her death in 1997, he continued to live there until he went into nursing care just a few weeks before his death. He is survived by two sons, Bill and Bo, and four grandchildren.

Jean Jones of Bonnie Brae Road, passed away on November 1. She and her husband, Clint, moved in their home in Meadowbrook in 1962. Shortly after he died in 2014, she moved into a nursing care facility. Jean was a fine neighbor for many years.

Mrs. Jane Smith, formerly of Monza Court, died on October 16. Jane and her husband, Doug, built and moved in their home in 1978. After Doug died in 2003, Jane continued to live there until a few years ago when she needed to go into nursing care. Jane and Doug were fine neighbors and are remembered by many. She is survived by a son.

Notes of Appreciation

From time to time, when residents send in their dues, they write a short note of appreciation – usually regarding the patrol team. This is good to hear. Recently, when sending in her dues payment, a resident on Stornoway Drive wrote “Thanks for Caring”.

The Meadowbrook Estates Civic Association is proactive in providing a Neighborhood Patrol – but it is more than that. MECA seeks to protect residents and property by encouraging cohesiveness of neighbors. Knowing your neighbors and watching out for each other is the best guard in assuring safety and security. MECA encourages the upkeep of our homes and yards in order to keep our neighborhood beautiful and maintain our property values. If you have any suggestions, or any news to share, or any special requests, or if you wish to volunteer in some capacity, please contact anyone on the list below.

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