

MEWS NEWS

The monthly news letter of the Landmark Mews Community Association

JULY 2012

For Board meeting dates & locations, minutes & reports, governing documents, architectural standards, community news, residents directory, and other important information, log on to **www.landmarkmews.com**.

Board of Directors:

President: Dan Aminoff
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bgaffney86@cox.net

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Secretary/Mews News: Heather McGhee
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rocky6325@aol.com

Mews Webmaster: Heather McGhee
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Covenants Committee: Bill Evinger, Dick Fiske, Mecky Putman, Simon Bennett, Suzann Evinger, Michael Davids, Brian Koechel
covenants@landmarkmews.com.

Neighborhood Watch Chairman: Joel Kaplan
superjk2010@gmail.com

President's Message

The Board held its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday July 11th. We received a Financial Report, a Property Report, and a Covenants Committee Report. We also discussed two options to shore up our Restricted Reserve for the future. The Board selected Maria Santos to fill out the remainder of Delia Riso's term, which will expire at the end of 2013.

Financial Report – All the expenses for June were in line. There were no unusual expenses and all is going according to proposed budget. The

invoice for the concrete and pavement has been paid in full.

Property Report – Property Manager Roger Casalengo shared a proposal for the re-planting of the area along the berm path at the intersection of where it connects with Manchester Way and Chaucer Lane. The Board approved the replanting of this area, which should be completed shortly.

Roger and the Welcoming Committee have reached out to all new homeowner's going back some 3 years. We are grateful that the Committee has

reached out to everyone to get them started on a good note.

Also, the Welcoming Committee has taken on the responsibility of issuing Landmark Mews parking decals right on the spot.

Budgetary Adjustments -- The Board continues to discuss options for restructuring our budget. This is necessitated for two reasons: First, we had extensive costs in repaving streets and replacing concrete throughout the community in 2011 and 2012 – a total cost of almost \$200,000 – which all but drained our restricted reserve (used for major infrastructure projects). Second, combined with this expenditure is the 2011 independent reserve analysis completed last year (required by law every 5 years) which recommended a change in how Mews funds are allocated between our restricted reserve and the operational (unrestricted) reserve. We need to make adjustments to be sure the budget is on track with the reserve analyst’s recommendations. Essentially, we need to be sure your dues are being deposited into the correct accounts, and that those accounts will grow sufficiently to offset scheduled expenditures. I hasten to note: No one is recommending a dues increase! This discussion is about how we allocate the funds we have, not raising more revenue.

So, the objective is to rebuild the restricted reserve within a reasonable timeframe and to shift a greater portion of your future dues dollars into that reserve, recognizing that the reserve study broadens the scope of what should be paid from the restricted reserve. Sufficient funding must be provided to be sure we have the funds when we need them for major projects in the future. My plan, which I have discussed with

the Board, would guaranty we meet our funding objectives in a responsible way. Without boring you with lots of numbers, let me explain its key features.

First, my plan would transfer from our unrestricted (operational) reserve immediately \$32,000 now designated for “projects,” funding for projects Property Manager Roger Casalengo recommends that do not involve “major infrastructure.” That work now must be funded out of the restricted reserve, so the money must follow the obligation.

Second, my plan would transfer \$25,000 now from the unrestricted reserve to the restricted reserve, thereby giving it an immediate injection of cash and raising its balance to about \$35,000.

Third, my plan would create a special account in the restricted reserve called the “2027 Fund,” so named, because it comprises all of the major infrastructure work previously funded from the restricted reserve – asphalt, concrete, street sealing, painting/stripping – that the reserve analysis calls for renovating or replacing by 2027. The total cost: \$384,810. Even though we have just spent \$200,000 on our streets and sidewalks, we must begin now to set aside funds for the next cycle of major infrastructure work, years hence. For example, by 2020, merely 8 years from now, we are scheduled to spend almost \$50,000 just in sealing our streets. By creating the 2027 Fund, my plan preserves an important principle guiding Boards since 2004, when the major infrastructure reserve was first created, to guaranty future Boards set aside sufficient funds over time to pay for critical infrastructure. It was a

conservative approach that incented Boards to keep an eye on longer-term obligations – and it worked: We just spent \$200,000 on critical infrastructure, all within budget and without either a special assessment or dues increase. Putting in place the same funding structure now will provide a firm foundation for funding decisions by future Boards. This is transparent budgeting.

One final note on the budget: An alternative plan advanced by Treasurer Marty McDonald is flawed, and I will urge the Board to reject it. Marty would immediately transfer \$150,000 from our unrestricted (operational) reserve, leaving only about \$60,000 in that account. His plan would accrue funding in the restricted reserve, but without a 2027 Fund -- without segregating funding for critical infrastructure. His plan is flawed for two reasons. First, the depletion of the unrestricted (operational) reserve violates the Board's 2005 Budget Resolution requiring a minimum of \$150,000 in that reserve absent an emergency, and then requires a two-thirds vote of the Board to invade the minimum. The Board in 2005 approved this resolution because prior Boards had drawn down the reserve considerably with no plan for rebuilding or maintaining a healthy reserve. Second, without a segregated account for critical infrastructure, future Boards may not be as careful in keeping their eyes on the longer term. In short, Marty's plan would take us backwards, and I will urge my Board colleagues to reject it.

I-395 HOT Lanes – Please see the detailed update later in the Mews News.

Annual Meeting – We intend to hold the Annual Meeting of the Landmark Mews Community Association on Thursday October 18th, 2012. The meeting will take place at 8:00 PM at the Samuel Tucker Elementary School cafeteria in Cameron Station. I will provide the state of the Mews, Treasurer Marty McDonald will report on the Association's financial status, ballots will be counted, and election results announced.

There are two (2) Board seats up for election this year. The deadline for filing a petition of candidacy is Friday September 21st at 5:00 PM to the Chairperson of the Elections Committee, Steve Rochon. A candidate must file a petition of candidacy, "signed by not less than five Members representing five Living Units." The petition should also include a brief biographical narrative and other pertinent information as to your service on the Landmark Mews Board of Directors.

That is it for this month. The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday August 7th** 7:00 PM at 6309 Chaucer View Circle.

Thank You!
Dan Aminoff, President
Contact me: prez@landmarkmews.com

The Mews has several new residents, and we are hoping to obtain their contact information. **If you are new to the Mews or if you have updated information, please complete the form on the back of the Mews News to be sure you are on our E-Mail list. It will soon be our only method of communication.*

I-395 HOT Lanes Update

A sub-committee of the HOT Lane Task Force met with representatives of VDOT and TransUrban on Monday July 9th. VDOT provided us with an updated project status and timeline, the results of the recently completed noise study and an update on the status of the items we have proposed that VDOT provide.

The project funding will be in place by the end of July. That will allow construction to begin immediately in August. The project is a 29 mile project extending from Landmark Mews south to Stafford. The construction work is simultaneous along the whole 29 mile corridor. We can expect landscaping along Stevenson Avenue to be removed beginning in August. They expect construction to run through the Spring of 2014 in our vicinity. The project will be complete in late 2014 at which time the HOT Lanes will open.

The noise study validated that there will not be any additional noise as result of the HOT Lanes than currently exists without the HOT Lanes. The noise study also allowed VDOT and TransUrban to estimate the heights and relative heights of the Sound Wall along Stevenson Avenue. Based upon computer models, the Sound Wall will provide about an 8 to 10 db noise reduction to the first and second row of homes (approx. 200 feet). The relative height of the Sound Wall (the height the Sound Wall will extend above Stevenson Avenue) will range from about 11 to 15 feet high depending on the location. The easiest way to experience an 8 to 10 db decrease in noise is to use a stereo tuner that measures sound in db's and simply move it from one db level down 8 to 10 db.

Below follows an update on the previous items we had asked VDOT and TransUrban to provide:

1. VDOT shall construct the sound wall no closer to LMCA than the VDOT limited access fence along Stevenson Avenue.

The latest VDOT drawing confirms the sound wall will in all cases be built on the I-395 side of the existing limited access fence -- except where the limited access fence angles sharply down at Stultz Road.

2. VDOT shall deposit any soil and subsoil removed during construction and grading on the I-395 side of the sound wall or have it hauled elsewhere.

VDOT to address

3. VDOT shall fill and grade the area between the sound wall and Stevenson Avenue with quality topsoil suitable for landscaping and for trees expected to grow high enough to help screen off the sound wall.

VDOT to address

4. VDOT shall landscape the area between the sound wall and Stevenson Avenue with trees, grasses and bushes in accordance with a formal landscape plan jointly developed and approved by VDOT, LMCA, and the Fairfax County Urban Forester and the Commonwealth of Virginia's Forester. (We have begun preliminary discussions with the Commonwealth's Forester who is eager to support us)

VDOT to address

5. VDOT shall, at its expense, install a multi-zoned irrigation system between the sound wall and Stevenson Avenue. VDOT shall, at its expense, connect that system to LMCA's present irrigation system. LMCA shall pay the water bill and maintenance expense for the landscaped area and irrigation system upon completion.

VDOT to address. LMCA notes that I-395 retaining walls can easily be designed to avoid risk of irrigation triggering problems with marine clay problems.

6. VDOT shall obtain landscape contractor agreement that LMCA efforts to water new plantings will not compromise the landscape contractor's warranty.

VDOT to address

7. VDOT shall extend Stevenson Avenue curbs and gutters on the I-395 side from the Manchester Way bus stop to Stultz Road.

VDOT to address. LMCA points out that gutters are needed (a) to protect landscape area soil from winter chemicals / oil, etc and (b) to protect the landscaped area from soil compression caused by cars parking there.

8. VDOT shall design the sound wall storm drainage system so as not to interfere with or preclude the present landscaping or equivalent replacement.

VDOT to address

9. VDOT shall include an angled break in the sound wall with overlapping offset between the two walls to avoid any

significant sound leakage while allowing passing motorists on Stevenson Avenue to eyeball I-395 traffic congestion before committing to join it.

VDOT plans, to accommodate overhead utilities, call for a fifty-foot gap in the sound wall roughly at the Stultz Road / Stevenson Avenue intersection. VDOT should explain the need for this break in the sound wall and the likely effect on noise levels in our community.

10. VDOT shall provide photo depictions showing second floor LMCA views of the sound wall for those houses closest to the sound wall; i.e., from Stultz Road to the Cottingham gate. VDOT shall show two views; one with the 20-foot wall previously envisioned; a second with the 30-foot wall VDOT engineers later proposed solely to meet noise reductions requirements for the Olympus high rise apartments.

VDOT scheduled to provide these next week.

11. VDOT shall identify to LMCA specifically which homeowners will be entitled to vote "for" or "against" the proposed sound wall.

VDOT sound calculations indicate that roughly the first two rows of townhouses next to Stevenson Avenue (~200 feet) will be eligible to vote on the sound wall.

12. VDOT shall identify what other communities / total number of non-LMCA voters VDOT envisions including in the LMCA voting block

. LMCA is in the same "Common Noise Environment" as the high-rises to the

north, however, VDOT evaluates the votes to ensure LMCA preferences could not be trumped by theirs.

13. VDOT shall identify whether LMCA homeowners will have a choice between the lower and higher sound walls? If so, VDOT shall provide a comparison, suitable for homeowner consumption, of noise reduction and visual benefits. (See item 10)

VDOT 's sound wall plan identifies the height of the Stevenson Avenue sound wall will vary between about 11 feet above Stevenson Avenue to 15 feet.

14. VDOT shall install on the sound wall side facing LMCA, the simulated brick design similar to the photo previously provided of walls commonly used in Maryland.

VDOT agrees to tailor the sound wall to be reasonably compatible with our brick community. VDOT is exploring several options, on which they will solicit LMCA input.

15. VDOT shall bear full cost of the above commitments with the exception of the LMCA's commitment to pay landscape watering costs (item 6).

VDOT to address

16. Prior to the sound wall vote, VDOT experts shall hold a special briefing for LMCA homeowners to explain the design; the visual impacts; the expected sound reductions in layman terms, and the voting process.

VDOT agrees to hold such a meeting prior to the vote.

We have been working with Supervisor Gross' office to make the I-395 side of Stevenson Avenue a No Parking zone. We have increasingly noticed a high number of cars parking in this area. In addition, when the HOT Lane project is complete, we want to be sure that this area is clearly marked as No Parking.

Also, we are working with Supervisor Gross' office to be sure the community side of Stevenson Avenue is parking designated for residents only--not construction workers or residents from other communities. We are working through some options and will provide updates as they become available.

For follow-up, we will schedule a meeting at TransUrban's office to pinpoint the exact location of the Sound Wall relative to the existing fence line and TransUrban will come and walk the area along Stevenson with us to identify the extent of the existing landscape that will be removed.

We will schedule a meeting for the VDOT noise analyst to present his findings after the Federal Highway Administration accepts the result of the noise study and prior to the commencement of the Sound Wall vote. This meeting may be in conjunction with other neighboring communities.

That's it for now. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Dan Aminoff
President, LMCA
prez@landmarknews.com

Covenants Corner

Landmark Mews cooperates with our trash collector, AAA, in recycling on Thursdays. It may seem easy to figure out what goes in a recycling bin, but it's not as straightforward as you think. Here are some items that are frequently recycled by mistake:

1. **Bright paper:** The dye used to make brightly colored construction paper, manila folders and poster board can create what some environmental experts call "the laundry effect," when one dark item stains the whole load. Trash bright construction paper.
 2. **Plastic bags:** Plastic bags can wrap themselves around recycling equipment, causing entire plants to shut down in order to cut them out of machinery. Most grocery stores offer specific plastic bag recycling options, or go to www.plasticbagrecycling.org.
 3. **Bottle caps:** Different plastics have different melting points, so plastic bottles, #1-7, currently can be recycled and the caps should be trashed. Note: some retailers and natural food stores such as Whole Foods accept bottle caps. Advances in recycling technology means you may not have to separate the two much longer.
 4. **Pizza boxes and soiled paper plates:** Oil and water don't mix, so the grease on soiled plates and pizza boxes can cause problems in the paper recycling process. If a plate or box is soiled, it belongs in the trash.
- Currently AAA** provides recycling collection for all plastics #1-7, cans, glass bottles and jars, and mixed paper.

Mixed Paper includes:

- junk mail
- magazines
- catalogs
- newspapers
- phone books
- cereal and cracker boxes
- flattened cardboard
- AAA would prefer (3ft x 3 ft).

Items NOT acceptable for curbside recycling:

- light bulbs
- ceramic dishes
- cookware
- pizza boxes
- plastic or wax coated paper (milk cartons)
- hardcover books
- styrofoam
- plastic bags
- aluminum foil or foil pie pans

If you need a recycling bin or more information on recycling in our community, contact our Property Manager, Roger Casalango.

Also, whenever possible, please do not place your trash out on the curb until the morning of the delivery day, and be sure to you use black bags instead of white bags.

William R. Evinger
Chair, LMCA Covenants Committee

Please Slow Down

Please slow down while driving in the community and please obey the Stop signs. We have both children and the elderly living in the community, and it is simply not safe to drive fast on our narrow streets.

Reminder - Parking Policy

Please remember that the Landmark Mews Parking Policy has provisions for both residents as well as guests. Here are a few reminders:

1. Resident vehicles must display a Landmark Mews decal
2. Residents may not park in Visitors parking between 10:00 AM and 8:00 PM
3. Guests need to leave a note in their car as to whom they are visiting

Please water your Plants!

In the midst of an extremely hot and dry summer it is very important to keep your plants and yard watered and healthy.

Board Meeting Dates and Host

August 7th, 7:00 p.m. at the home of Joel Kaplan, 6309 Chaucer View Circle.

REAL ESTATE ACTIVITY

Courtesy of Fred and Nancie Williams, Weichert Realtors and Landmark Mews homeowners.

*Unfortunately there wasn't any real estate information available at the time this went to press. Please check the website for updates. Thank you

LMCA Board Attendance 2012

Member Name	Position	Jan 11	Feb 8	Mar 14	Apr 11	May 9	Jun 13	Jul 11	Aug 8	Sep 12	Oct 10	Nov 14	Dec 12
Dan Aminoff	President	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y					
Bill Gaffney	Member	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y					
Linda Carter	Member	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y					
Joel Kaplan	Member	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y					
Tom Craig	Member	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y					
Delia Riso	Member	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	NA					
Bill Evans	Member	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Y	Y					
Maria Santos	Member	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Y					
Marty McDonald	Treasurer	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y					
Roger Casalengo	Property Manager	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y					
Heather McGhee	Secretary	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y					

Please keep the MEWS informed about your current contact information. Please use the form below to update your contact information. As we may not have your most current information, we ask that all owners and residents complete the attached form and return with your next dues payment or E-Mail the information to Roger Casalengo at rocky6325@aol.com.

Thank you for your cooperation and in helping the community maintain an up to date database.

Name(s):

Mews Property Address:

Mailing Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

E-Mail(s):

Landmark Mews Parking Decal Numbers:

If you don't have a parking decal for any of your vehicles, please let us know the following about your vehicle:

Make:

Model:

Year:

License No.: