

January 2008



River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

President's Message

from Joe Kolb

Welcome to 2008 and to our first newsletter of the year. The new Board is eager to serve you and considers your ideas and concerns important. We appreciate community input and involvement, and we also seek your help. Please share some of your talents and a wee bit of your time by signing up for committees. There are issues that need attention, and the more people who pitch in, the greater our success will be in reaching our goals. Please take note of the Committees being put together (page 3) and volunteer where you can.

The Finance Committee has reviewed our current position and will continue to evaluate and monitor our expenses and our reserves. Our reserves need rebuilding, which will take several years. As your Board, we will do our part to keep costs down. However, some costs will continue to rise, and when it becomes necessary to adjust the assessment, we will clearly explain that need. See the Treasurer's Report (page 2) for more info. The Committee could also use some extra eyes and calculating fingers. You do not have to be a CPA, you just have to be willing to help.

In response to concerns expressed at the Annual Meeting about unauthorized or "free lance" vehicle towing, the BOD sent ABC Towing a firm letter stating that there is to be **no** towing without a written authorization from the BOD and that ABC Towing will be held responsible for any costs incurred for towing without the authorization letter.

Beginning with our next meeting on January 24, 2008, Board meetings will be held at 7 PM on the 4th Thursday of each month. We will meet at the Anne Arundel Police Station on Stepneys Lane and hope you will attend!

A Tribute to Mel Blume, President 2000-2007

By Joe Kolb

* * * * *

River Oaks has only known one President for its entire existence. We were blessed to have a man like Mel take our community from infancy through the turbulent early years. What must it have been like to have every event be a first time experience? Could some decisions have been made differently? Could some things simply not have been any other way? The vast majority of Mel's actions were right on the mark. And make no mistake about it, Mel's heart and mind were always directed at what was in the best interest and the overall good of the community. He took River Oaks upon his broad shoulders and surged ever onward. He blazed the trail. Mel and his wife Pauline spent countless hours doing things for this community, and Pauline is carrying that effort forward. We can thank her for the decorations in the front of River Oaks, and that is just one example. Pauline, thanks for your many sacrifices.

And Mel, we will miss you. Rest in Peace.

We're on the Web!
www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

ATTENTION: WE NEED YOUR CONTACT INFO!! Please go to the website and fill out the Contact Update form, or email your name, address, email, and phone numbers for e-newsletters and Membership Roster to:

Bev Wright Caruso @ bev.wright@comcast.net.

Board Meetings

* * * * *

4th Thursday of every month
@ 7:00 PM

Anne Arundel Police Station
35 Stepneys Lane, Edgewater, MD
Members Welcome

“Condo Owner’s Insurance 101”

A (Very) Condensed Introduction to Our Master Policy and Condo Policy Coverages

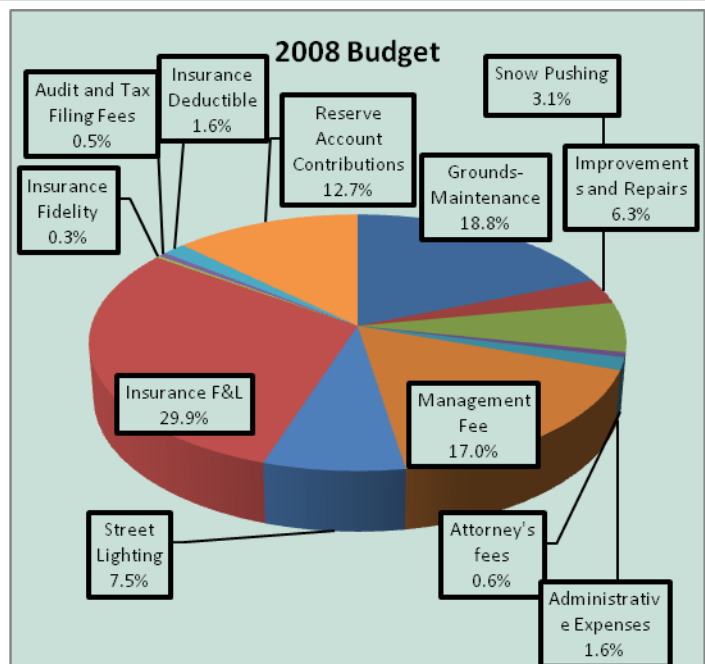
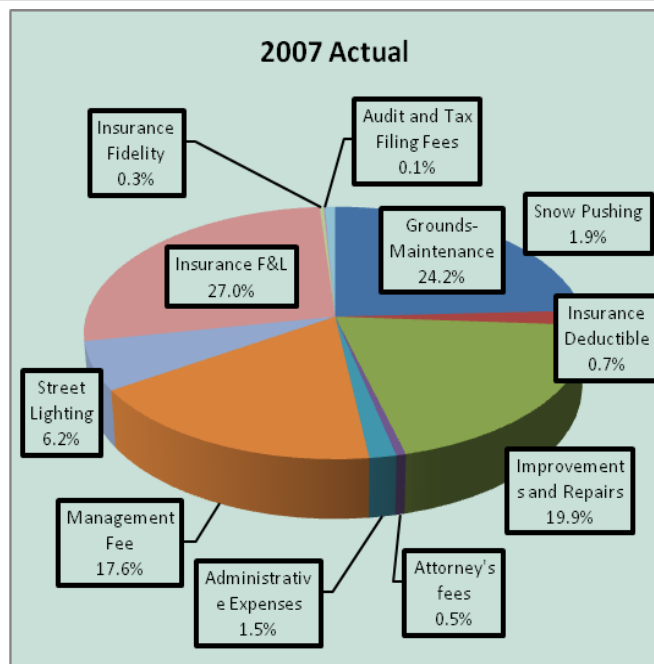
Insurance is an area worthy of clarification. In River Oaks, the only insurance we need individually is known as a Condominium Unit Owner’s Policy (HO6) to cover our belongings and those things that we bring into the home. At the 2008 Annual Meeting, our State Farm Insurance Agent, Gary Carpenter, described this as “anything that would fall if you turned your home upside-down and shook it.” Coverage for the rest of our buildings is paid with a portion of our monthly unit owner assessment fee. Please note, however, that owners are responsible for maintenance and wear-and-tear on the exterior of our units. For sudden damage to the exterior (as compared to the slow process of maintenance issues) we each have coverage through State Farm, with a \$1,000 deductible per occurrence, as mandated by Maryland law. River Oaks picks up the next \$1,500 to meet the policy’s deductible of \$2,500. Our community policy with State Farm then pays anything over that amount. On the inside of the unit, your HO6 policy takes precedence, not the community policy. If you need more information, contact Gary Carpenter at (410) 721-7474.

Treasurer’s Report

from Peggy Summers

Save community funds and avoid late fees!!

Pay your monthly assessment via direct debit at <http://www.comancoinc.com/payment.html>
or schedule an automatic payment with your own bank.



The River Oaks (RO) Board is working diligently with COMANCO staff members to improve the business of River Oaks and return the association to financial strength. Detailed financial statements for FY 2003-FY 2007 show that RO has not funded the Reserve Account for FY 2004-FY 2007. The Reserve Account is a *savings account* that was set up to pay for the eventual repair and replacement of streets, sidewalks, curb, gutters, and retaining walls. If reserves are not in place, a special assessment may be required for repair or replacement.

Reserve Account funds were held in the RO *checking account* and spent on general operating expenses. On December 31, 2007, the Reserve Account balance should have been in excess of \$95,000. However, the current Reserve Account balance is \$10,000. The erosion of the Reserve Account was primarily due to repair and maintenance costs that exceeded the budget.

At the 2008 Annual Meeting, the outgoing RO Board approved an increase in member dues that will enable the new board to operate within the approved budget. The RO Board is committed to fiscal responsibility and will strive to operate within the approved budget, including fully funding the Reserve Account.

River Oaks Committees Established – Volunteers Needed!

The association needs volunteers to work on all committees. Basic duties of each committee are outlined below, followed by the name of the BOD Liaison.

Architectural (Community Grounds/Landscaping) – Regularly inspect common elements; annually inspect limited common elements; review landscaping/exterior change applications; monitor mowing and snow removal for effectiveness/efficiency. (Joe Kolb)

Communications – Develop and edit newsletter and website content; distribute newsletter; keep website updated; maintain meeting notice board and signs. (Bev Wright Caruso) Peggy Donald, Newsletter Editor

Finance – Assist treasurer in reviewing contracts and budget documents from. (Peggy Summers)

Rules and Regulations – Identify areas of potential improvement and needs. (Jyl Dupont)

Safety (Security & Parking) – Identify safety, security, and parking issues and their possible solutions; enforce parking and other safety and security rules and regulations. (Danny Moreland)

Classifieds – Help Wanted – Announcements

Do you have something to sell, need some help, or want to post an announcement? Listings like those below will appear on our website.

FOR SALE: Corian solid surface River Oaks kitchen island top in "Sahara" tan and white. Custom-made with larger than standard overhang for stool seating. Excellent condition. Originally \$900.00, asking \$250.00. Also have island base cabinet in light oak color, free to good home. 410-956-0241

FOR SALE: SOFA, LOVE SEAT, CHAIR – Retro-modern Scandanavian-style furniture with rich wood frames and removable cushions. Original upholstery is solid cream color. Slipcovers for all cushions are bold beige and cream stripes. Each piece looks great from the back, where beautifully finished vertical wood slats support the back cushions. Asking \$800. Call [Peggy Donald](mailto:Peggy.Donald@comcast.net) to have a look. 410-956-1484.

Gone! Giveaway: TV-27" Sony Trinitron/kv-27FS16. Bottom 1" is fuzzy. Contact [Nancy Miller](mailto:Nancy.Miller@comcast.net).

2008 Board of Directors & Other Contact Information

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Secretary:	Bev Wright Caruso	bev.wright@comcast.net	703-606-2209
Treasurer:	Peggy Summers	p.summers1@gmail.com	410-956-2035
Member-At-Large:	Danny Moreland	dannym15402@aol.com	please email only
Newsletter Editor	Peggy Donald	peggydonaldemail@aol.com	please email only
Comanco:	Cindy Kuhn	123@comancoinc.com	410-721-7171

February 2008

President's Message

from Joe Kolb



River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

Wow - what a fast two months! The Board of Directors held its first full meeting on January 24th and several unit owners attended. The Board asked attendees to hold their comments until after the Board's regular business had been conducted. Although some attendees were eager to present comments and concerns during the Board's discussions, they waited patiently for the open forum, which the Board appreciated. After the meeting, the Board and some attendees retired to a local establishment for an "after action" session. We agreed to make this a regular occurrence!

At the next Board meeting on February 28th, we will discuss and vote on a **new Dues Collection Policy**. We need to change how we collect past due assessments from unit owners. Formalizing this procedure and hiring a collection representative will ensure that all unit owners carry their share of the financial responsibility. (See "Dues Collection Policy Forthcoming" on page 2.)

We have been experiencing a spike in nighttime pranks and vandalism, e.g., egging cars and plundering lamp posts. River Oaks teenagers are gathering around the community very late at night. Is there a connection? Parents of night-crawling teenagers are advised that, if necessary, the Board will seek to invest community funds in **security measures** to stop criminal and harassing activity, seek to prosecute each and every offense, and take parents to court for reimbursement of expenses. We can't afford to be lenient or forgiving with our security or our property values.

Residents can discourage this activity by **keeping lamp posts lit at night**. A recent evening stroll revealed that on Braxton Way, 35 lamp posts were not lit; on Millhaven Drive, 16 lamp posts were not lit; on Tilden Way, 33 lamp posts were not lit; and on Millhaven Court, 13 lamp posts were not lit. Please turn on your lamp post if it works; fix it or replace it if it doesn't work. The Board will be conducting annual exterior inspections in March and **maintenance citations will be issued for any lamp post that is not operational**. (Cont. on page 2, see *PRESIDENT*)

The Time for Gardening and Outside Projects is Right Around the Corner

Hooray! Now is the time to think ahead to spring projects, even though it may be cold outside today. So if you've been planning an outside beautification project for your yard, or an outside home-improvement project for your condominium unit, remember to consult our By-Laws (particularly pages 24-26) which are available on our web site. Depending on the nature of your project, you may need to submit your plan to the Architectural Control Committee. Go to www.comancoinc.com/pdf/arch-change-app1-new.pdf to find the application form you need. Fill it out, submit it, and once you receive your approval you're set to go!

We're on the Web!
www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

ATTENTION: WE NEED YOUR CONTACT INFO!

Send your name, address, preferred e-mail, and phone numbers to:
bev.wright@verizon.net

Go green! Get your newsletter online!

Board of Directors Meetings

* * * * *

4th Thursday of every month
@ 7:00 PM

Anne Arundel Police Station
35 Stepneys Lane, Edgewater, MD

Members Encouraged to Attend

Dues Collection Policy Forthcoming

At the January BOD meeting, the Treasurer reported that River Oaks has approximately \$8000 in outstanding dues, \$5000 of which is delinquent by more than 90 days. Such delinquencies affect our ability to manage our budget. Currently, accounts delinquent more than 90 days are referred to an attorney for collection, i.e., the filing of a lien. However, River Oaks needs to implement a dues collection policy which establishes a procedure to collect past due assessments earlier than 90 days, prior to the filing of liens. We are reviewing proposals from legal firms that can implement a broader dues collection policy and will be discussing this at the February 28th Board meeting. All unit owners are encouraged to be present for this discussion. See box below for "Proposed Dues Collection Policy."

Proposed Dues Collection Policy

A \$15 late fee will be assessed to unit owners delinquent by more than 15 days. At 30 days late, COMANCO will send a notice to the unit owner. If dues continue to be late beyond 45 days, the account is referred to a collection agency that will start lien filing procedures at 60 days. All collection fees will be charged to the unit owners and not to the Association.

Committee Notes Safety (Security/Parking)

Vehicle parking in River Oaks is at a premium and several issues have arisen relative to vehicles parked in No Parking/Fire Lanes and designation of owner and visitor parking. The River Oaks Safety (Security/Parking) Committee met recently and developed a list of suggested parking guidelines and future actions. Parking is addressed in several sections of the By-Laws and a formal policy will be set forth in the near future that will consolidate these guidelines and establish enforcement procedures. If you have suggestions or wish to be on the committee, contact Danny Moreland by email at dannym15402@aol.com.

Pet Peeves

Unit owners have complained to the Board about being disturbed by other neighbors' pets. Please pick up after your pet, especially in the parkland and common elements. **Cats must also be leashed when outdoors** because some cats are tearing apart trash and "marking" others' garages and yards, leaving foul odors and irate neighbors in their wake.

It's in the By-Laws Article X, Section 3

Commercial Vehicles Cannot Be Parked Overnight at River Oaks

Vehicles with commercial lettering or signs may not be parked or stored in or on any condominium unit or Common Element, except in areas designated for such vehicles* by the Board of Directors. Repairs or extraordinary maintenance* of vehicles is also prohibited. Commercial vehicles may be parked at a unit for loading, unloading, and service work, or as otherwise permitted by regulations adopted by the BOD.

*The Board has not designated any areas for such vehicles or as yet defined "extraordinary maintenance."

PRESIDENT (continued from page 1): If the bulbs are out, an enterprising resident will replace the bulbs for \$20.00 per lamp post (including supplying the bulbs). If you can't find the Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI) or you have a faulty light that pops the GFI circuit breaker, you may need an electrician. If a new line from the house to the pole is needed, encase it in plastic conduit to protect it. **Patriot Electric** installed the wiring, so they may be a resource for repairs. Last year, the Board agreed with homeowners to replace wobbly and tarnished brass fixtures with a black fixture. However, more than one style has begun to appear and there is a question as to whether one style or "any" style was approved. The Architectural Control Committee will review the situation and recommend a more definitive policy for Board action.

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Comanco:	Cindy Kuhn	123@comancoinc.com	410-721-7171
State Farm:	Gary Carpenter		410- 721-7474

Classifieds - Help Wanted Announcements

**[www.riveroakscondos.
webs.com](http://www.riveroakscondos.webs.com)**

See what's for sale, what's
up, and what's wanted!

March 2008

President's Message

from Joe Kolb



River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

We have an **opening on the Board of Directors**. Danny Moreland tendered his resignation, stating that "...I have appreciated both being part of the team and the opportunities that have been provided to me during the last four years." Danny will be missed very much. He gave a tremendous amount of time and energy to the association. I do believe that the writers of our By-Laws knew something when they limited each term to only three years. Thanks Danny, relax and enjoy the family.

Shelly Kemeza, already on the Safety and By-Laws committees, has volunteered for the open position, but if you are also interested in being considered for the open Board position, please send an email to either Cindy Kuhn, Comanco, 123@comancoinc.com or to Bev Wright Caruso, bev.wright@verizon.net, Board Secretary. Give a brief outline of your qualifications and why you would like to participate. Then attend the March 27th meeting at the Stepneys Lane Police Station at 7PM.

Progress has been made at the **Tot Lot** with the replacement of missing bolt fasteners. A sales rep from Sport Systems, Inc., came from Frederick, MD, and donated his time and some spare parts for repairs.

We came through the windstorm with damage to only a couple of shutters and some siding. As a reminder, unit owners are responsible for the exterior of their respective home. While our **condo insurance** covers storm damage, there is a \$2,500.00 deductible. Of this amount, the individual unit owner is responsible for the first \$1,000.00 and the Association the remaining \$1,500.00.

In response to recent vandalism, Anne Arundel County has agreed to increase its **police presence** inside the community. The Board will seek to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law anyone caught vandalizing River Oaks Property. If you witness suspicious activity, call 911. You can remain anonymous.

Sierra Landscape performed a Spring cleanup of the grounds and found an unusually large quantity of material. We can all help by picking up loose material blowing about. **(continued on page 2)**

Dues Collection Policy Approved

At the February BOD meeting, the Board approved a Dues Collection Policy which establishes a formal procedure to collect past due assessments. The newly approved policy is attached to this newsletter. In summary: Assessments are due on the 1st of the month. If the owner fails to pay the assessment, COMANCO will send a reminder notice explaining that the payment was not received and that a late fee was assessed. When an account is delinquent by more than 15 days, i.e. on the 16th of the month, a \$15 late fee will be assessed to the owner. If dues remain delinquent beyond 45 days, COMANCO will send a formal demand for payment notice stating the payment must be paid by the end of that month or the account will be referred to the Association's attorney for collection. Attorneys' fees are quite high, typically beginning at \$200. Additionally, COMANCO charges a \$50 administration fee to prepare the file for attorney turnover. The unit owner will be responsible for the costs of collection and attorneys fees.

The Board elected to delay implementation of the policy until May 1, 2008; however, COMANCO's **standard collection policy remains in effect** which refers accounts to the Association's attorney when they are delinquent by 90 days. The Board strongly encourages all unit owners to sign up for COMANCO's direct debit service. This is a hassle-free way to stay on top of payments and reduces the association's administrative expenses.



Upcoming Events



April – Annual community inspection by COMANCO and Board
May - Yard Sale – to be coordinated by Kraig and Patricia McNally

Board Meetings

* * * * *

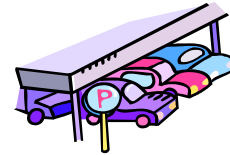
4th Thursday of every month
@ 7:00 PM

Anne Arundel Police Station
35 Stepneys Lane, Edgewater, MD
Members Welcome

We're on the Web!

www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

Proposed Tilden Way Parking Plan



At the February BOD meeting, a motion from the Safety (Security/Parking) Committee, to assign each non-garage owner on Tilden Way a second parking space, did not pass by a vote of two in favor (Danny Moreland, Peggy Summers), two opposed (Joe Kolb, Bev Wright Caruso), and one abstention (Jyl Dupont.) The stated purposes of the motion were "to facilitate parking for these owners and to establish a community standard that would enhance property values and promote the general welfare of the owners, their families, and guests". The plan called for assigning all "general use" parking spaces on Tilden Way, except for 15 "visitor" spaces located adjacent to the Tot Lot. The Committee presented a petition, signed by 24 of 32 non-garage unit owners, as evidence of owner support for this plan.

Board deliberations, and pro and con comments from unit owners present, focused on the By-Laws, the assignment plan, the petition, and the impact of assigning General Common Element spaces to individual units. By-Laws Article XVII, states, in part, that "...the Board of Directors shall assign a maximum of two spaces to each Unit Owner without a garage or driveway." Board members favoring the motion found the petition to be compelling and, in view of the authority vested by the By-Laws to assign spaces, believed that the Board should assign two spaces to each unit according to the plan presented. While agreeing that the By-Laws give the Board the authority to assign spaces, Board members opposing the motion questioned the merits of the petition and did not believe that converting 32 "general use" spaces to assigned spaces would promote the welfare of the community because that would force otherwise usable spaces to remain unoccupied when assigned owners were not present.

Committee Notes

Committee Volunteers Needed

The Association needs volunteers for the Safety (Security/Parking) and By-Laws (Rules & Regs) committees. These committees will be tackling important issues in the coming years and the chairpersons cannot do the job without help from other members.

In addition, we would like to form a Social Events Committee to organize some yearly events – great for building a strong and safe community. We already have volunteers for the upcoming Yard Sale in May (details to be announced via website), but the Board would like to organize a July 4th parade and picnic!

If you can serve on one of these committees, please contact:

Safety (Security/Parking): Shelly Kemeza (410-956-3267) or shellykemeza74@gmail.com

By-Laws (Rules & Regs): Jyl Dupont (301-261-4843) or jyldupont@yahoo.com

Social Events: Bev Wright Caruso – bev.wright@verizon.net

President's Message (continued from page 1)

Several neighbors helped get this started by pitching in to remove the **picnic tables** from the Braxton park area - thanks to Armando and Louis Santos, John Hoban and Greg Townsend. The tables were donated to Edgewater Athletic Association.

Our **Spring walk-through** is coming soon, and so is the warmer weather. Promise, it really is. We should be outside looking at what needs to be cleaned, painted and fixed. Remember, any hardscaping needs approval from the Architectural and Landscape Committee prior to installation.

Lastly, the new **assessment collection** procedure will commence on May 1, 2008. It is very exacting. Our Treasurer worked diligently to accomplish this and it will benefit the entire community.

ATTENTION: We Need Your Contact Info!

Send your name, address, e-mail, and phone number(s) to: bev.wright@verizon.net.

Go green! Get your newsletter online!

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State Farm:	Gary Carpenter	gary.carpenter.bxeq@statefarm.com	410- 721-7474

Classifieds - Help Wanted Announcements

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See what's for sale, what's up, and
what's wanted!

April 2008

President's Message

from Joe Kolb



River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

Imagine the distress of a 9-year-old who rode his bike to the house of a friend here in our neighborhood and then found the bike gone when it came time to ride home again. Happily, in this case, the boy's dad recognized the bike in the hands of other neighborhood boys and gave them a shout that scared them into dropping the bike and running. Even though the final outcome is good, the incident points to a very real problem in River Oaks: failure of young people to respect the property of others. We have had a rash of "bike borrowing" in which bikes disappear from the spot where owners have left them and reappear elsewhere. Let's face it – the moment a bike "walks," that's theft and a call to the police is justified. So, parents of youngsters, you might prevent serious consequences by addressing this issue with your children before you find a bike that you didn't buy stashed away on your property. And if you do find you have a bike that isn't yours, call the Anne Arundel County Police and turn the bike over to them.

Along the same line, AAC Police Officer Gibson has requested that our Newsletter announce it when a bike has been turned over to the police. So, Hear Ye, Hear Ye! A purple and orange Roadmaster was found in the wooded area behind Millhaven Drive and Braxton Way. To claim this bike, please call the police at 410-222-1961. (This is the same number to call if you find a bike.)

If you're a bike owner, do lock your bike up when you are not riding it. An ounce of prevention, as Ben Franklin noted, saves a stitch in time...or something like that. And, didn't someone else say that it takes a town to raise a child? Well, we are that town, and it's up to us to make sure the children in this community know that we take notice of what they are up to.

Finally, it appears that leaving garage doors open when you are not in the garage has proven to be too much of a temptation to teenagers in the neighborhood. Please remove this temptation by closing your garage doors whenever you are not actually in the garage. You will avoid unknown angst and headache.

STREET LIGHTS not working?

If any lights on your street are not working, please call BGE at 410-685-0123 and ask for a repair. You will be asked to provide the pole number, which can be easily seen at the top of the pole.

Spring Means Open Windows

Spring has sprung! With the lovely weather we've been enjoying, we've been throwing open our windows to bring the outdoors inside. But along with all the fresh air coming in, we also invite in noise. Conversely, our indoor sounds also waft out the window. We live in close proximity to numerous other households simply by virtue of living in condominiums, and courtesy is due to neighbors on all sides. When you listen to music, watch TV, or entertain in your home, the associated sounds shouldn't be heard beyond your own walls. Please check with your neighbors to learn what level of sound transmits through your open windows (or even through your adjoining walls) so you can adjust accordingly. Think about it: if you're not aware of what can be heard, you may be exposing your neighbors to more of your private life than you're comfortable with!

Community Yard Sale

Saturday, May 3rd, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

This event will be advertised; signs will be posted; and a dumpster will be placed at Braxton and Millhaven Drive a week later to collect your unwanted treasures.



Board Meetings

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4th Thursday of every month
at 7:00 PM

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It's time for our **annual spring maintenance inspection**. This means that a posse of strange folks meanders around, staring at homes, and taking notes. This crew strives to accomplish a tremendous amount in the course of one weekend and isn't able to take time out to discuss particulars with anyone. They will, however, provide all homeowners with an individualized report when the job is done.

Tot Lot Hours

At the March meeting, the Board voted to close the Tot Lot one hour after sunset to eliminate loitering and noise disturbance to neighbors bordering the Tot Lot. The Board hopes that this will also reduce vandalism if there is no place for potential troublemakers to "hang out." By having a closure time, the police may take action if called about loiterers or noise violations. The Tot Lot will open each day an hour before sunrise.

Committee Notes

Parking Survey Results - Millhaven Court

Results of the survey on Millhaven Court indicate an overwhelming desire to build a multi-story parking garage in the green area at the center of the court. All Court residents will have free parking in the garage; other River Oaks residents using the facility will pay a nominal fee of \$45/hour on weekdays and \$90/hour weekends. The collected monies will offset the cost of construction, maintenance, and staffing. Further monies will be collected for use of the rooftop swimming pool and gym. Again, this facility will be free to Court residents. Membership fees for non-Court pool and gym users will begin at \$23,000 per year, per household.

Happy (belated) April Fools' Day!

And Now the Real Story

The Millhaven Court survey of non-garage owners resulted in only 14 responses—not enough to reflect a consensus. In addition, the Board would like all Millhaven Court residents, including garage owners, to be surveyed. If you didn't respond or are a garage owner, you will be re-contacted to complete the survey. We need your participation!

Welcome Shelly Kemeza to the Board of Directors!

Shelly will serve as the new Safety Committee liaison. She has been chairing the Parking and Security Committee (now the Safety Committee), and she was also Chairperson of the Rules and Regulations Committee. She has been doing a great job on both of those fronts.

Welcome, Alicia Smollon, New Chairperson of the Rules and Regulations Committee!

Alicia has stepped in where Shelly left off on the Rules and Regulations Committee. Alicia is an attorney, so her legal beagle instincts will serve us well in ensuring that our Rules and Regulations comport with state and federal law.

Dues Collection Policy Change Effective May 1, 2008

River Oaks Has a New Attorney

Our new attorney is Michael Neall. We look forward to benefiting from Mr. Neall's services in the collection of outstanding dues and By-Laws enforcement.

Going Green / \$aving Our Green

Off-site owners of property in River Oaks will no longer receive the *Lamp Post* through the U.S. Postal Service. Beginning in June, the *Lamp Post* will be e-mailed to those off-site owners who provide an e-mail address to the Board. Those who do not provide an e-mail address will still have access to the newsletter via the website.

ATTENTION EVERYBODY! We Need Your Contact Info!

If you haven't done so yet, please send your name, address, e-mail, and phone number(s) to: bev.wright@verizon.net.

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River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

The annual Spring Inspection is now partially behind us. With the help of ten unit owners, we began early on a beautiful Saturday morning, April 19th, reviewing Millhaven Court together to make sure we were all on the same page about what was important. We then split into two groups and completed the entire community in one day. This inspection was more detailed than in the past, so consequently, there were more items noted on a lot of houses. However, this should make for fewer dings in next year's inspection, especially if everyone attends to their maintenance items in short order. The good condition and appearance of the houses are essential to maintaining property values.

After taking a few days to recover, the inspection team reassembled to review notes on each house to determine the level to be included, and prepare sheets to be mailed to each homeowner. Although the letters were mailed out on May 1st, the letters were dated May 10th, to extend the 45-day deadline for completion of maintenance items by ten days, to June 25th. By this date, any maintenance issue must either be resolved or a letter sent to Comanco citing your reasons and requesting an extension for the work to be done.

Compliance issues are a different topic, and we struggled with it. We understand that there has been a lack of consistency in decisions made in the past by past Boards of Directors, Comanco and individual unit owners. Our dilemma is how to resolve issues of compliance without demanding immediate action. In reviewing the history as it exists in the files at Comanco, we found records to be sparse.

Continued on page 3

News on Rules and Regulations

Alicia Smollon

Now that our homes are no longer brand new, some of us have found we need to replace items (e.g., lamp posts) and upgrade some features of our homes. While the Board recognizes the individuality of each owner, the Board also must require a certain degree of uniformity on the outside to ensure that all homes in the community blend with the rest. Our community is now more than seven years old, but our rules and regulations regarding landscape and architecture have never been updated. The Architecture and Landscape Committee (A&L) and the Rules and Regulations Committee (R&R) have been working for several months to make the rules user-friendly and compatible with building supplies available today.

Chaired by Hillary Frank, the A&L evaluated the original document line by line, cleaning up the wording and changing some of the requirements. They then turned the fledgling document over to the R&R to determine if any of their changes or clarifications conflicted with the By-Laws. The R&R, originally headed up by Shelly Kemeza (and later by me) reviewed the new document and made additional clarifications. Among other things, we found that we occasionally require permits that Anne Arundel County no longer requires. The Board then looked over the document and made comments, and also had our new attorney, Michael Neall, review the document.

We are now ready to present the proposed rules and regulations to the unit owners at a meeting, for comments and questions. By-Laws remain unchanged when new rules and regulations are implemented. This review is intended to occur from time to time, with changes and clarifications made

Continued on page 2

Extra, Extra! Read All About It!

Don't miss the extra page in this edition of the *Lamp Post* for details on the Spring Inspection and Safety and Security.

We're on the Web!
www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

Board Meetings

* * * * *

4th Thursday of every month
at 7:00 PM

Anne Arundel Police Station
35 Stepneys Lane, Edgewater, MD
Members Welcome

Rules & Regs (cont.)

as needed to keep our community looking its very best. We need this flexibility to address residents' requests for things such as purple doors, chicken coops, or that infamous multi-story parking lot with the swimming pool on top in the middle of Millhaven Court (which was actually an April Fools' joke).

In the near future, the Board will be sending out a letter to every homeowner with a copy of the proposed, revised rules. As soon as you receive the letter, please review the enclosed information and plan to attend the meeting for the discussion. We look forward to seeing you there.

Safety and Security Matters!

By Shelly Kemeza

During the past month there have been a lot of shenanigans in our community. The Board of Directors is publicizing some of the trouble to make you aware of it and to seek your help in stopping or correcting it.

For example, the police were called for various disturbances as many as six times in one weekend a couple of weeks ago. In one instance, teens were placed in handcuffs. Other security trouble include: vandalism of common area fencing; teens loitering in the abandoned buildings that abut Braxton Way; use of a toy gun without the required florescent orange tip; and children on bikes -- sometimes bikes with motors -- speeding over mounds of mulch in landscaped areas and going airborne right into Millhaven Drive. Several neighbors have also noted speeding cars in our community, a residential area where children and adults are at play.

Continued on page 3

**AVOID LATE FEES - USE DIRECT DEBIT
to pay your monthly assessment!**

Go to www.comancoinc.com and click on Automatic Payments for the form and instructions. Payments are withdrawn on the 5th of the month. The Board thanks you for paying on time and reducing our debt.

2008 Board of Directors & Other Contact Information

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Secretary:	Bev Wright Caruso	bev.wright@verizon.net	703-606-2209
Treasurer:	Peggy Summers	p.summers1@gmail.com	410-956-2035
Member-At-Large:	Shelly Kemeza	shellykemeza74@gmail.com	please e-mail only
Newsletter Editor:	Peggy Donald	peggydonaldemail@aol.com	please e-mail only
Comanco:	Cindy Kuhn	123@comancoinc.com	410-721-7171
State Farm:	Gary Carpenter	gary.carpenter.bxeq@statefarm.com	410-721-7474

Community Yard Sale

Many thanks to Yard Sale coordinators Kraig and Patricia McNally for spearheading this event AND for selecting a day with perfect weather. Our yard sale overlapped with that of our Enclave neighbors and attracted numerous treasure hunters. Unsold treasures worthy of donation were collected on May 10th by the AmVets, as announced in last month's *Lamp Post*.

The Dumpster is Coming

Between noon on Wednesday, May 21, and 8 AM on Friday, May 23rd, unwanted treasures can be tossed into the Anne Arundel County dumpster that will be at Millhaven Drive and Braxton Way.

Per AA Waste Removal Department rules, the following items will be excluded from dumpster:

Junk automobiles	Trailers
Gas and propane tanks	Liquids
Tree trunks and logs	Paint
Oil drums or tanks	Boats
Hazardous wastes	Tires
Refrigerators	Air Conditioners

The dumpster will be placed on Millhaven Drive near the corner of Braxton Way. Residents who normally park on the west side (or community park side) of Millhaven Drive are asked to park somewhere else for those three days so that all folks have reasonable access to the dumpster. If the dumpster fills and needs to be replaced, the number to call is 410-222-6100 ext. 3009. (This number is also posted on the Website Home Page.)

Going Green / \$aving Our Green

Off-site owners: this is the last *Lamp Post* you will receive through the U.S. Postal Service. Get future editions of the *Lamp Post* by e-mail or via the website.

ATTENTION EVERYBODY! We Need Your Contact Info!

If you haven't done so yet, please send your name, address, e-mail, and phone number(s) to: bev.wright@verizon.net.

Classifieds - Help Wanted Announcements

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See what's for sale, what's up, and
what's wanted!

President's Message (cont.)

The decision was made to require a well-defined paper trail so that future residents and future Boards would have something to go by. The steps are as follows:

- a) If the homeowner wants reconsideration of a decision arising from the inspection, the homeowner must submit a letter to Comanco outlining the reasons for reconsideration of the maintenance or compliance item.
- b) Comanco will record the receipt of the letter and forward the letter to the Architecture and Landscape Committee (A&L) for review and for a decision.
- c) If an exemption is granted, it is now recorded. A letter to that effect is sent to the unit owner.
- d) However, the A&L may stipulate that the unit and the exemption must be maintained in excellent condition, and that, upon selling the unit, the exemption is nullified and will not be renewed, so that the property would have to be returned to a state of compliance.
- e) The unit owner is now in possession of a written decision, as is Comanco.

The Board of Directors is required to provide potential buyers with information concerning a unit's compliance with the rules and regulations.

We would like to reiterate that the By-Laws are very clear. The occurrence of mistakes in the past, or casual approval given in the past, does not mean the Board must continue to allow violations of the By-Laws to persist.

When all is said and done, I'm sure we will all look back and agree that it was well worth the time and effort to bring the community to a greater state of uniformity.

P.S. We did not address the condition and appearance of driveway cement this year, which in many cases is deteriorating. Since we plan to address this next year, owners of driveways that are deteriorating are advised to plan ahead.

Safety and Security (cont.)

We need to work as a community to keep our families safe and to protect our property values. The only effective way is to work together. Please follow the guidelines below to do your part in keeping our neighborhood safe and secure.

1. Report all suspicious activity to police at 911 for emergencies and at 410-222-8610 for non-emergencies. You may remain anonymous.

2. All bicyclists should wear HELMETS! Parents, did you know that late last month, a youth on a bike hit a car that had just managed to screech to a halt on Tilden Way after seeing the children barreling around the corner? We had the police department, fire department, and an ambulance crew on the scene. Yes, the child was wearing a helmet, but one of the other kids wasn't. Parents, make helmet use a strict policy, and enforce it!
3. Bicycles are not to be ridden on common areas or private lawns. It is a matter of respect for the property of others. Along with the trail at the Tot Lot, there are plenty of sidewalks available for bike riding.
4. There have been complaints of vandalism and other nuisances that are the result of teens who live in the community and teens visiting the community. Speeding cars, vandalism, theft, and illegal activity will not be tolerated. If anyone is caught, the Board will prosecute and will seek restitution from the offender or parents where possible. In an effort to quell vandalism, several unit owners have either repaired or put up a new fence section in a common area at their own expense to prevent future use of this shortcut into and out of our community, an offense usually attributable to teens.
5. SLOW down when driving throughout the community. There are many young children playing and we need to ensure they are safe from being hit.
6. The playground closes at dusk and opens at dawn. Once signs are posted the rule will be strictly enforced by the Anne Arundel County Police. This is for safety and for peace among the bordering homes.

We are all neighbors who live very closely together. We can do so safely and comfortably if we all extend common courtesies and respect to each other.

If you have a specific problem or have ideas for a better, safer community, please email shellykemeza74@gmail.com.

June 2008

President's Message

from Joe Kolb



River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

Let's take a look into the future. Not the distant future, more like a glimpse down the road. Recently, I had the pleasure of multiple walks throughout our open spaces. Most of us are not even aware of the wooded areas that the county has required us to have. We tend to drive into River Oaks at night coming home from work and drive out again in the morning without giving the woods a second thought. However, we do have to maintain this asset. While preparing for the home maintenance inspections, I noticed a couple of trees of concern. Chatting with Comanco brought up the names of three arborists who would inspect our flora for free. The price was right so I contacted the first arborist.

Davey Tree Service advised that he had surveyed the property's trees before and that, indeed, some were troubling. As we walked, he explained that some were of more concern than others. He promised a written report. Bartlett Tree Service came and we repeated the process. He pointed out orange markers still evident from his prior trip. We found even more trees that were worrisome. A written report was given once again, this one prioritized on the likelihood and amount of damage individual trees might cause. A third company was called in because our neighbors, The Landings at River Oaks, had used them and their prices are appealing. This company, however, admits to some limitations as to size of trees that they can handle.

So, what does it all mean to our pocketbooks? We are looking at probably four levels of attack. Priority 1 includes very large, dead or dying trees that may be imminent threats to our units. Let me caution that these trees have already been standing for a few years in that condition, and may well stand for some time to come. While that may be of some comfort to some, it definitely is not to those whose homes lie in the direct (projected) path of the tree. Priority 2 includes trees in danger of falling, but the projected path of natural fall leads the various arborists to conclude these trees will fall into the woods, away from houses; but they still might pose
(continued on page 2)

Safety and Security

Safety in our community is increasingly jeopardized by some very few residents and by nonresidents they bring into the area. In many instances, the simple presence of interested or concerned neighbors could be enough to discourage the behavior that is either destructive or on the verge of being so.

Shelly Kemeza, Board of Directors Member-At-Large, is also the head of our Safety (Security/Parking) Committee. In addition to not being able to be in more than one place at a time, she is also not able to dedicate 24 hours a day to this issue. Shelly needs volunteers. She doesn't need nighttime vigilantes to patrol the neighborhood; she needs people to make phone calls, take notes, follow through. She needs people who will take calls from concerned neighbors when they see something happening and have called the police, so that we have a way to consolidate information on what has been happening and what is being done about it. She needs a network.

Email shellykemeza74@gmail.com to join in the effort to keep our community a great place to live.

Thanks for your efforts!

In this space, we'll highlight community members for their outstanding efforts to make River Oaks the #1 community in Edgewater.

- ✓ Nancy Miller – for keeping our community sign board up to date.
- ✓ Danny Moreland – for power washing our entry sign – see picture page 3.

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President's Message (continued from page 1)

a threat. Priority 3 trees are definitely not a threat to life or domain unless you are in the forest at the time the tree falls. Priority 4 trees are showing signs of deterioration but are not considered a risk at this time. They may, in fact, survive.

As soon as the Board gets some solid cost factors, we will decide to take down the most problematic trees first. The cost factors are such that these expenses are not in our current budget. We all were taken aback by the cost increase during last year's budget process. We promised that we would bring these issues to the community as we became aware of them, and we are doing just that.

The reality is that we will need to address this issue, the sooner the better. Do we have enough brawny backs with chain saws, wheelbarrows, and gloved hands to haul out debris produced by the removal crews? Of course, we could allow the debris to stay put and decompose naturally, but this could take 10 to 20 years. In the meantime, the debris becomes a haven for small furry creatures and invasive plants, and inhibits the natural re-growth of replacement trees.

Another solution could be to hire company to haul out the debris for an additional fee. Alternatively, does anyone know of a firewood company, for example, that will take felled trees out for free? Any insights you may have would be appreciated.

The Board of Directors will have to budget into 2009 and beyond for the continuing maintenance of our wooded areas. These woods are there for all of us to use. When I first moved into River Oaks, my daughter and I would ride our bikes through the woods on the east side of Tilden Way. We would walk through there on Saturdays to visit Carlson's Bakery. You can't go that way any more; there are four to six very large trees that have fallen across the path. These have all gone down naturally, luckily without hitting anything.

On a similar note, you may have already seen Sierra Landscaping removing dead landscaping trees from our entryway and replacing them with live trees. Again, this was not in our budget, but the Board felt that we are charged with doing what is necessary to maintain an attractive appearance and to keep up the property values of our community. We decided to split the process into two stages. We will do the front entrance area this year and leave the rest for 2009. To remove and replace all of the dead trees this year would have cost nearly \$10,000. We have agreed to begin with a part of this project that will cost \$2,400 from our 2008 budget. From time to time, we all question what we are getting for our monthly assessment of \$70.00. Here is where some of it goes.

The Board has begun looking at similar communities to compare monthly fees. If anyone knows people in other communities like ours, please get us contact information for the President of that organization so that we can talk. My research has shown that we have a relatively low assessment. For example, in Arnold, there are two communities similar to ours, with no pool, no tennis courts, etc., and they are paying more than \$100.00 per month. Do I want to see that? NO! Might that be needed? Not sure of that yet.

I can say that this Board has been holding the line on spending. Our Treasurer has worked with our insurance agent to get our insurance costs down. The money that she has saved is paying for the first audit this community has ever had. We have produced a low-cost Website that is full of great information. (I encourage everyone to use it.) At very little cost we have this monthly newsletter to keep everyone aware of happenings such as the successful yard sale and free dumpster cleanup. This has all been done without new funds from our budget. The Architectural and Landscape Committee has beautified the entrance area with new trees at really low prices; we have benefited from a free weed whacking around the pond; and, our front entrance sign was power washed at no charge by Danny Moreland.

The Safety Committee has found a new towing company that is local, saving those whose vehicles are towed for breaking our parking rules the added expense of traveling all the way to Odenton to retrieve their vehicle. Those signs about towing are soon to be deployed, and we will begin towing violators. So take note and get your car off the yellow lanes.

We want to keep costs down, but we must do the things that truly must be done. If we can get some extra hands to go into the woods and clear out the underbrush and the litter, it will enhance the property values of the community. We would like to organize a cleanup in the fall, so send me an email if you will volunteer to "chip" in. (Pun intended!)





Where Dogs Should Go

Dog walkers, we ask you to keep your dogs from lifting their legs on neighbors' lawns and lampposts. Homeowners who have dead patches in their lawns have been told by the Board to reseed those spots. Many homeowners have already done this; some have actually had sod put in place. Now, to have people permit their precious pets to place ... well, do I HAVE to spell it out? ... on the posts prevents picture-perfect pastures and provokes previously peaceful people. (I think I DID spell it out!) Please direct your dogs to your own yard, or to common ground.

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Committee Notes

Eye on the By-Laws

All about Leases

Our By-Laws state: No portion of a Unit other than the entire unit may be rented and no transient tenants may be accommodated. (Article X, Section 2)

Any unit owner who leases a unit must provide the Board of Directors a copy of the lease immediately after it is signed. All leases must contain a provision that declares that the tenants' right to occupy the unit is subject to the Declaration, our By-Laws, and our Rules and Regulations.

Our By-Laws also state that a copy of the Declaration, By-Laws, and Rules and Regulations must be maintained on the property of the leased unit. (Article X, Section 2) So, as you can see, we all live under the same restriction and privileges whether we own or rent.



ATTENTION: We Need Your Contact Info!

Send your name, address, email, and phone number(s) to: bev.wright@verizon.net.

Think green! Someday soon we'd like everyone to get the newsletter online. So far we have 99 email addresses (including 10 off-site owners) – only 139 left to collect!

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Newsletter Editor	Peggy Donald	peggydonaldemail@aol.com	please email only
COMANCO:	Lowell Thompson	136@comanco.com	410-721-7171
State Farm:	Gary Carpenter	gary.carpenter.bxeq@statefarm.com	410- 721-7474

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See what's for sale, what's up, and
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July 2008

President's Message

from Joe Kolb



River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

Spring Maintenance Inspection Follow-up Reports. The follow-up reports are nearing completion and a big "thank you" is due to most unit owners because they have done something or everything on their list! Unfortunately, some owners have done absolutely nothing, and that is sad. We have granted every request for time extensions and understand that the companies that are wrapping and/or painting trim have been backed up. If that is your situation and you have not sent a note to COMANCO explaining the delay and a date when you expect it to be completed, please do so immediately. This does not mean a phone call to COMANCO. Send a note. This can be done via the US Postal Service or via email. Links can be found on our web site at <http://riveroakscondos.webs.com/contactus.htm> or email our manager, Lowell Thompson, directly at 136@comancoinc.com.

The follow-up reports will be delivered to the unit owners in August. At that time, the Board will decide if any items need to be accomplished immediately and will have them done and paid for from the Association's funds. Unit owners will have to reimburse the Association immediately to prevent liens against their property. I am sure that you will be able to negotiate a better price for the work than we will since cost will not be our concern. Quality and timeliness will be our controlling factors. This maintenance work is YOUR responsibility according to the documents you signed at settlement.

2009 Budget. We will begin building our 2009 budget proposal soon. We anticipate that the current assessment will no longer cover the needs of the community. No one wants to spend more money unnecessarily, especially with the cost of gas and food rising seemingly on a daily basis. We have not had increases in costs of service from our major service providers in almost five years and we know this will change. We need help in drawing up the new budget and hope you will consider offering some of your time. If you regulate your own domestic spending, you've got what it takes to help in developing our community budget.

Thanks, Hillary - Welcome, Ken. Hillary Frank resigned as Chairman of the Architectural Control and Landscaping committee. We thank her for her energetic and sound guidance through the first year of this Board of Directors. Hillary promises to continue to help when we need some extra hands, and we will take her up on that offer. Ken Via has offered to take the reins and go forward. If you have an interest in the Architectural Rules and/or the community landscaping, Ken and the remaining committee members welcome your participation. Please contact Ken at dance4673@comcast.net.

(continued on page 2)

Condo Master Insurance Policy Changes Afoot

Did you receive a letter from your insurance company about a court ruling that may affect your condo owner policy coverage? A decision by the Maryland Court of Appeals increased the maximum deductible that a condo association may assess an owner if the Association files a claim for a covered loss suffered by an owner. This may also affect the amount of your liability if a loss is less than the deductible, for which the Association would not file a claim. Please review the information on our website <http://riveroakscondos.webs.com/condoinsurancedocs.htm>. If your agent has questions about our Master Policy, refer your agent to Gary Carpenter at 410-721-7474 or gary.carpenter.bxeg@statefarm.com.

Thank You for Volunteering!

Volunteers who responded to Shelly Kemeza's call for help with the Safety (Security/Parking) Committee last month.

✓ Ricky and Katrina Ahlquist

✓ Heidi and Matt Tracey

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President's Message (continued from page 1)

Doggie Stations. Several months ago, the Board of Directors voted to remove and/or relocate several of the Doggie Stations to reduce the collection and resupplying costs. We made these moves after a review with the removal service, as to which of the 8 stations throughout the community were the least used. We will monitor this situation to determine if we may save more by removing the station near the Landings sediment pond, which is located behind the 2100 block of Millhaven Drive and the station that is on Millhaven Court. No decision on this has yet been made.

New Rules and Regulations. At the next Board meeting we hope to see the vote on the final edition of the new Rules and Regulations. Following the hearing on the new rules, the Board took into consideration every one of the issues raised by those folks who attended. We appreciated your input.

Water Damage Due to Air Conditioner Leaks. Air conditioners remove humidity from the air and deposit it as water into a drip pan. This pan drains out a PVC pipe down to a drain hole in your slab, and from there to the outside. If a break, crack, or clog occurs in any part of this drainage system, you will end up with water pouring onto the utility room floor. From there, it will probably flow into your neighbor's house, too. Check periodically around your AC (and hot water heater, too!) for signs of water. Where the PVC pipe runs out of your house, consider installing a mesh or vented end cap to prevent critters from entering your home.

Committee Notes

Park Hours Signs



Here is our new Park Hours sign. Four are posted at the Tot Lot and two are posted at the Braxton Way park. If you see people loitering in the parks after hours, please call the police. Now that the signs are up, the police have more justification to act.

Thanks go to Nancy Miller for getting these signs from her employer, Minuteman Press.

Bikes and Security

Bikes are still being abandoned in our parks and around the General Common Elements.

Unfortunately, bikes are also being stolen from the front yards, back yards, in broad daylight, at night, chained and unchained. And the thieves live in our neighborhood and adjoining neighborhoods, or may be friends with kids in our neighborhood. In one case, the bike was left unchained, but in front of a friend's house during the day. The parent searched the immediate neighborhoods and found the thieves with the bike. In the other case, the bike was chained up overnight in the back yard and the thieves used bolt cutters. The teenaged owner of the bike got his bike back several days later when he saw another teenager on the bike and demanded his bike back.

If you see suspicious activity, please call the police. Local number is 410-222-1960. You can remain anonymous if you so desire.

Communications

The website is updated every month with the Board meeting minutes and reports submitted by officers. Look at the latest budget figures, read about parking surveys, learn what's about to happen next. If you think of this as dry reading, attend the Board meetings and catch the full flavor of the Board in action.

See you in September!

"The Lamp Post" will be taking a holiday in August.

Enjoy your summer!

Unwanted Visitor?

Call Animal Control (410 222 8900). It is not legal in Maryland to kill wildlife – no matter how scary it is!

One homeowner found a 5-ft corn snake making itself comfortable inside the front foyer. Corn snakes are non-venomous, rarely exceed five feet in length, and come in an array of colors – see below. Other homeowners have reported black snakes in their front yards on Millhaven Court.



Carpenter Ants?

This has been the season of carpenter ants, which thrive in moist and woody environments, such as rotten wood. A couple of homes have been plagued with infestations which can be eliminated with immediate and then routine annual pest control. View pictures on the Internet if you want to see what they look like. See the River Oaks website for pest control companies recommended by your neighbors.



Disappearing Dog Stations

Our dog stations have done a great job of eliminating danger underfoot for everyone who simply walks around the neighborhood. But it costs to maintain these stations and supply them with disposal bags. Two of the stations have been removed since they weren't much used. (They used to be at the two far ends of Braxton Way.) A third station was removed from Tilden Way and placed where Braxton and Cromarty meet. Eliminating two stations will cut annual maintenance costs by 25%.

Please remember that these stations are ONLY for dog waste.

FORGET TO PAY YOUR MONTHLY DUES?

Comanco will send you a letter to tell you that you have been assessed a late fee, on top of the owed dues.

Small consolation, so avoid that extra fee and pay on time!

ATTENTION: We Need Your Contact Info!

Send your name, address, email, and phone number(s) to: bev.wright@verizon.net.

Think green! Someday soon we'd like everyone to get the newsletter online. So far we have email addresses for 103 residences – only 125 left to collect!

Eye on the By-Laws

All about Noise

Our By-Laws state:

No noxious or offensive trade or activity shall be carried on within any Condominium Unit nor shall anything be done therein or thereon which may be or become an annoyance to the neighborhood or the other Owners. No nuisances shall be permitted within the Condominium, nor shall any use or practice be permitted which is or becomes a source of annoyance to the members or which interferes with the peaceful use and possession thereof by the members. By way of example and not limitation, examples of nuisances include loud music or noise; loud, frequent and late night parties; use of electrical equipment which interferes with normal television or radio reception.

These By-Laws may feel restrictive, but they also protect us all from misbehavior on the part of our neighbors. They can help keep River Oaks a pleasant place to live as long as we remember to put them to use when we need them... and live by them ourselves.

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Who Owns What In River Oaks

Grounds Owned by the Community

The **General Common Elements**, owned in common by every unit owner, encompass everything from the Tot Lot between Tilden Way and Millhaven Court, and the woods in the center of our community between Tilden Way and Millhaven Drive, to the Sediment Pond near the entrance, to walkways and sidewalks, to fences between us and other communities. The detailed list of each and every part of the common element runs 16 items long. We all pay to maintain these general common areas and the costs are covered in our annual maintenance budget and reserve fund.

Areas Owned by Individuals

The list of areas that each homeowner owns and maintains is short:

- Driveways in front of those units that have them
- Walkways from the sidewalk or driveway to the front door of each house
- Siding and windows
- Roofs, decks, and patios

These are the responsibility of the individual unit owners. The areas of front yards, side yards (for end units) and rear yards are known as **Limited Common Elements**. Individual unit owners have exclusive use in these areas, are required to maintain them and keep them aesthetically pleasing. Any additions, deletions, or changes must be approved by the Architectural Control Committee or Board of Directors in writing. And the homeowner must bear the cost of maintaining these areas.

Snow shoveling of sidewalks is the responsibility of residents; repair, maintenance, and replacement is the responsibility of the community. Do you live in an end unit? Then the joy of shoveling extra sidewalk area after snowfall is yours.

Sidewalks have an average lifespan of 10-15 years. Some of our sidewalks are beginning to weather or crack or have sunk and are posing a tripping hazard. We can let them go for now but we risk accident exposure. It is the Reserve Fund that will have to pay for these

(continued on page 2)

Thanks for your efforts!

This space highlights community members for their outstanding efforts to make River Oaks the #1 community in Edgewater.

- ✓ Alicia Smollon – for preparing powerful letters to local government representatives and agencies to request assistance in addressing community issues.
- ✓ Ken Via – for volunteering to chair the Architectural Control and Landscape Committee. See Ken's introduction on Page 2.

We're on the Web!
www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

ATTENTION:

We Need Your Contact Info!

Send your name, address, email, and phone number(s) to:

bev.wright@verizon.net

We have email addresses for 119 residences (including 15 off-site owners and 6 tenants) – only 109 residences still needed!

Board Meetings

4th Thursday of every month @ 7:00 PM

Anne Arundel Police Station

35 Stepneys Lane, Edgewater, MD

Owners and Tenants Welcome

President's Message (continued from page 1)

repairs. Future repair and replacements of capital items like sidewalks, streets, curbs and gutters, and retaining walls are the reason we need a robust Reserve Fund. Our builder, US Homes, estimated that it would cost about \$400,000 in 1999 dollars to replace these items. A Reserve Fund was established and each year \$20,000 has been budgeted for these future capital replacement costs. However, the reserve funds totaled only \$10,000 in January 2008, instead of the scheduled \$120,000, due to higher than expected expenditures and minimal assessment increases each year. Over time, this combination led to an underfunded Reserve Fund. By increasing your dues this past year, the previous Board sought to infuse the reserves with needed funds. By holding the budget spending this year we were able to set aside not only the budgeted \$20,000 for 2008, but an additional \$15-\$20,000. By year end, the Reserve Fund will be almost \$50,000. Quadrupling the fund may sound impressive, but we ought to have about \$140,000 in reserves by the end of the fiscal year.

As you know from previous President's Messages, we are spacing out annual maintenance and improvement projects over the next year or so to spread out the expenses. Some projects have to do with trees; some with wrought iron rails behind the even-number homes on Tilden Way; some with wooden fences; some with underbrush out in the woods. Some projects could be tackled by having "work parties." Ken Via, Chairman of the Architectural Control and Landscape Committee, is interested in forming a work party to clear underbrush from the woods, so contact him at dance4673@comcast.net if you would like to get involved. Your community participation saves us all money!

Financial Info on the Website

The Treasurer's reports are posted on the "Financial Reports" page of the River Oaks website. Please review this valuable information on a regular basis to see our budget and how your dues are spent.

Meet Ken Via

Chairman, Architectural Control and Landscape Committee

I have lived in and owned 2117 Millhaven Drive since November, 2003. Earlier this past spring, the Board asked for volunteers to help with the Spring Maintenance Inspection. I participated in the inspection and really became familiar with the entire River Oaks complex. If you happen to wander by my house, you will see that I enjoy landscaping, and flora and fauna in colorful bloom, so when, in early summer, the position of Chairman for the Architectural Control & Landscape Committee came open, I gladly offered and was gratefully accepted.

The primary function of the AC&L committee is to review and approve homeowner changes to the external configuration of, or landscaping around, homes and any included limited common areas. The committee also assists the Board of Directors by reviewing and making recommendations regarding general landscaping around the complex, reviewing maintenance inspection discrepancy corrections, or just answering homeowner emails or verbal questions regarding landscaping and/or changes in the architecture of a home. Yes, the AC&L Committee, and I as Chairman, are the first to review your Architectural Change Applications before they are approved by the management company and your Board.

It's quite a job, and worthy of a full committee, but at the moment, I am a committee of one, so if you see me out on the sidewalk or traversing the common areas, with pen and paper in hand, seemingly always looking up at the trees, rooflines, or just your front door trim, and jotting down notes, please don't be alarmed. I'm only checking the reported completion of a spring maintenance item, or getting a first hand look at an issue raised by a homeowner regarding an architectural change. If you are interested in joining the AC&L Committee, please drop me a line @ dance4673@comcast.net or ring my chimes @ 410-956-2276. Once a full committee is established, more autonomy is allowed by the Board. Currently I only make recommendations, and the Board makes the final decisions.

Let me close by passing a vote of confidence along to owners and tenants. The image I get from walking around the neighborhood is that the look of the complex has improved tremendously, especially since the Spring. Thanks for doing your part to preserve or rejuvenate the condition and image of your home and yard, which potentially increases everyone's property values and helps us all feel good about living here.

See Page 4 for Ken's Tips for Fall Planting

Millhaven Court Gets Assigned Parking

By the end of October, Millhaven Court residents can expect to have one assigned parking space for every house that does not have a garage. The Board will advise residents when cars will have to be removed from the Court parking area so the paint can be applied. Some spots will be numbered; some will be designated "Visitor" and some will be left blank.

Security Matters

River Oaks is a wonderful, family-friendly community where residents can be seen strolling about safely at all hours of the day and night. That's not to deny that there are problems that we as a Board and community must monitor and continue to address. The Board would like to assure those folks who have come forward that their concerns are taken seriously and that the BOD appreciates your alertness. The Board is working closely with the Captain and staff of the Southern District Police Station to proactively address safety and security issues by identifying specific action items, including increased patrols. By working together, we can achieve the common goal of providing a safe and friendly community.

In the unlikely event that residents have to call the police, they should call 911. In the past, there have been many questions about whether or not to call 911. The police have advised us that 911 is not only for use in a dire emergency. In Anne Arundel County, the 911 system is the only means by which the police can systematically, efficiently, and effectively track and address complaints.

Committee Notes

Eye on the By-Laws All about Leases

Our By-Laws state that no portion of a Unit other than the entire unit may be rented, that no transient tenants may be accommodated, and that a copy of the Declaration, By-Laws, and Rules and Regulations **must** be maintained on the property of the leased unit. Furthermore, any unit owner who leases a unit **must** provide the Management Company with a copy of the lease immediately after it is signed. All leases **must** contain a provision that declares that the tenants' right to occupy the unit is subject to the Declaration, our By-Laws, and our Rules and Regulations.

So, as you can see, we all live under the same restriction and privileges whether we own or rent. *A word of caution: the Board will consider using the fining procedure if off-site owners do not provide leases in accordance with the By-Laws.*

Grill Safety

Recently, there was a deck fire which is believed to have been started when old grease on the grill was ignited. PLEASE be very careful to keep your grills clean and do not use them for ashtrays or non-cooking uses. The results could be devastating for you and your neighbors.



Green Sea Turtle photographed by Peggy Donald on her trip to the Galapagos!

If you have a neat photo, let us publish it. Contact Peggy Donald @ peggydonaldemail@aol.com

Please Help Keep the Tot Lot Clean

The Tot Lot is a major feature of our community where parents and children relax and play. Please keep the area free of litter, especially cigarette butts. If you see litter, help out by picking it up and disposing of it. THANK YOU!

2008 Board of Directors & Other Contact Information

President:	Joe Kolb	kolbioe@comcast.net	410-956-1890
Vice President:	Jyl Dupont	jyldupont@yahoo.com	301-261-4843
Secretary:	Bev Wright Caruso	bev.wright@verizon.net	703-606-2209
Treasurer:	Peggy Summers	p.summers1@gmail.com	410-956-2035
Member-At-Large:	Shelly Kemeza	shellykemeza74@gmail.com	please email only
Newsletter Editor	Peggy Donald	peggydonaldemail@aol.com	please email only
COMANCO:	Lowell Thompson	136@comancoinc.com	410-721-7171
State Farm:	Gary Carpenter	gary.carpenter.bx.eq@statefarm.com	410- 721-7474

Classifieds - Help Wanted

Announcements

www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

See what's for sale, what's up, and what's wanted!

Ken's Tips!
From Your AC&L Committee

September; **Fall** is the time to plant for **Springtime** Splendids!

As we see summer fade into fall, and as you endeavor to keep your lawn and landscape areas thriving, there are some well known reminders that fall is the best time to spruce up or rejuvenate bare or thin areas of the lawn, or start a new plot of grass, as new root systems can become stable and strong through the cooler months. The same can be said for shrubbery and new trees. Fall attention now will aid in building a good root system through the cooler weather, ring in the spring with a smooth carpet and new shoots, and more easily survive the hot spring and summer soil that generally inhibits growth, instead of supporting it. Remember to use good compost soil (yard waste compost recommended) as you cover the new seed, and plenty of water to start.

If you have noticed Japanese beetles on your flowering roses and other leafy fauna this past season, the experts recommend spreading a good coating of milky spore on the nearby areas in the fall to ward off the hungry grubs in the root systems of the ground, that feed now, and morph into those pesky beetles in the spring.

October 2008

President's Message

from Joe Kolb



Almost Ready for Winter

A big "THANKS" to all who have completed the maintenance and compliance issues for their respective units. Our community looks absolutely terrific! Yes, perhaps three houses still have satellite dishes on the front roof, but the rest of the dishes have been moved to the rear. The Dish folks were required to re-screw and seal the screws after removing dishes so we have had no reports of leaks as a result of the work.

For the most part, fascia boards have been painted or wrapped to comply with maintenance reports, fences have been repaired, and the lawns are looking sharp. In front of our community, the white fences and brick pillars are being power washed, further improving the curb appeal of our neighborhood. The Tot Lot equipment has been fixed, except for that one squeaky swing. And, finally, the most dangerous trees have either been removed or been made safe.

Police Presence

Captain Krampf, Southern District Commander of the Anne Arundel County Police Department, responded to Alicia Smollon (our Safety and Parking Committee head) and Shelley Kemeza (Board liaison) when they asked him to meet with the Board. As a result, we are enjoying the benefits of an increased police presence in our community. If teenagers are out late at night they will be interviewed. If they are not from our community, they will be advised to leave. If they are in the River Oaks parks after dusk and before dawn, they will likely be detained and possibly charged with trespass.

Where Not to Park

If you park in "No Parking" zones, e.g., in front of mailboxes, fire hydrants, or someone's driveway, you are subject to towing. Several notices have been placed on offending vehicles; warnings have been issued; tow trucks will be coming. DO NOT PARK IN "NO PARKING" ZONES!

2009 Budget

The Board is preparing the 2009 budget and promises that this year's presentation at the General Meeting will be understandable to everyone. No hanging "chads" and no "Undesignated Equities." We will ensure that you are fully aware of how we are spending your money. Our Treasurer has been working with Comanco, gathering quotes for 2009

(continued on page 2)

Thanks for your efforts!

This space highlights community members for their outstanding efforts to make River Oaks the #1 community in Edgewater.

- ✓ Jennifer Mercurio – for organizing our Fall Yard Sale

We're on the Web!
www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

Next Board Meeting

October 23rd, 2008, at 7:00 PM
Anne Arundel Police Station
35 Stepneys Lane, Edgewater, MD

ANNUAL General Meeting

Election and Budget top the agenda!

Wednesday, December 3, 2008
at the Police Station

President's Message (continued from page 1)

from various vendors. We will mail out the proposed budget in late October or early November. Please prepare yourselves for a small increase in dues to rebuild the Reserves and provide funds for maintenance to be completed in 2009. We have not had any increases in costs from Comanco or Sierra in nearly four years. Chances are good that there will be some kind of adjustment coming our way.

Upcoming Board and General Meetings

The November Board of Directors' meeting will not be held the fourth Thursday because that day is reserved for eating large amounts of turkey! The meeting will be in home of a Board member on November 20th. The 2008 annual General Meeting will be held on WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2008, at the Police Station. Keep an eye on the Website, your email, and the Tot Lot Announcement Board for reminders about these meetings.

Treasure Hunt

Look inside your electrical circuit breaker box in your garage or on your ground floor. Many of us will find the names of the specific subcontractors who did the original work on the home. One owner even found the color of the siding used on the unit, which was helpful since there had been some damage.



Don't be a (blue-footed) boobie!
Pay your dues ON TIME!

PET PEEVE - Where have all the bags gone?

Can you imagine - River Oaks went through 15,000 dog waste bags so far this year? That's a lot of doo-doo! We hope that folks are not taking extra bags home with them, or making some other use of them at a community expense of hundreds of dollars per year. PLEASE, confine bag usage to their intended purpose and take one at a time! Thank you for saving us \$\$.

Dues "Discount?"

It's a bit like getting a 15% discount on your dues.
Or maybe it's like paying a 20% penalty.

Paying your monthly dues **late** can cost you a \$15 fee, so when you add that to the \$70 regular dues, you're paying \$85 that month for the mistake of paying late. That's 20% more than your neighbors are paying. Every time you do pay on time, you're avoiding a total outlay of \$85, so it's kind of like giving yourself a discount.

AVOID LATE FEES - USE DIRECT DEBIT to pay your monthly assessment!

Go to www.comancoinc.com and click on Automatic Payments for the form and instructions. Payments are withdrawn on the 5th of the month. The Board thanks you for paying on time and reducing our debt.

Surprisingly few of us have taken note of the fact that the entire Association assessment of \$840.00 is actually due every year on January 1st. But an arrangement has been made to allow 12 equal monthly payments of \$70.00 each, due on the first of every month.

Meet Peggy Donald

Newsletter Editor, River Oaks Condo Association

I moved into the neighborhood last year just in time for Halloween and the onset of the cold, dark days of winter. I had just spent nearly a quarter of a century in Pennsylvania and was attracted back to Maryland by the prospect of sailing on the Bay and by family I have here in the area. I jumped at the opportunity to help with the community newsletter, having experience writing, editing, and proofreading, and I saw it as a chance to reach out to meet neighbors. In doing this, I've become familiar with the Board by attending its monthly meetings, and I've approached numerous people as helpers to hand-deliver the newsletter. Things I enjoy include sailing; jogging; skiing; picture-taking (notice I don't call it "photography" since I'm not very good); volunteering as a Spanish Interpreter at the Stanton Center Outreach Clinic; and still being "Mom" to my two children in their 20s. In addition, I get a kick out of selling Silpada sterling silver jewelry through home parties – another way to meet people when you're new to an area!

If you want to pitch in, volunteer to deliver the *Lamp Post*. (Email address below.) Help is always appreciated!

Committee Notes

Eye on the By-Laws

Provide Leases to COMANCO

Any unit owner who leases a unit but fails to provide COMANCO with a copy of the lease could be fined for a By-Laws violation. Please follow the rules and provide a copy of the lease to COMANCO, Inc., P.O. Box 3637, Crofton, MD 21114, ATTN: LOWELL THOMPSON, or fax to 410-721-3842.

Bird Feeders

Article X, Section (n) prohibits bird feeders from being hung from any part of any Unit or upon any of the Common Elements or from or upon any balcony or patio..." Birds are lovely but they can roost behind your house trim, and feeders that use seeds attract squirrels that find their way into attics and cause further damage. Put bird feeders in your yard, and use squirrel baffles to keep the seeds for the birds.

Treasurer's Report – see spreadsheet page 4

This month, to prep ourselves for understanding the 2009 budget, the Treasurer and the Board wanted you to see a typical month's Income and Expense Report. Every month, our Treasurer prepares such a spreadsheet and highlights different facets of our budget. This month, Projected Overruns and Underruns were included. These reports are always posted on our website on the Financial Reports page as well. The Board encourages you to review the Financial Reports regularly so that you know what your dues are paying for.

Berry ink graffiti – artwork or eyesore?

Please tell kids to respect our property and not to write on curbs/ sidewalks with purple berry "ink" that does NOT wash away easily. Thanks!

Get on our "E" List!

To get an electronic (color!) copy of the newsletter and timely notices about safety/security, community events, website updates, lost & found, and other cool info, please send your name, address, email address, and phone number(s) to: bev.wright@verizon.net.

2008 Board of Directors & Other Contact Information

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Secretary:	Bev Wright Caruso	bev.wright@verizon.net	703-606-2209
Treasurer:	Peggy Summers	p.summers1@gmail.com	410-956-2035
Member-At-Large:	Shelly Kemeza	shellykemeza74@gmail.com	please email only
COMANCO:	Lowell Thompson	136@comancoinc.com	410-721-7171
State Farm:	Gary Carpenter	gary.carpenter.bx.eq@statefarm.com	410-721-7474

COMMITTEES:

Architectural Control	Ken Via	dance4673@comcast.net	please email only
By-Laws/Safety-Security	Alicia Smollon	asmollon@aol.com	please email only
Newsletter	Peggy Donald	peggy.donald@gmail.com	please email only
Safety/Security/Parking	Shelly Kemeza	shellykemeza74@gmail.com	please email only

So far we have email addresses for 125 of 228 residences (including 15 off-site owners & 5 Tenants) – only 103 to go!

Classifieds - Help Wanted

Announcements

www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

See what's for sale, what's up, and what's wanted!

MILLHAVEN COURT PARKING AREA

The Millhaven Court parking area re-lining and numbering are now done! It's been a long eight-year trial of the "honor system." And now, a gentle reminder to all the residents on the court: your number is for your use only. Please let Comanco or a Board member know if an unauthorized person is occupying your numbered space. Please park in your numbered spot, and after that in open spots on your side of the street. In the past, cross-street parking has occasion-ally caused stress and havoc among neighbors.

Please ask your guests to park in the center, not in front of homes. If you have numerous guests and there are not enough spots in the middle area, have guests park at the Tot Lot or at Valvoline (after hours). Exercising good judgment and a neighborly attitude will make this new parking arrangement a source of harmony in the court.



Ken's Tips! From Your AC&L Committee

Itching to get those heavily advertised great deals on Spring bulbs in the ground? Patience, please. As we experienced this week, warmer weather has not gone into hibernation yet, and we don't want the precious bulbs to think Spring has already sprung! Tradition says 'wait until after Halloween, please.'

Those pesky weeds in your wood mulch got you steaming? Don't blame the weeds. Compost mulch is generally much better at weed control AND is better for the soil around your flowers, shrubs, and bedding plants.

Plant pansies! They love cooler weather, survive snow and ice (don't ask me how), AND the flowers are edible and nutritious! Tea, anyone?

TREASURER'S REPORT

SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

	YTD Actual	2008 Budget	Projected Over (Under)
Income			
Assessments to 9/25/08	151,838.75	191,520.00	(5,000.00)
Expenses			
Grounds - Maintenance	25,986.76	30,000.00	(15,000.00)
Snow Pushing		5,000.00	0
Improvements & Repairs (dog station maint.)	4,397.67	10,000.00	4,500.00
Attorney's Fees	2,246.65	1,000.00	(3,000.00)
Admin. Expenses	3,526.35	2,500.00	(1,500.00)
Management Fees	20,314.40	27,086.00	0
Street Lighting	7,921.52	12,000.00	1,000.00
Insurance F&L	30,548.03	47,600.00	7,000.00
Insurance Fidelity	324.00	424.00	100.00
Audit and Tax Filing	1,725.00	850.00	(3,000.00)
Insurance Deductible	1,766.65	2,500.00	-
Expenses Totals	98,757.03	138,960.00	(9,900.00)
Contribution to Reserves	13,485.60	20,228.33	
Undesignated Equity for Reserves	53,081.72	32,331.67	(14,900.00)

FIND THE TREASURER'S REPORT ONLINE EVERY MONTH AT
WWW.RIVEROAKSCONDOS.WEBS.COM

November 2008

President's Message

from Joe Kolb



River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

Just a year ago, I was wondering whether or not to run for the Board of Directors. I had been the President of another townhouse association earlier in my life, and was not anticipating being the President of this one. I simply felt that our community needed some help.

Prior elections that I had witnessed here in River Oaks left me concerned that there would be a Board of one: me. Fortunately, I was joined by four other like-minded folks who felt that they could provide the community with direction.

Following the election we met to select the officers. We agreed to operate jointly, and we have. At times it has been a bit contentious, but the best interest of all 228 unit owners has always been foremost in the mind of each Board member. We simply have come to that focal point from widely differing angles. Now we are looking for some new members to join (or rejoin) us in that same quest, to help make this community the very best that it can be.

We are a community of townhomes that display a quiet, elegant diversity. Unlike some other townhouse communities, our houses don't all look exactly like our neighbors'. We even have wonderfully divergent but well-maintained front gardens, each saying something special about those who reside there. We are graced with a pleasing variety of trees that flower and leaf on their own specific schedules, and with flowers and shrubs that add their own shape and color throughout the growing season.

(continued on page 2)

Quorum/Proxies for Annual Meeting

In order to transact business at the Annual Meeting, we must have 57 units represented in person or by proxy. If you are not able or not sure if you can attend the meeting, please help us achieve this quorum by filing your proxy with a neighbor or a Board member who will attend; or, leaving it in the envelope on Jyl Dupont's door (254 Tilden Way); or faxing it to Bev Wright @ 410-956-2326.

Voting Rights of Members

In order to vote at the Annual Meeting, unit owners cannot be more than 30 days delinquent on their assessments and have a lien filed against their unit.

Get on our "E" List!

To get an electronic (color!) copy of the newsletter and timely notices about safety/security, community events, website updates, lost & found, and other cool info, please send your name, address, email address, and phone number(s) to: bev.wright@verizon.net.

So far we have email addresses for 133 of 228 residences (including 15 off-site owners & 5 Tenants) – only 95 to go!

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ANNUAL General Meeting

Agenda: Election & Budget

December 3, 2008

7:00 PM

At the Anne Arundel County Police
Department Substation
Stepneys Lane, Edgewater

President's Message (continued from page 1)

We would like each of you reading this to think about what you can do to contribute to River Oaks. If you can spare only a couple of hours on a Saturday, you could help on a landscape project. If you have just 20 minutes once a month, you could pitch in by handing out the newsletter. If you have 6-8 hours a month to spare, then you have what it takes to join us on the Board of Directors.

The Board meets once a month for about two hours. Every Board member is assigned to one of our various committees. If your committee actually meets to do things, you might need another hour or two beyond what is mentioned above.

Last year, in addition to the regular monthly board meetings, we met in executive session perhaps an additional seven times: twice with the police, once to perform the maintenance inspection, once for budget development, and three times for the new Rules and Regulations development and hearing. We should not need to review the Rules and Regulations again for another couple of years.

For our Treasurer, the workload consists of reviewing the financial data that our management company forwards to us each month. Then the Treasurer prepares a report that the rest of us novices can understand. As a Board member, the Treasurer participates in making all the various decisions that come before us. And, finally, there is the interaction with the agent who collects our past-due assessments to make sure that anyone who is not paying dues is reminded of that obligation.

In this day and age, a lot of discussion takes place in emails, where we all express our viewpoints on the topic under discussion. I probably get an average of about 6 to 10 a day.

With greater community participation, there are lots of fun activities we could add to our calendar. We have already had two yard sales this year. In addition, we would like to have a summer picnic for the community, a July 4th parade for the children, and maybe a Halloween dress-up contest for kids at one of our two parks.

Serving on the Board is a terrific way to get to know your neighbors. Just look at me! Most of the community knows who I am, or so it seems from the response I get when I meander through the community.

Ken's Corner – Tips from your AC& L Committee

MUM's the word!

Cliché or not, those hearty yellow, red, orange, and white garden and door stoop decorative flowers can return next year if a few careful steps are taken now. First, if you want to retain what's in the pot on the front doorstep, and have a place to plant them, do so, but now's the time. For these and the ones you may already have planted, when the flowers are done, and the stems are on the wilt, trim them off about 1"-2" above ground and smother them with mulch until spring. They will return. Tune in again in the spring, when I'll tell you how to keep them from blooming too early!

If you haven't noticed, frost is indeed on the pumpkin and the overnight temps are starting to dip below freezing. It's time to think about that external hose connection front and back, if you are not using them anymore until next year. They're an excellent source of frozen pipe woes if not drained before the freeze hits. The recommendation is to open the valve slightly on the outside of the house, then close the valve on the inside of the house (most are in the lines next to the water heater). When the water stops flowing, close the valve on the outside of the house. There may be some water still trapped in the pipe between the valves, but there is air and room for expansion of any ice that might form, and the pipe itself (and your wallet) should not take the hit.

Meet Shelly Kemeza
Board Member, River Oaks Condo Association

Originally from Philadelphia (GO EAGLES, PHILLIES & FLYERS!) and raised in Las Vegas, I've been in the Annapolis area for the past 16 years. I am the original owner of my unit and have enjoyed my time living in River Oaks over the past 8 years. I decided to get involved last year when I felt the need to do some volunteer work, and I had NO idea what I was getting myself into. Being on the Community Board is tough work, and sometimes it seems like a thankless job; however, I am proud to be part of this group and feel great about all the things we've accomplished this past year. Aside from my time with the BOD, I work full time for Amazon.com in the Government Affairs/Public Policy office in Washington, D.C. In my spare time I love to paint interiors (yes, paint -- I've even consulted with neighbors on colors and actually painted rooms for them!), I love to scrapbook, exercise, and most importantly, spend time with my husband, Dave and my 4 year old daughter, Zoe.

Play it Safe, Sleep Better

A recent nighttime review of lit and unlit lamp posts in front of every home in River Oaks revealed that about a third of the community to be "in the dark." Each of those houses has been given a letter requesting that the lamp be in working order and be turned on while it is dark outside. Keeping those lights on will increase security in our neighborhood by reducing opportunities for crime, as will keeping garage doors closed, removing daily newspapers from doorsteps (clear indicators that you are away), trimming large shrubs that would otherwise allow someone to hide out of sight, locking your screen doors, closing and securing back yard gates, etc.

Committee Notes

Safety – Security - Parking
Input Welcome on Parking Commercial Vehicles
in River Oaks

The By-Laws Committee, in conjunction with the Safety/Security/Parking Committee is beginning to formulate understandable regulations about parking commercial vehicles in our parking areas. NOW IS THE TIME TO SPEAK UP ON THIS ISSUE! Please send your opinions, comments, and ideas to Alicia Smollon at asmollon@aol.com or other Board members listed below.

2008 Board of Directors & Other Contact Information

President:	Joe Kolb	kolbjoe@comcast.net	410-956-1890
Vice President:	Jyl Dupont	jyldupont@yahoo.com	301-261-4843
Secretary:	Bev Wright Caruso	bev.wright@verizon.net	703-606-2209
Treasurer:	Peggy Summers	p.summers1@gmail.com	410-956-2035
Member-At-Large:	Shelly Kemeza	shellykemeza74@gmail.com	please email only
COMANCO:	Lowell Thompson	l36@comancoinc.com	410-721-7171
State Farm:	Gary Carpenter	gary.carpenter.bx.eq@statefarm.com	410- 721-7474
COMMITTEES:			
Architectural Control & Landscaping	Ken Via	dance4673@comcast.net	410-956-2276
By-Laws/Rules & Regs	Alicia Smollon	asmollon@aol.com	please email only
Newsletter Editor	Peggy Donald	peggydonaldemail@aol.com	please email only
Safety/Security/Parking	Shelly Kemeza	shellykemeza74@gmail.com	please email only



Classifieds - Help Wanted

Announcements

www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

See what's for sale, what's up, and
what's wanted!

December 2008

President's Message

from Joe Kolb



River Oaks Condominium Association

The Lamp Post

Final Report from our Treasurer

At our Annual Meeting on December 3rd, Peggy Summers stepped down as Treasurer and Shannon Whaley was elected to fill Peggy's spot on the Board. Peggy's final report can be found in full on the website. One of Peggy's major accomplishments on our behalf has been to add \$20,000 to the Reserve Fund, which was at a mere \$10,000 last December. Another \$20,000 now exists in undesignated funds. The Reserve Fund was intended to grow by \$20,000/year over the past six years and be at a level of \$120,000 by now. These funds will be needed for replacement (not maintenance) of our roads, sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and the retaining wall. We thank Peggy for her year of service on the Board and for the hours she has spent improving our financial status.

Here's further word from Peggy on a topic found again on page 4 of this newsletter.

The concrete mix designed for roadways and driveways has a higher PSI (pound per square inch) rating than the mix used for sidewalks. Also, the soil and gravel under the concrete roadway and driveway is mechanically compacted to a higher rate over sidewalks and curbs. Thus, sidewalks are just not constructed for the weight of vehicles. The dead load of a vehicle really damages sidewalks and curbs.



Increase in Monthly Fee

Each homeowner recently received a letter from Comanco announcing the increase in our monthly fee to \$75 (from \$70). That letter detailed the rationale for the increase; if you didn't receive your letter, please contact Comanco.

Join the E-Crowd!

Don't be square!

Electronic (color!) newsletters will be delivered to over half of our neighborhood starting in January. Check the addresses of e-recipients on page 3. If you're not listed, please send your name, address, email address, and phone number(s) to: bev.wright@verizon.net.

Save our community some green (\$\$\$) when you go green!

We're on the Web!
www.riveroakscondos.webs.com

Committee Notes

Landlords Take Note!

Each rental unit must, repeat, **must** have a lease on file with Comanco. Landlords who don't have an up-to-date lease on file could be fined for a By-Laws violation. Send your lease to COMANCO, Inc., P.O. Box 3637, Crofton, MD 21114, ATTN: LOWELL THOMPSON, or fax it to 410-721-3842.

Board Meeting

* * * * *

January 22, 2009
7:00 PM

* * * * *

At the Anne Arundel County
Police Department Substation
Stepneys Lane, Edgewater



Bird's Nest Found in Vent Stack!

Install a vent cover for protection

Recently, a neighbor saw rusty water on the utility closet floor and discovered that a bird's nest was almost completely blocking the HVAC vent stack. During the heat cycle, excess combustion gas is supposed to be released outside the home via the stack that exits the roof. In this case, the gas was barely getting past the nest, so it was condensing inside the stack and rusting the pipe. This obstruction could have caused carbon monoxide to build up in the house – obviously a dangerous situation. Every-one is advised to have their vent stack examined to be sure it is clear, and then have a vent cap installed – which is something that the builder should have done!



The Scoop on the Sink Hole

The sink hole next to 2130 Millhaven Drive was repaired. Once the storm drain was excavated and exposed for visual inspection, no damage was observed. The ground was refilled and compacted. Then a swale was dug behind units 2130 to 2144 to re-direct the water flow over the general common element.

'Tis the Season

On Sunday, December 14, 2008, at 5 p.m., Dana and Jeff Springer organized caroling at the Tot Lot. About a dozen adults showed up, with an equal number of children. The Springer's provided sheet music, hot chocolate, cookies, small hand-held candles, and even their professionally trained voices, while others also contributed cookies and their enthusiastic voices to the singing. The group sang *Silent Night*, *Jingle Bells*, and other traditional tunes. By 6 p.m., everybody had gone home, humming all the way.





E-Lamp Post is Coming to Town!



Starting in January, the *Lamp Post* newsletter will be e-delivered (**electronically ONLY**) in full, vibrant color to the addresses listed below. Those newsletters will be produced *with absolutely no trees harmed in the process!*

Braxton Way	202
Braxton Way	204
Braxton Way	209
Braxton Way	210
Braxton Way	213
Braxton Way	215
Braxton Way	221
Braxton Way	223
Braxton Way	227
Braxton Way	229
Braxton Way	235
Braxton Way	237
Braxton Way	243
Braxton Way	245
Braxton Way	247
Braxton Way	254
Braxton Way	255
Braxton Way	257
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Braxton Way	263
Braxton Way	266
Braxton Way	268
Braxton Way	270
Braxton Way	271
Braxton Way	272
Braxton Way	274
Braxton Way	275
Braxton Way	280
Braxton Way	282
Braxton Way	283
Braxton Way	284
Braxton Way	285
Millhaven Court	2
Millhaven Court	6
Millhaven Court	8
Millhaven Court	10
Millhaven Court	12
Millhaven Court	14
Millhaven Court	16

Millhaven Court	20
Millhaven Court	24
Millhaven Court	28
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Millhaven Court	56
Millhaven Court	58
Millhaven Court	60
Millhaven Court	62
Millhaven Court	64
Millhaven Court	66
Millhaven Court	68
Millhaven Drive	2110
Millhaven Drive	2115
Millhaven Drive	2117
Millhaven Drive	2118
Millhaven Drive	2119
Millhaven Drive	2128
Millhaven Drive	2130
Millhaven Drive	2131
Millhaven Drive	2133
Millhaven Drive	2135
Millhaven Drive	2136
Millhaven Drive	2138
Millhaven Drive	2142
Millhaven Drive	2144
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Millhaven Drive	2148
Millhaven Drive	2149
Millhaven Drive	2152
Millhaven Drive	2153
Tilden Way	159
Tilden Way	161
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Tilden Way	192
Tilden Way	196
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Tilden Way	249
Tilden Way	251
Tilden Way	254
Tilden Way	255
Tilden Way	257
Tilden Way	263
Tilden Way	265

If your address is listed here but you wish to continue receiving a paper copy of the *Lamp Post*, you must email your request for delivery of the newsletter to your door to Peggy Donald at PeggyDonaldEmail@aol.com.

Meet Bev Wright



Board Member, River Oaks Condo Association



I'm a native Washingtonian and grew up in Silver Spring, MD, right beside the Beltway BEFORE it was built. Upon graduation from the University of Maryland (B.A., Sociology), I moved to New York City to become the first female correctional officer ever assigned to an all-male Federal prison. After 3 years of "doing time," I became a ski bum at Stowe, VT. However, I left the skiing lifestyle to embark on a 23-year career as an FBI Special Agent. After I retired in 2002, I found happiness as a golf bum – see a pattern here? Alas, in 2004, I returned to work for the FBI as a contractor. Also that year, my husband and I chartered a sailboat with my father to cruise the San Juan Islands, WA. This wonderful experience led to buying a 32' Bavaria sailboat, *IRRESISTIBLE*, which is at the Selby Bay Yacht Club in Edgewater. I soon realized how much I wanted to live close to the water and to *IRRESISTIBLE*. Thus, in 2006, I moved to River Oaks. Between 1989 and 2006, I had served as a Board member and Board President of communities in Alexandria, VA, and Annandale, VA, so when a position came open on this Board, I volunteered, and the rest is history. I have one brother and a nephew in Orlando, FL, and a sister, brother-in-law, and 2 nephews in Silver Spring, MD. My mom lives in Berlin, MD, but visits often, and many of you have probably seen her walking Penny, her German Shepherd-Husky. My dad still lives in Silver Spring, and is an avid sailor with his own boat kept in Deale, MD. This past season, I crewed for the first time on his racing crew – we don't win, but we do have fun!

Committee Notes

Safety – Security – Parking

Five vehicles were seen parked on the curb on a recent evening stroll around the neighborhood. Letters have been sent to owners of those vehicles. Our Board has decided to begin towing offenders in the hope of staving off sidewalk and curb repairs. Moral to the story?

Toe the line or be towed!



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State Farm:	Gary Carpenter	gary.carpenter.bx.eq@statefarm.com	410- 721-7474

COMMITTEES:

Architectural Control & Landscape	Ken Via	dance4673@comcast.net	410-956-2276
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Classifieds - Help Wanted

Announcements

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at [www.riveroakscondos.
webs.com](http://www.riveroakscondos.webs.com)