



ReView

Golf Course View Cluster Association

January 2010

Special Issue: Overview of Cluster Management

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Landscape & Trees

Patty Williamson

Playgrounds

Lori Allred

Financial Management Disclosure Packets

Barbara Beasley
540-554-8887

PO Box 8394,
Reston VA 20195-8394

gvcbeasley@hughes.net

Website

www.golfcourseview.org

Email

gcvca@golfcourseview.org

It's a slow news month, and because six of our homes changed hands last year, it seems like a good time to update and republish one of last year's newsletters that reviews the basic information about how the Cluster Association works and how the common services and interests of homeowners and residents are managed.

The Cluster owns a little more than eight acres of common property that includes: Golf Course Drive between the upper speed bump and the gully, six courtyard parking lots, the common sidewalks along Golf Course Drive and facing the parking spaces, one and a half playgrounds and the common landscape areas. The common services paid for by the Cluster include: trash collection/recycling services; street lights; snow plowing/shoveling; maintenance of the common landscape, trees, playgrounds, street and sidewalks; liability insurance; legal counsel and financial management. The Cluster has no paid employees and contracts out all of these services.

Homeowners are responsible for maintaining their own townhouses and property in compliance with the Reston Association (RA) Covenants and the Cluster design standards—which are administered by RA and its Design Review Board. In addition, homeowners and residents are subject to Cluster parking regulations that have been incorporated into the Cluster Bylaws.

Landscape Development and Maintenance

By far the largest portion of your annual assessment goes to pay for landscape maintenance. Routine maintenance is provided under a contract with BladeRunners. This contract includes a number of routine services:

- **Spring cleanup:** Once a year edging and mulching of all landscape beds, cutting back perennials and grasses, and cleaning lawn areas and parking lots of winter debris.
- **Turf care:** One application of preemergent crab grass control; two applications of organic fertilizer; two aerations and seedings in specified locations; and one application of lime. No pesticides are applied to our turf.
- **Mowing and trimming:** Twenty-three mowings, twelve edgings along sidewalks and two minor prunings of trees and shrubs along walkways.
- **Tree and Shrub care:** Six inspections/dormant oil applications and one fertilization of trees and shrubs.
- **Leaf removal:** Two leaf collections, one in November and one in December.

In addition to the routine landscape maintenance, the Cluster budgets \$16,000 a year for landscape improvement and tree maintenance.

The \$9,000 budgeted for tree maintenance is spent on tree trimming and removal, based on a prioritized list reviewed each spring by a certified arborist and the Cluster Landscape/Tree committee. The major portion of the work is done in the late spring.

The remaining \$7,000 is spent on significant landscape improvement projects identified and prioritized in the current 5-year landscape plan.

Next Board Meeting

The next board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb.9 at 7:30 pm at 2080.

Interested residents are welcome to attend.

This year, the scheduled major projects include:

- Renovation of the entrances to Courtyards A and E.
- Installation of a new tree in a parking island in Courtyard D to replace the big maple we lost last year.

Landscape maintenance also includes the resolution of drainage problems on common areas. A project to correct drainage issues between and behind 2086 and 2088 is scheduled to be done this spring.

Snow Plowing/Shoveling

Our contract with BladeRunners includes plowing the street and parking lots when there is 2" of snow, application of sand and calcium carbonate whenever icing is a threat, and shoveling the sidewalks that face the parking lots when there is 4" of snow.

We pay for these services on the basis of a per man hour rate and a per truckload rate for sand/salt. The goal is simply to make it possible for residents to get in and out of the Cluster safely. Residents are responsible for clearing snow from their own walks and for shoveling common sidewalks when there is less than 4" of snow.

Trash Removal/Recycling Pickup

Trash is picked up on Tuesdays and Fridays except on major holidays. Recyclables are picked up on Fridays. When a holiday occurs on one of our trash days, the next pickup will be on the next regular trash day.

Our trash contractor, VHI, will pick up anything except refrigerators, freezers and other appliances that use chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Limbs, branches and other wood must be cut into 4 foot lengths and tied in bundles. While VHI doesn't like to pick up construction debris, they generally will if it is broken up and put in a container.

All trash should be placed on the curb as close as possible to the front of your own unit. Parking lot islands should be used only by those who do not have direct access to the curb.

Street Lights

The street lights in the Cluster are maintained by Dominion Virginia Power. Any resident can call the power company to report a burned out street light (1-888-667-3000). You'll need to provide the identification numbers on the lamp post. If you prefer, you can contact any board member to report the problem.

Playgrounds

The Cluster maintains the "upper playground" in Courtyard D and shares the maintenance of the "lower playground" with Golf Course Square Cluster. The upper playground was completely renovated in 2006-2007. The lower shared playground, was renovated in 2008.

Pets

Fairfax County has strict leash and "pooper scooper" laws that apply to the Cluster, and County Animal Control officers patrol the neighborhood on a regular basis.

The Cluster takes dog waste clean up seriously and "Mutt Mitts" are available from dispensers located near the swimming pool and in three locations along Golf Course Dr. and Golf Course Square. Please pick up after your pet and dispose of the waste in a trash container.

Cluster Information Resources

The Cluster provides a number of information resources for homeowners and residents. These include:

- **ReView**, this monthly newsletter designed to keep you informed of coming events; inform you about issues that affect our neighborhood; and provide important contact information.
- the **Cluster Handbook** that includes comprehensive information about our community, the services provided to residents, homeowners' and residents' responsibilities and the Cluster design standards and rules.
- two publications that explain how to work with the Cluster color palette for exterior trim.
- the **Cluster Website**, www.golfcourseview.org, contains comprehensive information about the Cluster including the Bylaws and rules, the Cluster Handbook, in depth information about the Cluster design standards, the minutes of the board meetings and copies of the Cluster newsletter, community information and maps, and links to the Reston Association website.
- direct access to the board by email at gcvca@golfcourseview.org.
- the opportunity to receive email messages from the board with up to the minute information about situations that affect us all. If you're not already receiving these emails, you can join the list by sending us an email at the address above.
- the **Cluster Directory** published periodically to promote communication among residents and provide quick access to frequently needed telephone numbers. The latest edition was distributed in March 2008. We expect to update the directory in the next few months.

Board of Directors

The Cluster Association is managed by a Board of Directors. Directors are elected each year at the Cluster Association's Annual Meeting in June.

The board meets once a month, usually on the second Tuesday. Residents are welcome to attend board meetings, the time and place of which are announced in the monthly newsletter.

The real "work" of the board is done by those directors and residents who volunteer to serve as chairs of the various board committees.

The names, addresses and phone numbers of board members and committee chairs are listed in each issue of the Cluster newsletter.

Insurance

In compliance with the Reston Covenants and state law, the Cluster maintains a million dollars worth of hazard, property damage, liability and directors' and officers' liability insurance and a \$150,000 fidelity bond on the officers and directors.

Homeowners are encouraged to purchase individual property damage and liability insurance coverage as advised by their insurance agents.

Financial Management

The Cluster operates on a Jan. to Dec. fiscal year. The proposed annual budget is presented to the community in November and the final budget is approved by the Board at its December meeting. The annual homeowners' assessment is determined by the operating budget for the calendar year.

Homeowners can pay their annual assessment in full by Feb. 1 each year and enjoy a 10% discount. Those who prefer to pay the assessment in quarterly installments must make their payments by Jan. 15, April 15, July 15 and Oct. 15. Installment payments that are more than 30 days late are subject to a \$20 late fee and after 60 days an 8% interest charge applies. After 90 days, the account is turned over to the Cluster's legal counsel for collection.

The Cluster's finances are managed by Barbara Beasley. You can reach Barbara at 540-554-8887 or gcvcabeasley@hughes.net. Payments should be mailed to GCVCA, PO Box 8394, Reston VA 20195-8394.

In addition to its operating fund, the Cluster also maintains a reserves for capital improvement fund. The reserves fund is used to maintain the Cluster's road, parking lots, sidewalks and playgrounds. A portion of the annual assessment is deposited to the reserve fund every year and any assessments not spent on operating expenses during a year are transferred to the reserves fund at the end of the year.

The reserves fund was established in 2000 with the goal of enabling the Cluster to maintain our capital improvements without a need to levy any special assessments. The fund is invested in an interest-bearing account, currently a Charles Schwab money market fund, to maximize its value over time. Because interest rates are so very low at present, the board is considering moving some of the reserves to high quality, higher yield bond funds.

Parking Rules

In 1989 the Cluster adopted parking rules that:

- provide two assigned parking spaces to each unit,
- identify safety zones (marked by yellow curbs) in which parking is never permitted, and
- list vehicles that may never be parked in the Cluster overnight.

These rules are incorporated into the Cluster By-laws that are available on the Cluster website and in hard copy upon request from a director.

In 2007 the Cluster contracted with RoadRunners to tow cars that are illegally parked. Cars that are parked in safety zones, are illegally parked in an assigned parking space or are double parked behind cars in assigned spaces can and will be towed without notice.

Other vehicles parked in violation of the parking rules will be marked with a parking notice and towed if not removed within the time limit specified in the rules.

Note: Golf Course Square Cluster will tow, without notice, cars that are parked for more than eight hours along Golf Course Dr. beyond the sign located near the steps by the gully.

Golf Course Square and all other public streets in Reston are designated by Fairfax County as a Community Parking District. All commercial and recreation vehicles are prohibited from parking on these streets except when actually engaged in work or for loading and unloading purposes.

All residents need to be aware of the parking rules and ensure that they and their guests park appropriately.

If your car is towed, you should immediately call the Fairfax County Police (703-691-2131) for information about where and how to collect your vehicle. You'll need the registration card and the cash necessary to pay for the tow and impoundment to get your car released.

Cluster Design Standards

All homeowners are members not only of the Cluster Association but also of the Reston Association (RA) and subject to its Covenants. The Cluster design standards have been approved by RA and are administered by RA's Design Review Board.

All changes to the exterior of your property must be approved by the RA Design Review Board. This includes the removal of a live tree with a trunk diameter of 4" or more.

The Cluster design standards are spelled out in the Cluster Handbook and a publication titled "Working With the GCVCA Color Palette, both of which are available on the Cluster website www.golfcourseview.org, or upon request from the Cluster president. You can access the Reston Association design standards and information about the RA design review process and download the RA DRB Application Form through the Cluster website.

Cluster president, Sandy Dresser, can help you complete the RA DRB application form. **All RA-DRB applications must be signed by two or more of your closest neighbors and an officer of the board.** These signatures do not signify approval, only awareness that the application is being made.