



# SOMERSET NEWS

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### Board of Directors

President - Willis McCloud  
 Vice President - Earl Burton  
 Treasurer - Patrina Kandul  
 Secretary - Charlotte Jordan  
 At Large - (vacant)

## President's Corner

By Willis McCloud



Residents of Somerset.

As you enjoy the last days of summer, I hope you can look back on the great times you've had enjoying all that Prince William County and Westridge have to offer. One of the best things about our community is that we are a stone's throw from one of the best recreational facilities in the area. The Chinn Aquatics and Fitness Center located less than ten minutes from Somerset has a wealth of equipment, classes, and information to support a healthy lifestyle. For more information on how you can take advantage of Chinn's facilities to support you and your family's leisure and fitness goals, you can access their website at [www.pw-cgov.org/government/dept/park/chinn/pages/default.aspx?](http://www.pw-cgov.org/government/dept/park/chinn/pages/default.aspx?) While the lazy days of summer may be starting to wind down, your management team continues to stay busy as we plan two major projects and the Annual Meeting that will take us into the Fall. As you may know, the focus of the two projects is to increase your quality of life within the community and maintain and/or increase the property values of your homes. Details of the upcoming projects and the Annual Meeting are as follows.

1. Security Light Upgrade: We are replacing the conventional lightbulbs in all floodlights and lamp posts within the community with LED bulbs. This will not only reduce our electrical utility costs but will also lower our overall lighting maintenance costs as well. Conventional floodlights and lamp posts cost a lot more to maintain than LED based systems. Choosing this option will result in monetary savings to you and the Association. This project is currently ongoing and will be complete in September.

2. Attic Thermal Upgrade: As you may remember several months ago, some residents volunteered to participate in an energy audit of their homes. These audits identified areas of energy loss in their homes that could be addressed by either the homeowner or the Association. To that end, the Association has chosen to

install thermal barriers in the attics of some of the residents who participated in the energy audit. Once installed, we will evaluate the performance of the product before making a decision to apply the solution community-wide. The first phase of this project should be complete this Fall.

3. Annual Meeting, October 18: This is a key activity that you should put on your calendar. It's scheduled each October and is one of the most important activities your community conducts. This meeting provides an opportunity for the Board of Directors to report the status of the Association, brief future plans, and, probably most importantly, elect officers to the Board of Directors (BOD). However, in order for this meeting to take place residents must either attend the meeting in person or deliver signed proxy statements to the BOD. Unfortunately, for the last several years both attendance and delivery of proxy statements has been extremely low. Mailings announcing the Annual meeting will be going out soon. When you receive the letter please sign and return the proxy statement whether you intend to participate in person or not. If you do attend, your proxy statement will be returned to you during the meeting. Please contact our community manager, Ms. Stacy Panuzio, [spanuzio@capitolcorp.com](mailto:spanuzio@capitolcorp.com) or at 703-707-6404 for more information. The BOD strongly encourages you to help ensure the Annual meeting for this year and in future years is a success.

Projects to maintain our landscaping and sidewalk repair projects are detailed in the ALC article on page 4. We will provide more information on the status of these projects via email messages.

One of the sure signs of the approaching Fall is the beginning of another school year. Soon the streets will be filled with kids, school busses, and cars heading to one of our county seats of higher learning. Please be cautious when driving around neighborhoods and stop, if required, for school busses loading and unloading students.

In one of these editions I may not have to mention pets or garbage. Unfortunately, today is not that day. Recently, we've had an increase in the number of incidents where people are not removing pet waste from the grounds and depositing it in one of our many pet waste stations around the community. For example, today someone left pet waste directly in front of a fully working pet station. Leaving pet waste on the ground contaminates our water system, creates a health hazard for you and your kids as you work and play around the waste, and encourages the spread of rodents by providing them a ready food source. Also, please walk your pet as far away from our homes as possible when they have to go. Some of us are allowing our pets to repeatedly relieve themselves in someone's yard. This not only makes the area smell bad but also kills the grass. Please walk your pet toward one of the pet stations whenever possible. Your pet and your public will thank you.

Concerning the garbage please ensure that you are placing all trash in a receptacle with a lid. Having a lid ensures the garbage won't blow away and prevents animals, particularly rodents, from using the trash for food. Having a lid also prevents odors from escaping. Once your garbage is properly secured, please ensure it is placed on the curb for pickup no earlier than Sunday evening or Wednesday evening. Leaving your garbage out over the weekend or early on the day of pickup creates a nuisance and isn't fair to those of us who have to see and smell it for prolonged periods. Your consideration is appreciated.

Finally, please take the opportunity to participate in your community by taking one of the following steps.

1. Volunteer to serve on a committee or board;
2. Communicate your concerns or ideas to the community manager, or
3. Review the governing documents available on the Somerset website at <http://somerset>

[tatwestridge.org/somerset](http://tatwestridge.org/somerset). By reviewing these documents, you will become a more knowledgeable resident who can make informed decisions on behalf of yourself, your family, and your community.

In closing I hope everyone enjoys the remaining days of Summer and may the odds be ever in your favor! ✨

## Manager's Message

*By Stacy Panuzio*

### OMG....now what?

The OMG referenced above can apply to any post casualty loss whether it is systems related, weather related, or in response to a natural disaster. The key is in the “now what?” part of the above, and knowing what to do after an emergency is equally important as knowing what to do during an emergency.

Hopefully an emergency preparedness plan exists for the community, or alternatively, that an emergency point of contact has been previously identified. In most cases this will be the community manager or a member of the Board and this person should spearhead the necessary initial response.

Immediately following, and if possible during an emergency, it is imperative to first identify all of the parties to the casualty. If the loss is limited to one household it is likely that the homeowners' insurance held by the unit owner will cover the loss in its entirety, which is pretty straight forward. If the loss involves multiple units or is large or costly in nature, then things can get complicated fairly quickly and having the proper post loss management skills is imperative to a successful operation.

Next is the dispatch of necessary emergency services. Regardless of the type or size of the casual-

ty, services must be provided in as timely a manner as possible. These can include fire or water clean up, structure stabilization, engineering services, mold prevention, and the like. In extreme cases, help can also be sought from the American Red Cross or similar organization, if shelter or further assistance to residents is needed. Ideally these types of vendors are identified before a loss, but they can also be identified through CAI or the good old fashioned phone book.

Now that the involved parties have been identified and the needed emergency services rendered, focus should shift to long term repairs, which is where post casualty loss management skills are essential to the successful outcome of the rebuild. As with most situations in life, good communication is the key component to a successful outcome.

There are a lot of moving parts to a post casualty loss and communications will vary depending on the party involved. Early on in the post casualty loss, a determination should be made regarding rough estimates of damages, as this will determine what insurance policies are invoked. In a larger scale loss, it is likely that the resident(s) will invoke their homeowners' coverage and the association will invoke the master insurance policy and the separate insurance adjusters will sort out what is covered under each policy. This also requires effective communications to the Board of Directors, so that they can make the necessary business decisions to move the process forward. Legal counsel may also have to be consulted if there are questions regarding ownership or responsibility, which cannot be gleaned from the governing documents.

Special consideration should always be given to communications with affected residents, as suffering a loss can be a traumatic event to begin with. Additionally, it is the residents who will be displaced or further inconvenienced with repairs, so maintaining an open avenue of communication is

critical to the residents' sense that the association is acting responsibly and appropriately to the situation. Involving the residents in the repair process can also lend itself to a more favorable outcome, especially if they have preferred vendors or special concerns. Notifications should also be provided to neighboring residents who might be impacted by the loss or pending repairs, just as a measure of good business, management, and communication in general.

There is no such thing as a good or positive casualty loss, but the outcome can be favorable when common sense, common courtesy and good communication are the order of the day.

Please also note that insurance will likely not cover the cost to repair the component which caused the loss, like a burst pipe. To that end, residents may wish to investigate home warranties, as an added layer of protection against potentially costly out of pocket repairs. ✨

## From the ALC

*By Greg Hodgson*



Greetings from the ALC! Before the close of 2016, the association will be addressing a number of items to enhance the appearance and safety of our community.

In the May newsletter, we mentioned that replacement shrub and turf work would occur this summer in previously identified areas. Due to the early summer excessive heat, the decision was made to hold off until September/October to perform this work so the new plantings would have a better chance of survival. A list of the units scheduled to receive replacements will be posted on the Somerset website. We kindly request that residents water the plantings to help them thrive.

Some tree work is scheduled for the week of August 22. This work will include: removing some dead/dying/overgrown trees from the hill at the Somerset sign; trimming back low-lying limbs at the main Churchman entrance; and trimming back limbs from trees in the Westridge Drive buffer area adjacent to buildings 8 and 9. All tree removals include grinding the stumps to below ground level.

It has been quite a few years since the Somerset sign has been refurbished. Some of you may have noticed that one of the letters has been missing from the sign for a number of months. This fall, the sign and raised lettering will be repainted and the missing letter will be replaced.

During the week of August 29, numerous sidewalk trip hazards will be addressed throughout the property. For the least severe cases, these hazards will be repaired using a technique called precision concrete cutting. A comparison analysis revealed that the cost to repair serviceable concrete is far less than the cost to replace it. Additionally, repairing produces far less disruption to pedestrian traffic and creates a lot less mess. To learn more about this cutting technique, visit <http://precisionsafesidewalks.com/>.

In the May newsletter, we indicated that the association will seek the advice of an arborist regarding the parking island trees. Currently, the hiring of an arborist is still pending.

Rusting heat/chimney stacks – for which unit owners are responsible – are a concern. There are many stacks in the community which require rust removal and repainting, or replacement. From an aesthetic standpoint, it is an eyesore. From a safety standpoint, it's possible that some of these stacks might be almost rusted through and compromised. If you have a rusty heat stack, please have it inspected and properly addressed.

I would like to pass along some compliments I have received concerning Somerset. My family

had several out-of-state visitors stay with us during the spring and summer months, and each of them remarked on how wonderful our 28 year old community looks. Everything from the siding, roofing, landscaping, decks, fencing/sheds, and asphalt was given a thumbs-up. I received similar comments from contractors we've hired to work inside of our unit. These positive comments are a direct reflection of the care and attentiveness exhibited by our Board, management, committees, and residents. Thanks to everyone for making Somerset a place to be proud of!

We hope you enjoy the rest of your summer. ✧

**Involvement Is  
The Key To A  
Successful  
Association.**



*By Earl Burton*

In the purest sense, the Community Association is a form of representative democratic governance. As with actual representative governments, the various leaders have prescribed roles and responsibilities. In community associations, the owners are the electorate and have the responsibility of being good citizens (paying assessments, voting, abiding by the rules, etc.) and for electing representatives to a policy body to carry out a policy-making and administrative oversight role. Officers are elected to provide leadership to the policy body. Committees are created by the Board to provide substantive input to the board's deliberative process and as a conduit for owner participation and involvement.

The community association is self-governed by owners and as such, the homeowners select from among themselves leaders who make decisions for the group. Homeowners must then abide by those rules and decisions so it behooves each owner to be involved.

Joining a committee is a responsibility each owner should consider to share in the work involved in governing our association. It also creates an opportunity for more in-depth participation and important decision making and gives a mechanism to have your ideas not only heard but implemented.

Owners also have a responsibility to adhere to legal obligations. They have an obligation to pay assessments in a timely fashion in order to permit the association to meet its financial obligations without penalties. Timely assessment payments save the association, and you, the owner, the added costs of collection activity.

Finally, owners have a responsibility to adhere to rules and regulations, mutually agreed to and properly adopted. This adherence to the rules permits owners to live harmoniously under the same constraints. It also saves us the expense of more formal enforcement (which your Somerset board tries desperately to avoid at any and all costs). ✧

**Secretary's Letter**

*By Charlotte Jordan*

**Subject: What is a Quorum  
and Why is it Important?**



A quorum is the minimum number of owners who must be at an annual meeting before business can be transacted. The Governing Documents tell us what that minimum number is for our association. It's relatively low, but we still have a tough time getting to it. It's a common problem in many associations.

Annual Membership Meetings (*this year, it's October 18!*) that don't have a quorum must be adjourned and rescheduled at a later date. This costs the association money and creates more work. And, achieving a quorum at a second meeting—if we couldn't get one the first time—is even harder.

So, why bother to try again? Because the board is legally obligated to conduct an annual membership meeting. It's an important part of conducting association business. During the annual meeting, new board members are elected. No quorum—no election. This means the current directors will have to continue serving until an election can be conducted.

Good news: You can be “at” a meeting and across the country at the same time by signing a proxy! That's how you assign your vote, in writing, to another person. Proxies count toward the quorum, so they're very important to the association.

We ask you to complete a proxy form, even if you plan to attend the meeting. That's just in case something comes up that prevents you from attending. And, when you do attend the meeting, your proxy will be returned to you.

Because proxies are so important to achieving a quorum, you may find us knocking on your door, calling on the phone, or even stopping you in the common areas asking you to sign a proxy form. We'll do anything to achieve a quorum. Without it, we can't do business, and eventually that affects you, the homeowner. ✨

**Treasurer's Notes**



*By Patrina Kandul*

**Subject: Fair Debt Collection Practices**

Our association makes every effort to work with homeowners who are having problems paying their assessments. But sometimes people get behind anyway. We want our homeowners to know that the association adheres to the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act (FDCPA), and we do not harass homeowners for unpaid assessments.

Community associations are required to collect assessments, which many state and federal courts consider to be debts. The FDCPA requires those

who collect debts from individuals—like homeowners in a community association—to refrain from tactics that might be considered invasive. The FDCPA prohibits the association from:

- Harassing you
- Threatening you with violence or harm
- Publishing names of owners who are delinquent or refuse to pay
- Annoying you with repeated phone calls
- Making false statements about you
- Misrepresenting the amount you owe
- Depositing your post-dated check early
- Threatening to take legal action against you when we don't really mean it
- Providing your personal information to anyone else without your permission

The FDCPA also requires the association to notify you in writing about your delinquent assessments. This correspondence must state that it is an attempt to collect a debt, include the amount of the debt and the association's name, and it must state that you have 30 days to dispute the debt in writing. If an association violates any of these stipulations, it could be liable to the homeowner for damages, attorneys' fees, and court costs.

For more information about the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, visit the Federal Trade Commission's Consumer Information page at [www-consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0149-debt-collection](http://www-consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0149-debt-collection).

If you are having problems meeting your financial obligations to the Association please contact our community manager, Ms. Stacy Panuzio, [spanuzio@capitolcorp.com](mailto:spanuzio@capitolcorp.com) or at 703-707-6404 for assistance. ✨

**Board Minutes**

*By Greg Hodgson*

Did you know that as a Somerset unit owner, you can read our association’s Board meeting minutes on our website? While the meeting minutes are not intended to record every discussion and debate word-for-word, they do include all actions voted on by the Board. In addition to reading the quarterly newsletter, reading the meeting minutes is a good way to stay informed about what’s going on in our association!

Accessing the minutes is easy: Just sign in to your Somerset account at [www.somersetatwestridge.org](http://www.somersetatwestridge.org) and go to Resources>Board Minutes. If you have any questions, please contact Stacy Panuzio at [spanuzio@capitolcorp.com](mailto:spanuzio@capitolcorp.com) r 703-707-6404.

**Upcoming Board Meetings**

**September 13**

**November 15**

**\*\*Association Annual Meeting - October 18\*\***

Residents are welcomed and encouraged to attend Board meetings, which are held at the Westridge Clubhouse and begin at 7:00 PM.

**Somerset at Westridge, A Condominium**

Management Company: Capitol Property Management  
 3914 Centreville Road, Suite 300, Chantilly, VA 20151  
 Manager: Stacy Panuzio; 703-707-6404;  
[spanuzio@capitolcorp.com](mailto:spanuzio@capitolcorp.com)  
 After Hours Emergency: 703-401-1918  
 Somerset Website: [www.somersetatwestridge.org](http://www.somersetatwestridge.org)  
 Board of Directors: [bod@somersetatwestridge.org](mailto:bod@somersetatwestridge.org)  
 Architectural Landscape Committee: [alc@somersetatwestridge.org](mailto:alc@somersetatwestridge.org)

**Westridge Swim & Racquet Club**

Management Company: Legum & Norman  
 12764 Quarterhorse Lane, Woodbridge, VA 22192  
 General Manager: Debbie Carter; 703-590-1600;  
[HOA@Westridgeva.org](mailto:HOA@Westridgeva.org)  
 Westridge Website: [www.westridgeva.org](http://www.westridgeva.org)

**Additional Contacts**

Emergency Police, Fire, Ambulance: 911  
 Police Non-Emergency: 703-792-6500  
 Washington Gas: Emergency, 703-750-1400; Non-Emergency, 703-750-1000  
 Dominion Virginia Power: 1-888-667-3000  
 Towing: Dominion Wrecker Service; 703-590-0994  
 Trash: American Disposal Services; 703-368-0500;