

NEWSLETTER

HOA Board Meetings

Regular Board of Directors meetings are held from 7:00PM to 9:00PM on the following dates: Thursday, September 13 (Thear residence); and Tuesday, November 13 (Milke residence). All homeowners are welcome to attend. ❖

HOA Web Site

The Brookeville Farms HOA web site is located at www.bfmdhoa.info. This site includes information pertaining to the HOA such as Architectural Review forms, minutes from previous board meetings, current and previous newsletters, as well as contact information for board members. ❖

Community E-Mail List

The Brookeville Farms community maintains an e-mail distribution list to make it easier to communicate with our neighbors. The e-mail address is "bfneighbors@bfmdhoa.info". This list has been used to find recommendations for service providers, find carpool buddies, and to participate in group purchasing agreements (like, propane and whole-house generators). The Homeowners Association newsletter is also distributed to this list.

To add your e-mail address to the list do the following:

- Using your web browser, go to the HOA web site - www.bfmdhoa.info.
- Select "E-mail List" from the left column.
- Fill in the form at the bottom of the page. ❖

A Fitness Trend Called Plogging

Running is good for your health. Picking up litter is good for the planet's health. Why not combine the two? That's the idea behind "plogging," a new environmentally conscious fitness trend where people pick up rubbish while on a run. This exercise-meets-eco-friendly activity started in Sweden and has since spread throughout Europe and into the U.S., Mexico, and beyond. A more accessible cousin of plogging is plalking, walking and picking up trash. How often you plog, how much trash you gather

each time, what types of trash you collect, and how you transport said trash is really up to you. There is no wrong way to do it. It does not matter how much or how little you pick up—it's an empowering way to engage with our community. Whether you decide to plog one day a week or one day a month, it helps our environment.

Plogging tips:

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Wear gloves. If you will be in an area where you might encounter glass or other sharp objects, consider gardening gloves rather than latex.
- Bring separate bags for waste and recyclables.
- Carry extra bags. You might be surprised at the amount of trash you find, and running with overstuffed bags or empty bottles can be a hazard.
- Do a full-body warm-up.
- When you pause to pick up trash, do so by squatting down instead of bending over.
- If you are in a group, be sure you let people know when you are stopping. ❖

Extreme Weather Pet Advisory

The Humane Rescue Alliance (HRA) offers these tips to help pet owners keep their animals safe during hot weather:

- Keep your pets indoors when temperatures are extreme and in the shade when they are outdoors.
- Walk your pets early in the morning or later in the evening to avoid the hottest part of the day.
- Give pets plenty of water to avoid dehydration. When you walk your pet or take your pet outside, carry water with you.
- Never leave your animals alone in a parked vehicle. Temperatures in cars can increase rapidly and become lethal.
- Animals with short noses such as Bulldogs, Pugs, Boston Terriers and Persian cats, are especially vulnerable in the heat. Dogs and cats cool themselves by breathing through their mouths, but those with flat faces cannot cool as quickly and need extra attention.
- If your pet is panting excessively, drooling, struggling to walk, is lethargic or has bloody diarrhea

or vomiting, know that that these are potentially signs of overheating.

- Windows in the home that are open should have screens. Pets can fall out of open, unsecured windows.
- Be careful with dogs on asphalt in the heat. Not only are their paws sensitive but because their bodies are closer to the asphalt, they can overheat more easily.
- As always, if you think your pet is in distress due to the heat, call your veterinarian as soon as possible.
- If you are hot, your pet is too!

If anyone sees an animal in distress, including an animal that has been left outside in extreme temperatures, the HRA is asking them to call 202-576-6664 to report it. ❖

How to Hire a Home Contractor

A home construction or renovation disaster can easily happen if you hire the wrong contractor. We've all heard the horror stories about contractors who don't show up to the job site, spring unfair fees on you at the last minute or can't seem to finish the project anywhere near the deadline. To keep yourself safe from these types of situations, it's important to follow certain guidelines when hiring a contractor. Keep reading for tips and best practices for hiring a contractor.

Make use of your state's consumer protection agency and the Better Business Bureau

Even if you meet face-to-face with a contractor you feel comfortable with and think will get the job done, it's still advisable to double check their background. Look up their name through your state's consumer protection agency and with the Better Business Bureau to make sure that they don't have a record of disputes with other clients they've worked with.

Ask for references

Always ask for at least three references of clients that the contractor has worked with in the past. The contractor should give you a list of their past clients' names, addresses and phone numbers. Ask the references if the work was completed on time, if the workers were punctual, if there were unexpected costs and if they were happy with the quality of the work.

Ask for their insurance information

Depending on the type of home project you need completed, the contractor should have the appropriate insurance to do it. Otherwise, you could be on the hook for on-the-job injuries and other liabilities. Some examples of the type of insurance the contractor should have are workers'

compensation, personal liability and property damage coverage.

Drop in on their current job sites

If you really want an accurate read of a contractor's performance, drop in on one of their current job sites and have a look for yourself. If you find disorganization, sloppy workmanship or safety hazards, this is a clear sign not to work with this individual.

Payment demands and lowball bids are red flags

Typically, the client pays the contractor about 10 percent of the total cost upfront and then makes individual payments of 25 percent of the cost throughout the completion of the project. However, if the contractor asks you for a lot of money upfront, this is a clear indication that they may be desperate for cash. Also, be wary of lowball bids on your construction project. If a contractor makes you an offer that seems too good to be true, it often is. It's a red flag that this person doesn't have a lot of work right now because they can't get hired for one reason or another.

Ask about credentials

First and foremost, the contractor you hire must be licensed. Don't work with anyone who isn't. It is also advisable to work with a contractor who has additional credentials such as a certified graduate remodeler or membership in organizations such as the local Building Industry Association or the National Association of Home Builders. Holding these designations means that they adhere to strict guidelines put forth by these organizations.

Put everything in writing

Everything must be in writing. All the minute details that you and your contractor discuss about the way in which the work will be completed should be included in a contract. For instance, any agreements made in conversation about whether the contractor and their crew are responsible for cleanup are items that should appear in the contract. And, of course, you need the basics: your name and the contractor's, addresses, phone numbers, subcontractor information, payment schedules, start and end dates, and more. ❖

"Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." -- Benjamin Franklin