

NEWSLETTER

HOA Board Meetings

Regular Board of Directors meetings are held from 7:00PM to 9:00PM on the following dates: Tuesday, February 4 (Annual Meeting - Longwood Recreation Center); Tuesday, April 7 (Sager residence); Tuesday, June 9 (Sager residence); Tuesday, September 8 (Sager residence); and Thursday, November 12 (Sager 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.

Why is a Coyote Following Me?

Has a coyote ever “followed” you or your dog while you’re walking in your neighborhood or in the park? If so, you may have felt afraid, perhaps thought the coyote was stalking you, or that an attack was imminent. But don’t fear. Coyotes are naturally curious animals, and often engage in this behavior called “escorting”. Escorting is when a coyote, sometimes with its mate, makes sure that you are



Brookeville Farms Coyote (Photo by Don Collins)

leaving its territory.

This behavior is most often seen from early March to late April, when coyote parents are protecting their precious puppies. Escorting most often happens in early morning or in the evening, and because they may see dogs as a threat to their babies, it’s most often seen by dog walkers.

What do you do if you’re “escorted” by a coyote? Don’t panic; the coyote is much more terrified of you! If you don’t have your dog leashed - which you should in coyote country- immediately leash it and keep it by your side. Calmly keep walking, slowly, as normally. Soon enough, you’ll be out of the coyote’s home and he will stop escorting you! On the off chance the escorting coyote starts to approach too closely, shout and wave your hands to frighten it away. As we humans develop more and more woodlands, coyote coexistence has become even more essential; we simply must learn to speak their language. ♦

Montgomery County Snow Portal

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/snow/ provides information on the latest delays and closings, the status of plowing in your neighborhood, other up-to-date snow-related information and allows you to submit a service request. ♦

Clearing Sidewalks of Snow and Ice - If You Own Property, It's Your Responsibility

Clearing sidewalks within 24 hours after the end of a snowstorm is a civic responsibility that keeps our communities and neighbors safe – and it’s the law. Property owners are required to clear sidewalks in front of, and alongside, their properties. Make sure to clear walks wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers. If your neighbor is elderly or disabled, consider clearing their sidewalks and checking on them during storms. Residents who wish to report an unshoveled sidewalk can do so online or by calling 311. ♦

Save Money and Conserve Energy

Have you thought about the ways you can save money and energy in your home? It's easier than you think and doesn't have to cost a fortune. Some options may have larger upfront costs but will pay for themselves quickly. Here are just a few things you can consider to conserve energy in your home.

Programable Thermostat

If your home still has an old thermostat, it may be time to upgrade. A programmable thermostat can give you the ability to set times for when the heat or air conditioning goes up or down, depending on your schedule. And you don't need to do anything — just set and forget. If you want to get really modern, there are now smart thermostats that you can connect to from your phone and control even when you're not home.

Ceiling Fans

Something as simple as installing a ceiling fan can help you save energy. It moves air around your home, increasing circulation and allowing your furnace or air conditioner to run less. Ceiling fans aren't useful only in the summer. Most have a setting for winter, too, which will push the warmer air down, so your heat is more efficient.

Appliances and Fixtures

Many years ago, appliance manufacturers began selling appliances with the sole purpose of efficiency. For example, an energy-efficient dishwasher or washing machine will use less water to get your dishes or clothes clean. And you can also install fixtures to help with water conservation, such as low-flow toilets or shower heads.

Change Your Lightbulbs

Simply changing out your lightbulbs from incandescent or fluorescent can help. Today, LED lightbulbs are much more affordable than they once were, and they use a fraction of the energy. They also last longer, which can help your budget in the long term.

Insulate Your Home

Have you checked your insulation lately? Certain types of insulation are better than others. And some people don't realize that their home isn't as efficiently insulated as it could be. ♦

Digital Inheritance

Have you ever thought about the uncomfortable question, what happens to our digital presence when

we die or become incapacitated? Many of us have or know we should have a will and checklists of what loved ones need to know in the event of our passing. But what about all of our digital data and online accounts? Should we consider some type of digital will? Should we create a "digital inheritance" plan?

Think about your digital presence. Bank and retirement accounts, home mortgages, family photos and videos, smart home accounts, email, and social media are just some of the many examples that make up our digital footprint. In the event of your death or the death of a close family member, family and loved ones may need prompt access to those accounts or data. In addition, legacy data and online accounts left behind could become vulnerable over time to hackers, thus placing family and friends at risk.

Creating a Plan

It is a good idea to discuss your desires with your trusted family or friends, like other end-of-life details. In addition to having these conversations, take inventory and document your digital assets and online accounts. If you do not provide access to your accounts after you die, it can be very difficult for family members to access or close them. For example, would you want your family members to be locked out of all those years of family photos and videos you have stored online?

One idea is to document your online presences in a password manager. This is a program that securely stores all your logins and passwords, credit cards, and other sensitive information. It's designed to make creating, storing, and accessing passwords and security questions vastly simpler. In many ways, this is a powerful tool to catalog your digital presence. With many password managers you can even configure them to share all or certain passwords with other trusted family members. If you are uncomfortable with that, document access to your password manager and seal that in an envelope; then have that sealed envelope opened after your passing by an executor or trusted family member. This way, they will have access to your password manager and be able to access your accounts and information stored in there.

In addition, some sites provide the option to identify legacy or trusted contacts. Facebook, for example, allows participants to determine in advance if they would like their account deleted or memorialized after passing. Memorializing creates a space that's only visible to existing friends, where memories can be shared. Finally, you may want to consider dealing with

a lawyer or estate planner who specializes in digital inheritance.

Inheriting Digital Assets

You may find yourself in the situation where you have to recover or access the online accounts of a recently deceased friend or family member. We recommend you first coordinate with a lawyer and other family members before taking action. Other family members could quickly become upset if they see you taking action without consulting them first. Then start with identifying any passwords you can find. Did the family member write them down or store them anywhere? If that is not an option, can you access any computers or mobile devices they used and are still logged into? If not, you most likely will have to reach out to each site for access to the deceased member's account. This often includes having to provide both a death certificate and proof you are directly related to the family member. In some cases, you will not be able to access the account or data stored in the account but only delete it. Every site handles these situations differently, which can be a time-consuming process.

In today's digital world, we should not only consider physical assets but also digital assets in our future estate planning. ♦

Night Driving Tips

An estimated 90% of all driver decisions are based on what the driver can see. Yet at night, one's vision is compromised, which may account for the fact that approximately 40% of all fatal motor vehicle accidents occur at night. Experts offer the following tips for driving in the dark.

Keep Windshield and Windows Clean

Limiting the glare from other headlights is very important. A dirty windshield will make matters far worse. Try polishing glass with newspaper to remove all residue.

Clean and Adjust Exterior Mirrors

Dirty mirrors are just like a dirty windshield and can reflect and distort light that distracts the driver. So keep them sparkling clean.

Aim Headlights

Even in brand new vehicles, headlights are sometimes uneven or pointed lower than necessary. Take the time to review your owner's manual and aim them correctly so they'll light up the roadway as best as possible.

Turn Down Dash Lights

Today's vehicles come equipped with infotainment systems and more. These can bring a lot of unnecessary distracting sources of light into the cabin and diminish your vision. At night, turn down your dash lights to the lowest setting.

Don't Stare at Oncoming Lights

Bright lights aimed at your eyes can be distracting and fatiguing. Turn your gaze away from other lights on the road, and don't look at oncoming high beams. If a car behind you has its high beams on, use the switch on your rearview mirror to move it to reflect light backward to alert the driver, and to get the reflection away from your own eyes.

Slow Down

When driving at night, especially on rural roads that are not well lit, slow down. Obey the speed limit or drive slightly under the limit — this gives you ample time to react should you need to.

Follow Indicators to Find the Roadway

At night, road markings can be nearly invisible. To find the roadway in the distance, rely on the traffic ahead of you, watching which way it curves. In addition, utility poles, reflective street signs, and houses with lights can all serve as indicators for the shape and path of the roadway ahead.

Maintain Enough Following Distance

Never tailgate, but it's especially dangerous to do so at night. Maintain a safe following distance so you have plenty of time to react should something unexpected happen on the road.

Use High Beams Appropriately

On back roads that are poorly lit you'll be able to see much better by using your high beams, but only if driving on a relatively open road. Just make sure you switch them off when you see another vehicle approaching — you don't want to blind another driver which can cause a collision.

Scan Intersections and Crosswalks

Your vision is compromised at night. Be extra vigilant when approaching an intersection to look out for other cars. The same applies to crosswalks, where you'll want to be on the alert for difficult-to-spot pedestrians. In fact, 75% of pedestrian fatalities occur after dark, according to AAA. ♦

Beware Blue-Green Algae Poisoning

Toxic blue-green algae blooms have been identified in all 50 states. Blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) is found in stagnant freshwater sources like ponds and lakes during warm weather.

- Inspect water before allowing your dog to swim. Blue-green algae looks like green slime or paint on the surface of the water.
- Do not allow your dog to drink stagnant water.
- If your dog swims in stagnant water, immediately rinse him off with clean, fresh water.
- Blue-green algae poisoning can be fatal. Seek immediate veterinary care if you notice the following symptoms after exposure to stagnant water: panting, diarrhea, excessive drooling, seizures, disorientation, vomiting or difficulty breathing. ♦