

NEWSLETTER

HOA Board Meetings

Regular Board of Directors meetings are held from 7:00PM to 9:00PM on the following dates: Tuesday, April 7; Tuesday, June 9; Tuesday, September 8; and Thursday, November 12. Until the coronavirus crisis is over, these meetings will be held via teleconference. Contact the HOA president for access information. All homeowners are welcome to attend.



HOA Dues

Please note that the HOA Treasurer is Phil Craig at 20509 Abrams Court. If you have your HOA dues sent from a bank BillPay service, please check that you have the correct address. Incorrectly addressed payments may soon not get to the Treasurer. ❖

Accomplishments for 2019

At the February Annual Meeting, a summary of the major accomplishments for the past year were presented. They are outlined below:

Architectural Committee

- Projects approved: 1 pool, 1 solar panel project.

Landscaping Committee

- Landscaping at the east entrance of the community was renovated.
 - Dead tree removed/dead branches cut down.
 - Cherry laurel bushes planted along upper border.
 - Old juniper bushes around entrance sign replaced with new juniper bushes.
- Trees in the common areas were trimmed.
- The landscape vendor (Estes) continues to do a good job.

Communication Committee

- Five HOA newsletters were published and distributed by email.
- Welcome packages sent to five new homeowners.
- The HOA web site was kept up to date.

Other

- Potomac Disposal is providing good trash service.
- New propane pricing contracts established.
- Speed camera installed on Bordly Drive.
- Community cleanup day was a success.
- The HOA is now a member of GOCA.
- The fireback found during the archeological dig on the Pleasant Hill Farm is on display at the Brookeville Beer Farm. The display case was constructed by John O'Loughlin.
- CCOC annual survey completed. ❖

Dog Attack

My dog was attacked by two dogs earlier this month. He was bitten on the rear leg. A trip to the vet, two staples and antibiotics, and lots of love have him back to his old self. In researching dog-on-dog attacks, I learned some things that may be helpful if you find yourself in a similar situation.

- Be aware of your surroundings. Note any dogs that are not completely under the control of their handler.
- Carry something that can be used to keep a dog from attacking. This could be an animal deterrent spray, mace, a stun gun, or a cattle prod.
- Do NOT pick up your dog in an effort to protect him. The attacking dog may leap at you instead (in a bid to get at your dog) and you may be seriously injured just for being in the way. If you are hurt, you won't be able to help your dog.
- Note any details you can about the dogs, where they live, and their owner's name and address. Note the breed, size, color of the dogs. Snap a photo with your cell phone if it is safe to do so.
- Get the names and phone numbers of any witnesses.
- Note the day, the time, and the location. Snap a photo of the location if you can; your cell phone should record a date/time stamp.
- Get your dog to the vet, even if he doesn't show any external signs of injury. Better to be safe than sorry.
- File a complaint with the local animal control. Even if the owners apologize, pay the vet bill, and seem like nice people - file a complaint. If

the dog has a history of aggressiveness, animal control can determine what additional steps may need to be taken.

- Be aware that some dogs may need 'rehabilitation' after an attack. They may be afraid of other dogs and might even show signs of fear-aggression. If you notice this happening with your dog, consult a dog behaviorist. The behaviorist can teach you ways to help your dog to become more comfortable around other dogs again. Dogs also pick up cues from their people's body language. If you stay relaxed, your dog will be more relaxed, too.

Dogs that are known to be aggressive should never be given the chance to exercise their aggressive tendencies. It is the owner's responsibility to keep these pets securely leashed and under control at all times. If it's your dog that's the aggressive one, work with a behaviorist to learn ways to safely manage your dog around others. ❖

Prepping Your Home for Sale

As you prepare to put your home on the market, consider prioritizing the tasks that will make your house sale-ready on a budget:

- Clean and declutter your house. Empty spaces encourage potential buyers to imagine themselves living there and a clean house looks well cared for. Remove clothes from your closet to show buyers they will have more than enough storage space.
- Add curb appeal. Spend some time tending to your exterior. Focus on trimming bushes and trees, weeding flower beds, repairing gutters, fixing peeling paint, putting in new mulch or gravel, weeding and repairing driveways and walkways, and installing décor like wreathes, pots, and house numbers.
- Paint walls neutral colors. Now it's really time to say goodbye. Your home may lose some of its character in white, but it's more appealing to a wide variety of buyers. People can also tell when a coat of paint is fresh and new!
- Make home repairs before you show the house. Focus your attention on things like leaking faucets, loose doorknobs, stained tiles and grout, running toilets, broken windows, and burned-out light bulbs
- Do small updates to spruce up your home for a dime. Ensure that the appliances match, get new cupboard knobs, or stick on new wall tiles. Small design touches go a long way.
- Give each room a well-defined purpose. Potential homebuyers find it inspiring. Even if you've been

using the room for many tasks, pick one to showcase.

- Check the flow of your house. Ensure that furniture is not blocking people's paths.
- Create a blank canvass. As with the simple wall colors, keep the decorations simple and free of personal items. The goal is for potential buyers to be able to imagine their own decorations in the house.
- Open the curtains. Let light in and turn on inside lights, and include some potted plants for a bit of green.
- Produce good smells in your home. Avoid cooking bacon, microwave popcorn, or anything with a lingering smell on the day of an open house. Instead, use the morning to do some baking.

Taking a critical eye to your house can help you identify many areas that need improvement. Prioritize this list to make your house move even faster on the market. ❖

Reduce Vehicle-Related Thefts

Auto theft and theft from vehicle remain a high-volume crime in Montgomery County. Residents can prevent and/or reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of these types of crimes by removing valuables and any spare keys from vehicles and locking vehicles when they are left unattended.

Having your vehicle or property stolen can be inconvenient and costly, and can also lead to additional victimization. If a suspect is able to obtain personal information from items in a vehicle, you are susceptible to becoming a victim of identity theft. Also, thieves have used stolen vehicles in the commission of other crimes.

The Montgomery County Police Department wants you to lower your risk of becoming a victim of auto theft and theft from vehicle by urging you to follow these safety tips:

- Keep your vehicle keys with you at all times, and never leave a spare key or valet key in your vehicle. Note: Valet keys can be used to start the vehicle.
- Close and lock all vehicle windows and doors when leaving vehicle unattended.
- Remove valuables from the vehicle.
- Don't leave a vehicle running if unattended.
- If your vehicle has a "push button" ignition system, make sure that the vehicle is turned off and locked before you leave it unattended.
- Park in well-lit and well-traveled areas.
- Park in a secure garage if possible.

- Use a car alarm and/or anti-theft device.
- Use a vehicle locator device.

Many of these vehicle-related crimes occur overnight. The Montgomery County Police Department reminds residents to immediately call 9-1-1 if they observe any suspicious behavior or activity.

If you have questions relating to vehicle theft in Montgomery County, please call the Montgomery County Police Department-Centralized Auto Theft Section at 240-773-6370.



Should I Mulch Around Trees?

It's time to mulch again! But, with the time and money it takes to mulch your trees and beds regularly, you're likely wondering, "Is it worth it?" Kansas State University says applying mulch is the single best thing you can do for a tree after you plant it.

- Adding mulch can nearly double the tree growth rate – compared to when trees grow in grass. Mulch increases the growth rate of walnut trees by 89 percent. Other fine hardwood trees – like oak, maple, hickory, birch, beech and cherry trees – grow 79 percent more with mulch. (United States Forest Service 2016)
- Mulch prevents many weed seeds from germinating by lessening the amount of light they get. Thicker, coarser organic mulch, rather than a finer mulch like compost, does a better job reducing weed growth. One study found that mulch can reduce weed growth by 45 percent the first year and 85 percent the second year! (HortTechnology 2007; HortTechnology 2016)
- Mulch helps the tree's soil accumulate more nutrients, like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. The more inches of mulch you add, the more nutrients your soil gets. But, too much mulch can actually damage plants. That's why 2 to 3 inches of mulch is best. (University of California 2009)
- Organic mulch can reduce water evaporation by about 35 percent compared to bare soil. If you apply the right amount of mulch, you can significantly reduce how often and how much you water. Plus, adding a layer of organic mulch can reduce soil erosion by up to 86 percent. Soil erosion removes topsoil, which contains all kinds of good organic matter that your trees and plants need. (Washington State University 2007)
- Mulch acts as a constant insulator for our tree by keeping the soil warm in winter and cool in summer. Organic, coarser mulch does a better job at this than inorganic or processed mulches, like fabrics or plastics. (Swedish University 1997)

Choosing not to mulch, especially with newly planted trees, brings some significant drawbacks such as:

- Weeds. They have a better chance of cropping up under an unmulched tree.

- Stalled root growth. Roots have to compete with grass for water and nutrients in the soil. And without mulch, it's tough for tree roots to win that battle.
- Pest problems. Weak, dehydrated trees have a hard time shielding themselves from an infestation. ❖

Distraction Thefts

Police are also warning residents to be aware of distraction thefts in which the suspect(s) will attempt to distract the victim before committing the theft. In these cases, the suspect will approach a customer at a grocery store or retail store and distract her with a question about a product. Meanwhile, a second suspect will steal the customer's purse from her shopping cart. The victim will likely not realize that her purse was stolen until reaching the cash register to pay for merchandise. By this time, the suspect(s) have fled and may be using the stolen credit cards to make purchases at nearby business establishments.

The Montgomery County Police Department is offering the following tips to help eliminate the opportunity of becoming a victim of this type of theft:

For men:

- Avoid carrying your wallet in your back pocket. Thieves will generally avoid stealing a wallet from a front pocket.
- Avoid carrying large sums of money, several credit cards, or several forms of ID in your wallet.

For women:

- Avoid carrying your wallet in your purse or use a purse that is difficult to open.
- When carrying your purse, keep it closed and in front of your body.
- Never leave your purse unattended on a store counter or in a grocery cart.

For all:

- Consider photocopying the content of your wallet in order to know exactly what was obtained should your wallet be stolen.



"When you make a mistake, there are only three things you should ever do about it: admit it, learn from it, and don't repeat it." -- Paul "Bear" Bryant