

Mill Creek HOA
Board Meeting Agenda
Monday, February 20, 2023 7:30 pm
via Zoom

Adele Plunkett, Dan Heuchert, Blair Carter, Robert Finley, Anne Golladay, Jim Aitken, Naomi Aitken, Tim Shephard, Carmen Trimble, Carol Cutler, Nancy Dewitt, Tish Jennings, Caroline Wade, Jill Shatto, Jorge Giovanni, Neal Grandy, Peggy Scoggin, Barb Shepherd, Cheryl Eklund, Carol Hernandez, Kurt Vogelsang, James Hansen, Kimberly Leonard

1. Convene 7:35

2. Approval of January Minutes

Secretary has updated two typos noted by Naomi by email.

All in favor. Approved.

3. Treasurer's Report (*Jim Aitken*)

a. This was sent by Jim to board members by email

b. There was a large deposit recently, numbers of January not as robust as they actually are.

c. 30 unpaid (of 215) dues – Carmen will send a note this week

d. \$70,000 in checking, \$28,000 in savings

e. Question from N. Grandy about timing of dues versus annual meeting (which used to be in January). It's good to know when the financial statement is available before paying the annual dues.

f. Could we post the financial spreadsheet on the webpage? Note, this is exposed to the entire internet world.

g. Generally preferable to release only to those who request (and who are homeowners). "Financial records can be released upon request to homeowners" on webpage and notice for dues.

h. Carmen would verify that the request is by a homeowner, and Jim could provide a copy of the spreadsheet.

- i. Note that anytime someone asks for a disclosure, they receive a general financial statement.*
- j. J. Aitken makes a motion: request from the Homeowner goes to treasurer@millcreekclassic.org; Carmen validates that it's a homeowner; Carmen notifies Jim when there's a request by a homeowner; Jim sends the most recent complete report to the person requesting. → All in favor, no objections.*
- k. Carmen will create the address treasurer@millcreekclassic.org*

4. Committee Reports

a. Architectural Review (Naomi Aitken)

- i. One request from homeowner to remove tree, ARC will go to 1475 Gray Stone Court to review*
- ii. One inquiry about mailbox paint.*
- iii. Some discussion about identifying a woodworker who can make mailboxes.*

b. Common Grounds (Dan Heuchert)

- i. Happy to have passed the 1 year anniversary of the January 9 2022 ice storm, without another!*
- ii. No new requests since last month.*
- iii. No communication with Lake Reynovia on a prior drainage issue.*

c. Nature Committee (Caroline Wade)

- i. Winter newsletter was finalized and sent via email, also soliciting additional feedback from neighbors*
- ii. February 1 meeting hosted 4 local experts (two from County, TJ Water district, Blue Ridge PRISM)*
- iii. C. Wade sent out a comprehensive report to the board and those who were interested. You can ask for that to be sent directly.*
 - 1. Major priority is the vines on the trees in the common area.*
- iv. Two sites that came up:*

1. *south of Mill Creek Drive at creek crossing, there are several trees with significant vines, overgrowth, and debris that could block the culvert and important for drainage*
2. *North side of Mill Creek Drive, conversation about possible erosion control, the soil and water district has a cost share (VCAPS) program that would include soil management that is heavily subsidized. C. Wade is happy to take the lead on that.*

v. *VCAPS proposal:*

1. *This is a reimbursement program, proposal works with the county that helps with contractors; we would pay and then submit receipts for reimbursement of 80% up to \$8000. Suggestion to plant native plants in that space (need to mark it so it won't be mowed), we can also put up signs about pollinators to make it educational for the neighbors.*
2. *C. Cutler is going through the same program on her property, and would like to help C. Wade for this.*
3. *Motion to authorize C. Wade to proceed with an application for funding (Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water District VCAPS program). Passed.*
4. *C. Wade will draft the proposal and pass it by the board for approval.*

vi. *Another workday with 2 new volunteers cleared many more vines (especially English Ivy, some bittersweet and Autumn Olive).*

vii. *Improved plans for herbicide use notification, which will now be 48 hours in advance of any usage. Note that the usage of herbicide is VERY targeted and cautiously used, with several knowledgeable neighbors advising on its use.*

5. Office Manager's Report (Carmen Trimble)

- a. Status of Dues

- i. 30 remaining, C. Trimble will reach out this week.*
 - ii. For those (4) delinquent from previous years, C. Trimble will file this (the process is slightly different from a previous year, so she is researching this now).*
 - b. Board Election: candidate notice on website, bios on website*
 - i. Annual meeting will be on third Wednesday of April (April 19, 2023)*
 - ii. All current board members have decided to continue for another year.*
 - iii. Reach out to the community to find out if anyone is interested in serving.*
 - iv. Gather bios, notify the homeowners of the officer slate*
 - 1. Current board members need to send their bio.*
 - 2. C. Cutler suggests that board members make a statement about their vision for the upcoming year.*
 - v. If new individuals are interested in self-nominating or nominating someone else (with their permission), then we can list all names individually and have a vote (if no one new is interested in joining, then we can list the current directors as a unit)*
 - vi. Allow homeowners to send in a proxy vote and participation prior to the meeting.*
 - vii. Set up a collection point for return proxies (last year was Jim and Naomi's porch)*

6. New Business

- a. Nature Committee plans and program discussion*
 - i. Bridge is not permitted by the covenants, and has been removed. C. Cutler understands, and reiterates that it was a friendly gesture.*
 - ii. No one should install anything on common area without board approval.*
 - 1. A. Plunkett says that neighbors can propose a project at a board meeting for approval, and we can work together. That would be the proper procedure.*

- iii. *Note that there are a couple of bridges on Mill Creek common area in Biscuit Run connector area.*
- iv. *B. Carter would like to see the insurance policy to better understand our liability on bridges . R. Finley asks whether we are protected under a Virginia Law that says a property owner is not liable if not charging admission.*
- v. *Carmen is in the closest contact with the insurance company, looking for the policy and will send to B. Carter.*

b. Homeowners comments and concerns

- i. *C. Wade has a few slides to guide the discussion.*
- ii. *Nature Committee has tried to solicit feedback from homeowners*
- iii. *J. Shatto shares the concerns listed, she was at one of the “cleanup” days. Wonders if a short trail is what we want, given the wildlife involved. Does inviting people have an impact on the wildlife? Are we inviting people outside Mill Creek to come in? How do we maintain the trails? How do we make sure the area is safe?*
- iv. *P. Scoggin, on Nature Committee and has been involved with cutting down vines, freeing holly and ferns. She supports all this work, as well as getting rid of debris (where snakes might be). Husband does not want a path near his property. Expresses similar issues related to privacy, and their dog would be too excited if there were a designated pathway with mulch.*
- v. *T. Jennings (west side of pond), lives on Spring Mountain road, yard backs up to the common area near creek. Awful how overrun it is with vines, and in storms they can hear trees falling down. If we don’t have a pathway to get back there, it’s hard to get in and do maintenance. She has been working on maintenance of the common area near her house, and notes that it’s A LOT of work to get to the trees to take care of them. For this reason, she promotes a version of a path in order to get back and*

keep the area maintained. Also, it's important that there be a stable path for people

- vi. *C. Wade notes that there are some "animal trails" (clear ways already there) that serve as the basis of the current pathway system. But in other areas there are too many barriers to get back there.*
- vii. *T. Shepherd (east side of pond)*
 - 1. *Process: work of nature committee is valuable, and the process has not been followed. Does not want neighbors to do work near his property without knowing the boundaries; neighbor violated county ordinance by having dog off leash.*
 - 2. *His property is the nearest to the pond, with a narrow strip that will wash away in storms.*
 - 3. *Mindful of fox den. He claims the trail will make these go away.*
 - 4. *Safety issue. Trail will link Southern Parkway to near his backyard.*
 - 5. *He claims that the pine trees are designed to fall, independent of the ivy.*
 - a. *T. Jennings notes: Many of the trees in that area are tulip poplars and their lifespan is 300 years.*
 - b. *Shepherds acknowledge that homeowners CAN walk on the common area, they don't want a defined trail.*
- viii. *B. Shepherd, says that it's muddy and dangerous for people to walk back on the strip near their property .*
 - 1. *They remain in favor of cutting invasives and cleaning up the area.*
 - 2. *Appreciate the efforts of the nature committee in trying to preserve the common areas.*
- ix. *C. Cutler, agrees that we don't want many strangers from Southern Parkway along a defined trail, and grateful that Shepherd family is not opposed to neighbors walking around the pond if they want to.*
- x. *C. Wade (west side of pond) – appreciates hearing the concerns.*

1. *The east side of pond trail has been taken off the map. No more trail building with mulch on that side of the pond.*
 2. *Trail across the dam is in place as an access trail for the county. County comes out to clear the outflow.*
 3. *Side note on the county easement: We have one of the few easements that the county actually maintains. They do regular assessments to tell when they need to dredge the pond. It does not need to be dredged imminently.*
 4. *It was the NNC best intention to avoid the property. Given that they were near the area that earth work was done by HOA funded project, NNC thought that they were in common area. Apologies if they were on private homeowner property.*
 5. *What is the best way for HOA/ NNC to identify a homeowner property line? NNC is aware of GIS, and knows that it is not extremely accurate.*
- x. *Shepherds say that a change was made in the trail plan. Flier in mailboxes had a different trail plan, and indicated that communication should have been made in advance with the adjacent homeowners.*
- xii. *C. Wade to the board:*
1. *What is the process going forward in contacting homeowners (all homeowners) about work on the common area?*
 2. *If there is a question about property lines, what is the process to identify the boundaries?*
 - a. *T. Shepherd says that he does not have a problem with (as homeowner) getting a survey of his own property in order to know the boundaries.*
 3. *What should be done about the debris pile that is blocking common area access?*

- a. *B. Shepherd notes that much of the debris was from deadfall of trees from the common property.*

xiii. B. Carter:

1. *Comments on respecting property owners' concerns about safety and privacy, and having a common area does not mean we have to use it.*
2. *Suggests we should stop walking around the pond, and stop work near the pond (that is, go no farther), in order to preserve the natural animal habitats there.*

xiv. J. Shatto:

1. *Wants more communication about HOA activities*
2. *More information and transparent is a good solution*
3. *Wants to know what is the process? Who makes the decision?*
 - a. *R. Finley suggests that the HOA board has the final choice.*
 - b. *C. Wade reminds that she was invited to lead the Nature Committee by the board, and has been entirely in communication.*
 - c. *B. Carter reminds that homeowners should be informed*

xv. N. Grandy: Are we asking for ALL work to cease by NNC, or just halting the trail work?

1. *Agree that trail work has halted until further notice.*
2. *Further discussion points out that the February 26 meeting of the nature committee (for vine work on south side of Mill Creek Drive creek crossing) would be very helpful in order to avoid missing the heavy growth season. **This is approved.***
3. *C. Wade will reach out to both homeowners with adjacent property.*

xvi. R. Finley: Suggests to be very cautious about trail work near any fox den

- xvii. *J. Shatto (1295 Copperstone): wants to discuss storm drainage and runoff. Ditches getting wider, trail coming down Mill Creek is at risk of being gone. Neighbor behind has flooding in their yard due to this.*
 - 1. *Drainage and culvert is on VDOT property.*
 - 2. *C. Wade suggests T. Jefferson Soil and Water District*
- xviii. *D. Heuchert: Homeowner suggests that we start a neighborhood lost and found.*
 - 1. *Could a cubby hole be added to the Little Free Library space?*
- xix. *Another suggestion for communication: plexiglass board to announce meetings?*
 - 1. *Meetings are communicated by email*
 - 2. *Meetings are third Tuesday of the month*

7. Next Board Meeting:

- a. *Proposed: Tuesday, March 21, 2023, 7:30 pm APPROVED*
- b. *This will be a special board meeting for continuing this discussion*
- c. *Includes some planning for the annual meeting*

8. Adjournment 9:55 pm