

Mill Creek HOA  
Board Meeting Agenda (updated)  
Tuesday, March 21, 2023 7:30 pm  
via Zoom

Adele Plunkett, Carol Cutler, Jim Aitken, Naomi Aitken, Robert Finley, Tim Shephard, Dan Heuchert, Neal Grandy, Anne Golladay, Blair Carter ,Peggy Scoggin, Jill Shatto, Cheryl Eklund, Carmen Trimble, Kurt Vogelsang, Jorge Giovanni, Carol Hernandez

1. Convene *at 7:34*
2. Approval of February Minutes
  - a. Just one update was made, for annual meeting to be April 19 (previously written incorrectly as April 20)
  - b. Three insurance policies will be sent to Blair for her (legal) review and comment. Carmen has requested these.
3. Treasurer's Report *Jim*
  - a. At this time of year we have \$78k in checking, \$28k in savings. Winter was light, so no need to spend on downed trees this year yet.
  - b. \$10k is allocated for tree maintenance, \$2k to nature sub-committee
4. Committee Reports
  - a. Architectural Review *Naomi*
    - i. Two homeowners submitted request for trees, otherwise quiet.
    - ii. Two requests for fences, but have other things to take care of before submitting a proposal (including knowing where property lines are)
    - iii. Temporary Structure in a driveway - how to define? how to resolve?
      1. Notice has been sent to this house to say they are out of compliance, and they wanted more specificity of what the covenants and bylaws said.
      2. Nothing very specific is given in the bylaws and covenants about such a temporary garage.

3. Participants reminded that there is a description in the covenants of building materials that have to be consistent with the neighborhood. Also this building would have to be done with permission from the ARC.
4. This kind of temporary garage structure is not permitted, and would set a precedent.

b. Common Grounds *Dan*

- i. Even though we made it through the winter without major ice storms, remember that thunder storms are still coming up and can cause damage.
- ii. Cleanup campaign was to be organized by Naomi for Sunday, March 26, but just one person responded positively. Carol may send the email again, but need to post signs 24 hours in advance, so not much time is available to plan.

5. Office Assistant's Report *Carmen*

a. Status of Dues

- i. 15 dues outstanding, has been in touch with some of those owners
- ii. A filing is due at end of May, Annual report should be filed.
- iii. DPOR certificate due June/July

b. Board Election at Annual Meeting: update on candidates

- i. Bios have been drafted
- ii. Ballots ready. Single ballot line for the entire slate (no new people have stepped up to volunteered). Same board as previously, without Jorge (who is moving)
- iii. Jim and Naomi will have the ballot box on their front porch, so ballots can be returned directly to the ballot box or scanned/emailed to the office assistant.

1. *Discussion*: Is it delicate that people whose name are on the ballot are also the same ones receiving the ballots? Point is well taken.

Consensus is that this is OK. Carmen is the one who collects the box, and checks the contents.

- iv. Email blast gets to ~75% of people. Then will follow up and also distribute it by mail.
  - 1. People need to be aware, and the ballot also includes text about the day/time of the meeting.
  - 2. Reach homeowners who are not residents.
  - 3. According to covenants/bylaws, a copy should be mailed or electronically delivered.

## 6. Old Business

- a. Homeowner comments on common areas and trails (no action will be taken by the Board tonight; this continues the receipt of comments ["listening session"] from the February meeting; a halt/moratorium to any trail building remains in effect)
- b. C. Eklund has sent an email with concerns. This has been received by the board for consideration.
- c. C. Hernandez has written a letter by email that was sent to the board.
  - i. Trail is a very narrow track between houses, footing is a little hazardous. She felt she was intruding. This is not a walking trail (from Copperstone). They saw a large, established fox den, and turned around. Also saw a hawk's nest nearby.
  - ii. What is the goal of this trail? To assert right, at the cost of people whose privacy and comfort is being compromised? This is causing division and resentment throughout the neighborhood.
- d. N. Grandy has a similar feeling. Has been involved with treating invasives in that area. That trail is mainly for access to work on vines on trees.
- e. T. Shepherd says human presence would disrupt the wildlife there.
- f. C. Eklund says that this area is full of wildlife, and invites others (especially board) to take a look from her property.

- g. A. Golladay says they have been here for many years, and the wildlife in their backyard here has surpassed what they saw on their previous 2 acres elsewhere in Albemarle County. Doesn't think we need a path through the neighborhood here. Wants to protect trees and invasives, without wildlife moving away.
- h. C. Cutler says the path near Copperstone is supposed to be much higher, and there is supposed to be a sign there that indicates the Fox Den. Main reason for the path would be to access the English Ivy to take care of the trees.
  - i. Others are worried that this would be intrusive to the neighbors there also. Also very dense and steep.
  - ii. Would a sign cause more attention?
  - iii. She enjoys walking in the common area, and
- i. C. Eklund says people have walked into that common area since she has been living here, but she says it's hazardous.
- j. A. Plunkett brings up the positive side of homeowner participation in the discussion about the common area. Homeowners should consider being proactive about the common areas, rather than reactive.
- k. J. Shatto agrees about the animals and wildlife. She likes that the common areas are not being touched.
  - i. Are other common areas going to be considered for trails?
  - ii. Is there a resolution to put into place to say what the intent is for the common areas?
- l. T. Shepherd says that he understood that the common area is designed as a buffer space. That attracted him to the property.
  - i. People can walk in the common area, but formalizing that creates an invitation outside the community, and encroaches on their privacy.
  - ii. Comment about invasives. Forestry department representatives went to his back yard, and says that the ivy is not the main challenge to the pine trees. The pine trees will fall anyways. Leave the animals there.
- m. B. Carter agrees with Rob about preserving

- i. Albemarle County has a leash law, dogs are not allowed to run free off leash.
- n. D. Heuchert wants to address the background and misunderstanding of the board's role. He had taken a laissez faire approach to react to situations as they occurred. Others want to be more proactive about invasives and trees falling, and trying to preserve the space that they have. He supported the Nature Committee to take an active role in protecting the common area. However, he only approved a trail if everyone had buy-in.
  - i. This differs from the Biscuit Run trail, which predates us moving here.
  - ii. The covenants guarantee that our residents have access to the common area. This doesn't mean that we build a trail and make it easy for everyone to access. We have a responsibility to be good stewards of that space.
- o. N. Grandy, has in his possession a map that shows where all common areas are located. The area near Copperstone-Southern parkway is the largest swatch of it (other than Biscuit Run easement).
  - i. Vines (even on pine trees) will start putting out seeds, those drop and grow more vines. There is still value in getting vines off any trees. They could bring down limbs.
  - ii. Note that "vines" here includes mostly English Ivy, also Bittersweet.

## 7. New Business

- a. Attendance at HOA Annual Meeting - to assist those without Zoom - a. take time to explain the telephone option for Zoom, and b. volunteers to have neighbors join them on Zoom? *Naomi*
  - i. Maximizing attendance is the goal.
  - ii. Dan already made the link. Adele will create a brief explanation of how to connect by phone, to send to Carmen by Thursday PM so she can send it out this weekend.
  - iii. Doing the meeting by Zoom is good for maximizing participation
- b. NNC newsletters posted on the Website; an update from 2016 Common Grounds article needed. Soliciting input from homeowners?
  - i. Ask homeowners if this is important to them.
  - ii. requires volunteers to support this

c. HOA Communication

i. newsletter or regular emails

1. email could be a good way – fliers are often left in the mailboxes for too much time.
2. Printing many more newsletters could be costly — if email is preferred, then we should send by email.
3. Don't bombard people with too many emails

ii. responding to homeowner emails - process, spreadsheet

1. Naomi handles the Mill Creek Gmail account to scan for ARC messages. She also scans other emails, along with Carmen, to direct to the correct people.
2. Does the board want to create some auto response?
3. Technically the ARC has 30 days to respond.
4. Nothing specifically stated about board communication - what is the desired timeframe.
5. Would it be helpful to have someone screening the emails? Tim, Naomi, and Carmen could get together to make a plan for a process.
6. Carmen says that in the last month, all board emails are sent to all board members now.
7. Make sure expectations are clearly communicated.
8. Need to look at the issue more closely.
9. Action item: continue this conversation.

8. Next Board Meeting

- a. Agreed: Tuesday, April 11, 2023, 7:30 pm (meeting to prepare for annual meeting the following week on Wednesday April 19)

9. Adjournment *shortly after 9:17*