

FORREST LAKE TOWNHOMES



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 2

Paula Williamson, Editor (FLNewsletter@yahoo.com)

March 31, 2010

CONGRATULATIONS!



Wayne Wisnowski

Our security guard, Wayne, is completing his 9th at Forrest Lake. Thanks, Wayne, for helping Forrest Lake maintain a level of security and peace for us. Job well-done!



Bill Smith (#195) purchased two trees for the front of his townhouse after Hurricane Ike destroyed one. Here he is standing by his live oak tree which is doing very well. What a good neighbor!



Financial News

Ken Barker

It will not have escaped the notice of Forrest Lake (FL) owner/residents that the number of homes for sale in our community has increased substantially over the past few months. Do the sellers know something that the rest of us do not? Not really, but it demonstrates that the nation-wide problems in maintaining house payments are finally becoming more common in Texas and Forrest Lake.

So how does this affect our community? Well, the more serious impact is that many of the FL homes now appearing on the market are foreclosures and this means that maintenance fees due from these properties stop. In many cases it has stopped some time previously, but that is another story for another time. The result is that the total revenue necessary to run FL (\$300 per town house per month) is becoming substantially reduced, while, unfortunately, our costs continue to rise. On this last subject, there seems to be a theory circulating among many of our owners that in some magical way FL is excluded from paying the going rate for the essential services and supplies we must have each month (water, sewer, and electrical power are all good examples). As a result your Board is spending a considerable amount of time each month renegotiating service contracts, delaying purchase of essential supplies, and rearranging work programs in order to address the deficits. It is no consolation for us to know that most other local organizations are going through similar exercises at this time and we ask for the patience and understanding of everyone.

Neighborhood News:

- Get well wishes to **Herb Weaver** as he recuperates from a mild heart attack he suffered while on a church mission trip in East Texas. He was hospitalized in Dallas, and thanks to good church friends, returned to Houston as soon as he was able to travel. Our prayers are with you, Herb – May God grant you speedy recovery.

3-1-1 Houston Service Helpline

The 3-1-1 Houston Service Helpline consolidated call center provides quick and reliable access to City services including Engineering and Construction, General Services Department, Health Department, Neighborhood Protection Corps, Planning and Development Services, Parks and Recreation, Right of Way, Solid Waste Management, Traffic and Transportation and Utility Maintenance and Water Quality.

3-1-1 should be a citizen's first line of defense when requesting a City service. By calling or submitting information online to 3-1-1, citizens ensure their complaint becomes logged into the system with a corresponding service request number. It is imperative for callers to have the location and specifics of a problem readily available to tell the 3-1-1 representative.

The call center makes city government more accessible and responsive to City residents. City government is at your fingertips – one call or e-mail and you can get answers, find the right person or have your City service problems solved. Please escalate the complaint to the District A Office at 832.393.3010 after 3-1-1 has been given the opportunity to assist.

To submit a 3-1-1 request call 3-1-1 or submit an online request at https://webintake.houstontx.gov/web_intake

FORREST LAKE TOWNHOUSE ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
January 21, 2010

Present: Ken Barker, Earline Soteris, Elva Bryant, Stephanie Rush, and Bob Wharton

Earline Soteris called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The Minutes of the December meeting were approved.

Treasurer: The year-to-date Actual vs. Budget is currently in line with the exception of the water cost. The actual water cost is up approximately 50% to the forecasted budget. Ralph and Ralph, our CPA, has completed the Review for the 2009 Financials.

Maintenance: We had some pipes burst due to the freeze. We were able to use maintenance to do all the repairs and saved money in doing so.

Landscape: Planting of new trees will begin in late January (weather permitting). The irrigation system has been completed along Lumberdale. Most of the tree stumps have been removed.

Security: There was a security incident on 1/18/2010 at the entrance to Forrest Lake which is still being investigated. We still have problems with trash being thrown over the east side fence and we are working to resolve this problem.

Old Business: Delinquent accounts (over two months old) will be sent a legal letter from the Forrest Lake attorney.

New Business: In the future, renters will be notified in writing (left on the clip) if the maintenance fee has not been paid and the possibility that the water might be shut off. A flyer will be placed on all homes that are listed for sale, explaining that a list of guidelines can be obtained at the office.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Wharton, Secretary

Security Corner

- Ken Barker

❖ Asbury Park Problems

For many months residents along east side of Forrest Lake have been subjected to a series of unpleasant and at times dangerous activities from Asbury Park, the community just across our perimeter fence. These incidents have included bricks and other missiles being thrown to damage vehicles and property, trash (including soiled diapers) tossed over the fence, loud noise in the evening hours, and other anti-social activities.

Our security officers have instructions to call the Asbury Park security officer (for details see below) immediately when they are aware of a situation and then to call HPD (911). As we have found the speed of HPD responses frequently depends on the number of complaints about an incident they receive, we recommend that FL residents add their individual complaints to the one that will already have been submitted by our security officer. Residents should also alert the security officer of what they have done.

Many FL residents have asked why we cannot get the owners of Asbury Park to take firmer action regarding these nuisances. Unfortunately Asbury Park is well into the process of selling off their apartments to other parties as individually owned condos. It is fairly likely that these condos will then again be leased to other parties, and so

will continue basically as apartments, but the ownership pattern will then have changed from a single community owner (as the target for our complaints) to a very large number of single owners. In this situation it is almost impossible to get anyone to take responsibility, which is why the HPD complaint route provides the best solution. We can certainly not expect any assistance from the Asbury on-site management, or their security company, as personnel in these appear to change very frequently and we seldom are able to talk with the same individual twice.

Western Eagle Security
Ricardo Hernandez
11201 Richmond Ave. Suite A108
Houston, TX 77082

Office: 281-496-6800
Cell: 892-641-0416

❖ Noise issues

Living in the close conditions of a townhouse community and sharing many facilities in common, requires a degree of courtesy and cooperation unnecessary to the same degree in single dwelling accommodation.

For this reason the Association bylaws state: (Art. 3:02 – Page 3) No owner.... shall permit anything to be done on or within his townhouse or elsewhere on the Property which is or may be an annoyance or nuisance to other Owners, their families, or guests.

If further violations of the Association Bylaws continue after a warning is given then we will have no hesitation in taking appropriate action that may include imposing financial penalties on the unit in question as well as lodging formal disturbance complaints and requests for action with the Houston Police Department.

❖ Speed issues

We have a number of heavy right footed residents, and/or their visitors, in our community and we remind everyone that the maximum speed permitted in Forrest Lake is 15 mph. Reasons for this are the crowded nature of our roads, extensive on-street parking, the relatively low visibility at night, and the presence of numbers of older residents and children. Forrest Lake does not permit excessive and unsafe speeds anywhere on the property, and particularly during the evening and night hours. If this type of behavior is reported then we will have no hesitation in imposing financial penalties and other appropriate Sanctions; and, in the event of an accident we will also share our historical records on the unit involved with other appropriate parties, including HPD and vehicle insurance companies.

In this respect, we again draw all residents' attention to Article 3:02 (Page 3) of the Forrest Lake bylaws. This states that "no owner ... shall permit anything to be done on or within his townhouse or elsewhere on the Property which is or may be an annoyance or nuisance to other owners". These violations include irresponsible actions causing injuries or damage to the property of others.



Get your Mail

We have 28 large mail boxes for parcels at Forrest Lake. They usually stay full because people are not removing their mail in a timely fashion. Karen, our mail lady, reported that some packages were delivered in December and are still in the boxes. There are also 4 missing keys. Please help everyone out by removing your parcels quickly and by leaving the keys in the boxes. If you have lost a key, you need to talk with Karen, our mail lady, to see what you need to do to replace it. After 30 days, the old parcels will be returned to sender.

FYI:



Earline Soteras

Painting the Backs of our Homes:

Over the last few weeks we have received a number of complaints from residents about the slow pace of the painting of the backs of FL houses. Like so many problems in life, the task looks simple but addressing it involves a lot of factors unappreciated by many of the complainants. These factors include the following:

- Backs of houses cannot be painted individually; this would result in an unattractive patchwork appearance. An entire block of houses must be painted at the same time.
- The presence of covers above many patios requires special scaffolding to be installed so that overhead work can proceed safely without damaging private property.
- Painting also requires open access to all patios in the block of homes on which the work is to be performed. Leaving patio gates unlocked appears to be a major problem for many residents. Unless all in a block comply when asked to leave their gates unlocked, work cannot proceed with any efficiency.
- Painting cannot begin during rain or very cold or very hot temperatures. In order for the work to commence, we need a "window" of good weather.
- Quick completion also requires several members of our 4-person work force to be available for the scheduled period. This is not always possible as emergency work on water/sewer problems, electrical failures, and other urgent matters must always take priority.
- Lastly, we provide earned vacation time as part of the work package for our employees. Most of them take vacation time during the winter months which generally suits Forrest Lake work planning because it coincides with more adverse weather conditions. However, it does result that during the winter months we are often reduced from 4 workers down to 3 or even 2 for several weeks.

The important work of maintaining the appearance of the backs of our homes has not been forgotten. However, Forrest Lake does not have unlimited resources and therefore cannot meet all the needs of all the residents immediately and still remain within our budget. Bear with us, Folks.....we're getting there!

2010 Census – Be Counted

Don't forget to complete your census information and mail in. This information is so important for our city.

Q and A to the Board:

Q: Re: Posting notices in timely fashion

I was very sad to learn of the deaths of Sandy Gotsdiner and Cathy Bayliss. It troubled me to find out this news in the Forrest Lake Newsletter, especially since Sandy died two months ago. I had served on the Board with Sandy and considered him a close friend. There are so many long-term residents here at Forrest Lake and I think it would certainly serve as a courtesy when there is a death of a resident, it be posted in the mail room. So many of us would like to pay our respects in a timely fashion. How do I make a motion, suggestion or request that this be done?

Thanks so much,

Margaret Rowell

A: Dear Margaret:

You make a very good point, and a very timely comment on the general subject of communications and how the Board can more effectively get information out to ALL the residents of Forrest Lake (FL). It has been some time since the last FL Newsletter appeared, but in this latest just published edition, there is an article that I wrote on a new initiative we are developing for the use of e-mails to get the word out more quickly and economically to those FL residents who are willing to accept it in electronic form. As my article states, there are many ways which are in current use but none are completely successful in reaching everyone. In particular, we have found that mailroom notices appear to be read by so few people that at times we question the time and effort involved in putting them up. Is there a "quick fix" solution to all this and one that will meet the needs of everyone? Unlikely, but we will keep trying. Please keep your comments coming as, with such poor attendance at town hall meetings, this is one of the few ways we are able keep informed on what FL residents think.

Ken Barker



Important Phone Numbers

Office Manager (<i>Cheryl</i>)	713-681-3591
Property Manager (<i>Pokey</i>)	713-956-6236
Security (<i>Wayne or Garner</i>)	713-201-5656
	713-204-2240
Emergency (Life Threatening)	911*
Houston Police Dept. (non-emergency)	713-884-3131
City of Houston (Loose dog pickup)	713-222-3501

Board Members:

Earline Soteras	713-688-3730
Ken Barker	713-681-1115
Elva Bryant	713-688-5807
Stephanie Rush	713-812-1080
Bob Wharton	713-680-8377

Maintenance (for after-hours appointments)

Francisco	713-409-4820
Willie	713-828-2428
Nahun	713-202-7148
Omar	713-818-4738

Submissions for Q & A

Residents are encouraged to submit questions about matters concerning Forrest Lake and the Board member responsible for that matter will respond in the newsletter. So few people attend the Town Hall meetings that responses to community questions only get circulated by word of mouth and sometimes are misinterpreted. Please send your questions by e-mail to FLNewsletter@yahoo.com or you may place them in the suggestion box in the mailroom or drop them by the office and Cheryl will forward them to the Board.



Remember – we have a library in the clubhouse.....Check it out!

Illegal Dumping Campaign Kick Off

On Thursday, January 28, 2010, Crime Stoppers of Houston and Houston City Council Member **Brenda Stardig** kicked off the 2nd Annual Illegal Dumping Campaign. **Katherine Cabaniss** and **Amy Smith** of Crime Stoppers played a pivotal role in the success of the 2nd Annual Campaign.

Media outlets attended the press conference and the message of fighting illegal dumping in neighborhoods made it through the airways. Crime Stoppers will continue to ask the public for information on identifying suspects caught in the act of illegal dumping.

Citizens can help by:

- Providing descriptions of the suspects
- Providing the location and types of debris dumped
- Providing information on the vehicles used for dumping
- Providing a license plate number if possible

Crime Stoppers will pay up to \$5,000 for any information called in to the 713.222.8477 (TIPS) hotline or submitted online at www.crime-stoppers.org that leads to the identification, arrest and/or charging of any felony suspect. Tips can also be sent by text message - Text TIP610 plus your tip to CRIMES (274637). All tipsters remain anonymous. For more information visit www.crime-stoppers.org

Handy Tips

- Peel a banana from the bottom and you won't have to pick the little 'stringy things' off of it. That's how the primates do it. Take your bananas apart when you get home from the store. If you leave them connected at the stem, they ripen faster.
- Store your opened chunks of cheese in aluminum foil. It will stay fresh much longer and not mold.
- Peppers w with 3 bumps on the bottom are sweeter and better for eating. Peppers with 4 bumps on the bottom are firmer and better for cooking.
- Add a teaspoon of water when frying ground beef. It will help pull the grease away from the meat while cooking.
- Add garlic immediately to a recipe if you want a light taste of garlic and at the end of the recipe if your want a stronger taste of garlic.

Reminder About Our Website: www.forrestlake.com

To view the newsletter in color and save pictures, go to the Forrest Lake website, www.forrestlake.com. Although the pagination is a little off, the photos in color make a real difference. You may also find bylaws and other information on the website. Bookmark it and return to read it each month. **Ollie Perry**, former FL resident and Board member, is our webmaster and he does a great job of keeping it up to date for us!

Report: Greater Inwood Partnership Meeting

Ken Barker

The March 25, 2010, GIP meeting was well attended with well over 50 participants attending. We are a member of the GIP and I represented FL.

Main points:

- **Brenda Stardig** (who replaced Toni Lawrence as Council member for District 1) spoke. She is a strong and informed person and I think will generally follow Toni's previous policies and programs. FL is, of course are not in Stardig's District 1 (by about 6 feet) but much of what she said for promoting for the neighborhood will impact FL. The main thing is the new City registration and inspection program for apartments. So far only 1300 out of 5000 apartments in the City have registered for this but starting in April those that do not will face heavy fines. The subsequent inspections are promised to be very thorough and tough with operational permits rescinded quickly. This should weed out a lot of the bad players. Stardig also said she felt (and everyone enthusiastically agreed) that multi-family units in our area had reached their sustainable limit and she would (so far as Houston's lack of zoning will permit) fight any new additions in this area. In answer to my question on whether condo communities (like Asbury Park) would also be covered with the apartments in the program she said that they hoped (eventually) to do this. Still seems we will have a while to wait on this.
- **Sharon Moses** (City Solid Waste Dept.) advised of the new City program for larger waste container (96 gallon). This will not impact FL although (again from a question I put) private trash pickup may be brought into the program in the years ahead. All part of the City's attempt to make our entire area more environmentally conscious and introduce new recycling programs.
- **Ben Wilson** (Aldine School District) made a short but very informative presentation on the Aldine School District which has recently won some awards for their improvement of educational scores particularly among minority groups. His big point was that Aldine ISD is running in the red and will almost certainly be faced in 2010 with making some agonizing decisions on whether to substantially cut services, or raise school taxes, or both. Not good news for tax payers. Aldine has one of the lowest school tax district rates in the Harris county area , and again (in answer to a question) he did say that school taxes are also levied on apartment owners and will trickle down to their tenants in the form of increased rents.

Meeting finished at 9:30 pm.

La Madeleine's Tomato-Basil Soup

CDKitchen <http://www.cditchen.com>

Serves/Makes: 8

Ready In: 30-60 minutes

Ingredients::

- 4 cups tomatoes, peeled, cored and chopped, or canned whole tomatoes, crushed
- 4 cups tomato sauce or part tomato juice and part vegetable pr chicken stock
- 14 washed fresh basil leaves
- 1 cup heavy cream
- ¼ pound sweet, unsalted butter
- Salt to taste
- ¼ teaspoon cracked black pepper

Directions: Combine tomatoes, juice/and or stock in saucepan. Simmer 30 minutes. Puree, along with the basil leaves, in small batches, in blender, food processor (or better yet, one of those handy hand-held food blenders, right in the cooking pan). Return to saucepan and add cream and butter, while stirring, over low heat. Garnish with basil leaves and serve with your favorite bread.