

FORREST LAKE TOWNHOMES



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 10, ISSUE 8

Paula Williamson, Editor (FLNewsletter@yahoo.com)

November 10, 2009

Board Election

Congratulations to **Ken Barker** and **Bob Wharton** who were re-elected to the FL Board of Directors. Thanks to **Phil Salerno** for his interest in the community and desire to serve on the board.

There were 122 ballots received which is 50% of Forrest Lake. This is a great turn-out (the past 5 years we have had approximately 1/3 of the owners voting.) Thank you to all of the FL residents who cared enough to turn in your ballots!

The new terms began on November 1.



Flag Dedication

Mary Bird

One of the things I enjoy doing in Forrest Lake is donating the new United States flags. This is the fifth flag I have donated to our townhomes. Each time I dedicate the flag to someone or a group that has been outstanding either to our country or to our community.

I would like to honor and dedicate this flag to our wonderful maintenance men: **Pokey**, who has done an outstanding job as leader and **Willie, Francisco, Nahun, and Omar**. They work very hard for us and save us a lot of money. If we had to hire outside contractors for many of the jobs, it would cost us thousands of dollars more. Our guys have wonderful attitudes and are prompt getting the job done.

Thank you, thank you! There are not enough words to describe your greatness!



Mary Bird (L) is seen presenting the new U.S. flag to **Earline Soteris**, President of the Forrest Lake Board of Directors, who is accepting it on behalf of **Pokey, Willie, Francisco, Nahun, and Omar**, for the fine work that they do!



Car Ports

Ken Barker

It may come as surprise to some Forrest Lake owners and residents to learn that the car port and storage shed allocated to them is not their property. It is part of the common grounds, although it, and the adjacent storage shed, is allocated for the exclusive use of that specific resident.

We are becoming concerned about a growing tendency for some residents to use their carport areas for the storage of variety of non-vehicle items such as discarded furniture, large household appliances, construction materials, and unused cars. This practice has a very derogatory effect on the appearance of our neighborhood and depresses property values, besides being a fire risk, and an attraction for vermin. Over the next weeks we will be in touch with some of the worst offenders in our community, but urge all residents to take stock of the area adjacent to their home and to make any appropriate improvements.

We accept that the fact that many residents use a portion of their car port area for the positioning of a BBQ unit (covered, is best) and also for stationing of potted plants, etc. We have no problem with these type of items providing they are good in good order and appearance



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
Emergency (Life Threatening)	911*
Houston Police Dept. (non-emergency)	713-222-3131
City of Houston (Loose dog pickup)	713-222-3501

Board Members:

Earline Soteris	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

**FORREST LAKE TOWNHOUSE ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
July 18, 2009**

Present: Jim Elswick, Ken Barker, Elva Bryant, Earline Soteras and Bob Wharton

Jim Elswick called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The Minutes of the June meeting were approved.

Treasurer: The actual cost year-to-date is up approximately 10% compared to the budget. This is mainly due to increases in security and legal cost.

Maintenance: : Maintenance has been working on the fountain in front of the office, which was donated by Melodye and Billy (#13). We are now handling the pool cleaning in-house. This is both a cost saver and we have better control on the cleanliness of the pool. We now have a Certified Pool Tech on the maintenance staff. Work on the east side fence (between FL and the apartments) will begin in September.

Landscape: We have renewed our contract with the current landscaper after reviewing other bids. No new planting is scheduled until September due to the summer heat.

Security: We are having problems with owners not getting a criminal background check on lessees before they move in. These checks must be done and a copy is to be turned into the office before any renter can move in. We have experienced a rise in the number of people trespassing on FL property. We are still in the process of getting bids on both the security cameras and the maintenance of the cameras. According to the Near NW Management, youth gang problems are on the increase due to school being out for summer break.

Old Business: The FL County Store made approximately \$500.00 for the purchase of furniture for the clubhouse.

New Business: A representative from Comcast Cable will be at the next Open Meeting on July 22, to discuss changes in the television business.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Wharton, Secretary

**FORREST LAKE TOWNHOUSE ASSOCIATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
August 20, 2009**

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

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

The Minutes of the July meeting were approved.

Treasurer:

Fiscal Year-To-Date thru July 31, 2009 (9 months)

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Revenues	\$640,035	\$647,565
Expenses	\$592,251	\$647,565
Net before Appropriations	\$ 47,754	\$0
Appropriations (Roofing)	(\$43,740)	(\$43,740)
Net to Contingency Fund	\$ 4,014	(\$0)

Maintenance: Maintenance is currently repairing the front of homes.

Landscape: The contract with the Landscaper will be renewed for another year. After reviewing the arborist quote of \$31,000 for trimming of the trees, it was decided that we would have maintenance resume the tree trimmings. This passed by a unanimous vote of 5 to 0 in favor. The trimming will resume

when the weather cools down. The following restrictions will be followed:

1. Trees with branches over the street will be trimmed up to 14 feet.
2. Trees with branches over sidewalks will be trimmed up to 10 feet.
3. Any broken or dead branches that exceed these heights will be removed.
4. Trees blocking signs will be trimmed to eliminate the blockage.
5. Any requests by Homeowners for tree trimming should be made in writing.

Security: We had one attempted car thief last month but that was thwarted. We had a problem with a homeowner barbecuing too close to the patio fence. This contravenes Houston Fire Department (HFD) regulations and is a potential fire hazard to adjacent property. HFD was called and quickly resolved the matter. We also have had complaints of a homeowner leaving dogs on the patio all day and sometimes nights and they were constantly barking. This is very disturbing to neighbors and is being addressed with the responsible parties.

New Business: Currently, we have a usual amount of delinquent homeowner's maintenance fees. Ollie Perry advised the Board that his meeting with the Prudential Realtors went very well and it built a better relationship with them. A letter from a homeowner regarding a missing window screen was discussed and a response will be written to the owner. The next open Town Hall meeting will be held in early August.

Social Committee: A craft show will be held on November 7, 2009 in the club house.

Old Business: We still have a few rental units which still need to complete the required paperwork. These homeowners will be contacted immediately.

New Business: We are looking to either concrete or brick the section in front of the Maintenance Area where the trash cans are located.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:04 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Bob Wharton, Secretary

Letters to the Editor:

Hi Paula!

You are doing a wonderful job with the newsletter. Thanks for your hard work; I know sometimes it must be a real pain !

I would like to make a brief comment for the next newsletter:

Thanks to **Ollie Perry** for his fantastic job with the FLTA website, and his efforts in promoting Forrest Lake as a great community to consider for future residents. I personally use the website to track homes for sale, and often send the link to people I know that are "in the market". Being a webmaster myself I can tell you that what Ollie has created as a volunteer is literally worth several thousand dollars.

Have a wonderful day !

Dan Cocozza

#146

Thanks, Dan, for your comments. I totally agree with you that Ollie has done a wonderful job with the FL website. Although he has moved into Inwood Forrest, he continues to volunteer his time by being our webmaster. We owe him a big thanks.

--pw

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Dear Editor,

I found out recently that the SPCA has an immediate need for clean newspapers as a result of a rescue of over a hundred animals recently. I telephoned them to follow-up and they advised that they need clean newspapers all of the time. So if any of the other residents in Forrest Lake are interested, I would be happy to have them deliver their newspapers to me for recycling at the SPCA. If there is interest then they could bring them over on a Saturday periodically and I will haul them off to the SPCA. This is for newspaper only and not the inserts that are coated. Please let me know if you need further information.

I am taking a load over to them today as my shoulder is doing much better since my surgery two weeks ago. Thanks.

*Philip Salerno*

#56

Thanks, Phil, I hope you get some "takers" to this good cause!  
--pw

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Date: 8/30/09

This is my second request for someone to please address the mirror that has been gone from the fence on our drive, behind our townhomes. Hurricane Ike destroyed one mirror; the other is still on the fence. As my husband and I leave daily from TH #193, turning right to drive around the circle leading out of our townhomes, I personally came close to an accident on three different times.

Could someone please replace this as I have witnessed other close calls (near-accidents) about to occur. An accident is sure to happen in just a matter of time.

Sincerely,
M. Boswell

Dear M. Boswell, This letter was dated a couple of months ago. I have not done a newsletter during September or October. Hopefully, by now, this matter has been taken care of. If not, please notify maintenance or call Earline Soteris who is the Board member who works directly with maintenance issues and I'm sure that this will be resolved.

-pw

Home Sales in Forrest Lake

Ken Barker

A Fire Sale of Homes in Forrest Lake! Nonsense, and like many other tales that circulate through our community, it loses nothing in the telling.

Here are the facts: There are currently 13 homes for sale in Forrest Lake. Over the last 10 years we have averaged around 10 at any one time so this is only slightly above average. And, as this represents around just 4-5 % of our homes, it is pretty much the average for Houston, Texas, and the U.S. As an expert in this field (David Seiders, Chief Economist of the National Association of Home Builders) recently said, the rising tide of mortgage foreclosures has dumped more homes on to an already glutted market, and this at a time when potential buyers are having difficulty getting mortgages because lenders are tightening their standards. This makes it more difficult to sell houses even in Forrest Lake.

Why do our current residents want to move? For a variety of reasons, and we (your Board) always try to establish what this is. So far those reasons we have heard vary from job change, retirement plans, health problems, to family and educational reasons. What is absent from all the reasons we have heard until now is too large maintenance charges. Your Board continually checks our maintenance fee levels with those of other local housing associations, carefully comparing what Forrest Lake provides for its residents and what others furnish for the fees charged. In most cases we come out very favorably. Views to the contrary? Then let's hear the facts (not opinions, please) and we will run further comparisons.

FYI: Your Texas Drivers License

Something all Texans should know, especially since this has received very little or no publicity. Your Texas Driver's License has a phone number on the back, just above the bar code on the lower left side: 1-800-525-5555. (It's in VERY SMALL PRINT, but it IS there.)

This number can be called for emergency assistance on the highway or wherever you might have trouble while in your car. A service truck will be sent to you. This service is state operated and paid for with your tax dollars. If you are ever stranded, just call the number on your driver's license...help is on the way. A state trooper will be sent to make sure all is well.

Security Corner

Ken Barker

When most of our residents think about security then crime and police activities come immediately to mind. However, in many cases the emergency may involve Fire or Ambulance services. In all cases time is of critical importance so it is so essential when you have called 911 for any reason to also let Forrest Lake security immediately know about the situation. This allows our security officer, if he is available, to position himself near the entrance to direct the incoming EMS, Fire, or Police unit to the right home with the least amount of delay. We all know that the numbering system for homes in FL follows a somewhat arbitrary pattern (one older resident picturesquely described it as being laid out by a drunk having a very bad day) so any time wasted in finding the right house can be life-threatening.


Forrest Lake Security numbers are:

- 713-201-5656
- 713-204-2240

This brings up a question we receive from time to time:

Why don't we post the times when Forrest Lake security officers are on duty?

Our security officers work long shifts, and for most of every day and night during the week one or other of these officers are on duty in Forrest Lake serving our community. We frequently change the actual timings of our security schedules in order to keep criminals and potential criminals guessing on who is around. Our security cameras which remain on duty on a 24 hours/7 days per week basis, and also helps. As any police officer will tell you, there is no security system that is 100% guaranteed successful, but they will also emphasize that a resident's personal safety and protection is enhanced by their observation of what is going on around them, and a willingness to report immediately anything they feel is suspicious, or potentially dangerous. In emergency situations **always call 911 first** and then report the matter to Forrest Lake security. And, as we have said many times before, your identity is always kept in confidence.

FYI: 

Earline Soteris

- There are patio fences in poor states of repair. They need to be fixed by **December 1, 2009**, or Forrest Lake will begin repairing them and charging the owners.
- Please do not call Pokey, the property manager, to schedule after-hours repairs. Contact the maintenance worker directly to set up appointments. Their phone numbers are posted on page 1.
- Every resident is provided with carports for parking. Please do not park in the circles – that parking is for visitors.



Landscape Corner

Elva Bryant

Lawn fertilizer and ant killer has been put down for the fall. The ant killer should last about six months. If there are any problems with ants in the common areas, please call Maintenance or Elva at 713-688-5807.

The Landscaper does blow the leaves and other debris out from carpports about eleven times a year, mostly from November thru February. But we have received several requests to have carpports blown out. Please be aware that if you have trees in your patio, you are responsible for their upkeep, and therefore need to clean-up any debris from your trees when the Landscaper has not done so.

Upcoming irrigation is scheduled for late November to complete the east side of Lumberdale.



Financial News

Ken Barker

Our Fiscal 2009 year ends on October 31, 2009, so with the year-to-date (YTD) results at September 30, 2009 shown below, we are now entering our 12th and final month.

F/2009 – YTD thru 9-30-09	Budgeted	Actuals
Total Income (year to date)	\$791,468	\$783,684
Total Expenses (year to date)	\$791,468	\$704,326
Net Surplus before Appropriations		\$ 79,358
Appropriations (Roofing Fund)	\$ 53,460	\$ 53,460
Write Off of Bad Debts		
Surplus to General Fund (year to date)	\$ (53,460)	\$ 25,898

All very much within budget, but we expect that the final figures next month will require some minor adjustment. In this respect we work closely with our Financial Advisory Company (Ralph & Ralph) who will compile, as usual, our annual Financial Report.

In looking forward to 2010, we are pleased to advise that the budget for this coming year was approved by the Board last month. The Audit Committee then reviewed this and has also advised their approval. We will be discussing aspects of the 2010 budget in future editions of the Newsletter. In the Budgeting process all Board members are required to submit their cost estimates and requirements for those areas of Forrest Lake operations for which they are responsible. This is a very detailed assignment requiring many hours of careful analysis of cost information and judgment calls on the future needs of our community. It is to the credit of all Board members that their forecast planning for this past year has been so accurate

Neighborhood News:

- Condolences to **Barbara Scott** on the loss of her father.
- Condolences to **Ruth Seiler** on the loss of her father in September.
- Happy Birthday to **Stephanie Rush** (October 28th), **Debbie Magaña** (Nov. 14th), **Earline Soteris** (Nov. 15th), and **Nettie Kiel** (Nov. 19th).

- Fond farewell and the best of luck to **Harriet Whiteside** who has been a FL resident for years. Harriet recently moved to The Tremont which is a very nice retirement community located in the Westheimer/Gessner area. This is a loss to Forrest Lake and we will miss her. Hopefully she will continue to attend FL functions as a special guest.
- Welcome new neighbors, **Debbie Hester** (#23) and **Sandra Upshaw** (#175). We are glad to have you here!
- Congratulations to Melodye Martinelli and Billy Martin for winning the prestigious Opal Award for tourism. (see info below.)



Kirk Demeter, OPAL Award wholesale tour operator is shown with our own **Melodye Martinelli** and **Billy Martin** who have recently won the OPAL Award from Tourism Australia.

Dear Friends,

We would like to share with you the announcement of our winning an award a couple of weeks ago while attending a tourism conference in Australia. We were so honored to have won the prestigious OPAL award from Tourism Australia.

We have and are working very hard in promoting Australia and sending many clients there for memorable experiences. 100% of these travelers have returned expressing the great time and pleasures from their many interesting experiences to the land of OZ. We are so pleased that our business to both New Zealand and Australia continues to grow from these very satisfied clients giving us referrals from others also wishing to travel to Australia. The greatest pleasures they express from their travels are meeting the very friendly and outgoing fun loving Aussies and Kiwis.

We have just returned from 4 weeks of travel to many new areas of Australia that we had not visited before, adding to the already vast amount of experiences we have had from our annual trips. WE absolutley LOVE Australia and those fun loving great AUSSIE people and so enjoy working with clients to design trips that match their interests.

Also in the photo is Kirk Demeter owner of Down Under Answers who won an OPAL award for being the best wholesale tour operator. We work with him in many marketing programs to promote Australia and to plan itineraries. There are a total of 5 Opal awards that are given each year by the tourism board.

We appreciate your keeping us in mind when it comes to travel referrals.

Melodye Martinelli and Billy Martin

North American Kiwi Specialist of the Year - 2008
 North American Kiwi Specialist of the Year - Runnerup - 2009
 Houston's only Premier Aussie Specialist
 Two time Opal Award Winner 2007-08
 Opal Award Winner - 2009
 South African FUNDI Specialist
 Kenya Specialist
Let's Travel Together
 5800 Lumberdale Ste. #13
 Houston, TX 77092
 TEL: 713-681-4001
 FAX: 713-682-0624

Flood Insurance and Elevation Certificates

Bob Wharton

Most of Forrest Lake falls at, or near, the Flood Plain level of 80 feet. New State and City regulations introduced in 2008 require all property owners in the Flood Plain to carry flood insurance. Many owners in our community already do this and some have had flood insurance for many years. However, when they receive their flood insurance renewal notices, or negotiate new coverage, many homeowners will be surprised to find that their premiums have gone up alarmingly. In contesting this increase with their insurance company they will quickly find that the one essential document they need is an elevation certificate. This lists the exact and officially recorded elevation height of the top of the foundation slab for their home, in relation to the accepted datum. It is perhaps the single most important piece of information required in any negotiation of a lower premium.

FL recognized this need last year and, as individual elevation surveys are quite expensive, undertook to have every slab on every home in FL surveyed as part of a single comprehensive study. The individual certificates for each home are available for purchase at a cost of \$250 which is still well below the going rate of over \$400 required for individual surveys.

Many FL residents have already purchased their survey certificates and have used these to justify their claims for lower Flood insurance premium increases and rates on their homes. The purpose of this article is to remind everyone that individual elevation certificates for their homes are still available for purchase in the FL office.

Google Business Directory

Here's a number worth putting in your cell phone, or your home phone speed dial:

1-800-goog411

This is an awesome service from Google, and it's free -- great when you are driving on the road with no pen, pencil or paper handy. Don't waste your money on information calls and don't waste your time manually dialing the number.

I am driving along in my car and I need to call the golf course and I don't know the number. I hit the speed dial for information that I have programmed. The voice at the other end says, "City & State." I say, "Garland, Texas." He says, "Business, Name or Type of Service." I say, "Firewheel Golf Course." He says, "Connecting" and Firewheel answers the phone. How great is that?

This is nationwide and it is absolutely free!

To see a short clip for a quick demonstration, go to

<http://www.google.com/goog411>

Forrest Lake and Realtors

Ken Barker

Sooner or late (and we hope it will be later) every Forrest Lake (FL) owner will, for one reason or another, eventually desire or need to sell their property. Big decisions are involved, and not least on which realtor to use. From our experience with realtors involved with FL sales over the last 10 years we have found that many of those selected are very unfamiliar with FL and the unique conditions that apply to the sale of a townhouse in our community. Due to its complexity, this has led to in some cases to delays in the house sale, and even surprises for the owner and the new buyer when the transfer of ownership actually takes place. The selection of a realtor is always the owner's decision, but we suggest that it might be useful for you first to check with the FL office on those realtors who have considerable operating experience with FL and who have been particularly successful in the selling property in our community.

Near Northwest Management District

-Ken Barker

After nearly five years of dedicated work the Houston Near Northwest Management District (NNMD) has received approval from State authorities in Austin to proceed with the next stage of its 15 year Service, Improvement and Assessment Program for our area. Forrest Lake (FL) has been a very active supporter of NNMD since it was formed in 2005, and regularly participates in its meetings and planning programs.

So how is this new development going to impact our community? Over the last two years there has been increased focus on the crime in our area and thanks to the sterling work of HPD, now supported by a number of Precinct One Deputies, there has been significant reduction in most types of crimes in our neighborhood. However, crime activities can increase rapidly whenever given the opportunity and so we cannot relax our vigilance. Over the next two years NNMD will increasingly focus on the business community to encourage the number and variety of commercial and retail operations in our area. This will provide not only better facilities for us all and a more up-market ambiance, but also will encourage the increasing number of new employees working locally to also live locally.

Work on a number of recreational programs like the hike and bike trail extension alongside White Oak Bayou, the development of park and recreational areas at the old Inwood Forrest Golf Club site, and the new Alabonson Park area on North Houston Rosslyn will make welcome additions to recreational facilities in our area.

Basically, the proposed services and improvements in the NNMD service plan should add value to all properties in our district, increase levels of service, and enhance public awareness and image of our district. This all helps us maintain FL property values and enhance our life styles.

FYI:



Earline Soterias

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- Every resident is provided with carports for parking. Please do not park in the circles – that parking is for visitors.

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.