

## **BOARD OF THE FEARRINGTON HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION**

### **2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

#### **President's Report: Rose Krasnow**

It has been a busy and rewarding year for the Board, as you will see if you read each Director's report on their activities. Clearly, much of our energy was focused on the proposed dues increase from \$200 to \$300. Our secretary worked hard to develop a timeline and keep us on task. The Board held two open meetings on this subject as well as several coffee and conversations, and the questions we received from our residents helped us articulate why we thought the increase was so important. It was very gratifying to achieve a quorum of more than 840 residents at our special meeting held in September and to find out that the great majority of our residents voted to approve the increase which will take effect beginning January 1.

The improvements to the wastewater plant have taken more time than originally anticipated, but Fitch Creations has worked with us to make sure that walkers stay away from the private road leading down to the plant given all the heavy equipment needed at that site. The new road from Weathersfield to Millcroft is proceeding, and I believe it will be well used once it is completed. Since Fearington has been built in phases, new roads have been added frequently but it has been interesting to watch the construction process. An even more recent change has been the state's decision to no longer allow left turns from Weathersfield onto 15- 501. Although many residents had hoped a traffic light would be installed there, the intersection did not meet the state's standards for such a light. Fortunately, drivers going south on 15-501 will still be able to make left turns into the community, but those leaving the Village will have to make a right and then a U-turn to go south on 15-501. We hope that the light at Village Way will be changed as well to put in a full left turn signal as opposed to the blinking yellow light we have now. Too many accidents continue to occur there.

Our covenants committee has been busy indeed this year with almost 150 applications at the time to date, and these are only for the 540 Fearington homes that don't have their own service group. It is so important to get approval for any changes to your home, from adding an addition to removing trees. The committee tries to work with each homeowner, but we need to preserve our special ambiance.

We upgraded the AV equipment in The Gathering Place, which has made a tremendous difference, and before Thanksgiving we will put in all new HVAC units. Fortunately, we have been able to socialize in person this year, so our clubs are back to a regular meeting schedule. We have also received many kudos from residents who enjoyed both our first ever Founder's Day event and Oktoberfest, which combined our Club Fair with the Newcomer's welcome party. We held the latter event on the upper lawn of the Swim and Croquet Club, which we hope to continue to do in the future. Although the FHA is not in charge of that facility, collaborating with their organization is in the best interest of us all. Likewise, we have forged stronger bonds with Fearrington Cares, which recently welcomed Kim Schneider as their new Executive Director.

We finally completed the architectural drawings for the Creekwood Mail Kiosk and permits are in place. Now we are awaiting bids, although the work will probably not begin until 2024, to make it easier on our postal workers during the holiday rush. We also renovated the Smokehouse Mail Kiosk, which needed a major cleaning as well as painting and a new roof.

Our treasurer has done a lot to make our budget more transparent, and he quickly moved our money around to take advantage of the higher interest rates that we can now earn on our reserves. I also want to thank him for all the work he put in related to the dues increase.

We are still tweaking our new website, but I certainly use it much more than I used to. I also hope that people take the time to read the monthly *Belted Gazette*, which is chock full of information. Although the paper copies are not "at our fingertips" like before, the electronic version permits inclusion of more material such as beautiful pictures. In addition, the effort to produce next year's directory is well underway. Our community is growing, so that's a big task in and of itself.

We renewed our property management contract with Associa/HRW for another year, and I want to say a special thanks to Kathy Wood, who truly loves this community and puts in many extra hours making sure that things are running smoothly. I also want to welcome Amber Christian, our new assistant property manager.

We continue to meet quarterly with Fitch Creations. We are very appreciative that they listened to the concerns of our residents and opened a new pub in the lower level of the Belted Goat. They haven't really advertised it much, but I went

there recently and had a lovely time visiting with friends while enjoying wine and charcuterie.

We have taken steps to streamline our board by reducing the number of members from ten to eight. Rather than having a Director of Covenants, the Board will be appointing a covenant committee of three people, with very similar responsibilities. We also combined the Grounds and Facilities positions (it was one position until 2019). At the same time, we have asked directors to put together volunteer committees to work with them to help shoulder the workload. For example, Community Affairs has a volunteer group to work on special events, another to train and work with the Area and Block Contacts, and so forth. Landscaping and Facilities has a group that works on the trails, and another group oversees technology in the Gathering place.

None of this year's accomplishments would have been possible without our dedicated Board members, as well as many other community members who have come forward to work with us. I want to wish the incoming Board great success in 2024.

#### **Vice-President's Report: Amy Ghiloni**

- Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC)
  - The LRPC spent the first two months of the year continuing the work of its subcommittees and then took on some new directions in close cooperation with the FHA Board.
  - For The Gathering Place, a significant upgrade of the AV systems has made it much easier to use modern technology and has made a big difference already for our clubs and service groups.
  - The LRPC took on the urgent development of a survey to find what amenities residents wanted. The survey was developed by a member of the LRPC and vetted carefully, while another member found a no-cost and viable mechanism to do the survey. It was launched in the spring, and there were enough responses to make the survey statistically significant. The survey results are helping to guide the decisions of the FHA Board.
  - The LRPC developed a communications strategy to help the Board present the need for a dues increase that went beyond the nominal annual increase permitted without a vote. The LRPC revised the

SWOT (Strength/Opportunities/Weaknesses/Threats) analysis that was last done in 2019 ( pre-pandemic and pre-amenities survey). This is now complete, and with a new mission statement, the LRPC is developing a strategy for the Village for the next five to ten years. The plan is to present this to the Board in January.

- FHA Nominating Committee
  - Committee member, Ruth Ann Burk, agreed to become the Community Affairs Director, replacing Pam Bailey.
  - We then recruited Libby Wilkie, who agreed to run for the now open position on the Nominating Committee to replace Ruth Ann Burk. We recruited Steve Stewart to run for President as Rose Krasnow has completed her allowed service time. Assuming that Steve will be elected, we recruited Warren Ort to serve the rest of his term as Director of Health, Safety, and Security.
  - Amy Ghiloni and Anthony Carroll are running for reelection. Patrick McGahan will run for his first elected term as Director of the newly combined position of Director of Grounds and Facilities.
  - Chris Kaman will run for re-election to the Nominating Committee.

#### **Treasurer's Report: Steve Gambino**

- I succeeded Tony Daniels as Treasurer at the 2022 Annual Meeting.
- Tony did a great job of working with Associa/HRW to organize our finances, and I am grateful that he left me with a pretty clean slate to work with. I have successfully broadened and deepened our relationship with Associa/HRW, developing processes and standardizing procedures.
- I reorganized some of the treasurer reporting, developed a monthly cash report, and a template for organizing reserve investments.
- Speaking of investments, along with inflation, interest rates have risen considerably. We are now heavily invested in insured Certificates of Deposit, which are paying about 5% on a one-year investment. We kept more liquid funds in insured Money Market accounts paying 2.5% to 3.5%.
- Of course, the big news this year was the assessments increase from roughly \$200 to \$300. There was a great deal of work involved from evaluation of the situation to communications and strategizing our legal requirements and restrictions to finally organizing the vote and getting the materials out to the residents.

- I remain committed to the concept that the recent dues increase is a long-term reset for operations and a long-term cushion for reserves.
- Operating Accounts. As of Oct 31, 2023, operating accounts overall remain within budget.
- Reserve Accounts. We are underspent on the reserve portion due to delays in progress on the Creekwood Mail Kiosk.
- Reserve Projects Completed in 2023
  - Reserve Study \$ 2,000
  - Gathering Place Audio Visual System \$ 20,000
  - Creekwood Mail Kiosk (current year to date)\$ 16,000
  - Paint & Repair Smokehouse Mail Kiosk \$ 8,837
  - Replace Gathering Place HVAC \$15,160

#### **Secretary's Report: Judy Graham**

- As Secretary, I am principally responsible for maintaining accurate records of Board business, involving a number of actions. Over the past year, I have done the following:
  - Contributed to regularly scheduled Board Meetings via Zoom and in person.
  - Contributed to Executive Committee activities.
  - Compiled accurate minutes of executive, regular, and open meetings.
  - Promptly delivered approved minutes for posting on the Fearrington Village website.
  - Maintained Board minutes online in Office 365 files and on the FHA website.
  - Maintained the Book of Resolutions and Motions, located online in Office 365 and in hard copy in the Gathering Place Office.
  - Managed the FHA Board election, with substantial participation with Associa/HRW, Community Affairs, Communications, the Board, the nominating committee, and volunteers.
- I also played a leadership role in planning for the request to increase the dues.

#### **Director of Communications' Report: Tony Carroll**

- First, a shout-out to the volunteers who produce 11 issues per year of *The Belted Gazette* and distribute hard copies to neighbors without email, as

well as the numerous article contributors. This year we have placed an emphasis on informing our residents about the many ways they can find community in our unique Village and the beauty that surrounds us.

- Additional wonderful volunteers, together with a much-appreciated outside consultant, keep the website, online directory, and email utility functioning and up to date, enabling us, among other things, to publish the printed annual Directory & Handbook (D&H). D&H publication is coming up, so all residents should update their contact information, including preferences about whether they wish to receive a physical directory, as well as club and service group information. If residents are in doubt about whether to receive a printed D&H, I encourage them to check it out – it contains a wealth of useful information, maps, and other handy data. The D&H information is also available on the FHA website, which is updated frequently.
- During 2023, my communications role was very much focused on the dues increase proposal, including holding an open webinar meeting in April and June, numerous email updates and website posts, and Coffee & Conversation meetings hosted by the Community Affairs team.
- We recently finished installing a Google-style website search function that we hope will make finding things on the website easier.

#### **Director of Community Affairs' Report: Pam Baily/Ruth Ann Burk**

- Developed a new infrastructure to support operations of Community Affairs and reduce the workload on the Director
- Coordinated all components of the area contacts(AC) and block contacts (BC) program
  - Provided training for new and continuing ACs and BCs to familiarize them with their roles
  - Produced welcoming materials for newcomers, including Welcome Packets and QuickStart
  - Worked with ACs and BCs to ensure each position was filled, finding replacements for retiring volunteers as needed
  - Kept an up-to-date list of newcomers and provided this information to ACs and BCs, Communications, and Ferrington Cares
  - Welcomed newcomers

- Served as a liaison with FV Clubs
  - Reviewed charter applications for the formation of new FHA clubs
  - Updated club contact list
  - Facilitated a Club Expo event in concert with Oktoberfest
- Managed volunteer program
  - Developed job descriptions for volunteers
  - Held volunteer appreciation event
- Served as a Liaison with FV Clubs
  - Reviewed charter applications for the formation of new FHA clubs
  - Updated club contact list
  - Facilitated a Club Expo event in concert with Oktoberfest
- Hospitality Office and Service Center
  - Worked with Coordinator for Gathering Place rentals to systematize the process of making rental agreements
  - Working with Associa/HRW, kept records regarding rentals and payments
  - Staffed the office five mornings per week
  - Assisted in the production, distribution and counting of ballots for the annual meeting and the dues vote
  - Produced over 100 Welcome Packets
- Responsible for 17 events
  - Founder's Festival (450 est. attendance) (19 clubs participated)
  - Volunteer Appreciation
  - National Night Out (with Associa/HRW) (200-300 est. attendance)
  - Coffee and Conversation (5) (20-40 each mtg)
  - Shredding Events (with Green Team) (2) (223 vehicles served on October 21, 2024)
  - Egg Hunt (25 children—very STORMY DAY! An all-time low)
  - Newcomer's Welcome (held in concert with Oktoberfest)
  - Oktoberfest (350 in attendance; 28+ registered themselves as newcomers; others did not self-identify)
  - Club Expo, in concert with Oktoberfest. (22 clubs participated)
  - Veterans Day Celebration
- Special thanks to the volunteers who staff the Hospitality Office and assist with all the events sponsored by the FHA. We are a caring group and hope to have many more volunteers join us!

**Director of Covenants' Report: Ric Frank**

- My responsibilities relate to covenant enforcement for areas not in service groups. The data below are from January 1 to October 27, 2023.
- Requests to Architectural Review Committee (ARC)
  - Open Requests – 3
  - Closed Requests – 89
- Violations of Covenants
  - Open – 4
  - Closed - 47

**Director of Facilities and Landscape & Grounds' Report: Patrick McGahan**

- Facilities. In 2023, we set out to bring four structures up to a standard we expect and deserve.
  - The first item we addressed was to restart the project to renovate the Creekwood Mail Kiosk. In January, we engaged a new architect to design a structure that better met the needs and style of the Creekwood community. Plans were completed in late spring and the permitting process proceeded during the summer. As of this writing, the permits have been secured and bid requests have been sent to local contractors. We are currently awaiting proposals.
  - The Smokehouse kiosk also received a significant refurbishment in 2023. Prior to doing any work being done on the building, we raised the tree canopy over the kiosk to improve the longevity of our work. The FHA then replaced the roof, thoroughly cleaned the interior, and painted both the outside and inside of the building. We also plan to replace the freestanding parcel lockers in this kiosk when we renovate the Creekwood Kiosk.
  - The Swim and Croquet Mail Kiosk will also get a thorough cleaning and new parcel lockers after the Creekwood residents' temporary use of the north wall section is completed.
  - Just like the mail kiosks, the FHA sought to improve the functionality and appearance of the Gathering Place in 2023. Led by Preston Thomas and his A-V team, the FHA upgraded the audio-visual equipment in the building. Three large screen TV's, with full internet capability, were installed in the main rooms. The A-V team also installed equipment that allows users to hold in-person/online hybrid



meetings at the Gathering Place. We look forward to exploring these new features in future meetings.

- The FHA also refurbished the generator outside the Gathering Place so that it will automatically run whenever power is lost. This capability will allow the Gathering Place to be a viable location for residents to store important items, like medicine, during extended outages.
- Because the Gathering Place HVAC system was breaking down frequently after many years of operation, we put in a completely new system.
- Grounds
  - In 2023, the FHA continued to maintain the grounds under its care. The park, playground, and pond received their usual care and maintenance from our landscaping service, GCU. The silt build up at the entrance to Beechmast pond is not sufficient currently to schedule removal/relocation.
  - In addition to the mowing contract, the FHA contracted with GCU from time-to-time for various other outdoor improvements. GCU refreshed and refurbished several of our paths in 2023. These include several locations along Millcroft, behind the Millcroft mail kiosk and Richmond. In addition to maintaining our paths and trails, we hope to add several new gravel paths in 2024.
  - The FHA has traditionally been very careful in how we expend our tree cutting and drainage management budgets. The funds available for these line items have always been particularly low due to the limited revenue we received. As this community ages, however, we keep seeing more and more need for tree cutting and drainage management.

### **Director of Health, Safety, and Security's Report: Steve Stewart**

- Health
  - Upgraded the Gathering Place to serve as an evacuation site for residents, including repairing the generator, increasing the number of electrical outlets, and stocking emergency food and water.
  - More fully coordinated health activities with Fearrington Cares.
  - Monitored COVID and changed Village Policies as appropriate.

- Coordinated as appropriate with the Chatham County Health Department.
- Safety
  - Coordinated with the Sheriff's Department, North Chatham Fire Department, and the NC Department of Transportation (NC DOT).
  - Removed foliage blocking stop signs in the Village.
  - Repaired roads and drainage throughout the Village using NC DOT.
  - Increased Sheriff patrols throughout the Village.
  - Sponsored National Night Out to recognize first responders.
  - Modified website text on emergency preparedness.
  - Converted speed monitors to solar power.
- Security
  - Began discussions to re-establish the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in the Village.
  - Began discussions to re-establish Neighborhood Watch in the Village.
  - Established a Health, Safety and Security Advisory Committee.

**From all of us. A heartfelt thank you.**

One of our favorite aspects of serving as members of the Board has been getting to know and work with so many wonderful volunteers. Without them, the Village could not function. Volunteering is a great way to meet people and contribute at the same time. It's energizing and fun, and we urge all residents to give it a try in an area they care about.