

The Ridges Landowners Association Newsletter

Number 35

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Winter 2005

In an effort to keep all landowners in The Ridges informed of the status of the development of the community and issues that may affect you, we are distributing this quarterly newsletter. We hope that you enjoy this periodic update and find it useful.

From the President's Desk

Annual Meeting

The Association held its annual meeting on October 28, 2004 with 35 lots represented in person and 11 by proxy. Treasurer Judy Whiteley presented the 2004 financial report and the 2005 budget plan. The discussion of the 2005 budget included a presentation by Association President and Roads Committee chair Olin van Dyck showing historical and projected Association expenses sorted into a few broad categories including roads, which dominate our costs. The budget projection assumes continuing the \$300 annual per-lot assessment and substantial continuing roads expenses. The 2005 budget plan and assessment fee were approved by the members.

The new Association Directors elected by the members are Brent Bonwell, Arthur Reeder, Doug Svetnicka, Olin van Dyck, and Judy Whiteley.

Regarding subdivision occupancy, Association Administrator Carolyn Cochran reported that there are 85 lots, one common unimproved lot, 12 privately owned unimproved lots, 4 lots with homes under construction and 68 lots with homes on them. No lots are still owned by the original developer.

Again on roads, there was a debate on speed control devices including speed "humps" vs. "bumps," and other measures. Straw votes resulted in no clear orders to the Association for action. The Roads Committee and Board will continue to discuss these measures. The Association may install (or authorize homeowners to install) more signs prohibiting off-road motor vehicles. Members were reminded to ensure that their insurance coverage was adequate in the case that they become a liable party in a road accident occurring on the piece of roadway that is an easement on their property. So far the Association has found no interest from insurance

brokers on adding property owners in an umbrella rider to the Association's policy to cover this contingency.

The perennial concern over possible failure of Entran II radiating heating tubing arose again. Leslie Thompson (466-7749) volunteered to serve as a contact/resource person for landowners with this issue.

As we adjourned, Dave Kingston was presented with a hand-painted coffee mug crafted by Estee Roll, in recognition for his many services to the Association.

Board Meeting, January 6, 2005

The full Ridges Board elected in the October general meeting met on January 6. The officers elected were Olin as President, Doug as Vice President, Judy as Treasurer, and Brent as Secretary. Michel Marx was elected as chairman of the Architectural Control Committee.

Michel was present by invitation to discuss the concern with construction on one property continuing past the nominal one-year window allowed by our covenants (Article 8: "...once begun, exterior construction or landscaping...shall be completed within 240 weather working days..."). Notice will be given to the landowners, notifying them of the deficiency and asking for a commitment to prompt completion, or to go back to the ACC and agree on construction stages, as allowed by the covenants. We think the rule is useful to help limit the time the neighbors must put up with the inconvenience of nearby construction.

We discussed the ACC file of construction plans in The Ridges, a bulky collection that is a nuisance to handle and store. However, the plans might be useful to resolve some future question about what was approved on some property. To relieve the storage problem, we had the key pages for each house (site plan, floor plan, elevation view) digitized. This is part of an effort to keep more of the Association's files on computer

format and reduce the accumulating paper. [But...the ACC house plan file could be of use to a homeowner who has no other copy—this in fact helped the undersigned a few years ago. So options for disposition of the paper files are still being discussed, including just returning the print sets to the landowners, or retaining the complete files as a service to the residents.]

The Board addressed a question regarding the level of traffic from a home business activity. Article 13 of our covenants prohibits a “substantial increase,” leaving considerable room for interpretation. In the last quarter, there was also a complaint about a dog-on-dog attack. This matter was referred to county authorities. When there is a complaint of violation of a covenant on a matter that is also regulated by government authority, the Board is inclined to refer and defer to that authority. Finally, regarding covenants and complaints, the Board expects to see an attempt to solve disputes between neighbors by discussion between them as appropriate before involving the Association.

The Board agreed with the proposal from the Roads Committee to recondition The Ridges gravel roads. See more from this committee’s report below. The Board also agreed with the Roads Committee provisional snowplowing policy—briefly, that over 6 inches of heavy snow or the equivalent should be plowed, recognizing the \$500 cost. The Board recommended that a contractor should be sought for roadside chamisa bush trimming where necessary for visibility (a job different than mowing).

Directors’ opinions were expressed on the impact of the proposed Salida del Sol Business Park (between Marianna’s Restaurant and Luz del Mundo) master plan amendment to add RV storage as an allowed use. Our concerns include possible objectionable night lighting and unfavorable appearance. [The CDRC hearing on the amendment continues to be tabled. We are indebted to Mary Gill, our 285 Coalition representative, for alerting us to this matter, and to her and Karen Embertson for keeping tabs on the CDRC.]

Jack LaRowe took the initiative to find out that there were extensive pilot light outages throughout the neighborhood on December 24 and to gain at least an implicit acknowledgement from PNM that we have a natural-gas service capacity problem in this area. See his note below.

Arthur agreed to work with Olin on a broad revision of the Bylaws, which have been accumulating changes since the last registered version in 2002.

The Board addressed the problem of records keeping. Questions abound regarding valid versions of the Bylaws and Covenants. Furthermore, as the Association accumulates a history, there may be some problem in knowing the record of binding resolutions of the Board or perhaps in finding important documents. See for example the note below on our resolution to permit contractors’ signs. Ridges Administrator Carolyn Cochran provided us with a memo describing her holdings and what should be retained. We will discuss with her disposition of files she doesn’t need. Olin suggested moving more toward computerized record keeping. Also, he proposed, without objection, to spend up to \$40 from budgeted administrative funds this year to register a Ridges domain name and obtain a full-service web site host [done; see note below].

Contractors Signs

The Board by email vote approved the following resolution:

"Resolved, that pursuant to Section 7.09 of the Covenants, the Directors declare that one sign, not to exceed 2 feet horizontally and 2 feet vertically of the display panel, and 3 feet overall in height above ground, is permitted to be erected by the lead contractor on any Lot during construction or property improvement. There shall be no more than one sign displayed whether for construction or property sale or rent."

Without this explicit provision, such signs would not have been allowed and paradoxically has led to “billboards” being erected, on the basis that the subcontractors and workers *must have* easy identification to their worksite.

Trees

The autumn’s cool wet weather may have revitalized a few apparently dead piñon trees. On my lot, I see some green new growth on several trees I thought had completely died from the bark beetle. If they live, maybe these become like the stunted relics you see here and there. Fortunately, I guess, I hadn’t gotten around to taking the dry skeletons out. Another victory for procrastination (one of the least applauded of the virtues).

Doggone It

One distinguished past officer (and The Ridges Benevolent Dictator-for-Life) told me, “dogs are our biggest problem here.” Whaddya know...still true. Another complaint (see above) received by The Ridges Dogcatcher related to a dog startling some horses with

riders. This seemed to call for a reminder to the probable landowner on dog ownership responsibilities, a reminder that could just as well go to all of us with those pets. The Ridges Dogcatcher does not hesitate to advise complainants to call County Animal Control, and those encounters are not always wholly friendly.

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The new web site is on-line. Material from the old site is being transferred and all new material will be posted here. The new site has an easy name to type and has all the usual features available, including posting .pdf files, which give a copy that is faithful in appearance as well as content to the original. Expect to see photocopies of the covenants and bylaws on this site.

Olin van Dyck, President

Roads Committee

Weather conditions, starting with a wet autumn, subzero temperatures in December, followed by snow, rain, and warming, made The Ridges gravel roads very muddy. One long-time resident said it's the worst he's seen here. The Board provisionally approved our proposal to expend most of the \$17,000 in roads funds budgeted for 2004-05 to re-grade the roads and spot fill. We, plus previous Roads chairman Dave Kingston, then met with our usual roads contractor to discuss the summer's work but also wintertime mitigation of the worst mud holes. The contractor strongly advised against trying to re-grade during the winter. Instead, he will submit a proposal to spread crushed rock in the sinkholes and slime pits we noted during a drive-through.

Residents wanting to upgrade their driveways might find it convenient to deal with our road contractor when he is on-site. If you want to get on a call list to be notified about the work schedule, call a Roads Committee person. (*See also Dave Kingston's article on type of gravel that is best for those slippery, muddy driveways. – Ed.*)

Consolation prize: the roads contractor said there's a lot worse mud around than we had. As another resident said in regard to all the mud resulting from precipitation—it's a problem, but a good problem! However, several weeks after the surge in precipitation, we seem to be back into a dry mode, and the roads now are as firm as one might years ago not have seen until March or April.

Going back to our favorite topic from the October general meeting, we also discussed speed humps and dips with the contractor. We might try as an experiment

putting a speed dip just east of the driveway to 46 Principe de Paz. Look for the white rocks on the roadside marking the location. Think about the unintentional speed dip on Alma just west of Chamisa Drive created by road subsidence into a utility trench—it rides okay at 25mph but gets jarring above 30.

Drive easy!

Roads Committee

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Muddy roads and driveways

In normal years the winter weather in The Ridges is cold and dry—with a few snowstorms and warm spells. This means that our gravel roads and driveways stay frozen and in pretty good shape. This year with more snow (and rain) and with unseasonably warm temperatures, the top 2-3 inches of the roads thaw out during the daytime, and when we have rain or snow, the driveways and roads get very muddy. The ground usually stays frozen below this top melting zone and any added rain or snow cannot sink in. The result is some very muddy roads and driveways. Gravel road grading and improvement cannot be done in winter at any reasonable cost, and The Ridges roads committee is investigating road improvements for next summer.

Muddy driveways, however, can be improved at any time of the year by adding a suitable gravel aggregate. Here are some suggestions for those homeowners who are contemplating driveway improvement.

1. The best aggregate (gravel) to combat mud is 1/2 to 1-inch crushed stone. The rough sides of the crushed stone hold up against the weight of traffic and don't sink in the mud (red or brown color is more expensive than gray).
2. Base course is what we now have on our gravel roads. This is cheaper than gravel and an improvement over dirt driveways. However, it has too much fine material (sand) and eventually gets muddy (like our gravel roads). Not highly recommended.
3. River gravel or washed stone is 1-inch smooth rounded pebbles and is not recommended. The smooth sides of the pebbles are slippery and are more easily pushed into the mud by traffic. Also, in summer they can be loose and not easily compactable.

4. Fine crushed stone (usually brown) looks good, but is easily incorporated in the freezing-thawing mud of winter—not recommended.
5. Finally, if you are tired of fighting winter driveway mud, you can try asphalt.

Contributed by Dave Kingston

Butts

It is still winter and wet for the most part but Spring and the dry are coming. In my more-or-less daily walks around The Ridges I cannot help but see that the discarded cigarette and cigar butts are building up again. Without going out of my way to check, it is obvious that many of these, both cigars and cigarettes, have been discarded while still burning.

In the eight years that I have lived in this area, there have been several minor fires and two major ones caused by carelessly discarded smoking materials: a proper forest fire near Pecos started at I-25 and a sizable grass fire that spread East from NM-14 South of Santa Fe.

Besides, it adds to the buildup of unsightly trash.

Please, if you smoke, use your car ashtray or otherwise assure that your smokes are out and properly disposed of.

And please, if you hire workers or have visitors who smoke, remind them that this is a fire prone environment and to please be careful.

Contributed by Jack LaRowe

PNM woes – and ours too

Waking up to a chilly house and hearing from a neighbor that his boiler pilot was out on Christmas morning, I checked around and discovered that there were numerous incidences that morning of either pilot lights going out or very low flames on appliances.

Remembering discussion at the time the gas lines were installed regarding capacity, I e-mailed the PNM Customer Service site as follows:

Over the night of December 24-25, several of the neighbors in our neighborhood experienced what appeared to be significantly low pressure. This resulted in low appliance flames and in several cases, pilot lights going out.

Why should this happen?

Surprisingly soon (couple of days) I received the following reply:

Hello J. R.:

Thank you for your patience. We have experienced so much growth in the Santa Fe Rancho Viejo and Eldorado area that it has affected some locations. We are working on the problem with Engineering and hope to have it resolved as soon as we can. There are plans to upgrade the system possibly around Springtime. Thank you again for your inquiry.

Linda

It will be interesting to see if anything actually happens in this regard in the fullness of time. In the interim, I would suggest that any such oddities or failures of service be reported on an individual basis.

Based on some 11 years of employment in the natural gas industry in another galaxy far, far away, I can assure you that a residence should NEVER experience a pressure drop significant enough to cause a pilot light failure unless a significant utility failure has occurred such as pipeline failure or damage or a widespread power or pumping facility failure. It just shouldn't happen.

While annoying, even if your pilot does go out, it should not present a safety problem since modern pilot lights automatically shut off the gas if the flame goes out for any reason and are about as close to fail-safe as modern mechanics get.

However, if your house is unoccupied and your heat remains off long enough to allow the water pipes to freeze you may end up with really big problems.

Contributed by Jack LaRowe

Community Yard Sale: One man's trash, another man's treasure

Taking a critical look around my house and garage recently, I realized that it was no longer about reorganizing or moving things to storage, it was about simplifying, getting rid of, letting go of excess, and recycling those things "too good to throw out" at a yard sale. This led to the idea of having a Ridges yard sale, possibly on and the first use for our community lot; the idea has been agreed to by the Board.

The potential convenience to homeowners of setting up on individual lots throughout the subdivision would necessitate a map, and parking and traffic could become an issue. Gathering on Lot 11 seems simpler, more effective, fun, and more accessible to the main road. Without knowing how many people will

participate, we'll need to see how the lot can work. It's all open for discussion.

No date has been set. I was thinking around "spring cleaning"...a Saturday in late April with an alternate rain/snow date the following weekend. Once firmed up, the details can be circulated in a flyer if not the next newsletter. A few signs on 285 to bring in the public will keep us all from going home with each others' junk.

Be ruthless and get your pile ready. We may need truck volunteers.

Contact me at <karenembertson@earthlink.net> or 466-2486.

Submitted by Karen Embertson

Our neighbors

This column is about and for the residents of The Ridges. Input is welcomed from anyone who has news to include. Items may be e-mailed to the editor at any time, titled "newsletter article" and will be included in

the subsequent newsletter. We also welcome timely articles.

Two Ridges residents produce a short film in Mexico

Two of our neighbors in The Ridges, Miles Merritt and his wife Gail Kempler recently produced a short film in the historic town of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. The film, entitled *El Cochero*, (The Carriage Driver) was adapted from a story by Chekhov.

It deals with a widowed horse and carriage driver who has recently lost his only son and stars the renowned Mexican actor, Alonso Echanove.

Billy Collins, the U.S. Poet Laureate from 2001–2003, has said "*El Cochero* is a poignant, beautifully paced, vividly colored piece of cinematic lyricism." The film has already won two awards at national film festivals and was shown here at the Santa Fe Film Festival the first week of December. There were two screenings at the CCA: Thursday, December 2 at 3:30 at the CCA and Saturday, December 4 at 12:30.

Congratulations to Miles and Gail.

The Board of Directors and the Association officers are listed for your information. Please feel free to call for assistance or information.

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