

# The Ridges Landowners Association Newsletter

Number 39

[www.ridgesla.org](http://www.ridgesla.org)

Winter 2006

*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

The Board of Directors met January 12 and officers were elected for the upcoming year as follows:

Judy Whiteley, President  
Doug Svetnicka, Vice-President  
Arthur Reeder, Treasurer  
Tina Lanman, Secretary

In the tradition of all office holders, we've made numerous promises of hoped-for achievements for our term of office. Primary among those goals is improved communication within the Association. You will find sites mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter to facilitate contacting all Board members and committee chairs.

- We plan to enhance the operation of our Architectural Control Committee and communicate more effectively with the residents regarding their responsibilities in adhering to the Covenants.
- We will also be working closely with the Roads Committee to develop a realistic budget for scheduled road maintenance projects.
- We are currently working on revisions of the Covenants and Bylaws to eliminate conflicting verbiage.
- We are creating a Concerns and Suggestions Committee to handle incoming resident concerns or direct to appropriate functions like the ACC. More information will follow on this as the committee is established and becomes operational.

We've been listening to your ideas and feedback and are working to make our Association a more user-friendly organization that continues to ensure your property values and lifestyle. I am so happy to live in such a welcoming community and look forward to contributing to the Association during my final year on the Board of Directors.

## Communicating with the Board

In the on-going effort to improve communication within our association, we want to mention the great website created and maintained by Olin van Dyck. Get all the latest about The Ridges at [www.ridgesla.org](http://www.ridgesla.org). Residents can also use e-mail to contact Board members with suggestions, issues and concerns by e-mailing [board@ridgesla.org](mailto:board@ridgesla.org). Board members will be checking these sources periodically and responding to your inquiries. Remember to include full contact information for yourself, with e-mail address and telephone or cell phone number as desired.

On occasion the Board member you have e-mailed may be traveling and unable to respond immediately, but take heart, we have to return home sooner or later to pay the bills, so we will get back to you.

These communication avenues will offer you the answers and information you seek AND the opportunity to communicate at all hours of the day and night, which should help protect our board and committee members from those 10 p.m. Sunday night calls they so love.

We all want to hear from you, just not while relaxing or entertaining after business hours. If contacting by phone, please keep to Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. when possible.

## Thank you, Olin

As we announce the membership of the Board of Directors for the upcoming year, it's a good time to thank Olin van Dyck for his past three years of service to our residents and especially his final two years as President of the Association. Olin worked more long hours for our benefit than most of us know and we had the benefit of his analytical skills and leadership, which will be missed. He single-handedly created The Ridges Landowners Association website and also headed the

Roads Committee while President. The current Board hopes, for the benefit of all of us, to be able to use Olin as a resource ongoing; if you see Olin biking the trails or around town, take the opportunity to thank him for his service.

*Judy Whiteley, President*

## Gotta problem? Got an idea?

Few of us wake up in the morning with intention to offend our neighbors or break the Covenants that we agreed to comply with at the purchase of our properties. With this thought in mind the Board has created a **Concerns and Suggestions Committee** to handle various issues that arise — from a suggested pancake breakfast to complaints about conditions on neighboring properties.

The Ridges website [www.Ridgesla.org](http://www.Ridgesla.org) will soon add a menu option for members to register a complaint or concern, or make a suggestion...all in the spirit of improving community relations. But, in the meantime...

Please call either Judy Whiteley (466-4138) or Dick Carlson (466-4868). As the majority of problems involve either architectural/landscaping or animals, call Judy for the former and Dick for the latter. If your issue doesn't fit either category, take your choice. Ideas and suggestions? Call either one.

If your problem appears to be resolvable through conflict resolution, please review the following procedure first established by the Board in September 2000, and more recently updated by Board action, February 2006:

- 1) First, try resolving it directly with the neighbor by one-on-one discussion at least twice.
- 2) If unsuccessful after two attempts, report the problem in writing to a member of the Board of Directors, citing the pertinent covenant.
- 3) **If the grievance is found to involve a covenant violation**, the Board will issue a letter to the offending neighbor directing compliance.
- 4) **If the issue does not involve a covenant violation**, the Board will recommend that the parties seek professional mediation.

We hope that using this process will resolve the majority of those issues that unintentionally arise.

*Dick Carlson and Judy Whiteley*

## Construction

Owners must contact the ACC (Architectural Control Committee) and obtain approval for any construction projects.

If you see any construction starting, e-mail us so we can confirm that the owner has submitted plans, paid the deposit and received ACC approval and will have ACC oversight.

— *Ed.*

## Reminder

The Ridges Landowners' Association annual assessment is due February 28, 2006.

## Animal control

A reminder that any animal control issues — which in our Association primarily involve dogs — should be directed to the Animal Control Division of the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Department at 992-1621. Our animals should be restricted to our own property and leashed when on our neighbors' property or the roads or the trails that run primarily on private property. It is unfair to other community members to find that our animals do not respond to voice commands as the animal terrorizes neighbors or their animals.

*Judy Whiteley*

## Roads

In the last quarter of 2005, we added 100 tons of basecourse on two gravel roads. The material used was chosen by the Roads Committee with the purpose of evaluating color choices as well as upgrading road conditions. On the lowest section of Pan de Vida, we laid down 50 tons of gray basecourse on the 200 feet of roadway that's one of the persistent muddy areas during wet weather. This is the least expensive quality material available, costing about \$250 for a 12.5-ton truckload delivered and spread, including tax. The stone presently being mined for this mix has a relatively dark color from ore content and presents a little less color contrast with the old surface than the light gray stone used earlier this past year. Next, on 200 feet of Rey de Reyes degraded by dirt mixed in from a water leak years ago and chewed up by recent construction, we laid down 50 tons of basecourse that's a mix of half gray and half brown, costing about \$350 for a truckload. Our experts advise against using 100% Santa Fe brown basecourse, on the basis of lower quality, plus it would be about \$450/truckload. In the springtime, after the winter mud (?) has mixed things up a bit, we'll ask for input on acceptable color and work toward making the gravel roads more uniform in

appearance. In 2005, we put down a total of 280 tons of basecourse and stone—a small fraction of what it would take to top off all of our side roads.

(The dark gray material has been used on a couple of driveways here recently. One truckload would give a typical driveway a 1–2” topping.)

Also in the last quarter, anticipating wet weather, we used a road sweeper to push some of the loose stone back towards the center of the road. You may remember that a year ago about this time we had a near-emergency with gravel roads becoming so slick and muddy they were difficult to traverse. In contrast, the dry, hard road condition so far this winter prevents new gravel from becoming consolidated with the old surface.

We have a snowplow operator lined up who may be able to provide same-day service. We hope to test him soon!

Finally, we received advice and cost estimates from several pavement contractors to help with planning maintenance for the next few years. This will be factored into an update for the long-range roads plan.

*email roads@ridgesla.org  
Charlie, Dave, Olin, Robert, and Tim*

## **Know your Covenants**

### **Cars, garages and parking**

The Covenants specify (Article 7.01) that each residence “...shall not be built without an attached garage of sufficient size to accommodate at least two (2) automobiles, which garage shall be used for vehicles and not storage.” This implies that our cars are to be parked in our garages. Article 7.04 says, “Extra automobiles, trailers, boats, recreational vehicles and similar mobile structures and vehicles shall be screened from view by means of a coyote fence, wall, or similar treatment.” Obviously this article is open to some interpretation.

Over time our Association has taken this to mean that in general we should park our cars and other vehicles in our garages to the extent that we have garage bays to accommodate our vehicles; and where the number of vehicles exceeds the garage space, we should take actions to place our vehicles where they are screened from the view of our neighbors and surrounding community as much as possible by trees or other plantings, coyote fencing, conforming walls or similar treatments.

All of us recognize that this is a complicated issue. During the day we may run numerous errands and temporarily park our cars in our driveways, which is

understandable. We may have visitors with additional cars and vehicles, which are brief occurrences. When we first move into our homes, many of us briefly store household goods in our garages while we unpack and settle in. After a few months this storage situation must transition to the required situation of parking our cars in the garage.

As a community we appreciate it when our neighbors keep to the Covenants that maintain the quality of our residential community that drew us to The Ridges. In the past the Board has from time to time contacted various neighbors to encourage them to comply with these requirements. Please park your cars in your garages and this will reduce complaints that have to be handled by your Board and reduce the irritation on all our neighbors.

*Judy Whiteley*

## **Changes within the ACC**

At the Board meeting on February 7, 2006, the Board of Directors resolved to establish a co-chairmanship to oversee the Architectural Control Committee’s activities; two co-chairmen with equal authority and responsibility will oversee the committee and perform all of the duties outlined in the Bylaws. The Directors elected Jerry Fornell and Henry Lanman as co-chairmen.

Furthermore, the incoming slate of members of the ACC for 2006 will be presented by the Co-Chairmen to the Board of Directors for their vote at the upcoming March 9, 2006, Board meeting as required in the Bylaws.

### **No butts about it**

While normally at this time of year we would be reminding you to be cautious while driving on ice and snow, with this winter’s lack of precipitation something just as dangerous exists: the dry winter with so much wind has with it the possibility of fires throughout the region.

One thing that can be done to minimize damage to structures is to mow weeds and grasses that grow close to homes, sheds and trees. The web site [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org) has several other valuable tips about how to reduce the threat of fire around one’s home.

A resident has noticed cigarette and cigar butts tossed alongside our subdivision’s roads. If you are one of the culprits, please dispose of these items in a proper receptacle. If you have workers at your lot, please ask them to do the same and even provide a can with sand in it for them to use to discard butts.

Which leads to another problem: the buildup of trash along our roadsides. While it isn't spring yet, if you are out walking, please take a plastic bag along with you to pick up some of the trash. It seems having a small amount of litter encourages more to be tossed.

— *Ed.*

## Mail problems

Many residents have had mail delivery problems recently. According to articles and letters in *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, this has been far more widespread than just in The Ridges. To make complaints about the mail or any other Federal Government activity, you can contact:

Senator Bingaman:  
(senator\_bingaman@bingaman.senate.gov) or 988-6647; or

Senator Domenici and Representative Udall have seen fit to require the following to e-mail them, quote:

Unfortunately, because of the thousands of messages that I was receiving from around the world every day, it became impossible to sort the messages from my constituents, and I had to close this e-mail account. In order to provide you with a more timely response, you can e-mail me by clicking on <http://...> and following the directions.

Unquote. The "directions" require a lengthy filling in of blanks. Somehow, Bingaman can manage although this looks like the new wave of Congressional e-mail.

Senator Domenici:  
<http://domenici.senate.gov/contact/contactform.cfm>.  
His staff may also be contacted by telephone at 988-6511

Representative Udall:  
<http://www.tomudall.house.gov/feedback.cfm>. His staff may also be contacted by telephone at 984-8950

To go directly to the USPS, a hotline for Santa Fe complaints has been set up at 988-6354. Or, contact all of the above.

*Jack LaRowe*

## Passing gas...not?

For those of you not on my Ridges e-mail list, the problem of low pressure on the natural gas lines in The Ridges reared up again in early December.

This problem first occurred in December 24, 2004, when the local temperature dropped to zero Fahrenheit, and is evidenced by quite a few appliance pilot lights going out and by low flame on appliances if you happen to look at the right time. The pressure returns to

normal fairly quickly but the pilots do not relight themselves. Some residents experienced several pilot flameouts during December 2005. Numerous residents complained to PNM and some took the problem to the Public Regulation Commission as informal complaints (it requires a \$25 filing fee to enter a "formal" complaint).

In 2004, I was assured that PNM knew of the problem and that correction would likely take place during the spring or summer of 2005. Well, it was not.

But, as of 15 December 2005 PNM claims that they have corrected this problem by installing larger capacity line(s) in the area of Rodeo and Richards Roads. The construction was actually observed but we won't know for sure that the problem is fixed until the temperature in the area drops to near or below zero again.

In the meantime, the main danger of this is that your home may be unheated in your absence to the point of freezing water or heating pipes and causing very costly damage. Thus, if you are not actually in residence for any period of time at all, be sure to have someone checking your house on a daily basis. This is always a good idea anytime you are away for any length of time.

Should the problem occur again, you can get PNM to relight your pilot(s) which is actually a simple process but having them do it will attract some of their attention and you need to complain about the problem if it recurs anyway. Call (505) 246-5700, this is their emergency number; they can also be reached at (800) 687-7854. Or, you can e-mail them at [PNMCustomerService@pnm.com](mailto:PNMCustomerService@pnm.com)

*Jack LaRowe*

## Septic tank and leach field maintenance

We all should consider the state of maintenance of our septic tanks and leach fields. This is a good time to think about and plan ahead for a spring or summer septic pumping.

For the education of those new to or not yet trained about these, proper maintenance of a septic tank requires a few ongoing lifestyle changes from city sewage disposal and periodic pumping to remove solids. More frequent pumping can mostly remove the necessity of the lifestyle changes.

Here is the way the tank works: the tank provides a site for anaerobic bacterial action on your sewage and a temporary home for sediment produced in your household.

First and most importantly for you and our water supply is periodic removal (pumping) of the accumulated solids remaining in the tank after the bacteria do their thing. Should your tank fill up and overflow solids into the leach field, it will almost immediately kill the field and cause two serious problems:

First, untreated waste will, for a time, pass through the tank into the leach field and leach from there, eventually, into the underlying aquifer.

Second, your leach bed will shortly fill with a mat of solids that will stop the leaching process. This will cause either a breakthrough of sewage to the surface and/or backup into your house and require the leach field be dug up and completely replaced. As you might guess, this is horrendously expensive.

The good news is that if your tank is properly maintained, the leach field should last more or less forever.

How often to pump depends on your individual household tank size, population and sewage practices. As a single example, our 1000 gallon tank with a household of two and reasonable care of what we flush and run through the garbage disposal seems to require pumping about every three years for safety. More people, major disposal use or flushing of chemicals that kill the tank beasts will shorten this period.

I would recommend that new residents should have their tanks pumped before they move in and about two years thereafter to determine how much it has filled with solids in order to establish a safe baseline for future pumping. In addition to the actual pumping, this requires that the pumper provide an accurate report on the percentage of solids fill. Ask if they can or will do this before you contract for the service and make sure the pumper knows on the day that they must provide the estimate.

Finally, the life style changes:

1. Be careful what you flush:
  - a. No household paper products not labeled as septic system safe.
  - b. No cloth or non-organic solids.
  - c. Be sure household and personal cleaning products that go down the drains are labeled as septic safe. Especially limit bleach use when you can.
2. Limit what you run through the garbage disposal. This especially applies to bones. Try to minimize fats and oils (these float and tend to pass through to

the leach field before the tank beasts can break them down properly).

3. Periodically use a septic tank activation product.

This is a debatable recommendation; various authorities recommend both for and against this use and various products probably provide different success but I maintain that periodically kicking up the tank beasts and/or enzymes cannot hurt and might actually help reduce the residual solids.

Additional information on septic system maintenance and on tank pumping companies can be obtained from the El Dorado Water and Sanitation District office or your neighbors may make recommendations. Cost for pumping a 1000-gallon tank with minimal digging should be in the \$160 range.

*Jack LaRowe*

## Old Las Vegas Highway

Reconstruction of OLVH, now designated as state highway NM300, is nearing completion. Project planning included historical appearance objectives and input from local residents. The results you'll see include use of newly-engineered but old-style cable barriers instead of W-beams, possibly brown chip-sealing of the shoulders so they look like earth instead of pavement, and mulching of the adjacent graded areas.

The "Thieves Corner" flea market was given dedicated space. Bicycle safety was enhanced at considerable expense. This project may become the standard for other state highway rebuilds. Enjoy the trip on NM300 when you're not rushing on I-25.

*Olin van Dyck*

## ⇒ Feedback ⇐

*There are sometimes issues, concerns, votes, etc., that invite comment, or things said of interest. You are invited to submit – in writing – items of concern, or, goodness, we'll even take praise! A couple of caveats, however: we may edit to a pithy line or two, with no attribution to the contributor (nor will we share with anyone the source) and with no targeted remarks to or about individuals.*

Is there any chance of having a community event so we can meet more of our neighbors? (See mention of pancake breakfast in the President's column — Ed.)

## Tracks in the area

In an area of The Ridges a deep canyon cuts down through the hills heading eastward to the railroad tracks. Some call this the fossil canyon because of the Devonian/Pennsylvanian limestone strata containing

brachiopods that outcrop in the bottom of the arroyo. In the deepest part of the canyon are water seepages and some old melting snow. These seeps provide drinking water for the local wildlife living in the wilderness area and animal tracks abound.

In December 2005 several hikers went down the canyon. Of note were the many deer tracks, what appeared to be elk (too big for deer and though very large, were too narrow for cow tracks). But the winner was a whole (walking) string of very large cat tracks. These measured over 6 inches long, including toes, and 4 1/2 inches wide. This was a BIG cat, too big for a bobcat, very likely a cougar. His reason for being there was probably the watering hole and the deer. No scat except deer was observed. The hikers also observed two mule deer does and an enormous buck with 10-12 points on his horns, over 2 1/2 feet wide with tines over one foot long. This was a big mule deer buck, living peacefully in the wilderness area because of no hunting, but attracting the large predators.

Russell Kingston, an experienced deer and elk hunter who reported this sighting, has also seen cougar tracks while hunting in Colorado. Over the past 10 years large cat tracks have been occasionally reported in The Ridges. These have been seen only in the dirt, never in snow, and were considered "not confirmed." We have seen bears in The Ridges as well as in Eldorado. Why not cougars?

*Dave Kingston*

*New Mexico Magazine, February 2006, has more information on the big cats found in the state. – Ed.*

## **Dealing with other wild life**

I was recently advised by a concerned citizen that the mole/gopher population is increasing in at least some areas of The Ridges. This may well be due to the lack of moisture leading to a lack of ground frost. I have also noticed that there seem to be a lot more of our ground squirrels active than usual for this time of year.

We don't garden as intensely as most do so I haven't had to deal with the few showing on our side of the ridgeline. So, remembering a long ago conversation with an ex-resident Master Gardener, I asked Ray Olson if I didn't remember that he had had some luck with disposing of the little buggers.

Herewith, his reply. I assume it will seriously offend the gopher huggers. Quote:

Hi, Jack. For a couple of years I used waxed poison blocks that I bought at Santa Fe Greenhouses. Then I got onto using the snap traps that they sell at the Country Store, and I have been successful almost every time. They give out a sheet of instructions, which

are necessary, because setting the traps can be tricky (watch your hand, so you don't get stabbed). No bait necessary. I use a metal sound to find the main tunnel (not an entry or exit), by moving back about six inches from the peak of the dirt pile; it usually takes many probings, going in a circle around the pile; when I feel the probe drop through, I use a planting trowel to excavate a hole large enough for my hand; then I put my hand in and feel to make sure I can find the tunnel running off in both directions. I set two traps (with a stout cord tied to the near end) and gingerly insert one in each direction, pulling the cord out of the hole; then I set a rock over the hole and wait 2 days. Almost every time I come back, I find the critter, "daid". "Become a Buddha!"

Oh, yeah, I almost forgot. Early in my gopher career with traps I discarded the trap with the impaled varmint, only to decide, "I can't afford that!" So, I switched to donning a pair of disposable gloves, extricating the varmint, tossing him in the trash, and then washing the trap under the outdoor water tap and storing it for reuse. It works.

Good luck, Jack.

Ray

Unquote.

Then, you might know, the weekly Newman's ad in *The New Mexican's Pasatiempo* would have a gopher tip. Note it disagrees with me about the winter activity being unusual. This does not appear to have been copyrighted and I would think Newman's would like the additional advertising so here it is as published save the format to fit this newsletter. Quote:

## **PEAT MOSS' GARDEN TIP**

Gophers continue to feed all winter long on trees, shrubs and perennials. This is when they actually do the most damage to your landscape, killing trees and shrubs. The best way to control these awful pests is with a combination of controls such as: trapping, poison baits, mechanical repellents, and collapsing tunnels. One effective device is to bury a wind bottle underground and insert a daisy pinwheel. The sound of the metal rod against the glass helps drive these pests out. However, it should be moved once a month.

Unquote.

*Jack LaRowe with much of it from  
Ray Olson and ol' Peat*

## **The (almost) Antiques Road Show**

Ever wonder if that treasure from Aunt Millie or auction bauble is as valuable as you hoped? One of our neighbors, Bill Farmer, has completed a course of study for appraising antiques and has generously offered to give a free verbal approximation of value for one item

per lot. You can contact him during normal business hours at 466-4506. More information will be in the next issue.

## 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.*

Eva Kingston (466-4078) has agreed to restart the Welcoming Committee. The "Committee of One" will greet newcomers and give them a letter from the President, copies of the most recent *Newsletter* and the governing documents. If you know of a new neighbor, or are a new neighbor, please let Eva know.

*We would like very much to know more about our newer neighbors as a way of greeting you and making*

*you feel part of the community. Please e-mail a short sketch about yourselves to the editor; for example, family members, where you lived before, what brought you to Santa Fe and/or The Ridges, your hobbies and interests would be items to share. As space permits, we will print your responses. We want to hear from you!*

In the meantime, welcome to the following as new neighbors since the November 2004 roster. We apologize if we've overlooked any of you:

Holly Dyer, Ron and Mitzi Billingsley, Larry and Magdalena Socea, Frank Welsch and Brigitte Phillip, Shari Weinstein and Michele Williams, Terry and Patricia Sciarrotta, Tim Haggerty and Diann Sullivan, and Rory and Cherie Hayostek.

We lost a friend and neighbor, Jo Ann Billingsley, in November 2005. Also, our sympathy goes to Jerry Fornell, whose mother died recently.

—Ed.

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

NAME	OFFICE	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL	COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
Judy Whiteley	President	505-466-4138	board@ridgesla.org	
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Arthur Reeder	Treasurer	505-474-6707	board@ridgesla.org	
Tina Lanman	Secretary	505-466-4591	board@ridgesla.org	
Dick Carlson	Director	505-466-4868	board@ridgesla.org	
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