

# The Ridges Landowners Association Newsletter

Number 43

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

Winter 2007

*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

### Spring Project: The Search for Clarity in Board Responsibilities

Spring is traditionally a time for cleaning and freshening and organizing our homes. It may also be a good time for raising the shades and shedding some light on what appear to be a few misconceptions within our community about how a landowners association is governed and what it can legally do.

As members of The Ridges Landowners Association, we are all (residents and absent owners) responsible for electing a Board of Directors whose members are charged with administering the Covenants and managing the affairs of the Association using the Bylaws as our rules. Thus, we have a representative form of government in which the elected Board members make decisions for all, based on our rules and state statutes.

By New Mexico law, the boards of directors of such landowners associations may, and often do, set the budget, which includes the annual assessment, without a vote of the membership. There is no legal obligation for allowing association members to vote on the budget.

The Ridges Board has always extended our members the opportunity to read and vote on the budget as a way to encourage both understanding and involvement in the affairs of their community. The Board feels this is still a good and necessary practice. The budget is mailed to all landowners prior to the annual meeting, and we strongly encourage members to read it carefully prior to either an in-person vote at the meeting or a mailed-in proxy vote. Members may vote against the budget, with the intent of rejecting the annual assessment. However, please remember that we all vote on the entire budget – expenditures and revenues – and not the annual assessment as a separate item.

There is some concern that, having paid the annual assessment, a landowner may sell and move before the end of our fiscal year, i.e., 31 December. Please know that as soon as January 1<sup>st</sup> of any year comes along, the new fiscal year is upon us and the budget, along with its new funds, must be in place. As managers of the Association, the Board must avail itself of the funds just as it did this year for snow removal. If you sell your home, certainly you can add the portion of the assessment to the selling price. Or, you could use a prorated share of this paid-up assessment as an asset in selling the house, precisely as is done with your property taxes which are also paid in advance each year.

A question has also been raised concerning owners of multiple lots and the payment of the annual assessment in full on each lot owned. The law governing nonprofits such as our landowners association dictates that each lot, whether occupied or not, must be assessed in the same amount. Otherwise, our tax-exempt status is lost.

We are governed by three different sets of legal documents, all found on our web site. They are the Articles of Incorporation, Covenants and Bylaws. Remember when reading these documents that the Covenants deal with real estate and property rights and the Bylaws address the day-to-day management of our Association.

We hope this clarifies some of the issues presented to us recently.

*Arthur Reeder, President  
Doug Svetnicka, President-elect*

## Neighborhood watch

### Update

The Neighborhood Watch Committee requested, and received, permission to become an entity with Board oversight.

The Board authorized the committee to purchase easily-identifiable removable transparent stickers, designed by Karen Embertson, to be placed on the windows of all vehicles belonging to residents of The Ridges. Residents will be asked to purchase the stickers at a nominal cost to help defray the cost of production.

While the use of stickers is voluntary, to be effective we are asking all residents to participate. Any vehicle without the sticker could be reported as suspect.

Several people have already called me when they plan to be out of town. They include dates away and in some cases a description of any vehicles (maids, handymen, house sitters) that might be on their property while they are gone.

Committee members plan to distribute a packet of information to each household sometime in the future. They hope to meet with each household to explain more about the watch and answer any questions that may arise.

Included with this newsletter is a vacation checklist column and a separate suspicious vehicle form to be kept in your vehicle. We suggest you make copies if there are multiple vehicles in your family.

Other suggestions to help with the Watch:

1. Be aware. Know your neighbors and their vehicles.
2. Keep a disposable camera in your car, use it to document a strange person or car, capturing the license plate. Or, use your cell phone to take pictures of suspicious activities.
3. Take digital photos of your possessions and place one copy where you can get to it and another with a relative or friend away from your home. Alternatively, or at the same time, engrave your NM driver's license number on valuables.
4. Take a good look around the interior of your house. Are there computers, TVs, other items of value in easy sight and reach of a window? Either move the items or somehow shield them from view.
5. Give at least one neighbor a key to your home and the security code of your alarm system.
6. Create friendships with your neighbors. When you go away, give them an itinerary, cell number, contact numbers both locally and along the way, vehicle description and license plate number if driving. Also tell them if there will be lights on timers.
7. Follow suspicious vehicles at a discreet distance. Do not, however, accost anyone. If someone is really searching for a home or individual he/she will likely ask for help. A vehicle driving very slowly is an unusual behavior, especially if it slows down even more and tries to get a following car to pass.

8. Again, a request for addresses of all residents who have e-mail will be made in the newsletter for notification of important news that will go through the channel already in place via the web site.

*Victor Hesch  
Neighborhood Watch Coordinator*

*You may see Victor making one of his frequent patrols of the area. We appreciate the hours and hours of time and effort he has already given to make this a safer place. Thank you, Victor. —Ed.*

### **Vacation Check List**

1. Prepare an itinerary with your contact information for neighbors and relatives in the event that you need to be contacted in an emergency. Provide information regarding any persons that you have authorized access to your property during your absence. Refrain from telling anyone other than trusted neighbors and relatives about your planned absence. Request neighbors to periodically inspect the perimeter of your home during your absence.
2. Make arrangements for mail and newspapers to be picked up by a neighbor or relative. As a less desirable alternative, stop delivery service during your absence.
3. If you own a security system, test the system following the service provider's instructions at least a week prior to your departure, leaving time for a service call if the system displays any malfunction. Physically inspect the components of your system to make sure motion sensors are not blocked, door and window contacts are operational, etc.
4. Instruct anyone who has your authorization to enter your home during your absence in the procedure to deactivate or activate your alarm system. Most alarm service providers suggest that you establish a secondary temporary authorization code for this purpose.
5. Notify your alarm service of your planned departure and return dates and who to contact if the alarm system is activated. Instruct the alarm service to always contact the Santa Fe County Sheriff Dispatch (505/428-3720) first.
6. Notify the Santa Fe County Sheriff Dispatch (505/428-3720) of your absence dates. If there has been recent or frequent criminal activity in your area, they will often increase patrols.
7. Secure valuables away from prying eyes, particularly items visible through windows and doors.
8. Automatic garage door openers do not secure garages. Disconnect automated door openers and use interior padlocks through the track to secure doors. Do not leave door opener transmitters in vehicles parked outside garages during your absence.

9. If your home has a pet access door, secure the opening.

10. Walk the outside perimeter of your home and put away ladders, tools or anything that could be used to break into your home. Disconnect garden hoses from faucets.

11. Put several interior home lights on timers set to turn on and off at appropriate times during your absence. It is also recommended to put exterior lights on timers. Wall switches with integrated programmable timers are available at hardware stores, electrical suppliers, etc., that work well for this purpose. Exterior motion sensors and/or photocell activated lights are also recommended. Law enforcement personnel advise that exterior lighting is one of the most effective deterrents to home break-ins.

12. Before leaving your residence, do a final walk through to verify that all windows and doors are locked. Check appliances to insure that they are either turned off or set to the appropriate operating mode. Refrigerators often have specific instructions to follow when one is to be away. Turn down heating thermostats and the temperature on the water heater. Turn off both the hot and cold water supply to the washer, especially if you have rubber hoses.

13. Notify your credit card companies that you will be traveling and that there will probably be an unusual pattern in your spending for the next several days/weeks. This can prevent your credit being abruptly suspended.

We welcome your input into what can be done when going away and will include any ideas you have in following issues. Let a committee member know or e-mail the editor.

*Your Neighborhood Watch Committee*

## **PCB II**

### **Second annual pancake breakfast**

Spring is here again and a group of neighbors is hosting The Ridges Second Annual Pancake Breakfast Saturday, May 19, 2007, 9 – 11 a.m. This will be an opportunity for all of us to socialize and get to know our neighbors better. The tentative menu will be:

Tina's Buttermilk Pancakes  
Roger's Sourdough Pancakes  
Judy and Charlie's Blue Corn Piñon Pancakes  
Ham  
FruitJuice and Water  
Coffee

The event will be held in the cul-de-sac of Rey de Reyes and will be hosted by Tina and Henry Lanman, Judy and Charlie Whiteley, and Larry and Maggi Socea.

If anyone would like to help in any way, shape or form, please call one of us.

If you would like to walk to the breakfast and collect roadside trash along the way, there will be trash receptacles available at the PCB. No dogs will be allowed. Watch for a flyer with further details prior to the Pancake Breakfast.

Be sure to come with pocket change for the exciting 50/50 raffle which helps defray the cost of the Pancake Breakfast.

To make reservations, please call Larry and Maggi Socea, 466-4445, with your name and the number of people in your party who will attend. While drop-ins are welcome, the committee would like to have as accurate a count as possible for planning purposes. It would be fun if everyone could come.

*Tina Lanman and Judy Whiteley*

## **Isotopes game, anyone?**

A group of Ridges neighbors is planning to attend an Isotopes baseball game in Albuquerque Saturday, August 4, 7:05 p.m.; if you'd like to join in call Judy Whiteley, 466-4138 for a reservation. Box seats are \$11 each and if we have more than 20, we'll get the group rate of \$9.50.

The Isotopes will be playing the Salt Lake Bees and there will be fireworks following the game. In case FOOD is your motivator, the ballpark has added several new delights to their standard fare (Green Chile Pizza and Bananas Foster are my personal past favorites) including Turkey Legs, Fish Tacos and Chocolate/Nut-Dipped Banana on a Stick.

In case you haven't been, Isotopes Park is wonderful ballpark with lots of entertaining activities between innings and a good view from any seat in the house. Join us! The deadline to sign up for the ballgame is May 20, 2007. If we don't answer your call, leave your name, phone number, and the number of tickets you'd like. When I'm able I'll call to confirm that I received your reservation.

*Judy Whiteley*

## **Roads**

Four of us from the Roads Committee plus three other residents with roads interest met to discuss possible safety measures for the arroyo crossing where in January a pickup truck dropped off the edge onto its roof (without serious injury). Proposals included a Park Service style wooden guardrail (\$8k) and a cable barrier made from salvaged materials (\$2k). The group expressed to the Board a strong preference for warning signs rather than physical barriers. You will now see a symbolic "slippery" sign at each end of that road section, these signs purchased and installed by committee members Tim Ames, Dave Kingston and John Brown, at nominal cost.

For several years, graffiti has marred the stop sign at the east end of Pan de Vida. A nearby resident, Tim Haggerty,

cleaned it and saved the Association a few bucks for replacement. Thanks, Tim.

We have been advised by our paving company to get the sand off the paved roads to reduce abrasion on the surface sealing coat so several residents have been chipping away (literally; some of it's now hard adobe) at it.

The Roads Committee has had and will see some turnover in membership this year so please consider joining this community-minded group.

We have new advice and estimates for pavement maintenance this year. You may have noticed the white paint on the pavement showing the areas needing patching. The extent of problem areas, growing over the years, makes it clear that we have to stay on top of the work and the financial planning. The recommended work this year exceeds budgeted funds (even if we didn't have unusual snowplow costs), the first time to my knowledge that needed maintenance would bust the plan. Because the patchwork is becoming so extensive, we are also considering putting a hold on further patching and saving that money for full resurfacing.

At the April meeting, the Board directed the Roads Committee to minimize expenses on Alma Drive this year and save towards repaving as soon as possible, probably next year, using funds from reserves as necessary. However, Principe de Paz will receive maintenance this year as advised by our paving contractor.

Residents should be aware that the motivation for paved roads is not long-term cost savings but convenience. During the winter, the paved roads are much easier to keep clear, and when dry are not dusty and prone to washboard. However, maintenance is several times more costly than for gravel roads, and must be attended to regularly or we will lose the investment.

*For the Roads Committee,  
Olin van Dyck*

*As one who was opposed to the initial paving of any of our roads, not because of cost but because of destroying a more rural feeling, I quickly became a believer after the first winter with pavement up the hill. Prior to that, our vehicles looked like they had been in a particularly bad mud/adobe hole and the washboarding was hard on car and driver alike. That coupled with less dust has made a big difference. – Ed.*

## **Covenants**

### **Two more issues in the Covenants**

The Ridges Declaration of Restrictive Covenants has a number of provisions where it seems that a simple idea is obscurely stated, leading to unnecessary contention. The two most often debated are:

## **“Structures”**

In the last Newsletter, we discussed the interpretation of the term *structure* with reference to whether a corral would be covered and therefore under the purview of the ACC under Article 6: “...All plans for every structure shall be approved as herein provided...” Because the covenants do not provide a definition of this term, the residents involved cited some personal knowledge dating back to the writing of our rules and were even driven to research the Uniform Building Code, the International Building Code, Construction Industries Division regulations, and—believe it or not—the state Criminal Code for the meaning of *structure*. That's a crazy situation.

But it is not singular in our history. Examples of past and obvious possibilities for definition of the meaning of structure include fences (in addition to corrals), vehicle screens, carports, mailbox pillars, play structures, dog houses, trellises, rock work, yard decorations, gazebos, patio covers, tents, and so forth. In this list, several items have already been contentious, and some owners have lost real money in the fallout.

It just shouldn't be so puzzling for us to figure out what we should be asking the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) to review, and we suspect that with reasonable rules, the ACC will be happy to wash their hands of stuff that does not have a significant impact on the neighborhood.

## **Parking**

The parking regulations in the covenants are hidden in *Article 7 Prohibitions, Section 7.01 Minimum Square Footage*, reading approximately as “...the main structure...shall not be built without an attached garage of sufficient size to accommodate at least two automobiles, which garage shall be used for vehicles and not storage;” and *Section 7.04 Types and Uses of Residences*: “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.”

It is a stretch to make sense out of this. What is sufficient size for two automobiles? Holds two Beetles or two Supercab F350s? If you buy the house and your vehicle doesn't fit, then what? Is it an “extra” vehicle? If not, then it doesn't need to be screened? And what is an adequate screen? (Eldorado fights over this one endlessly.) You can't use your garage for storage, whether or not it also holds your vehicles?

These rules are so incomplete and obscure that compliance and enforcement require broad interpretation with the consequent arguments. We assume that most owners want some control against vehicle clutter, so the arguments go

on. Although there will always be some room for judgment in enforcement, surely a rule that is more understandable and agreeable to the owners can be written.

Perhaps it was appropriate for The Ridges developer to write the covenants in generalities and leave it to the residents to close in on those issues that concern them the most. And perhaps with 15 years behind us, it's time to recognize and resolve persistent problems that lead to wasted effort and hard feelings.

*The 2007 Board of Directors*

## **Commentary and Opinion**

In the aftermath of the Annual Meeting and the Roads and Covenants controversies and discussion by the Board, we are now providing for a "Commentary and Opinion" section in the newsletter.

The guidelines for this column are in the Winter 2007 issue.

### **Commentary: As we see it**

We were drawn to The Ridges for many reasons, including the beautiful natural environment and rural setting, traditional homes that blend well with the landscape, and the feel of open space. The open space between houses is an important feature that protects privacy and visual aesthetics, preserves the natural setting, and ensures there is a buffer between houses and structures on adjacent properties.

As discussed in a past newsletter (Summer 2005), the Board passed a resolution that advised the ACC to use an inclusive interpretation of "structures" with regard to setbacks, so that "all above-ground manmade features referenced in Articles 6, 7.04, 7.05, and 7.06 should be included" as structures that are prohibited nearer than 50 feet from any lot line.

These Articles make references to corrals, barns, screens, fencing, pet enclosures, and privacy fences. The Board felt this resolution "would help maintain our uncluttered appearance and help protect each resident from a close-by annoyance." We think this is sound advice for the ACC. Stick with this interpretation of structures for the setback, and don't use a height restriction to modify the setback rule.

A corral or a dog run on the lot line should not be allowed. These structures in the setback could impinge on a neighbor's views and bring additional structures (like a doghouse, corral structures, or equipment) into the neighbor's view. This could put the corral or dog run closer to the neighbor than the owner, with the neighbor bearing more of the potential annoyances (odors, noise, and visual impacts) within 50 feet of the neighbor's home. Allowing homeowners to build up to the lot line as long as a height

restriction is observed opens the setback up to retaining and other walls, rockwork, fencing, patios, and parking, in addition to dog runs and corrals. Do we want wall-to-wall structures in The Ridges? Even with a height restriction, this kind of placement of manmade features could substantially alter the face of our community.

We think an exception to a covenant requirement does set a precedent. That's why it is so important that the circumstances that cause the ACC to make an exception should be site specific and unique, with no other good alternatives to the exception. Setbacks were wisely included in our Covenants. Homeowners should be able to expect setbacks will remain intact and will not be subject to encroachment.

*Terry and Patty Sciarrotta*

## **Fire season is here**

With so much welcome moisture in the past few months, grasses and weeds will probably be growing—well, like weeds. Take a good look around your property for such things as construction piles, especially those close to your house, tree limbs close to or on the ground, stands of dead grasses or weeds, and remove them. To help with fire suppression and control, use gravel walkways through your gardens and perhaps, as we do, have a barrier of gravel/stone around the perimeter of the house. And remember, fireworks of any kind are not to be used in the area. Practice safety and try to avoid the possibility of fire here.

*—Ed.*

## **Trash**

With all the wind that has been coming our way lately, the inevitable trash is once again building up. It doesn't help that certain individuals toss paper, cans, etc., along our roadsides. As part of our spring cleanup, please take some time to walk the roadside on your property and dispose of the accumulated debris.

*—Ed.*

## **Blue flags**

Have you noticed the blue flags that have been placed by each of our water meters? It turns out that the Eldorado Area Water and Sanitation District (EWASD) has been using those flags to locate the water meters in a training exercise for their new hires. I spoke with Rick Meyers, a project manager with Operations Managements International, which oversees the management of EWASD, and he has asked us to leave the flags for one more month as he has one more employee to train.

*Tina Lanman*

## Stray critters



**Western Screech Owl in Woodpecker Box.**



**Western Screech Owl...screeching?**

### I finally got the photo

Previously I stated that I needed a new camera to get the owl photo. I lied, I got it...I still want a new camera.

Meanwhile, we received this note and photo from Olivia Millard and Bill Waldman. The photo is Olivia's.

"We've been meaning to send this email since last winter's newsletter. See the attached for a picture of the western screech owl visitor we had last year for several weeks."

Both photos in living color on The Ridges Website.

*Jack LaRowe*

### ⇒ 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 and no attribution will be given.*

### Proposed gas station

The new gas station issue has been tabled for the second time. There will be a meeting at the Santa Fe County Court

House with the County Development Review Committee on May 17<sup>th</sup>. More information will be forthcoming but there needs to be a strong attendance of those opposed to this station. Please put this date on your calendar and plan to attend.

### This and that

There were many favorable comments about the poem Arthur included in his Winter 2007 column. Thank you for sharing it, Arthur.

From a resident: "The volunteer work given by our residents is excellent. It really makes a difference."

If you happened to see the accident involving an RV and a Honda at the 285-Avenida Vista Grande intersection a few weeks ago, the Honda was driven by our administrator, Carolyn Cochran, who was trapped in the car. We are happy to report she is recovering well.

Important numbers to have: Animal Control: 992-1621; Santa Fe County Sheriff's Department: 428-3720.

### A grave issue for The Ridges

Many of us when we moved here hoped that The Ridges might be our last move. And we have not been disappointed, finding this to be a peaceful neighborhood in a tranquil setting, where we would like to stay long-term. Our hope to put down our roots here could be deeply satisfied if we make the community lot our

#### —Terminal Acres—

In other words, these four community acres could become the place where our mortal remains find their final repose.

Obviously, this is appropriate to the spiritual nature of our community. But does it fit within the letter of "the law" (the covenants)? I'll just say that memorial monuments can surely be made to fit within the guidelines for driveway pilasters, including rules on height and lighting. We'll leave it to our directors to dig into the details.

Speaking of them—as you know, they are volunteers and receive little thanks for their efforts. As a small but thoughtful gesture from all of us, Terminal Acres could provide some elevated ground, a dais if you will, for the final repose of our directors together, so that they could enjoy the Eternal Board Meeting.

In other words, these four acres could become the place where our mortal remains find their final repose, and, if you will, the ultimate in personal involvement in recycling.

Terminally yours,

*Woody Coffen April 1, 2007*

## 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.*

—Ed.

Again we are requesting anyone who has not done so to submit your e-mail address solely for emergency/important bulletins. This information will be kept confidential. You may contact board@ridgesla.org or in writing to our administrator, Carolyn Cochran (see below for her address).

***The Board of Directors and the Association officers are listed for your information. Please feel free to call for assistance or information between 9 A.M. and 7 P.M. Monday through Friday, or e-mail***

NAME	OFFICE	TELEPHONE	E-MAIL	COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
Arthur Reeder	President	505-474-6707	board@ridgesla.org	
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Dick Carlson	Director	505-466-4868	board@ridgesla.org	
Jerry Fornell		505-466-0588 Office: 505-466-2612	ACC@ridgesla.org	ACC Chair
Henry Lanman		505-466-4591	ACC@ridgesla.org	ACC Vice Chair
Olin van Dyck		505-466-2492	roads@ridgesla.org	Roads
Carolyn Cochran	Administrator		P.O. Box 22352 Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-2352	Legal Notices, Land Transfers, Address and other records changes

\* Will take office mid-year

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