



2011 Annual Meeting  
29 September 2011  
Council Chamber  
City of Fairfax City Hall

**Preparing for the meeting:**

**Here are suggestions to help you get ready for the 2011 Annual Meeting.**

1. Read over the minutes of the 2010 Annual Meeting (if you can't access the document from the website, contact Ruth Fischer at 571-433-5889 for a copy). Write out any corrections you think are needed to submit to the Secretary.
2. Read the 2011 Annual Report provided with this newsletter
3. Bring this copy of the 2011 Annual Report as a reference
4. Remember that each of us is a member of the Great Oaks Homeowners Association
5. Keep in mind that those GOHA members serving on the Board of Directors are volunteers!

**If you are not coming to the meeting** and would like to vote for the candidates for the 2011-2013 Board of Directors and/or want to be counted for the Quorum, be sure that you sign your proxy over to a another GOHA member who will be at the meeting or to the Secretary so that you are counted as part of the quorum and can vote on the nominees for the 2011-2013 Board of Directors. All GOHA members absent from the meeting but desiring to vote can to so only if they have given their proxy to a member who is present. **No proxy means no ballot. No ballot means no vote.**

**During the meeting**

According to the GOHA Handbook, *Robert's Rules of Order* will apply in such areas as discussing issues, making motions and debating. The primary purpose for these rules is to ensure that the President, who is responsible for the conduct of the meeting, has a standard procedure for assuring that such conduct is orderly and productive.

Given the Roberts Rules of Order are lengthy, complicated, and designed to fit many kinds of meeting configurations, what do they mean for the Annual Meeting of the Great Oaks Homeowners Association?

Overall, these rules are based on common courtesy in the conduct of the meeting in areas such a acknowledging the responsibility of the President to run an orderly meeting, getting permission from the President to speak, offering comments in a well modulated respectful manner (using "nice" words and "inside" voices), making sure that comments are on point and succinct, and listening to others speak.

That said, the following procedure will be in place at the 2011 Annual Meeting.

1. No member will be recognized and no comments or questions will be allowed during the time when officers and committee chairs are presenting their reports.
2. Immediately following each report, the President will open the floor for a brief time for comments. Members are encouraged to take notes on points they intend to address during this time.
3. When the floor is open for discussion, members will wait to be recognized by the President. The member will stand and give his/her name and address slowly so that the Secretary has time to record the information. The member is expected to keep comments brief and to the point.
4. Civil respectful discourse/behavior is expected from everyone at the meeting, especially when someone is holding the floor. Arguments should be directed at the issue under discussion and not at a person or persons.

NOTE: If anyone is interested in taking on the role of Parliamentarian for the meeting, please contact Ruth Fischer at 571-432-5889 or [refischer1@verizon.net](mailto:refischer1@verizon.net)

**Slate of Candidates:**

To date, two GOHA members, **Jim Scanlon** and **Ruth Fischer**, have agreed to stand for election to the 2011-2013 Board of Directors. If you are interested in joining them, please contact Ken Curtis at 703-934-6767 or [kcurtislaw@msn.com](mailto:kcurtislaw@msn.com). Nominations will also be accepted from the floor during the meeting.

**SAVE the DATE:**

**The Second Annual  
Great Oaks Halloween Happening**

For the young and the young at heart—  
especially those in costume ☺

**When:** Saturday Oct 29<sup>th</sup> from 3 to 5

**Where:** Common Area at the corner of Great Oaks Way and Oak Hill Way

**Events:** Ghoulish Games & Spooky Silliness

**Further details to follow**

2011 Annual Report  
Great Oaks Homeowners Association  
September 29, 2011

*Taking Stock/Moving Forward*

**President (Ruth Fischer)**

Before getting into my report, I would first like to extend my appreciation to the following GO residents: to Ken Curtis, Joyce Halverson, and Iain Williamson, my colleagues on the Board, for their untiring efforts on behalf of the Great Oaks community; to Bonnie Curtis, Acting Chair, and Steve Bowman of the Architectural Committee, for the countless hours they spent re/inspecting the homes of Great Oaks, reporting their findings both to the Board and to individual homeowners and for the thousands of dollars their volunteer work saved GOHA; to Merideth Barosso for her diligence in keeping the Great Oaks website looking good and her rapid response to my occasional requests for blast email; and last but definitely not least, to Dick Olson for his well demonstrated commitment to Great Oaks as Editor of the newsletter and coordinator for both the Neighborhood Watch and Block Captain programs—and my heartfelt thanks to the men and women of Great Oaks who serve as Block Captains and Neighborhood Watch volunteers!

In addition, on behalf of the Great Oaks Homeowners Association, I thank Tom Manganello, “retiring” chair of the Long Range Planning Committee for six years of valuable service to the Great Oaks community.

This board has been committed to act on behalf of the Great Oaks Homeowners Association in compliance with the GOHA governing documents (the Declaration, Articles of Incorporating and By-Laws) as well as the Property Owners’ Association Act and the Nonstock Corporation Act. In addition, the Board has made a special commitment to the Architectural Control Committee as they complete the Inspection Cycle. As you all know, Inspection Letters have been sent out and re-inspection will commence in October. (Please see ACC report.)

We have tried to keep residents informed over the year via a monthly newsletter, not only about current happenings but also about the GOHA governing documents with a special focus on the ACC in preparation for the inspections and updates on the discussion regarding FIOS in Great Oaks.

Another means of more rapid communication is that of the “blast email”, sent only when deemed necessary to the members of the community who have signed up for this service on the GOHA website. Residents who are not able to receive such e-mailings have been asked to notify the Board to that effect so that other means of communication can be sought.

We were faced immediately with the task of setting up a payment schedule for the collection of the \$585 assessment that had been approved at the 2010 Annual meeting to reimburse the Repair/Replacement Reserve fund.

In order to ensure that such overage was not repeated in the 2010-2011 snow season, the Board via the GOHA management company, CMSI Management Inc., sent out a request for bids to local area snow removal companies. Prior to the selection of a contractor to provide snow removal services, the Board created the Contract Review Committee, headed by At-Large Director Iain Williamson, to move from bid to contract with the vetting of both the contract and the contractors to ensure that they, among other things, were appropriately licensed, bonded, and insured. In addition, Iain provided the much needed oversight of the snow removal work so that GOHA paid only for work that was done. (See the report of the Vice President and the Contract Review Committee.)

## Action Items

The Board addressed a number of projects that had either not been finalized or had been postponed over the past several years. I have provided background information and current status on each of these projects listed below.

### 1. Claim against Accent, Inc.

Regarding the Virginia Contractor Transition Recovery Act claim of GOHA against Accent, Inc. The Virginia Contractors Board awarded full \$20,000 recommended by the Informal Fact-Finding committee. This amount is the highest amount the statute allows. GOHA was represented by Chadwick, Washington Moriarity Elmore & Bunn P. C. The claim was based on the fact that Accent, Inc., owed GOHA \$30,500 that had been paid the company as a deposit for the construction of the front entry gate because the company could not do the work as contracted. Minus the legal fees accrued in overseeing the claim against Accent, Inc., the judgment was reduced to \$13,500. Following his research on this matter, Ken Curtis stated that further pursuit of the remainder of the damages from Accent, Inc, in the amount of \$10,500 would be futile because the company is now out of business. It would cost more in legal fees to pursue the owner, who signed the contract in the name of the company (which is now bankrupt) and not as an individual and therefore cannot be sued for further damages

### 2. FIOS in Great Oaks

On December 15, 2008, the 2008-2009 Board of Directors voted unanimously to “grant Verizon access to Great Oaks Homeowners Association (GOHA) for the purpose of installing and maintaining cable to provide FIOS services to GOHA Homeowners [based on] Final approval of a utility easement [sic] by GOHA legal counsel and the GOHA board.”

Since that time the issue of having FIOS installed in Great Oaks has been sporadically discussed. The issue was raised again late in 2010. Over the course of this year, the board has researched aspects of having FIOS installed. Recently they were advised by GOHA’s legal counsel that Verizon had rejected GOHA’s most recent amendment to section 10 of the Easement Agreement. (Please see 2010 Annual Report and the July 2011 newsletter for more information about the FIOS debate.)

The Board of Directors is of the opinion that the time has come for members of the Great Oaks Homeowners Association to advise the Board as to whether or not FIOS should be installed in Great Oaks. Much needed asphalt repair work in Great Oaks has been postponed in Great Oaks pending this decision. This matter will be discussed at the 2011 Annual Meeting

### 3. Street/Asphalt Maintenance:

In April, I met with Willis Shafer from the City of Fairfax Public Works Department, who told me that the streets in Great Oaks are basically sound but do need crack repair work in some places and that neither sealing nor slurring would be sufficient to take care of repair of the cracks. Subsequent to this meeting, a request for Bids was sent out for this work. I walked around Great Oaks with each of the three responding contractors so that they could assess what needed to be done to bring the streets back into good shape. Based on their assessments and bids, it became apparent that the cost of doing more than just sealing or slurring would in the neighborhood of \$50,000.

Prior to deciding on contracting the work, the Board needed to find out what plans, if any, that Virginia Dominion had for replacing buried lines prior to their failing. The Board was informed that they were only replacing lines that had failed (please see Street Light Replacement below). Consequently, it was determined that the maintenance work cannot be the determining factor in any scheduled street/asphalt repair plan.

In addition, several members of the community wanted to know the status of the installation of FIOS in Great Oaks. Such installation, if the Board decided to move forward on such a plan, would mean a yet-to-be-determined disruption of the streets. Pending a decision about FIOS in Great Oaks, this street/asphalt repair project will be addressed by the 2011-2012 Board.

### 4. GOHA Sidewalks/curbs:

In talking with the four contractors whose companies had replied to our request for bids, we were told that the concrete work should be done prior to asphalt work. After reviewing bids

from these contractors, Iain contacted each of them to finalize a cost and to ask them to provide the documents now required as part of the Contract Review Committee's vetting process. As a result, the Kauffman Group was contracted to do this work, which was completed in August

**5. Storm Sewer Maintenance**

The Board, through kind assistance of JJ Fitzgerald, determined, once and for all that the Great Oaks Homeowners Association bears the responsibility for the maintenance of the storm sewers. In addition, the City of Fairfax will not provide such services, either in full or at a reduced rate.

Given that no records have been found to indicate when the storm sewers were last cleaned and/or inspected, the Board has been attempting to accomplish this maintenance, along with the assessment of the structural integrity of the storm sewers using fiber optic cameras.

After an arduous process of determining which companies actually did such work at all, the Board received three bids, two from companies that could provide estimates for maintenance with fiber-optic inspection, which could only be approximated at a cost of \$15,000, and one that provided visual inspection at a firm cost of \$4,900. Because of the concern about lack of funds, given the other projects that needed attention, the Board decided to have the cleaning done with visual inspection this year and put off the fiber-optic inspection for at least a year.

However, when the company which offered the visual inspection was asked to provide the information required by the Contract Review Committee, they declined to provide it and rescinded their bid. As of this writing, the Board is waiting on a bid from the Kauffman Group.

- 6. Tree Assessment:** An assessment of overgrown trees and shrubbery in Great Oaks was done by Andy Carpenter, Arborist with ValleyCrest Landscaping Maintenance. Needed pruning and tree removal was completed in August/September.
- 7. Erosion Remediation:** Pacuilli Simmons & Associates was contracted to assess the status of erosion in the common areas of Great Oaks. Tom Briggs, chair of the Erosion Remediation, received the report in early September and will be reviewing it with the committee over the next few months to suggest a course of action..
- 8. Retaining Wall and Fence (Great Wall) –** Two bids have been received for the Great Wall along the Beech Tree Court/White Oak Court: Installed in 2000, this wall requires periodic maintenance, including underground screw tightening, powerwashing, and (possibly) staining. Two bids have been received for this work. Selection of one of these bids is pending, based on other fiduciary issues facing the board.
- 9. Small Retaining Wall:** The retaining wall along Old Lee Highway situated across from the entrance of the Army Navy Country Club and north/downhill from the entrance to Great Oaks is the responsibility of the Great Oaks Homeowners Association. It shows crumbling railroad ties and supports that require replacement or extensive repair. Two companies gave GOHA estimates of around \$20,000 for their work, not counting the cost of engineer's drawings and county/city permits, which would add up to \$3500 to the cost. This project has been postponed, pending the funds available for such work.
- 10. Street Lights Replacement:** The Board asked Gary Bottorff to contact Virginia Dominion to ask about whether they planned for future replacement of underground cables, several of which had failed across Great Oaks in the previous months. He reported that he was told that no such plan was in place and that repairs were made when the service went out at an individual home.

In the process of obtaining this information, Gary inquired about the replacement of the street light fixtures at Great Oaks. As a result, Virginia Dominion replaced all the light fixtures in Great Oaks during July/August. Kudos to Gary for enabling this process!

- 11. Pool Improvement:** New fence was installed by Cardinal Fence in June.

Over the course of the year, unexpected and more emergent Action Items have come up.

- 1. Proposed Construction of Sleep In on Fairfax Blvd:** In October, 2010, the Board was notified of the application for the replacement of the motel located at 9845 Fairfax Blvd with a Sleep Inn Hotel. JJ Fitzgerald, GOHA City Liaison, took responsibility for staying in touch with the Zoning Office and

keeping track of the proposed building, which would have had significant on the residences at that end of Great Oaks Way. Subsequently it seems that the project has been put on hold pending the applicants' compliance with the requirements of the Department of Community Development and Planning of the City of Fairfax.

2. **DR Horton Development:** In the spring, the DR Horton development, which was a huge focus on concern in 2006-1007, started becoming a reality with the breaking of ground this past spring. The Board was concerned that Horton adhere to the requirements of the Dead of Easement for the area behind Beech Tree Court. More recently, the concern has focused on the extent to which Great Oaks property, especially two large trees abutting the areas in which DH Horton will be building the Interparcel Connector.
3. **Front Entry Lighting:** Last March when workmen from ValleyCrest were preparing the mulch beds, they inadvertently cut two low voltage electric lines that were not there when they prepared the beds in March 2010. Subsequently attempts by an electrician from ValleyCrest and several Great Oaks residents to repair the lines and restore the lights were unsuccessful. The Board is in the process of getting bids for the repair.
4. **Front Entrance Sprinkler System:** Repair to the Hunter Irrigation System included a new controller and all new modules and power supply, all of which were under warranty so GOHA only had to pay for labor.
5. **Sink holes,** one at the end of Great Oaks Way next to Fairfax High School and another on Sablewood Ct.
6. Legal issues pertaining to individual homeowners

### **Recommendations for the 2011-2012 Board of Directors**

- Conduct Reserve Study
- Develop a Long Range Master Plan based on the findings of the Reserve Study and the action items not addressed by the 2010-2011 Board by means of the Long Range Planning Committee in conjunction with the Treasurer (perhaps with members of a yet-to-be-created Budget Committee)
- Review GOHA's governing documents (Declaration and By-Laws) to consider if/how they need to be updated
- Review of responsibilities of committees
- Continue to support of the Architectural Control Committee in bringing Great Oaks properties into compliance
- Analyze Erosion Remediation Study in conjunction with the Erosion Remediation Committee
- Recompete the contract for the management company
- Continue to develop/refine the Contract Control Committee

The Chinese character for the word 'crisis', I am told, consists of two meaning elements. One stands for 'danger' while the other stands for 'opportunity'. At the end of my second year on the Board of Directors, I have become distinctly aware of the "crisis" situation facing GOHA.

There is "danger" in the continued dearth of volunteers to help with tasks, be these tasks ongoing or one-time. Too few people are taking care of Great Oaks and some tasks either take longer to complete, do not get done at all, or have to be contracted out, costing Great Oaks money that could be used elsewhere.

On the other hand, there is ample "opportunity" for members of the Great Oaks community to get involved in keeping Great Oaks the lovely oasis that it is.

To those of you already actively take part in these opportunities, I give my heartfelt thanks. And to those of you who have not done so—or may not have done so in a while, I offer an invitation to find a way to help out.

Two years from now, in 2013, the Great Oaks Homeowners Association will celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration. How fantastic it would be if our "To Do" Lists were our "Done" lists!

### **Vice President (Ken Curtis)**

The past year presented a number of important and challenging issues to the Board. As Vice President, I took the lead to review contracting and potential liability issues in the day-to-day operations of our Association. We are 130+ homes, and with aging infrastructure, there is a lot of contract work to do on a daily basis. Contracts and

maintenance agreements for operation of the swimming pool, landscape, snow removal, irrigation, entry and grounds lighting and tree maintenance/preservation required careful re-examination.

Here are some of the highlights of contract review:

- A mandate for the Board has been to refine the specific procedures necessary to grant contracts for work performed on behalf of the Association. The Board established contract review procedures to insure that all contracts contain essential enforcement provisions should it be necessary to assert the Association's rights upon default by the contractor. Board members review the contracts before they are signed and checks written to ensure the contracts are fair and enforceable, that the contractors are licensed by the Commonwealth of Virginia, surety bonded and insured by a comprehensive liability policy to minimize the Association's liability. Your Board no longer operates on informal proposals, but requires fully ratified contracts for all major contractors performing work in Great Oaks.
- Quite a bit of time was devoted by every member of the Board for the recovery of Association funds paid when the contractor defaulted on the front entry project. The Board is pleased to report that \$20,000.00 was ultimately recovered from the State fund. While that does not fully reimburse the Association, it went a long way to recoup what was thought to be lost funds.
- Additional time has been spent working on resolving the front entry irrigation and lighting issues. We are pleased to report the irrigation system is now functioning well and the restoration of the entrance lighting remains a top priority.
- Your Board underwent training at the law offices of Chadwick Washington so that we would have the newest, most up-to-date information on how our Association is to operate. We enjoy a great rapport with our Association attorneys, who provide your Board with cost-effective, first rate legal support when we need it.
- In response to our owners who would like Verizon to bring its FIOS network to Great Oaks, a tremendous amount of work has been accomplished in vetting the language for the easement, but we still have a lot of work to do. It is essential that we do not give a blanket easement that does not specifically provide where the underground digging for cable installation will occur. The Board must protect Association assets and streets from unnecessary damage. If FIOS comes to Great Oaks, it will be a well-thought, planned event, not one that will be viewed as an avoidable disaster.

In closing, the Board and committee members have enjoyed the benefit of knowledge and support from many of our homeowners, whose time and talents do not go without sincere thanks. I look forward to continuing my term on the Board this year and welcome your suggestions on how your Board can best serve the needs of our Association.

## **Treasurer**

NOTE: In May, 2011, Patrick LeFloch resigned as Treasurer. Because a replacement for him for the duration of his tenure (2011 Annual Meeting) from outside the Board could be found, I took over basic oversight of the activities of the Treasurer (monitoring invoices and signing checks)

At the beginning of the tenure of the 2010-2011 Board, past problems with miscommunication between CMSI, GOHA management company, and the Board were addressed by three actions.

1. **Signature Card:** Ruth Fischer as President and Patrick LeFloch as Treasurer met with Rafael Martinez at Access National Bank in Reston to update the Signature Card so that either of them could sign checks on behalf of the association.
2. **Regular Review of Invoices:** CMSI must email all invoices to the Treasurer for review/approval prior to payment. Questions about them can be asked/answered prior to approval.
3. **Signees to checks over \$1000:** Formerly two signatures were required on any check from the GOHA account. To minimize the possibility of miscommunication between CMSI and the Board, this procedure has been changed. Now either the President or the Treasurer must be one of the signatories to any check over the amount of \$1000.

4. As of 19 September, the amount in the GOHA checking account for operational expenses is \$50, 891.91; in the Money Market account, the amount is \$173,192.21. These amounts will of course change by the end of the year as the last quarters bills are paid.

NOTE: GOHA members are reminded that they can view the non-confidential financial reports each month by sending their request to the Treasurer.

### **Contract Review Committee (Iain Williamson)**

Because of several contract issues plaguing the board over the past few years , the 2010-2011 Board decided that a definitive process must be installed to ensure the protection of the community's resources and to ensure that the only the best bids made the cut. The process adopted is a Contract Review Committee that ensures many independent eyes see a major contract prior to GOHA commitment.

The review committee consists of two Board members and two community members. Each is responsible for reviewing any proposals with a view to the following:

1. Does the language fairly, and fully, describe work to be bid?
2. Are there any indications that the contract is open ended, if so where and why?
3. Does contract provide for transparency regarding such areas as insurance, licensing and payment schedules?
4. Do the bids have consistency in SOW [Scope of Work]?

Following the review the board takes recommendations and makes a balanced decision at that point and negotiations on price then commence. Additionally, as currently enacted, any major contract that is entered has an assigned board member to oversee the work process through completion.

### **Snow Removal and Landscaping:**

Valley Crest has been retained on a long term (3year contract) for all landscaping and snow removal duties. After contract review Valley Crest met the standards GOHA sought and agreed to a rate hold at 2010 prices. Specific time in/out, equipment and materials usage were reviewed on each snow event and each invoice was reviewed upon receipt to ensure accuracy. The assigned board member for oversight also monitored work while in progress to ensure efficiency.

Additional note: It is important that community members recognize and respect that the crew working the jobs report directly to their foreman and the foreman reports directly to GOHA. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the appropriate community liaison as published on the GOHA website .

### **Concrete:**

Another major project for the year was to review and repair sidewalks as needed. The issues were general maintenance, rejuvenation and ensuring a safe environment for all residents. Over the last 12 months it came to light that several sections posed a significant safety and liability risk. Also, some areas of disrepair were also leading to secondary damage, most specifically the development of sinkholes. The Kauffman Group was retained for the work and has proven to be exceptionally responsive and forthright in their approach, to the point that the original SOW was reduced to cover necessary work only.

### **Architectural Control Committee (Bonnie Curtis, Acting Chair)**

#### **2011 Annual Survey**

In 2011, the ACC undertook one of the most comprehensive surveys conducted to date for all homes in Great Oaks. After eight weekends of data collection and re-examination to verify findings, the results were reported to the Board on July 15, 2011. Every homeowner received a letter at the end of July with the survey results. The survey was timed this year to allow plenty of "weather-permitting" time to meet the target date allocated for compliance. Our goal was 100% compliance by September 30, 2011.

Since the ACC survey was first announced in the March newsletter, the ACC has handled countless requests for exterior improvements. There have been many homes newly sided and painted, several with new windows, many new up-scale architectural-glass front entryway doors, driveways, garage doors, sidewalks, dramatic new landscape projects, attractive new mailboxes, and expensive stonework. Our neighbors have been busy with projects that not only make their homes more modern and livable, but greatly enhance their value. And when their values increase so do the values of other properties in Great Oaks.

### **ACC Presale Inspections**

A proud accomplishment of the ACC in 2011 has been the effectiveness of the presale inspection report. The homes that have sold in 2011 have had the benefit of the most comprehensive presale inspections and we are pleased to report 100% compliance from our sellers, meaning that our new owners received the properties free of any unresolved ACC issues! The days of sellers' bargain-basement pricing, saddling new owners with the responsibility to bring a sub-par home into compliance, are hopefully behind us.

### **Home Sales**

Sales prices are on the upswing in Great Oaks. It is a primary objective for the ACC to keep that trend going. With the number of homes in inventory in the Northern Virginia marketplace, we are delighted that our newest residents chose Great Oaks. Why? Ask them and they will tell you location, location, location and value, value, value. But they will also tell you that it was much more than just the home they purchased. It was our overall community. Great Oaks is a quiet oasis in the middle of a bustling Fairfax City/Fairfax County metropolis. So we must continue our work to keep all of Great Oaks at its very best, with our homes commanding top dollar

We cannot stress maintenance enough. No one wants to buy into a community that is run-down or mismanaged. Even bargain hunters want quality. The first things a prospective purchaser sees from your driveway could make or break your sale. The condition of your home's exterior also speaks volumes about the interior. Remember, you have just one chance to make a good first impression and exterior maintenance is the key.

### **Compliance**

It is unfortunate that not every owner has jumped on the exterior compliance bandwagon. Your July 30 letter asked if you are unable or unwilling to make the cited repairs/replacements, the Board needed to hear from you. Of the 131 homes in Great Oaks, two homeowners have contacted the Board with an improvement plan and one has requested clarification on their survey. Most are addressing the issues on their list, but several homes have yet to begin any work. Owners are urged to take the July 30 letter seriously and get their work done. During the first week of October, the ACC will return for a compliance re-look. After the October re-look, the Board intends to take all available action for significant and unresolved issues.

### **ACC In Action**

Do you ever ask yourself what is the ACC doing for you? Like the Board, the ACC works hard every day to meet the requests and challenges presented by our homeowners, not to mention the countless hours spent carefully assessing 131 homes in the ACC survey process. The work that goes into a single ACC approval can include research, color and materials sampling, drainage considerations and property safety concerns. It's a tough job. Just ask anyone who has served on the ACC.

As a note, please use the ACC Change Request Form and give the ACC ample time to process your request. We try to get everyone an answer in 7-14 days, but usually within 1-2 days. Please get approval for exterior work and please do not start work until you have the signed approval in hand. The ACC's goal is to help our owners improve their properties consistent with the overall quality of our community. We are thirty plus years old now and modern trends in architecture and landscape are finding great applications in Great Oaks.

The ACC survey was conducted this year with no outside assistance from our management company, saving the association thousands of dollars in administrative costs and fees. Hundreds of people-hours went into the data collection, data entry into spreadsheets, re-evaluations and preparation of 131 individualized letters to owners. The undertaking was huge and the payoff has been even bigger when we see all of the attractive exterior improvements that have been completed over the spring and summer months, and now into fall. This is proof that the letters are working, a benefit to every owner in Great Oaks.

This year we also began a column in the newsletter “Ask Great Oaks”. It is a great way to ask an anonymous question and get an answer that will benefit everyone! Submit your questions and we will do our best to answer them all.

Lastly, thank you for the thoughtful words from so many residents commending the ACC on the sometimes unappreciated work it does. If you have the patience of a saint and the diplomatic skills of Churchill, there is a place for you on the ACC! Come be a part of the good things happening in Great Oaks!

### **Landscaping (Terry Dabrowski)**

General landscaping has been taken care of by ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance. Terry Dabrowski and Ruth Fischer have worked with Russ Tolle to provide oversight for this work. The extent of this work is based on a map of Great Oaks from some years back that labeled the common areas to be maintained. Expansion of this area will entail a consideration of the additional cost of doing so. We have been quite satisfied with their work and their response time when problems arise—as well as their proactive approach to the landscaping and grounds maintenance needs of Great Oaks.

In addition, at the January Board of Directors meeting, Russ Tolle and Andy Carpenter from ValleyCrest spoke to us about a Proposal for Long Term Planning for Landscaping/ Grounds Maintenance and what such a program might entail in Great Oaks. Future attention is expected on this Long Term plan as a part of the discussion of an overall Long Range Master Plan, which has been recommended to the 2011-2012 Board.

### **Block Captains (Dick Olson, Coordinator)**

Many of us don't really know what block captains do. Great Oaks is divided into eight sectors, or blocks, and each has a designated block captain, who is the link between residents in that block and the Great Oaks Homeowners Association. They greet newcomers when they arrive, dispense GO parking decals, distribute monthly newsletters, hear complaints, and perform other functions as needed to address the needs of their blocks. They are the homeowner's link to the board of the association.

Now that most homeowners have access to the Internet block captains have a new tool to use in communicating with their fellow residents. We had an example of this in Block Captain Bob Thoensen's handling this year of a partial power outage in Redwood Court. On learning of this Thoensen promptly called Dominion Power, which had a repair crew on the scene within the hour to install a temporary power line re-router. Good work, Bob.

Finally I want to extend the appreciation of Great Oaks to Kirsten Shores, who filled the assignment for White Oak Court for the past five years, and to Mary Hollingshead, who has agreed to take over once again. Heartfelt thanks to both of you.

### **Neighborhood Watch (Dick Olson, Coordinator)**

It has been a year and a half since we revived the Neighborhood Watch program, which had become moribund for lack of community support. All that has changed, and we now have a loyal troupe of volunteers who patrol the streets of Great Oaks every weekday and even, on occasion, at night or over the weekend, making the rounds with magnetic Neighborhood Watch signs on the sides of their cars. Their purpose is to look for anything suspicious or out of the ordinary and, if indicated, to notify the police. At the same their rounds are public notice to would-be thieves or trouble-makers that Great Oaks is watching.

Along with these functions they work at keeping the private streets of Great Oaks from becoming parking lots – particularly for non-resident students from the high school – and making sure the fire lanes are clear of cars. Residents occasionally parking on our streets are encouraged to obtain GO decals to identify their vehicles. Keeping control of our streets is part of keeping our neighborhood safe.

All too often the patrol turn in reports of garage doors left open – a potential threat to home security. This is the homeowner's own responsibility, but we all need reminding that open garages provide easy access to attached homes and pilfering from all the rest.. In fact, Fairfax police reported two such attempts in Great Oaks recently.

### **Social Committee (Christie Rudolph)**

The Social Committee sponsored several events over the year, beginning with the First Annual Halloween Happening in October. In December, the Holiday Gathering was held at the Army Nave Country Club across Old Lee Highway. Special activities were set up for the kids in Great Oaks to encourage family participation. A Holiday Cookie Exchange was also held. Two parties at the pool, one in June ushering in the summer and one on Labor Day bringing the summer to an end, along with informal Friday evening get-togethers on the pool deck were held.

### **Pool Committee (Patrick LeFloch)**

The pool is on target to have 1,300 visitors this year an increase of 45% over last year.

For next year I would like to have an handrail installed in the main staircase, a few steps replaced, and the building power-washed to get rid of the mold. A few protruding boards need to be stained and replaced, but otherwise the roof deck is in OK condition. It would also be nice if we could trim back some of the ivy as part of our spring cleanup.

The pool management company tells me that inspector noted the white coat is worn in May. It may need to be redone before next season. I will see if it we can put that off till 2013.

### **Long Range Planning Committee (Tom Manganello, Chair)**

The Long Range Planning Committee worked with the Great Oaks Board in 2011 to develop a comprehensive priority list of Great Oaks' common assets that require maintenance or replacement over the next several years. That list was presented to the board this spring and formed the basis for several board accomplishments this year and for capital planning in the years to come. Great Oaks' common assets are listed below in the order that maintenance or replacement was deemed necessary by the Long Range Planning Committee, and, as you can see, some of the items have already received action (denoted by bold bullet points). This list will also serve as a basis for future capital reserve planning.

- 1) Storm sewer maintenance: Clean out sewers and lines, assess structural integrity of lines using fiber optic cameras; Assess and repair outflows near Accotink Creek.
  - Board has solicited bids to assess storm sewer conditions.
- 2) Streets/Asphalt: GOHA board had a VA DOT engineer assess the GOHA roads in 2006, at which time it was determined only a seal coat was necessary then (not a slurry coat); Board had roads re-assessed by city maintenance/roads official to determine what maintenance is necessary and when; and then repair paving, cracks, when work is done.
  - Board has solicited bids for a comprehensive street repair in 2012, pending decision about FIOS.
- 3) Small Retaining Wall – Old Lee Highway, north/downhill of entrance: Crumbling railroad ties and supports; requires replacement or extensive repair.
  - Board postponed this project pending available funds.
- 4) GOHA Sidewalks/Curbs/Gutterpans: Several concrete sidewalk panels and gutter pans needed to be re-poured, leveled, or repaired; several curbs were damaged by snow removal vendor over the past few years; some tree root problems, as well as curb cuts for ADA compliance.
  - Concrete repair completed in August 2011.
- 5) Retaining Wall and Fence (Great Wall separating Great Oaks Way/Beech Tree Court and White Oak Court): Installed in 2000, this wall requires periodic maintenance, including underground screw tightening, powerwashing, drainage cleaning and (possible) staining.
  - Board has received two bids but has not yet contracted for this work.
- 6) Erosion remediation –
  - See report of Erosion Committee (Tom Briggs)

- 7) Repair of failing utility cables under Great Oaks (including Dominion, Cox, phone, gas lines) – consider extent of problem and whether any such street-disrupting repairs or replacements can be scheduled in tandem, perhaps along with future Verizon Fios installation, and with any planned street repairs, to minimize duplicative digging and disruption.
  - Board will consider this issue in conjunction with any street repair.
- 8) Landscaping improvements: Inspect islands and common area shrub/landscaping for sight hazards caused by overgrown azaleas, hollies and shrubs. Examples include Beech Tree Court island with overgrown azaleas and shrubs; White Oak Court common area has large perimeter hollies that create a blind turn; Sablewood/Great Oaks Drive island has overgrown plantings creating blind traffic hazard. Re-plant lower specimens where sight lines are compromised.
  - To the extent overgrown specimens can be transplanted, consider moving them to Old Lee Highway or Rebel Run border.
  - Make sure board continues to apply for City of Fairfax beautification grants if the program is re-funded (e.g., for front entrance plantings).
  - Consider a landscaping master plan and fund additions/replacements annually.
- 9) New plantings or privacy fences to increase privacy/security at key perimeters along Great Oaks, including the “conservation area” near the new D.R. Horton “Preserve at Great Oaks” development which removed hundreds of trees and privacy; the unsightly area along the multiple crooked and poorly maintained privacy fences along Rebel Run; the non-protected areas near the itinerant motels on Rt. 50; the area below the swimming pool along the Accotink Creek; and additional plantings along Old Lee Highway frontage.
  - Board has not yet taken action on this issue.
- 10) Street sign for Great Oaks Way (see quote provided by street signs vendor, Custom Home Accessories, for \$1682 for sign) at Great Oaks Drive intersection. A twin-bladed street sign in the same style as our current street signs is contemplated, one blade reading “Great Oaks Way 9916-9945” with a left arrow, and another blade reading “Great Oaks Way 9914-9900” with a right arrow. The pole would also have a diamond-shaped “No Outlet” sign below the blades.
  - Board has not yet taken action on this issue.
- 11) Street lights replacement GOHA pays for its electricity each month and our mercury vapor fixtures were not only loud and unsightly, but very inefficient and costly.
  - Dominion replaced GOHA street light fixtures in July 2011 with new sodium vapor fixtures. Special thanks to LRP member Gary Bottorff.
- 12) Electrical power redundancy: Continue to pressure Dominion Power to improve the circuit that powers Great Oaks and to introduce a redundant back-up power source to reduce or eliminate the frequent outages experienced by our neighborhood.
  - This issue remains unresolved.
- 13) Pool maintenance: New pool fence installed in June 2011.
- 14) New amenities targeted at children/pets, in flats near pool deck (many possibilities, including playground, gazebo, dog-park or dog walking path, parklet, etc.). Consider synergies (cost sharing) with Ridge Avenue and Horton development.
- 15) Mailboxes – GOHA mailboxes have been included in several long range planning surveys and there is significant support for replacing them with more elegant options, but no consensus yet on style or strategy. Additional complication: many mailboxes (if not all) are located on GOHA common property, but are the responsibility of homeowners. This dichotomy must be addressed in any replacement effort.
  - Mailbox unit matching GOHA bronze street signs (cast aluminum in bronze coloring) is attractive but expensive (nearly \$450 per house, or \$60k for 130 homes).
  - Consider reducing cost and clutter by having dual-mailbox systems where one pole holds two mailboxes.
  - Consider replacing only the boxes, not the stands, to achieve consistency, but save costs.

The Long Range Planning Committee is always seeking new membership, and this year requires a new chairman, as Tom Manganello is stepping down after six years with the committee. If interested, place your name on the sign-up sheet for the Long Range Planning Committee or contact the new board president.