

MEWS NEWS

The monthly news letter of the Landmark Mews Community Association

AUGUST 2011

For Board meeting dates & locations, minutes & reports, governing documents, architectural standards, community news, residents directory, and other important information, log on to **www.landmarkmews.com**.

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superjk2010@gmail.com

President's Message

The Board held its monthly meeting on Wednesday August 10th. I thanked everyone that helped put together a very successful National Night Out. We had several police vehicles as well as an ambulance this year. It was great to see so many children and grandchildren exploring these vehicles and enjoying great food from Rocklands BBQ. Please be sure to put next years' event on your calendar today—Tuesday August 7th, 2012.

This month's meeting was rather lengthy. We brought everyone up to speed on the HOT Lane project as well as debated whether or not to re-mill our streets.

In addition, we discussed the growing bat problem within the community. The bats are burrowing in behind shutters. While we do not feel the bats are dangerous in any way, please ensure that any cracks bigger than ¼ inch are sealed or plugged, so as to prevent bats from entering your residence.

Annual Meeting – We will hold the Annual Meeting of the Landmark Mews Community Association on Thursday October 20th, 2011. The meeting will take place at 8:00 PM at the Samuel Tucker Elementary School cafeteria in Cameron Station. I will provide the state of the Mews, Treasurer Marty McDonald will report on the Association’s financial status, ballots will be counted, and election results announced.

There are three (3) Board seats up for election this year. The three incumbents: Linda Carter, Joel Kaplan and Bill Menzies have indicated their intention to run again.

The deadline for filing a petition of candidacy is Friday September 30th at 5:00 PM to the Chairperson of the Elections Committee, Brenda Johnson at 6366 Brampton Court. A candidate must file a petition of candidacy, “signed by not less than five Members representing five Living Units.” The petition should also include a brief biographical narrative and other pertinent information as to your service on the Landmark Mews Board of Directors.

The other members of the Elections Committee are Kathleen Ryan and Brian Koechel.

I-395 HOT Lane Project – As you know, the HOT Lanes Task Force (Task Force) has communicated extensively with VDOT over the past couple of months. We have made our positions clear to them about our major position points:

1. We do not want a flyover adjacent to Stevenson Avenue.
2. We do not want to lose our “green space” along Stevenson Avenue.
3. We do not want VDOT to narrow Stevenson Avenue.
4. If VDOT offers and the affected owner’s agree to a sound wall along Stevenson Avenue, we want input into the design and construction of the sound wall.
5. VDOT and the City of Alexandria will provide necessary traffic improvements to alleviate the traffic affects from the Mark Center at the Duke Street/Little River Turnpike Interchange.

VDOT invited the Task Force to a meeting on July 27th hosted by our County Supervisor Penny Gross. Northern Virginia VDOT Administrator Garrett Moore chaired the meeting.

VDOT presented drawings of their conceptual design for the HOT Lane exit ramp to I-395 general purpose lanes. Surprisingly, VDOT’s plan for the flyover portion of the exit ramp is completely South of Stevenson Avenue. VDOT proposes to build the flyover South of Winter View Drive (the road in Overlook just beyond the Stevenson Avenue cul-de-sac), and adjacent to the reserve area along Turkey Cox Run.

In addition, we will not lose any “green space” along Stevenson Avenue. In fact, we will gain some “green space” as the proposed position of the associated sound wall is closer to I-395 than the existing fence. Stevenson Avenue will remain as it is today.

We have provided VDOT with our criteria for sound wall design. VDOT has requested that we provide input on the look of the sound wall, which we will do.

We consider this a decisive victory. We are convinced our engagement at an early date had influence on the design and location of the flyover and “saved” Stevenson Avenue. You should complement your Task Force for the team work that they provided in bringing about this positive result. They all provided significant time and input and brought about a favorable result.

The Task Force will next provide input to VDOT on the sound wall design, a request for an irrigation connection to the other side of Stevenson Avenue, the type of landscaping we would like to see and some other finer points. However, while we have fought the flyover and Stevenson Avenue issues successfully, we are mostly at the mercy of the City of Alexandria to help alleviate traffic concerns associated with the Mark Center project.

In conversations with Transurban and VDOT, I learned that Transurban and VDOT will not extend the HOT Lanes beyond the proposed terminus anytime soon. The City of Alexandria will do everything in their power to prevent it. Transurban and VDOT would, of course, like to eventually extend the HOT lanes all the way to the Pentagon, but they are saving that fight for a later date when different regimes are in place in both the City of Alexandria and Arlington County.

As the community nonetheless has a “dog in the fight” surrounding the traffic

impacts resulting from the Mark Center project, Landmark Mews will continue with our neighboring communities to push the City of Alexandria to an acceptable traffic solution. However, I want to make it clear that this issue and the flyover issue are completely separate.

We are not prepared to give up the victory we have achieved on the flyover issue for the sake of traffic impacts as a result of the Mark Center project. A project for which we have no control. We realize that continuing the HOT Lane project to at least the Mark Center makes sense, however, we nonetheless want an exit ramp from the HOT Lanes to the general purpose lanes beyond the Springfield Interchange especially if it will not adversely impact Stevenson Avenue and the Community.

There are several reasons for this, which I will outline in future correspondence, but one big reason is that it allows residents that work in the Tyson’s Corner or Fairfax areas to utilize the HOT Lanes to return to the Mews during the evening rush hour.

Financial Report – Treasurer Marty McDonald updated the Board. There was not much to note about this month’s report. We are working through our list of projects, which will be reflected in the August 31st financials.

Marty also presented a draft 2012 budget for our consideration. The budget projects less expenditure for 2012 vs. 2011 as per our 2011 Reserve Analysis we will be re-categorizing certain expenses from the operating budget to the major infrastructure budget.

The Mews has several new residents, and we are hoping to obtain their contact information. **If you are new to the Mews, please complete the form on the back of the Mews News to be sure you are on our E-Mail list. It will soon be our only method of communication.**

Property Report – Projects are continuing. Tyson’s Tree Service had taken down and removed the stump of the dead fir tree on Chaucer View Circle, and that they had also trimmed back other trees. The Board agreed to a project on the rear side of Brampton Court. The project involves the repair and painting of the white stucco wall, which is currently cracked from water damage, as well as the power washing of the landscape timbers and installation of new lighting.

The brick wall pointing and repair has been completed. I am sure many of you noticed the work that was done on the wall this spring and summer. These repairs should last us for some time.

We have received recommendations from the Landscape Advisory Committee (LAC) for the entrance ways. We will be reviewing their plans at our September meeting. We will then turn our attention to beautification of the berm this fall. The LAC will be submitting recommendations to the Board soon.

Streets and Re-Mill – We have no single infrastructure project that will cost as much as the re-milling of our roads. As you know, the community has not had to re-mill our streets since they were first put in place 30 years ago. For some years now, prior Boards have successfully deferred replacement of the

streets by authorizing extensive repairs, such as crack sealing and patching—not inconsiderable sums along the way. From 2003 through 2009, the Community has spent over \$96,000 on asphalt replacement, sidewalk repairs, periodic street sealing, crack sealing, and re-striping. The good news is we have taken aggressive steps over the past decade to extend the projected useful life of our streets.

In 2001, our reserve study concluded we needed to replace the streets by 2006. The 2006 reserve study told us we would need to do so by 2011. In 2008, the Board obtained an interim update that concluded we could wait until 2014. Now, the latest reserve analysis defers this to 2015. I have always been a fan of spending aggressively to maintain the streets to push off the day when we would need to resurface them in their entirety. That was a sound approach, even with spending tens of thousands of dollars along the way, because it allowed us to accumulate funds in the major infrastructure reserve, as well as take on other projects payable out of that reserve, including installation of the pathway from the berm to Chaucer View Circle, restoring the brick pathways from Chaucer View Circle to Landmark Mews Drive, resurfacing the crumbling berm path, and considerably more brick wall maintenance, itself totaling about \$60,000 since 2005, including almost \$10,000 this year.

However, the Board came to the conclusion that it should commit to resurfacing the streets (along with related concrete work) rather than kicking the can down the road to a future Board. The current obligation hangs over the community like a Sword of

Damocles. It is a project we must account for all the time, and it freezes consideration of other work the Board might want to entertain. We are way beyond the original useful life of the streets. It is not premature to get the job done in the near term and get this obligation off our books. The cost of asphalt is skyrocketing along with the price of oil. It is anyone's guess what the cost will be in a few years, even with the best financial analysis. Who predicted over \$100 per barrel oil a few years ago?

The Board authorized the re-mill and concrete work. The project will begin in mid to late September. The concrete work will begin first followed by the re-mill itself. There will be minimal disruption to the community, and access to everyone's driveways will be available throughout the process. The total cost will run approximately \$165,000. We are just awaiting the final concrete quote to determine the total cost.

As with maintaining a healthy (and sizable) minimum reserve, a prospective buyer can be comforted in driving into our community. He/she will not see streets marked with significant crack-sealing (although this indicates a well-maintained street) but freshly paved streets and freshly re-done curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. If I were considering a community with major infrastructure that is new or recently re-done, I know even without looking at the financials, this community is sound. I do not have to worry about a special assessment in the foreseeable future because Boards have not accumulated sufficient reserves. It sends a very positive signal.

There are some who disagree with this course of action, claiming that the reserve study proves we can continue with periodic maintenance in order to get another few years out of them. However, this course is not cost-free; it would cost this year alone over \$30,000. The Board listened to those urging a further deferral and decided it was time to bite the bullet, stop dumping more money into maintenance, and get this project done once and for all. It is not unlike deciding to trade in the 15-year-old car that needs a new transmission. You have been a good owner, kept it well-maintained, but you now reached the point beyond which there are sharply diminishing returns keeping it running any longer.

The Board is not unmindful of the significant expense this project entails. However, Boards over the years have planned for this day, and it is to their credit that we can take on this work now, with available funds, without the need for a special assessment.

So, although some may disagree with this step now – and I respect their point of view – I, along with a decisive majority of the Board, believe the better course is to complete this project and to complete it now.

That is it for this month. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday September 14th at 7:00 PM at the home of Linda Carter, 6304 Chaucer View Circle.

Thank You!

Dan Aminoff, President

Contact me: prez@landmarknews.com

Covenants Corner

The Committee again wants to thank all the residents who have completed their spring inspection repairs. The Committee will begin the required follow-up inspection in September. Only residents who continue to have outstanding required items will receive follow-up letters. LMCA rules call for a written response from the homeowner regarding their corrective action plans. The Committee will follow-up with correspondence and inspections as necessary to resolve any outstanding issues. In the event that no response is received, the Committee will, at its discretion, turn the matter over to the Board for further action.

Please Slow Down

Please slow down while driving in the community and please obey the Stop signs. We have both children and the elderly living in the community, and it is simply not safe to drive fast on our narrow streets.

How Can I Keep Bats Out of My Home?

Some bats live in buildings, and there may be no reason to evict them if there is little chance for contact with people. However, bats should always be prevented from entering rooms of your home. For assistance with "bat-proofing" your home, contact an animal-control or wildlife conservation agency. If you choose to do the "bat-proofing" yourself, here are some suggestions. Carefully examine your home for holes that might allow bats entry into your living quarters. Any openings larger than a quarter-inch by a half-inch should be caulked. Use window screens, chimney caps, and draft-guards beneath doors to attics, fill electrical and plumbing holes with stainless steel wool or caulking, and

ensure that all doors to the outside close tightly.

Additional "bat-proofing" can prevent bats from roosting in attics or buildings by covering outside entry points. Observe where the bats exit at dusk and exclude them by loosely hanging clear plastic sheeting or bird netting over these areas. Bats can crawl out and leave, but cannot re-enter. After the bats have been excluded, the openings can be permanently sealed. For more information about "bat-proofing" your home, contact Bat Conservation International (www.batcon.org).

Garage Sale

Got too much stuff? Don't want to mess with eBay? Then consider joining us for a community-wide yard sale. If you are interested, please contact Loren at lsciurba@gmail.com so we can plan a date.

Pet Waste

We have a pet waste issue in the community and it is an ongoing problem. Unfortunately, we also have a few Mews residents who are not diligent about picking up after their pets. The responsibility of owning a pet continues past your own walls. It is simply inconsiderate and rude to leave pet waste out in our public areas or worse, on someone's private property. Finally, it is not okay to simply let a pet out through your yard fence to take care of business and leave the waste. Thank you for your ongoing assistance with this issue.

Open House

Lea Abrams, located at 6333 Chaucer View Circle, will be having an open house on Sunday, August 21st. Items available for purchase include:

- *Dining Room Table and 6 Chairs
- *Bedroom Furniture
- *Like New Exercise Equipment
- *Beautiful Etage
- *Antique Dresser, etc.

For more information please contact
Lea at comichope@gmail.com.

Items for Sale

Unique Italian-made game table. Italian mahogany with green leather-inset top, 4 drawers. Four matching mahogany arm chairs with green leather cushions. Excellent condition. Custom glass top included. Originally purchased from Colony House Fine Furniture. Perfect for a den, library, recreation room. \$3,590. Contact 202-828-7157 or bwood@aiadc.org.

Board Meeting Dates and Host

September 14, 7:00 p.m. at Linda Carter's home, 6304 Chaucer View Circle.

REAL ESTATE ACTIVITY

*Courtesy of Fred and Nancie Williams,
Weichert Realtors and Landmark Mews
homeowners.*

FOR SALE:

5198 Bedlington Terrace, \$549,000
6261 Masefield Court, \$549,000
6333 Chaucer View Circle, \$555,000
6264 Masefield Court, \$470,000
6317 Chaucer Lane, \$699,000

SOLD

6315 Chaucer Lane, \$560,000

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Please keep the MEWS informed about your current contact information. Please use the form below to update your contact information. As we may not have your most current information, we ask that all owners and residents complete the attached form and return with your next dues payment or E-Mail the information to Heather McGhee at Secretary@landmarknews.com.

Thank you for your cooperation and in helping the community maintain an up to date database.

Name(s):

Mews Property Address:

Mailing Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

E-Mail(s):

Landmark Mews Parking Decal Numbers:

If you don't have a parking decal for any of your vehicles, please let us know the following about your vehicle:

Make:

Model:

Year:

License No.: