



THE MOUNTAINEER

Walnut Mountain Property Owners' Association

Vol. 125

January 1, 2011

Calendar of Events

- Jan. 13 Garden Club Potluck, 6:00 pm at the Clubhouse. All are welcome.
- Jan. 14 Pizza & Bingo, 6:30 at the Clubhouse. \$6.00 per person for pizza, drink, sweets and 2 bingo cards. Bring a white elephant gift for prizes. For reservations, call Jan (276-3459) or Bunny (698-4040).
- Jan. 15 WMPOA Board Meeting, 9:00 am at the Clubhouse
- Jan. 15 Quarterly Property Owners Meeting, 11:00 am at the Clubhouse
- Feb. 10 Garden Club Potluck, 6:00 pm at the Clubhouse. All are welcome.
- Feb. 18 Game Night, 7:00 pm at the Clubhouse. Bring snacks and games to share.
- Feb. 19 WMPOA Board Meeting, 9:00 am at the Clubhouse
- Mar. 10 Garden Club Potluck, 6:00 pm at the Clubhouse. All are welcome.
- Mar. 18 Game Night, 7:00 pm at the Clubhouse. Bring snacks and games to share.
- Mar. 19 WMPOA Board Meeting, 9:00 am at the Clubhouse



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Max Holstein

Let's Talk Winter

As I write this on December 14, we are in the middle of our first winter storm of the 2010-2011 winter season. Where I live, on Mountain Oak Road, we received about two plus inches of snow, and temperatures have been in the low teens for a couple of days. The road in front of the house was not passable the first day. On the second day I was able to go down to the mailbox and office. I was only able to do that because I have four-wheel drive and low range. The road was icy and not in good condition. Today it looks like the temperature will get up to about 35 degrees and in the mid to high 40s tomorrow. By tomorrow, the roads up this high, and on top of the mountain, should be fairly clear. That would be three days that someone without four-wheel drive would be stuck on the Mountain. That is about the average that I have experienced since I moved here full time in 2001. I don't consider that to be a bad trade-off for living at Walnut Mountain.

I mention this because I have had several calls about why the staff has not cleared the roads to the top of the Mountain. The answer is simple; we do not have the equipment for snow removal on steep slopes. We do have salt (have spread about 1,200 lbs thus far) and a

Don't Forget the Quarterly
Property Owners' Meeting
11:00 a.m.
Saturday, January 15

spreader that goes on the back of a medium weight rubber tire tractor. We also have a brush that goes on the tractor that is for sweeping dirt from roads but can be used in certain instances to help remove snow. My instructions to our staff have always been, and will continue to be, go until you don't feel safe and then stop. Putting our staff and equipment at risk just doesn't seem prudent to me, and I leave it up to those that operate the equipment to know when to stop. That may be different with each occasion. For example, last year we had a heavy wet snow and we were able to clear pretty far up Mountain Oak Road. This time Eddie got about half way up the first hill and the tractor spun around. I am also told that the salt doesn't seem to be working on this snow. It thaws the ice, but because it is so cold it quickly refreezes. Today we had to stop all efforts at snow removal to focus on the frozen raw water lines.

I guess the bottom line to all of this is that each of us must prepare ourselves to meet the challenges of living in an area that, although beautiful, can be harsh at times. We must realize that bad weather is going to occur and decide before it hits how we are going to handle it. Sometimes it means sitting tight for a few days and enjoying what Mother Nature gives us.

Let's Talk Party



If you were unable to attend this year's Walnut Mountain Christmas Party, you missed a great event. The decorations

were superb, thanks to the many folks, led by Lois Hoffman, who spent hours hanging lights, bringing in trees and other decorations. The chair backs were even covered with decorated covers. Much work went into getting our clubhouse ready for the event. Cantaberry Café catered the event and the food was superb. It was a great time to reacquaint with old friends and meet new ones. Approximately 50 residents and staff joined in to make the event memorable. After dinner we circled the chairs for the ever popular Chinese auction. Barbara Nickle undoubtedly has the best knack for choosing good gifts. Every time she chose one someone promptly took it away. Again, I want to thank everyone who took the time to make the party special for our residents. In fact, many of those same people work tirelessly all year to provide activities here on the Mountain.



Let's Talk Water

We all think nothing of turning on the faucet and getting good clean water from our Water Plant. There are very few times when that service is interrupted on Walnut Mountain. Usually when it happens it is because a water line leak has occurred and the staff has to shut a line down temporarily to fix it. The water is normally back on in a matter of hours. We all have come to expect these minor inconveniences and find that living on the Mountain is well worth the few problems that occur. Well, this fall and winter, in fact as I write this

article, we have experienced two near disasters with our water system. December's problem had to do with freezing of the water lines that bring raw water from the lake to the water plant. Having temperatures in the single and low double digits for several days caused the problem. The staff stayed engaged in isolating the problem and getting the lines thawed out. The big problem is that our tanks are now down to about five feet of water and it will be a race to see if the lines are cleared before the tanks run dry.

Before this, a major disaster came in November when the drinking water lake started leaking through the emergency drain system. As many of you are aware, we have had engineering drawings to put in a new siphon system to the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for almost two years for their approval. The old emergency drain system has been failing for several years as the gate that covers the pipe is made of metal clad wood and is rusting and rotting. At least one time before, we had to put divers into the lake to make repairs. This time the lake was losing over one hundred gallons per minute. That is in addition to the approximately 75,000 gallons we pull from the lake each day to process. The staff borrowed pumps from the Gilmer-Ellijay Water Authority and started pumping the water back into the lake. This was just a stopgap measure, as we only could recapture about seventy-five gallons per minute. And we had to have the divers back out and they, once again, made a temporary fix. Adding to the problem was the fact that the lake had gone down so much that one of our raw water pumps was on the bottom, in silt. When we finally got it out we found that the pump was ruined and needed to be replaced. A raw water pump costs about \$9,000.

All of this brings up something that I have been saying for years. We need to either find a better solution to our water needs and/or we must have a backup system in place. If the drinking water lake had drained we have no backup plan to provide

water to about 450 homes. The lake is mainly spring fed and could take many months to refill.

For the remainder of my term as President, I am going to make sure we look at all alternatives to providing our residents with water. I hope to, with the assistance of the other board members, have a plan in place that will assure an uninterrupted supply of water by the time I leave office in July. I want to look at every alternative. So, if you have an idea, no matter how trivial or crazy it might seem, please let me know what it is. E-mail me at max@ellijay.com. We need to brainstorm this problem and find the best solution.



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FROM THE TREASURER:

I hope everyone had a wonderful Holiday season and is looking forward to a successful 2011. We had a successful year financially on our mountain. Our budget was based on 810 assessments and we collected 814 assessments; there were 881 assessments billed. We are continuing to look into creative ways of collecting extreme past dues owed to our mountain.

Everyone should have received their 2011 Assessments. As you can tell, we did not have an increase for 2011. This is a re-cap of our financial statement ending November 30, 2010. On a positive note, we are one day closer to a better economy!

Money Market Account - \$64,010.00
Operating Checking Account - \$1,474.81
Builders Bond - \$7,314.31
Capital Reserve Fund Account - \$100,437.20
Total Balance - \$173,236.32

Steve Barber

ACC Notes

Walnut Mountain's Architectural Control Committee (ACC) is a standing committee established by WMPOA Rules & Regulations, "...to protect and preserve the beauty and integrity of the environment and property values of the property owners..." The ACC meets every week to consider requests submitted by property owners to make various property improvements which may include:

1. Additions of rooms, decks, carports, and garages;
2. Paving, gravel, asphalt or concrete work;
3. Installation of fences, ponds, fountains, etc;
4. Installation of exterior flood or security lights (approval of affected neighbors also required);
5. Exterior painting (including approval of colors), re-grading or other significant landscaping changes (including tree trimming and/or removal); and
6. Any outdoor structure.

Pre-approval by the ACC *must* be obtained by the property owner before proceeding with such activities. Requests must be submitted in writing to the WM office utilizing specific forms identified for this purpose that are available either from the WMPOA office

or on the WMPOA website. In addition, any supporting information, drawings, etc. that will help further explain the work to be done should also be provided along with the request forms. After ACC review, the property owner will be notified in writing within fifteen (15) days of the ACC's decision.

Prior to undertaking any exterior property improvements, it is essential that property owners review and understand that part of WMPOA Rules & Regulations pertaining to "New Construction and Existing Homes". In addition, for construction, tree removal/trimming or other landscape changes that require compliance with setback requirements or greenbelt preservation, it is the responsibility of the property owner to, "...identify and mark the property boundaries so that compliance can be verified." If the location of the property's survey pins cannot be easily determined, it is *always* prudent to obtain a formal survey of the property *before* proceeding with any changes.

Questions concerning the ACC and related requirements may be directed either to the WMPOA office or to any member of the ACC. Current members of the ACC include Bob Demeo, Jerry Robey, Jim Eldridge and Jeff Long.
Jeff Long, Chairman, ACC

HELP WANTED

By Lois Hoffman

We all recognize the rhythm of this season – Christmas decorations go from the tree to storage, the cost of gifts long since given arrive in bulging VISA envelopes, and oh yes, the WMPOA Board again asks for volunteers to run for its four annual openings voted on in July.

Although to some it may seem inappropriately early to start asking for volunteers to run for an election that remains six months away, actually our community calendar encourages informing early and informing often. *The Mountaineer* newsletter, published quarterly, probably is the single most valuable communication tool we have for reaching all Walnut Mountain property owners. It coincides with our WMPOA Quarterly meetings giving updated information on a variety of issues and events. Following that schedule, our next *Mountaineer* will be arriving in April, 2011 (however, submission for publication must be made in early March). For residents new to Walnut Mountain traditionally the April newsletter gives a list of those having agreed to run for the open Board positions, and if none have “thrown their hat in the ring,” usually at the April WMPOA Meeting itself another request to consider volunteering is made. Then over the Memorial Day weekend at the end of May we have a Board sponsored “Meet the Candidates” picnic at which time the prospective candidates are introduced and fliers with their biographical information are distributed. June summers by and publication of the respective biographical information again is made available for the July *Mountaineer* and the subsequent July election. In other words there are only a few narrow windows of opportunity in which to communicate to all the need for volunteers to run and the names of those generous to do so.

To clarify what is at stake, as a private gated community invested with the ability to collect property assessments to be spent for common property maintenance and improvement, and in our case the inclusion of a private water system, we are legally required to have a Board of Directors, have officers of record, meet at least quarterly (although our Board meets monthly), and take minutes. Currently our covenants require a board constituted of twelve persons, each assuming a three year term, with four positions up for election annually. Again, this Board’s annual appeal for volunteers to run is not

intended to abrasively corral people into volunteering but to continue to meet our legal obligation to the state.

So why volunteer to run for the 2011 Board? The importance of this election cycle for Walnut Mountain property owners may never be greater as the four Board members whose terms will be expiring have indicated that they will not be running for re-election. They, Chuck Burnfield, Lynn Robey, Jim Eldridge, and Lee Gilreath, have all served at least two and sometimes three terms. They reflect a pattern that has evolved over the years of encouraging members to serve multiple terms when it appeared that the WMPOA Board’s twelve member benchmark likely would not be met. While that kind of commitment is admirable, and having seated members with board history provides continuity, asking the same people over and over again for their service eventually becomes unsustainable.



Yet, while it often takes a rigorous effort to persuade residents to run for the Board, the actual community it serves is doing remarkably well because of that very service. Past and present boards have worked successfully in providing solid financial footing, updated and improving infrastructure, a quality water production and distribution system, and a well trained staff to maintain its reliability. This healthy profile of our community is in amazingly sharp contrast to the strained and uncertain economic climate that currently surrounds us. However, there is no “Stop Loss” sanction which would require existing Board members to continue their service in the absence of others not volunteering. Therefore, the bottom line is very simple. Four positions on the WMPOA Board are opening in July, 2011, and at least four new volunteers must run. It thus begs the question, “if not you, then who?”

www.walnutmountain.org

Don't forget that this excellent web site contains many items of interest to all of our homeowners. For example, all ACC forms are available for you to print out for your use. Old copies of *The Mountaineer*, as well as all the rules and regulations for the Mountain, etc. are also available. Bookmark this website so you can return to it when needed.

IN MEMORIAM

On December 8 Walnut Mountain lost one of its dearest homeowners with the death of Hank Horton. Hank was born July 27, 1933. He received a BS degree from Kansas State University, served in the Korean War and had a long career in sales and sales management. He retired to Ellijay and Walnut Mountain, where he spent several years on the Board of Directors and as head of the Architectural Committee. There will be a Memorial Service on Saturday Jan. 8 at the Walnut Mountain Clubhouse from 4 to 6pm. All of his friends are invited to attend.

WELCOME

TO OUR NEW PROPERTY OWNERS

Georgette Lawrence 310 Dogwood Ter.
Joe Vines Lot M104
Robert Levy Lot B98
Bill and Sherry Janssen Lot L60

New Phone Directories

The company putting together the new phone directory will contact previous advertisers about continuing to advertise. If you would like to put an advertisement in the Directory, contact Twila at the office. The new directories should be available by the April POA Meeting. The first phone book is free and the second one is \$1.00. The Welcome Station and the Office will have them available after the POA meeting.

Property Owners: Please take note of the companies that advertise in *The Mountaineer* and utilize their services. Their ads substantially reduce our printing costs.

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GARDEN CLUB NEWS

Each year the Gilmer County Library holds a FESTIVAL OF TREES and businesses & community organizations are invited to participate by decorating a themed tree for the festival. At left, Garden Club members visit their tree (based on the Children's book *Christmas Eve Blizzard*) at the gala opening celebration held on November 29.

The Garden Club meets every second Thursday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at the Clubhouse. Everyone is welcome. Bring a potluck dish to enjoy with your neighbors and learn what good work comes from the members in keeping our Mountain beautiful.



Our hospital, it's complicated

by Lois Hoffman

Healthcare--part medicine and part business, and if you are a patient or a provider, you are keenly aware of this fragile balance. Medical practices can range from standard assessments and maintenance to high tech heroic interventions, and the business of this medicine can range from free market profit making to responding to the social ethos of indigent care.

From the abstract to the local, the harsh reality of maintaining this balance in Ellijay specifically and Gilmer County in general, was brought to light in a town hall meeting held at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church on October 21, 2010, hosted by Jeff Dunn, CEO of North Georgia Medical Center and Hometown Health CEO, Jimmy Lewis. Jeff Dunn is also Chief Administrator of the Gilmer Nursing Home which is attached to the hospital and not only is doing well financially, but was included in the Consumer Research Council of America's "Guide to America's Top Nursing Homes" for 2008 and 2009. Jimmy Lewis as CEO of Hometown Health is an advocate and paid lobbyist for Georgia's rural hospitals and thus assists small towns in understanding the dynamics involved when their local hospital is in financial crisis. Currently sitting with about \$4 million dollars in uncollectible debt, our hospital is indeed in crisis.

The how and why this hospital finds itself in this situation is as varied as the people who offer their insight. Observations range from its being an older facility which is still haunted by a past clouded with less than quality care, being caught in the middle, quite literally, of strong competition from Fannin Regional Hospital to the north and, most particularly, Piedmont Mountainside Hospital to the south. Also, there are the financial pressures of charity services (now called indigent care), Georgia legislative budget cuts coupled with the new Hospital Bed Tax, and the reduction in Medicare reimbursement. In all of this, opinions often become bundled up with the facts. To that end, in his presentation, Mr. Lewis outlined a

very grim economic future for Ellijay, Gilmer County, and the other 14 sites in Georgia he is addressing with similar closures looming. The degree to which these forecasts would materialize is certainly subject to opinion, but what is not is that if our hospital closed, the Emergency Room would also close, and at least an additional twenty minutes would be added to any emergency transport from Ellijay to either Fannin or Piedmont.

At first glance, an extra 20 minutes doesn't sound significant, but if the "gold standard" for trauma care is 60 minutes from event to intervention and/or stabilization and treatment, that extra 20 minutes looks large. Trauma is not like fine wine; it does not age well. As heroic as EMPS are in transport, they do not perform their care in an Emergency Room, which is staffed and equipped to a different standard. In our community of largely retirement-age residents, when trauma occurs it rarely does so in a vacuum. There is often a complex backdrop of pre-existing conditions with requisite medications. Plus there's that "age" thing. Getting to an Emergency Room is not only essential but time sensitive.

To that end, at the January 15, 2011 Property Owners' Meeting, Sherry Ellis, Director of Nursing at North Georgia Medical Center, will be giving a brief outline concerning the stand of the "golden hour" in emergency medicine and answering questions concerning time and trauma. If our hospital were to close, this information might be very valuable in personally managing the observation made by Geoffrey Chaucer 700 years ago, that "Time and tide wait for no man."

I encourage all residents to take advantage of the information that Sherry Ellis will be presenting. Trauma is random, and faced with possible change where remedy can be sought, ignorance IS NOT bliss.



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