

The Gazebo

A Publication for the
Afton Glen
Homeowners Association



2015 Annual Meeting Held

The 2015 Afton Glen annual meeting took place December 3 at Sangster Elementary School, called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Highlights

The Board presented the 2016 budget and discussed significant past and upcoming projects and anticipated expenses.

Among the main topics were the work already performed and still needed with the creek that runs adjacent to the walking path, as well as with the walking path itself, particularly near culverts where erosion has become a problem. In general the Association is on very solid financial ground and is expected to remain so for the foreseeable future, despite expected upcoming major expenses for common area improvements.

The meeting agenda and presentation by Board President Jane Davies are available online at <http://www.aftonglenhoa.com/2015%20Annual%20Mtg%20Update.pdf>.

Association Fees

Homeowner quarterly assessments in 2016 will rise \$1.50, from \$138.50 to \$140. The added income will go

toward replenishing the neighborhood reserve fund for future common area improvements. If you have set up automatic electronic payment for these fees, please update the payment amount to \$140.

Trash Collection Expenses

Trash collection remains the major expense in the budget. Some residents have asked whether the Association could save money by having trash picked up just once a week instead of twice as it is now. The answer is that there would be very little savings, if any. The reason is that the trash expense is largely determined by landfill fees for the total haul volume and weight, which would be about the same over the course of a week, regardless of whether it was picked up once or twice.

Board Member Elections

Two Board positions were open because of expiration of terms of current Board members. The floor was opened for nominations of candidates. Board Member Carol Ward agreed to serve an additional term, and new Board member Robert Siebens was elected as well.

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Outgoing Board member and President Jane Davies was recognized and thanked for her service and diligence.

At the close of the annual meeting, we heard from guest speaker State Delegate David Albo.

Board Officers

At their meeting in February, members of the Board elected officers as follows:

- President: Dan Sigg
- Vice-President: Jim Harper
- Treasurer: Carolyn Eng
- Secretary: Carol Ward

New County Noise Ordinance

A new Fairfax County noise ordinance became law on Feb. 17, 2016. Fairfax and other counties already had similar rules in place before. However, they had to be re-written to conform with a ruling by the Virginia Supreme Court, which stated that such laws must be based on objective criteria such as decibel levels rather than a subjective “reasonable person” standard.

Types of Noise

The new rules follow the basic principle that noise should be limited at night but allowed during the day. The law prohibits various types of noises during specific hours, generally from either 9 or 10 p.m. until 6 or 7 a.m., depending on the source of noise. The following are some of the noise sources regulated and their prohibited hours (some categories have additional restrictions; see the law for details):

Noise source	Prohibited
Loudspeakers/amplifiers	10 p.m.–7 a.m.
Power lawn equipment	9 p.m.–7 a.m.
Power washing	9 p.m.–7 a.m.
Fixing cars or equipment	9 p.m.–7 a.m.
Collecting trash	9 p.m.–6 a.m.
Loading/unloading trucks	9 p.m.–6 a.m.
Animal barking, howling, etc.	10 p.m.–7 a.m.

Some noises are excluded from the restrictions, including power generators used in emergencies, snow removal, cars on the road, Metro trains, and police or fire sirens.

The new law also sets maximum decibel levels for residential, mixed use, commercial, and industrial areas.

Filing Noise Complaints

Please be courteous to your neighbors. Remember that the Afton Glen Homeowners Association cannot handle noise complaints. First talk directly to the person responsible for the noise. If that’s not an option, here are the numbers to call:

- During daytime hours (Monday–Thursday 8 a.m.–4 p.m., Friday 9:15 a.m.–4 p.m.), contact the Fairfax County Department of Code Compliance at 703-324-1300, TTY 711.
- At night, call the Police Department’s non-emergency number, 703-691-2131, TTY 711.

To enforce the law, the county may seek civil and criminal penalties against violators, as well as court orders to prohibit current and future noise. Civil penalties start at \$250, rising to \$500 for subsequent offenses. Criminal convictions would be a misdemeanor.

More Details

The county web site has the full language of the ordinance as well as a handy summary, listing by types of noise source (power equipment, trash, animals, etc.). You can find the summary of the rules at: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoning/noiseordinance/soundsmarychart11-17-15.pdf>. You can find other background and full details about the new law at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/zoning/noiseordinance/>.



Around the Gazebo

Who plows our streets?

During the recent overwhelming snow-storm in late January, Board members fielded numerous calls from homeowners wanting to know when our streets would be cleared. Here are the basics:

- The pipestems are private drives and as such are the joint responsibility of the adjoining owners.
- All other streets in the neighborhood are public roads maintained and plowed by VDOT.

Afton Glen homeowner fees do not include any amount for snow plowing services. The Board has considered this option on numerous occasions and has always come to the same conclusion: We don't think people would be willing to pay what would be necessary. For the big storm in January, private plowing would have required our neighborhood to cough up tens of thousands of dollars. To put it in concrete terms, covering a cost like that would require every homeowner to pay an additional \$150 or more beyond the current association fees.

It may be frustrating, because not everyone can be first on the VDOT plow schedule. But even though it may have seemed like it took forever for our streets to be cleared, in fact Afton Glen fared very well in comparison to many other neighborhoods.

During snowstorms, the real-time status of VDOT plows is online at <http://www.novasnowplowing.virginia.gov>. That web page also has links to VDOT traffic cameras showing current road conditions. In the meantime, while waiting for the plows, be sure to keep your own sidewalks cleared, and be alert for ways that you can check on or help any neighbors who need assistance.

Also remember that when trash and recycling pickup is not possible because of weather, there is no make-up day. Trash pickup simply continues as it ordinarily would on the next scheduled day (Monday for trash and recycling, Thursday for trash only).

Your fees at work

For the past several years, the AGHOA Board has avoided significant annual increases in the quarterly association fees. Yet at the same time, a small portion of each fee payment you've made has been saved for building or replenishing the reserve fund. This fund helps cover the cost of infrequent but large projects that are necessary to maintain our 30-year-old infrastructure.

Among those projects have been improvements to the Afton Glen gazebo and walking path, repair of drainage culverts, foot bridges where the path crosses over the stream, and erosion control and flowage correction for the streambed itself.

Still on the horizon is some further work to perform long-term repair of the streambed, and possibly to add a handrail on the steep part of the walking path.

The next time you're out for a stroll on the walking path, consider the upkeep required for this valuable neighborhood asset, pay attention to the beneficial results of maintenance work, and be proud that you helped pay for it. Thanks for your help!

Tot lot project in the works

The Board has agreed to accept some welcome volunteer assistance in refurbishing the tot lot as part of an

AGHOA Board of Directors, ARB, and Community Management Company

President	Dan Sigg 703.451.7649 drs616@verizon.net
Vice President	Jim Harper bowserrex@earthlink.net
Secretary	Carol Ward jjwardjr@verizon.net
Treasurer	Carolyn Eng carolyn@theEngZone.com
Board Member	Kailash Gupta kailash.gupta68@gmail.com
Board Member	Richard Ambrow richard.ambrow@gmail.com
Board Member	Robert Siebens rgsiebens@verizon.net

Web site www.aftonglenhoa.com
 Facebook Afton Glen Homeowners Association

Architectural Review Board (ARB):
 John Davies | 703.440.8934 | jedavies_8629@icloud.com
 Dennis Dombkowski | 703.644.4507 | den.d@verizon.net
 Gerald Lebel | gerald.lebel@femmecomp.com

Community Management
 Chris Huemmer
 CSH Community Management
 6700 Norview Court, Springfield, VA 22152
 703.913.1480 | chuemmer@yahoo.com

Eagle Scout project. In the coming months you might expect to see some improvements to drainage, mulching, equipment repair, and other efforts to restore this asset's community value and usability.

Clean up after your pets

It shouldn't be necessary to harp on this—we're all mature adults, right? But we see the evidence on our lawns and sidewalks: a few residents need to refresh their memory on their responsibilities as pet owners.

- When you take your dog for a walk, please take a poop bag with you, and use it.
- When you fill the poop bag, take it back home with you and dispose of it in your own trash. Do not leave it in other people's driveways, in the gutter, or in the gazebo, hoping that it will magically disappear.
- Remember that your neighbors are watching. They will capture photos or videos of "poopertrators" in the act and contact the police with the evidence.

Pet owners who violate Fairfax County's pet waste law can incur a fine of up to \$250.

Thanks for your conscientious cooperation!

This Old Tree

Many of the large shade trees in Afton Glen predate the neighborhood or were planted not long after our houses were built. The bigger and denser they grow, the more shade they cast—but also the more work it takes to maintain them.

- If you've got a large tree, keep at least 15 feet of it trimmed above your grass to allow enough air and light for the landscape underneath to thrive.
- Be mindful of your neighbors. Your tree may have begun to stretch beyond your property line, causing issues for other houses such as deteriorating grass, unwanted leaves in their gutters or branches on roofs, dirty or moldy siding, and so on. Invest in keeping it well trimmed to avoid such problems.

Upcoming Events in Afton Glen

Annual Afton Glen Cleanup

Saturday, May 14, 2016—8:30–10:30 a.m.

Join your neighbors and help your community by giving a couple of hours of your time on May 3rd. The cleanup will focus on the common areas by trimming back bushes, picking up litter, and making the paths safe for our residents. The meeting point is at the beginning of the path to the tot lot on Green Garland Drive. Bring your gloves and plastic bags. If you have cordless equipment such as leaf-blowers and tree trimmers, we could use it.

And here's a shameless bribe: As in years past, coffee and donuts will be available for volunteers.

Afton Glen Yard Sale

Saturday, May 21, 2016—8 a.m.–12 p.m.

Need to declutter your basement? Looking for that trash-to-treasure item? Our community-wide yard sale is just the event. The AGHOA will advertise the event. This is a great opportunity to clean out and clean up!

Some Trash & Recyclables Reminders

- Trash is picked up weekly on Monday and Thursday.
- Recyclables are picked up every Monday.
- Yard and garden waste is picked up every Wednesday starting each year on or about March 12 until December, plus the first two weeks of January for Christmas trees. Garden waste must be bagged or bundled. The bundles can't be longer than 4 feet or more than 50 pounds. Loose piles of branches will not be taken.
- Put trash receptacles out no earlier than 6 p.m. the day before; put them away by 1 p.m. the day after.
- There is no pickup on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, or New Year's Day. Service resumes on the next regularly scheduled pickup day.

Trash and recyclables should not be put out to the curb before 6 p.m. the night before pickup. Neighborhood guidelines allow garden waste to be put out the weekend before pickup, but it's preferable to not put it out until the night before, if possible.