



# AFTON GLEN HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2009

### Executive Board

David Buffington	President	703 455-1482
Dennis Dombkowski	Vice President & newsletter	703 644-4507
John Davies	Secretary	703 440-8934
Dan Sigg	Treasurer	703 451-7649
Melissa Hopkins	Board Member	703 569-3390
Hal Neptune	Board Member	703 455-9621
Carol Ward	Board Member	703 866-4697
Chris Huemmer	East Coast Management	703 569-9880

**MONTHLY MEETINGS.** The Board usually meets the third Wednesday of every month—check for postings on the gazebo and our web site at <http://members.cox.net/aftonglenweb>. All Afton Glen residents are welcome to attend the monthly meetings. If you can't attend but wish the Board to discuss a certain topic, call David Buffington or Chris Huemmer, and we'll add the topic to our agenda.

## Results of December Annual Meeting

Thanks to all who attended our annual meeting in December, and thanks to Father Gould for making available the St. Raymond parish hall for our use. Here are highlights of the main agenda items:

### 2009 Budget

The 2009 budget was presented and approved, with quarterly fees set at \$132 (with a further \$25 fee for late payment).

To minimize administrative costs, instead of quarterly fee reminders, you will now receive by mail a single annual notice containing four quarterly payment coupons. The board will also put up a quarterly dues notice by the gazebo as a reminder.

As usual, the single largest expense item in the budget is for trash collection. The good news is that through our management company we have been able to reduce the previously expected contract cost by several thousand dollars.

### Election of board members

Several board members whose terms have expired were reelected. David Buffington, Hal Neptune, Dan Sigg, and Carol Ward will continue their service on the board for additional 3-year terms.

Please consider serving on the board, to help share the civic duty of self-management. Only a few hours of your time are required each month; you don't need any special expertise; it's a great way to learn more about

our community; and you can have a direct personal impact on neighborhood issues that you care about.

### 2007 Audit

The audit of our 2007 financial accounts was completed, and it found everything in order. The audit noted that our neighborhood assets include 2,079 feet of pathways, some walkway culverts, and the gazebo. (These are community assets for which the neighborhood must budget maintenance and repair costs.)

### Area Family and Personal Support

At the annual meeting, Father Gould requested that we remind everyone that many of our nearby churches, such as St. Raymond, Sydenstricker United Methodist, and others offer counseling and other types of personal and family support. His concern, shared by many, is that current economic difficulties can trigger stress, depression, feelings of hopelessness, or even suicide. If you or other people you know are at risk, do not overlook the help to be found at our area's spiritual institutions.

## Association Officers Chosen

At its January meeting, the board members chose association officers for 2009. David Buffington has generously agreed to serve as president; Dennis Dombkowski will be vice president; John Davies will serve as secretary; and Dan Sigg continues as treasurer.

The other board members join in expressing their gratitude to John Davies for his years of service as president of the association. John has been generous with his time

during some particularly difficult issues in recent years, such as the Koger Management embezzlement, bankruptcy, and related audits; working out neighborhood parking solutions with St. Raymond parish and the county; and other many efforts, both major and minor. We are happy that he will continue to further donate time to our neighborhood by remaining on the board in his new capacity as board secretary. Thanks, John!

## **Trash Collection Update**

As mentioned above, the board has renewed the neighborhood's contract with AAA Recycling for trash collection and recycling services. Here are some things to know about our trash collection:

### **Trash and recycling schedule**

AAA collects trash and recyclables on Mondays, and trash again on Thursdays. AAA does not pick up trash or recycling on Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year's Day. It follows its normal schedule on all other holidays. If it misses a collection because of emergencies or inclement weather, it will resume collection on the next normally scheduled pickup day.

### **Recycling services**

All material for recycling may be combined and placed in a single container—it does not have to be sorted. AAA will recycle all materials specified by the county requirements: cardboard, glass, plastic food and beverage bottles, aluminum, and metal food cans. It will also remove flattened packing boxes and moving cartons placed at the curb by new residents.

### **Yard debris**

AAA collects yard debris—leaves, grass clippings, branches, etc.—each Wednesday from March 1 until December 24. During January and February, place such items out with your regular trash.) Please observe the following limits and requirements for pickup:

- AAA will attempt to pick up what is set out for collection, but during peaks in yard waste production it may choose to limit collection to 20 bags of yard waste per house per pickup day.
- Brush and limbs must be cut into 4-foot lengths, bundled with rope or twine, and should not exceed 50 pounds. Tree limbs that are larger than 6 inches in diameter and 4 feet in length will not be collected.
- AAA is permitted to impose a handling charge on any household putting out more than 5 bundles.
- Leaves and lawn clippings should preferably be placed out for collection in clear plastic or biodegradable bags. There is a weight limit of 35 pounds per bag or container.

- All unbundled brush will be considered a special pick up. (See below.)

### **Non-collectible items**

AAA will NOT pick up flammable products, oil, paint cans, tires, animal carcasses, manure, tree stumps, dirt, stone, rock, brick, lead, acid/wet cell batteries, railroad ties, toxic materials, bio-hazardous materials or waste, tanks containing propane, oxygen, or helium, items containing gas or oil, explosives, live ammunition or weapons, large amounts of animal waste, oversized brush (longer than 4 feet in length or 6 inches in diameter), bags weighing more than 50 pounds, or any items that cannot be safely loaded by crews for removal or any items that may damage hauling equipment.

### **Bulk removal (special pickups)**

AAA will collect, at no extra charge, furniture and other large, non-metal household items placed at the curb, as long as their bulk is no more than 2 cubic yards. You must call AAA beforehand (see contact information below) to schedule disposal of such items.

AAA will also collect, for an extra fee, ferrous metal or “white good” items such as appliances. You must call AAA beforehand to schedule and prepay for the pickup. Appliances that had contained the refrigerant Freon must be certified Freon-free before removal.

### **Replacement carts and bins**

AAA will repair or replace recycling bins and wheeled trash carts at no cost if they are damaged due to normal wear and tear. However, you may be charged for their replacement (\$75 for wheeled cart, \$25 for recycling bin) if they are damaged or lost due to fire, theft, vandalism, defacement, or resident neglect.

### **Where to call**

Call the AAA office at (703) 818-8222 or visit its website at <http://www.aaatrash.com/> in advance to schedule pickups of large or other special items, or if you have other requests or needs. The minimum charge for a special pickup is \$50.00.

## **Fees and Payment Delinquency**

No one likes to pay homeowner association fees. But our dues pay for necessary services and help keep the neighborhood around you in good order, which helps to protect your property's value. That's why we are reasonably strict about enforcing payment of association dues, and for the most part our neighbors are conscientious about this responsibility. Here are three reminders:

- You should have already received by mail your quarterly payment coupons for the year. As noted above, we have switched from quarterly mailings of payment

notices to one annual mailing that contains four quarterly payment coupons (\$132 each). Please schedule these payments on your calendar and in your household budget so you don't forget them. The next payment is due April 1.

- If you do fall behind on your payments but don't contact us or ignore payment reminders or warnings, we will follow a standard enforcement process, starting with a first reminder letter and progressing through several other steps, all the way to placing liens on your property and attempting collection via court judgment. We don't want to use these methods if we can possibly avoid them, because they are time-consuming and incur administrative and legal costs (which you are liable for).
- If you are having financial problems that are making it difficult for you to keep up with dues payments, don't be too embarrassed to admit you need some help. That means don't keep us in the dark or refuse to communicate, and then make us spend your money on legal fees. PLEASE contact the homeowners association and/or our management company to let us know—we understand that the economy is hurting many people, and we are more than willing to work out a solution, such as a repayment schedule that accommodates your means.

## Respecting Our Management Rep

You've elected the association board to act on your behalf (and if you didn't, then you should consider attending the annual meetings, and serving on the board so you can exert some direct influence). And on your behalf, the association board contracts with a management company (East Coast Management) to handle duties for which it has specialized expertise and capability.

Among its responsibilities are some pretty unenviable jobs—but someone has to do them, which is why we specifically identify and pay for them as part of our contract. One of those is to regularly visit and walk through the neighborhood, identifying problems that either the association board or individual property owners need to deal with. Doing this regularly prevents issues from getting out of hand and keeps the neighborhood orderly, safe, and attractive.

So when the management representative notices something amiss at your house and leaves a notice or reminder on your door, please be civil and refrain from taking it as a personal insult. He means well, and he's doing his job conscientiously.

If you have an issue with how our management representative is performing his duties, please contact a member of the board. (You definitely should NOT do what we recently learned one resident did, passing himself off as the "president of the neighborhood associa-

tion" in order to get a management contractor to do something a certain way. That's impersonation and fraud.)

## Walking Path

You may have noticed that we have posted caution signs on our walking path. Please take special care on the steep parts, which can be slippery when wet. Remind your kids that riding bicycles or skateboards is not permitted on the path.

## School Start and Dismissal Times

Based on a report from its Transportation Task Force, the Fairfax County School Board is considering the possibility of changing school start and dismissal times, beginning with the 2009-10 school year. Here are the proposed new hours for the two schools of most concern:

School	Current Hours	Proposed Hours
Lake Braddock Secondary	7:30-2:10	8:45-3:35
Sangster Elementary	9:00-3:40	7:50-2:30

Updated developments on this issue, as well as related information for other public schools, can be found online at <http://www.fcps.edu/news/start.htm>.

## Kids at Bus Stops

The groups of kids who gather at their morning bus stops are a welcome reminder that we live in a community thriving with the liveliness of children. But all the same, ask your children to be mindful of homeowner property and privacy at bus stops. They should wait on public sidewalks near the curb, and refrain from temporarily congregating on nearby porches or driveways, leaning on vehicles or other private property, and so on. Thanks!

## Spring Cleanup: May 16

Mark your calendars for the annual Afton Glen cleanup on May 16. Neighborhood volunteers will check the walking paths and other common areas to pick up trash, cut back brush, and perform other chores to spruce up our community. Meet at 8 a.m. at the entrance to the walking path on Green Garland Drive.

## Afton Glen Yard Sale: June 13

Also mark your calendars for the annual Afton Glen Yard Sale, to be held on Saturday June 13 (rain date Sunday June 14). Empty your garage, basement, and overstuffed closets. We will advertise the yard sale in local newspapers and place signs at the entrance to the community.

## ***Illegal or Eyesore Vehicles***

By now you should be aware that Afton Glen restrictive covenants in combination with recent county regulations prohibit the parking of large or recreational vehicles, other than for a short time, anywhere in Afton Glen at any time, whether on public streets or private property. County police may ticket violations with warnings or fines. None of the following may park on public streets or private property in Afton Glen:

- Watercraft, boat trailers, motor homes, camping trailers, or any other trailer or semi-trailer
- Any vehicle with three or more axles
- Any vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 12,000 pounds or more, except school buses currently and regularly used to transport students
- Any vehicle designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver, except school buses currently and regularly used to transport students
- Any vehicle of any size used for transporting hazardous materials.

The restrictions do not apply to the following:

- Commercial vehicles dropping off passengers or parked temporarily while performing work or service at a particular location
- Utility generators located on trailers used to power network facilities during a loss of commercial power
- Restricted vehicles temporarily parked for a maximum of 48 hours in order to load, unload, or prepare for a trip.

So are you staring out your front window at an oversized or other eyesore vehicle illegally parked on our streets? Let us know, and we'll work with the police to get any such vehicles removed.

## ***Store Big Ladders out of Sight***

If you have a tall extension ladder, when it's not in use please keep it stored out of view in your garage if it will fit, or else hidden behind your house—for reasons of both personal safety and household security.

## ***County Crime Database***

The Fairfax County Police have an online database that allows you to interactively search for crimes reported near a location and during a time period you specify. This can be a very useful tool for assessing the relative safety of various county areas, such as our or other neighborhoods, commercial areas, and so on. The database is at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/crime/>.

## ***Next Monthly Meeting***

The next monthly homeowners meeting will take place March 18 at the Davies residence, 8629 Groveland Drive. Please feel free to attend if there's some matter you wish to talk about. If you can't attend but want the association board to be aware of or discuss some issue, call Chris Huemmer, our representative at East Coast Management, at 703 569-9880; or call David Buffington, the association president, at 703 455-1482. We'll put the matter on the agenda.