

# PCA Newsletter

The Plantations Community Association, Inc.

Volume 3 - Issue 3

August 2007

## Need for Additional Board Members and Volunteers

In September we will have four Board seats open. We really need to fill these seats, to have a few more hands to carry the load. We could try to hire a management company to handle our day-to-day affairs, but our low yearly assessment doesn't provide adequate funds for this.

As an alternative to joining the Board, you can join one of our committees. As a member of a committee, you can participate in the planning and the execution of projects in your area of interest. We have openings on our committees for:

- Playground planning
- Community event planning
- Grounds maintenance
- Architectural change control
- Newsletter editing and delivery

You also can simply volunteer to help with a specific project, such as newsletter distribution, mailing assembly, or playground repair.

Please call, e-mail, or write the Board to offer your help, or to ask about opportunities.

### Next Board Meeting:

Thursday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM  
Staff Lounge, Woodfield Elementary School

## Annual Meeting and Election – Call for Candidates for Seat on Board

On Thursday September 20, 2007 the PCA Annual Meeting and Election will be held at Woodfield Elementary School. The primary purpose of this meeting is to elect directors of the board. Residents are also welcome to come and discuss issues. The meeting will start at 7:00 PM, with polls open from 7:00 PM until 8:00 PM, and the meeting ending at 8:30 PM.

Residents are encouraged to send in nominations for seats on the Board of Directors. You can nominate yourself. If you wish to nominate someone else, please first obtain his or her permission to do so. Send in your nominations by phone, e-mail, or post. Please contact us if you have questions about how the Board operates, what a Board member does, how long a director serves, or anything else about the PCA.

**Nomination Deadline for  
Seats on the Board of Directors:  
August 24, 2007 6:00 PM**

If you miss the nomination deadline, you can nominate yourself from the floor at the Annual Meeting. However, those voting by proxy will be unaware of your candidacy.

All residents should make an effort to respond by voting in person at the Annual Meeting, or by mailing in their ballots with a completed proxy voting form. Ballots will be mailed out to property owners on September 3rd. Keep an eye out for this mailing, and please participate!

## Reminder – Annual Meeting and Election on Thursday, September 20 Woodfield Elementary School, 7:00 PM → 8:30 PM

Please come out on September 20<sup>th</sup> to vote, and to discuss community issues with the Board and with other residents. We'll be prepared to discuss plans for our two parks, needed improvement projects, ideas for the 2008 budget, and other community issues.

- Come to the meeting to vote for new Board members.
- OR: Mail in your completed ballot and proxy voting form. You must sign & date the proxy form.

## **Property Appearance – A Homeowner’s Responsibility, and the PCA’s Responsibility**

The PCA has seen an increase in the number of properties that are not being adequately maintained, and an increase in the number of complaints from residents about this problem. A poorly maintained property doesn’t just undermine the maintenance efforts of nearby homeowners, it also affects the appearance of the entire community, and can adversely affect property values.

Maintaining properties is primarily the responsibility of the homeowner. However, it is also the responsibility of the home-owner’s association (HOA). The PCA’s Covenants give it both the responsibility and the authority to approve changes to the appearance of a property, and to monitor a property for proper maintenance. If the maintenance is inadequate, the PCA will send a violation letter to the owner, describing the violation, and providing a time period for the violation to be corrected.

If the homeowner does not comply, the HOA has the option of filing a complaint with the Montgomery County Commission on Common Ownership Communities (CCOC). The CCOC will schedule a hearing that must be attended by the owner and by the HOA, and will pass a ruling on the dispute. The CCOC also handles complaints by owners against HOAs.

Here are some common violations:

- Vehicles in town-house parking spaces that do not have current state tags; these vehicles are subject to towing by the PCA.
- Trash not stored in sealed containers.
- Trash or recycling containers stored at the front of the property (please put trash and recycling containers at the curb no sooner than the night before your pick-up, and remove them the day of the pick-up.)
- Personal items stored in the front or side yards of the property (car parts, trash, tools, toys, etc.).
- Vehicles or trailers stored on lawns.
- Wooden trim on house in need of re-painting.
- Missing shutters or gable vent covers.
- Grass not cut for an extended period.
- Excessive storage of personal items in rear or side yard, especially if visible from the street.

The PCA is increasing its vigilance in response to the recent increase in maintenance problems. Please address your property’s needs, and avoid being cited with a violation.

## **New Residents**

The following residents moved to The Plantations between May and August of 2007:

- Pickens, Matthew, et al, of 9701 Ambergate Court.
- Clark, Anne T., of 24105 Bush Hill Road.
- Collier, Rosalyn M., of 24200 Bush Hill Road.
- Powell, Robert W. & Brandy M., of 24109 Club View Drive.
- Caffi, Jorge Romero, et al, of 24204 Newbury Road.
- Moore, Matthew M. & Christina F., of 24208 Newbury Road.

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## **Architectural Change Control Application Process**

When making changes to your house or property, please remember to complete a PCA architectural change control (ACC) application. Applications are required whenever changes are made that affect the appearance of your property. To obtain an application, please call us, or go to our web site.

Please attach to your application any drawings or other information that will help to describe your project. If you are building a fence, addition, or other structure, you will need to include a copy of your Site Location Survey (SLS) drawing, with the new structure sketched in. This allows us to see the relationship of the new structure to other structures, and to property lines. You should have received an SLS when you purchased your property.

The ACC committee will review your application, and contact you if there are any questions. The PCA Covenants require us to process applications within 30 days, but we can usually complete the process within a couple of weeks.

Please be aware that a Montgomery County building permit is required for all additions, sheds, and new fences.

The County also enforces set-back requirements, which define a minimum distance between property lines and additions or sheds. Typical set-back distances (for R-150 Cluster zoning) are:

- For Additions to the Main Structure: 10 feet between the structure and a side or a rear property line. However, some properties have a 30-foot set-back to the rear property line.
- For Detached Structures (e.g., sheds): 12 feet to side line, 7 feet to rear line.

Call the County Permitting Department at 240-777-6300 to determine the set-back distances for your particular property, and to apply for a construction permit.

## Recent Maintenance Projects

Recently completed projects include:

- Addition of wood chips to both playgrounds. This had not been done in a few years. A total of 70 cubic yards was added to the two parks, and more will be needed in future years to build up the chip depth. We chose to use a finely ground wood chip, which packs down with use, and provides some degree of handicapped access to the playground.
- Continued maintenance of the playground equipment in Wesley Foreman Memorial Park, including the replacement of additional boards in the swinging bridge.
- Maintenance in the storm water basin, located across Newbury Road from Wesley Foreman Memorial Park. The County Department of Environmental Protection directed the PCA to perform maintenance activities in this area. Although we used a community work day to clear the basin of trash and make-shift structures, we still spent \$4,700 for brush clearing, mowing, roll-off container rental, County right-of-way permit, and silt removal from the concrete riser structure. Some ongoing routine maintenance will be required, but it should be minimal.

Planned Projects Include:

- Replacement of playground equipment in Club View Park. No firm schedule yet, but we are scheduling planning meetings, and meeting with representatives of equipment companies.
- The swings in Wesley Foreman Memorial Park need repair where the chains attach to the overhead beam. The swings will be removed for a couple of weeks until this repair is done.

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## Problems with Golfing, BB-Guns in Club View Park

The PCA has been made aware of damage to a residence on Ambergate Court caused by golf balls, apparently being driven from Club View Park. In response, the PCA has prohibited all golfing in the Park.

We have also received a report of BB-guns or BB-rifles being discharged in the park. Please be advised that no firearm of any type may be discharged in any PCA park or common area. The police will be called in response to any firearm discharge on our properties.

## Canine Courtesy

Some of our residents are experiencing problems with dogs in the neighborhood. Please observe the following practices regarding your dog, as required by County law:

- If your dog defecates on property other than your own, you must immediately pick up your dog's feces.
- Dogs should be on a leash at all times when they are not on your property.
- Unwanted contact with dogs is prohibited. In other words, do not let your dog approach people without first checking that the contact is desired (when the child is very young, we suggest that the child's parents should be consulted first).
- Know where your dog is -- if you put your dog out unsupervised, make certain that your yard is adequately fenced to prevent your pet from leaving your property.

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## Property Re-Sale Process

Please contact the PCA when you are placing your property on the market. We can provide a re-sale certificate and a copy of our home-owner's association (HOA) documents for you to present to your prospective buyer.

Maryland law requires that the seller provide the HOA documents to the buyer, and allows the buyer to cancel a sales contract up to 5 days after receiving the documents (unless the documents were delivered 5 days prior to entering into the contract). Having these documents allows the buyer to review the community's rules and assessment amounts prior to making a purchase.

The PCA charges a fee of \$35 for an HOA document set.

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## Help Us to Stay in Touch

The PCA sends out occasional e-mail notices to help keep you informed, and to announce volunteer opportunities. We will never share your e-mail address. Please send your e-mail address to:

[PCA4U@yahoo.com](mailto:PCA4U@yahoo.com)

## Recent Vandalism

This summer has seen the repeat of some familiar problems in our community. A few years ago we replaced the roofing shingles on the pavilion in Club View Park because someone had climbed on to the roof and torn off many of the shingles. This tends to be something of an ongoing problem, but earlier this summer there was a rash of this activity, leaving the roof in very bad shape.

The expense of replacing the roofing shingles is one that all residents must bear, and our spending money to repair damage from senseless vandalism will reduce the funds available for other projects. The PCA will involve the police if anyone is observed damaging PCA property, and we will attempt to obtain compensation from those involved. Please speak to your children about the need to respect community property, and make certain that they are not involved in these sorts of activities.

The PCA received a report that five mailboxes on Newbury Road were destroyed by vandalism in the early morning hours of Saturday, July 28. This, too, is a repeat problem. Some residents have suggested trying to organize a Neighborhood Watch program through Montgomery County. Please contact us if you would like to be put in touch with other interested residents.

In the early morning hours of a Friday in April a shed on Bush Hill Court was destroyed by fire. We're not certain whether the fire department ever issued a ruling as to whether this appeared to be arson.

Please report vandalism, other crime, and suspicious activity both to the police and to the PCA. Having neighborhood problems in the police record may help the police to connect problems in different neighborhoods, and may help to get our neighborhood more attention. For our part, the PCA will try to keep residents informed of problems in our community.

For emergencies, call 911.

For non-emergency police response, call 301-279-8000.

Call the PCA at 301-330-8560.

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### **The Plantations Community Association, Inc.**

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Phone: (301) 330-8560

E-Mail: PCA4U@yahoo.com

Web: <http://www.geocities.com/plantations1>

## Voter Registration

If you are a new resident, please remember to register with the Maryland State Board of Elections. This can be done through our local Montgomery County Board of Elections. Even if you were previously a County resident, you need to update your voter registration to reflect your new address. Also, if you have someone in your household who will be 18 years of age by the next election, please encourage them to register. Don't wait – registration is closed from 21 days before an election, to 11 days after the election. It is necessary to be a U.S. citizen in order to register to vote.

Voter registration applications are available at post offices, libraries, Motor Vehicle Authority offices, and other County offices. You can also get an application mailed to you by calling 240-777-VOTE (-8683), and leaving a message. Get more information, and download a registration form, at one of these Web sites:

Montgomery County Board of Elections:  
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/eletmpl.asp?url=/Content/Elections/index.asp>

Maryland State Board of Elections:  
[http://www.elections.state.md.us/voter\\_registration/index.html](http://www.elections.state.md.us/voter_registration/index.html)

You should receive a voter registration card in the mail within three weeks of submitting your application. If you do not, you should contact the Board of Elections.

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## Recycling Tips

It appears that many residents are placing inappropriate materials in their recycling bins. Here are some tips taken from the County solid waste Web site:

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/apps/dpwt/solidwaste/collectionservices/index.asp>

- **Plastic:** All plastic bottles having a neck are accepted, regardless of recycling number, or color. No yogurt, margarine, motor oil, or pesticide containers. No need to remove the rings around the necks.
- **Mixed Paper Recycling:** Include newspaper, clean cardboard (both corrugated and food boxes), office paper, telephone books, paperback and hardcover books, and most mailed items. Recycle your shredded paper by placing the shreds in a paper bag, to keep it from blowing around. Staples and windows in envelopes do not need to be removed.
  - o Do not include waxed paper, soiled paper, napkins or facial tissue, foil, photographic paper, or cartons having a wax lining (such as milk, juice, and most frozen food containers).