

- BLUE MOUNTAIN NEWSLETTER -

Blue Mountain Property Owners Association

Winter 2006

PLEASE VOTE ON THE COVENANTS

Some members have said that they are not voting because they don't want protective covenants. The fact is we already have covenants which have been legally in force since Blue Mountain Subdivision was developed decades ago -- and they were much more stringent then.

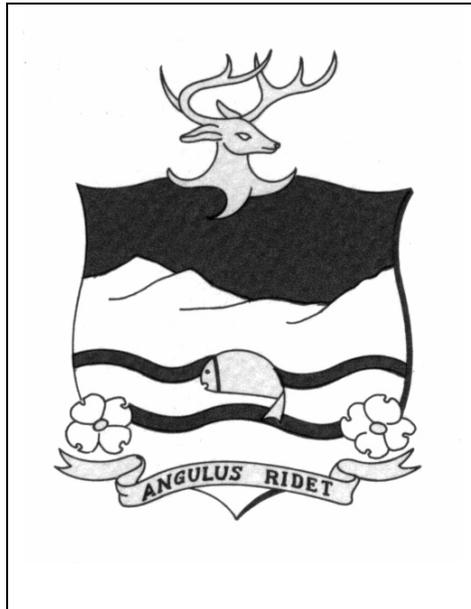
The property owners amended them back in 1992 and the ones sent to you in October are a further effort to bring them in line with less restrictive county ordinances and to make them more reasonable and user friendly.

Any member who is against the covenants in force now should at least vote in favor of the less restrictive ones being proposed. Non-voting, or even voting against the proposed changes, will not make our covenants go away. The existing 1992 covenants automatically extend at 10-year intervals indefinitely.

Consider what your community and your property values would be in a few years without covenants and please send in your vote today.

If you have misplaced the copy of the proposed covenants and the ballot mailed to you in October they can be downloaded from our website at www.bmpoa.org. Or, you can email jstuard1@aol.com for a set in MSWord. Or call our secretary, Cathy Berger at 635-1259 and leave your name and mailing address to receive another copy in the mail. Thank you.

Your Executive Board



Executive Board

President	
Jim McManaway	635-7630
1st VP	
Kathy Murphy	635-6637
2nd VP	
Nynette Rourke	635-6381
Treasurer	
Pete Plourd	636-3657
Secretary	
Cathy Berger	635-1259
Directors	
Tom Higgenbotham	635-4577
Jonathan Morrison	636-8349
Jack Davis	941-346-5253
Chuck Campbell	635-3848

Email: bmboard@bmpoa.org

Board Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of the month from 6-7 pm at the Linden United Methodist Church. Property Owners are welcome and encouraged to attend. Check www.bmpoa.org for updates.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Each winter our newsletter seems to focus on the challenges of keeping our privately owned roads passable. This year is no exception. Having been chairman of our roads committee back in the 1980s, I volunteered to help fill in for the previous chairman who resigned in 2004. I thought it a good idea to let everyone know how I have approached our recent bad weather and how I plan to continue:

- I follow VDOT's guidelines on snow removal tempered by 50 years of combined experience Eddie Williams and I have had with the stuff up here.
- When we actually do have a significant amount of sleet or snow, we try to have our contractors plow during or near the end of the precipitation cycle.
- I normally call the plows out when we reach four inches on the top of the mountain where it accumulates fastest. The weather predicted to follow the storm also affects my decision to plow or wait.
- Our contractors are instructed to plow the snow down to where some dirt is showing so you can steer for the dirt and your tires can get some purchase. If there is solid ice below the snow which can't be plowed, they are to clear the worst of the snow off the top of the road so that we can gravel it later.

- After plowing, depending on road conditions and the forecast, we may have gravel laced with calcium chloride spread on top of the ice to improve traction.
- If we expect rapid thawing and refreezing, the gravel can be mashed down into the mud, refreeze and become useless for traction. For this reason, I sometimes make a decision to delay spreading gravel.
- Some roads may need to be graveled twice as much as others because of their steepness, the amount of traffic they bear, or the amount of thawing.
- Because of the severity of a storm, it may be impossible to open all roads, or any roads, for a time. In that case I will tell you which roads are impassible and give you an alternate route if one is possible.
- During periods of real or expected bad weather, I try to post notices on our website on how I plan to proceed as well as what I know about road conditions.
- People who have plows or other equipment that can move snow should let me know at 635-7630. We pay to plow and I think it is best that one person control the operation and the costs.
- We can't afford to call in plows and gravel trucks every time snow or ice is threatened for a nearby town or city. It might or might not happen here.

There have been occasions when we could have easily spent an additional \$1,500 per day for a week replacing gravel which would have sunk into the ice or mud. Since we have already expended 92% of our budget for snow plowing, application of gravel and calcium chloride and refilling sand barrels, acting for our Board, I elected not to do that. We do have some additional funds in reserve for unusually heavy ice and snow or a late storm but want to avoid using that unless it is absolutely necessary.

Alternative Approaches:

The Board has considered trying to reduce our costs by buying our own gravel spreader and truck. We would have to buy and insure the truck and spreader and house them at least under roof when not being used. Then we would have to stockpile parts. (The spreader itself eats parts by virtue of the hostile environment in which it operates.) We would also need a reliable operator/mechanic, a stockpile of gravel which would have to be treated with calcium chloride and stored (covered) on a lot which we owned, a loader to load the hopper, chains for the truck and a repair point for chains because a heavy truck goes through chains

much faster than your car or truck, and so on. I may have forgotten something in the equation but you get the idea. The Board discussed all of the above and concluded that the costs and logistics are prohibitive.

In response to property owners' wishes, we experimented over the last two years with paving several of the worst and steepest roads thinking they might prove easier to maintain than gravel roads. Up to now, they have been easier to maintain but they have not been any easier or cheaper to keep open in icy conditions since they still need plowing and covering with gravel and calcium chloride.

Because of the steepness of many of our roads, a lack of dedicated and expensive equipment, and limited funding, we will never be able to match the performance of VDOT. The state can keep Route-638 clear because it is fairly flat and is kept open with heavy road graders, snow plows and lots of calcium chloride, then dried by the sun.

The way to ensure mobility is to use a full set of tire chains. Chains will allow you to travel on any road in Blue Mountain in anything but deep snow. Though I hate putting them on, when I have to move (such as go to work) they are the answer.

This has been a rather comprehensive answer to a number of questions and comments I have received over the past months, but it is important that everyone understand the problems and costs and the Board's thinking on the subject. These ice events don't occur every year but they tend to last ten days or so when they do. Though this gets old very quickly, it is not long-lived enough to be a major focus of remedial action to the extent that we would need to raise our sanitary district fees significantly in the hope of making our roads a little bit easier to drive in bad weather.

Living in a place like Blue Mt. in the winter has its perils and challenges and, in my opinion, some of them are just not fixable regardless of how much money we throw at them. However, this sanitary district operates as a democracy and if a majority of the property owners think that we should take another approach, we will of course attempt to do so.

Respectfully Jim McManaway

Gravel Roads Maintenance

Over the past two years, we have made some significant improvements by reworking many gravel roads, reopening neglected and clogged ditches, and adding culverts. This coming year, we will add one more culvert to Rocky Boulder and one other will need repair. Also, each year we clear out culverts at least once. These two tasks will use a little of the budget and the rest will be used to continue improving our roads to make them hold up better under increasingly heavy traffic.

Tomahawk had a complete overhaul last year and will be smoothed again and rolled in the spring. The curve near the intersection with Warbler continues to be difficult to keep smooth due to loose gravel and traffic accelerating on the curving slope. If drivers can keep a steady speed as they go up our gravel hills, the road will develop less washboarding and our work will last longer and cost less.

We have a contractor ready to smooth and add some gravel to some other roads. But as long as the roads are wet and muddy, trucks and bulldozer will do more damage than repair, so we have to wait for dryer conditions. When weather allows we will begin to bring in truckloads of stone to build up other roads, and rent a roller to hold it in place on the hills.

Specifically, I plan to build-up Old Sawmill, Spring Hill, PeeWee and Fire Trail/Rocky Boulder as well as work the road to the recreation area before Memorial Day. Then I will choose two of the worst "non-through" roads to re-work this summer and then choose roads to build up with layers of stone. With increasing fuel prices, the costs of hauling, spreading and rolling also are going up. So the more we get done early the less it will cost.

Thank you for your patience with the potholes and muddy roads. Our regular contractors have had difficulty getting around to filling potholes, and the weather has been a factor in doing other repairs.

Living on a gravel road has some benefits though. One is that almost all of the gravel put down in the winter to increase traction stays there and improves the road base over time.

Kathy Murphy

Sand Barrels:

Sand barrels have been placed at 147 strategic locations over the last two years for use by our members on our roads during ice conditions. I filled all of them with sand/grit in October 2005. Well over 100 of them were put to good use during the ice storm the week before Christmas as some were empty. They were all filled again in the days before Christmas. We need your help identifying any that need refilling so please let me or any member of the board know of the location of empty sand barrels. (And don't forget to carry your own shovel this time of year. You won't regret it.)

Pete Plourd

Inoperable and Unlicensed Vehicles

The Fall 2005 newsletter reported 72 inoperable or unlicensed vehicles visible at 39 addresses around our subdivision. Besides being a growing visual blight, these vehicles are in violation of county and state ordinances. Owners were asked to voluntarily get them licensed, remove them or have them removed by this spring. (Tharp's Garage in Front Royal at 635-7359 will tow them away for a modest fee.) In June, a second survey will be conducted and the addresses of inoperable and unlicensed vehicles will be provided to the Warren County Planning and Zoning Department for enforcement of county ordinances requiring current county tags. Please work with us and help keep your community attractive and safe. It's your property values that are ultimately and increasingly at risk.

Jack Davis

Blue Mountain History

Over the summer and fall, a group of Blue Mountaineers began collecting some of the history of our mountain. One accomplishment was to locate Dick Long, an early property owner, who interviewed many individuals from this area back in the 1960s. Dick wrote a manuscript titled "Blue Mountain Memories" which he is actively negotiating to publish in book form. He has shared his synopses of fifteen chapters of the manuscript with the group. All fifteen synopses are available on the website.

Dick also produced a video of some of those interviews. We have located a copy and plan to show it this spring at the Lodge.

We also found a large notebook of old photographs taken around the mountain going back about 30 years, and these are being scanned into digital format this winter.

We are hoping other early residents of Blue Mountain will share with us their personal reminiscences and loan us early photographs of the mountain and its earliest "settlers". Contact Missy McManaway at 635-7630 or email Jack Davis at jstuard1@aol.com with input, comments or any interest in our efforts.

Website Updates

There have been many changes to the website and many more are coming. Photos from recent events at the Lodge have been posted on the Recreation page as well as Blue Mountain Memories chapter synopsis on the home page.

Links to Front Royal and Warren County home pages have been posted on the local information and links pages. Inclement weather updates have been and will continue

to be posted on the home page. Our website changes often so be sure to check it out at www.bmpoa.org

Cathy Price

High Speed Internet Coming?

Efforts to bring broadband/ high speed internet to the mountain have been challenging. But some progress is being made. We have been searching every avenue for a source that will accommodate our needs as a community. Many of the companies entering the field in this area are small and finding one to work with us reliably on this project has been difficult.

In our latest attempt we have been trying to work out an agreement with Wave2net to purchase equipment for installation at our lodge which has a good view of several "hot spots" down in the valley. The broadband link would be rebroadcast directly from the Lodge to members within about a mile. The system would be managed by our Association which would make it cost effective for subscribers.

But Wave2net has not yet come up with a contract that we can approve and has not been very aggressive in marketing its services to us. They were invited to make a presentation at a recent Board meeting but failed to show up. We will continue to work on this approach but will explore other options as well.

At this point, we have collected almost 50 expressions of interest (not commitments) from Association members and we appreciate that. However, if we can at least double that number I am sure potential providers will give us a lot more attention.

Log in to our website to express your interest. This newsletter and our website will post progress reports on developments.

Chuck Campbell .

The following budget for our fiscal year beginning in September 2006 was approved by the Board and proposed to the County last summer. The county processes our proposed budget along with many other during the winter months. We will be notified when public hearings are scheduled which is usually in April. In the past, our proposed budget is approved by the County Board of Supervisors sometime in May.
 Peter Plourd, Treasurer

**Blue Mountain Property Owners' Association & Sanitary District
 Proposed Budget for September 2006 – August 2007**

Expected Revenue From:

725 Lots x \$55.00 per lot:	\$39,875.00
Assessed Value of Improvements of \$25,556,000 x .25:	\$63,890.00

Total expected revenue: \$103,765.00

Projected expenses:

County collection fee:	4.3%	\$ 4,461.90
Contingency fund:		\$ 0.00

Total other expenses: \$ 4,461.90

Total available for prorating: \$99,303.10

Road Maintenance:	25%	\$24,825.77
Equity Line Repayment:	25%	\$24,825.77
Administrative:	19%	\$18,867.59
Maintenance:	19%	\$18,867.59
Snow Removal:	6%	\$ 5,958.19
Security:	6%	\$ 5,958.19

Totals Prorated Expenses: \$99,303.10

Total Expenses: \$103,765.00

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Address correction requested



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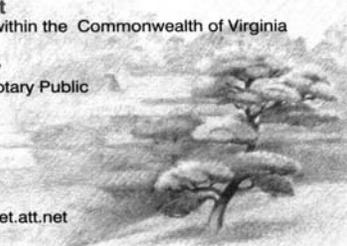
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