

## Annual Meeting to be Held October 18th

*In this issue...*

- ✓ *Annual Meeting Coming Up October 18th!*
- ✓ *Annual Meeting to Feature Environmental Report*
- ✓ *Finance Update*
- ✓ *Road Dedication Nearing*
- ✓ *Please Keep Basins Clear of Debris*
- ✓ *Vandalism*
- ✓ *Pool Policy*
- ✓ *Please Watch Your Speed!*
- ✓ *A Reminder to Curb your Dog*
- ✓ *Fence Policy*
- ✓ *HOA Board Vacancies*
- ✓ *About Us*
- ✓ *Halloween Parade Reminder*
- ✓ *Preserve @ Somers web site*
- ✓ *Final Thoughts from our President*

The annual meeting of the Preserve at Somers HOA will be held on October 18, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. at the Somers Library, Reis Park. The purpose of the annual meeting is to elect five (5) directors to the Board of Directors. After several years of serving on the Board, Matt Murphy and Nicholas Ward-Willis have indicated they will not be running for re-election. Ken Bicknese, Jay Taylor and Becky Williams are running for re-election and there are opportunities for others to join the Board. Please contact a Board Member or the Managing Agent if you are interested in running for the Board.

In addition to the elections to the Board of Directors, a representative from the engineering firm AKRF will be present to discuss the purpose and function of the 22 bio-filter basins on the HOA's property. Additionally, the Board will be reviewing the proposed 2007 budget. The dues, which were reduced last year from \$51.00 to \$45.00, have not increased. The Board, however, to lessen the administrative burden and oversight required by volunteer HOA board members, has decided that the assessment should be paid on an annual basis, rather than monthly. (A good portion of each monthly board meeting is now spent discussing what actions should be taken with residents who have not paid their dues.) This along with the budget will be discussed at the annual meeting.

The annual meeting is an excellent opportunity for residents of the Preserve to become involved and informed about their community. For the past two annual meetings, only a few residents have shown up in person and only one person last year provided a proxy. If you are not able to attend, please provide your proxy (which was mailed to you along with the notice of the annual meeting by the managing agent) to a neighbor who is planning to attend, the managing agent or a board member.

Nick Ward-Willis | [Nick.Ward-Willis@preserveatsomers.org](mailto:Nick.Ward-Willis@preserveatsomers.org)

**Save the Dates: Annual Meeting October 18<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 PM, Somers Library**

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**Preserve Halloween Parade, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 PM, Travis Pump House**

## HOA's Environmental Engineer to Report on Basins

As previously reported, the HOA has retained AKRF, Inc., an environmental engineering firm, to review the storm water management system at the Preserve. Our storm water management system consists of 22 basins which collect storm water runoff from roads and other areas. AKRF has prepared a report which will be available for review on the HOA website. AKRF will also be present at the annual meeting on October 18, 2006 to make a presentation detailing the purpose, scope and function of the basins and answer questions residents may have concerning the basins.

Maintenance of these 22 basins, the two dams and the several culverts located on the property is perhaps the most significant potential expense for the residents of the Preserve. Therefore, it is important that you attend this meeting and become informed as to the functioning of these basins and the potential expenses and liability associated with them, especially if there is one adjacent to your home.

## Finance Update

The HOA is within plan for the 2006 budget. The HOA expended additional funds for bio-basin assessment and maintenance recommendations. These were funds collected over the past several years and designated for investment in bio-basin management. Additionally, the board instituted a practice of investing HOA reserve funds to simultaneously maintain access to the funds while maximizing the return on investment. These practices are intended to minimize exposure to residents from unanticipated future expenses. The budget for 2007 has been mailed as part of the annual meeting notification.

There is no change to dues for calendar year 2007, though the payment schedule will change from monthly to annually. Association fees are due and payable in January. Special circumstances may be discussed by contacting the managing agent or the board directly.

The 2007 budget includes a capital improvement for beautification of the Loomis and Travis entrances. Many residents have commented that entrances don't have the pizzazz they should. This should be reflected as a one-time expenditure as the association seeks to invest in perennial plantings reducing the expense of annuals. Anyone who is interested in designing or working with a landscaper to re-design the entrance way should contact the managing agent or the board at [board@preserveatsomers.org](mailto:board@preserveatsomers.org).

## Road Dedication Plans

It is the Board's understanding that the builder is working to resolve all outstanding issues with the site identified by the Town and the HOA. The builder expects to complete the Town's punch list and schedule the roads for final pavement and dedication to the Town within a month. Upon acceptance of dedication, the Town will be responsible for future paving and maintenance of the roads. As you are aware, Phases I and II have already been dedicated to the Town. Please advise the HOA Board or the Somers Town Engineer at once if you have any concerns regarding the condition of a road, basin or drainage.

Nick Ward-Willis | Nick.Ward-Willis@preserveatsomers.org

## Please Keep the Basins Clear of Debris!

As you should be aware by now, the HOA's 22 bio-filter basins are designed to collect the storm water runoff from the streets, down spouts from our homes and our lawns. This water is then detained in the basins before being released to the wetlands, the Plum Brook or the groundwater. All of the storm water drains in the streets eventually lead to a basin. Consequently, any garbage or pollutants on the streets or in the storm water drains end up in the basin, and eventually the Plum Brook watershed. It is important that no one throws garbage into the storm water drains as it may potentially clog the basins. **Please also ensure that either you or your landscaper do not throw grass clippings or other yard debris into the basin or any other part of the common areas.** Our environmental engineer has advised us that during a walk through of the basins, dumping of yard debris and grass clippings were observed. Notices have been sent to the appropriate residents.

## Vandalism

As with any community, there are incidents of mischief within the Preserve. Some examples are egg throwing, graffiti, removal of drinking water bottles, etc. At the Preserve, we are more aware of these incidents than other communities due to the open communication provided by the HOA website forum. The HOA has spoken with the Town and State Police regarding these incidents and is advised that the incidents of vandalism are being investigated and pursued by the appropriate authorities and that, unfortunately, these incidents also occur elsewhere within the Town. The Police encourage residents to have motion sensor lights which they believe help in deterring vandalism. The police also request that any incident be reported to 911 if it is observed during the commission of the mischief and to the Town Police if the incident is discovered after the fact. **Please also note that all incidents should be reported to the HOA Board using the incident form maintained on the HOA website.**

## Pool Policy

The HOA Board observed several unfenced above-ground pools in use over the summer. The Declaration of Covenants to which all residents agreed as part of their home purchase in The Preserve specifically prohibits any above-ground pools, so in mid-August, all residents were mailed a letter asking for their cooperation in abiding by this restriction.

Because the board does not believe the Declaration was written to prohibit so-called "kiddie pools" which would typically be emptied each day, the board has clarified the definition of an "above ground pool" within the meaning of the Declaration to be a pool:

- Where the surface of the water is above the level of the surrounding ground, **and**
- Which has a design water depth of greater than 12 inches, **or**
- Which has the capability for water filtration or circulation, **or**
- Where chemical treatment of the water is performed, **or**
- Which is typically not drained at the end of each day.

Such pools are prohibited within The Preserve

## Let's Try to Take It a Little Slower...

For those of you who drive through our development slowly already, thank you! For the rest of us who often don't realize how fast we are going down these residential streets, please make an effort to slow down a bit. Remember that while the official speed limit is 30 mph, the demographics of this neighborhood sometimes require a slower speed.

We have so many children who live here and while we all try to explain to our children the importance of stopping before entering the street and looking for oncoming cars, children are children and they often forget to do so. They become preoccupied with catching up with their friends or chasing that ball that rolled into the road.

With our days being so busy and us running from one event to another, it is easy to forget to slow down. The truth is, however, that driving 10 mph slower will only cost you a minute or two on your overall drive time but the consequences of driving 10 mph faster can be devastating. Nobody would ever want to be in a position where they hurt a child in order to make it to an appointment on time.

So, as you drive through the development, please remember why so many of us moved here – to provide a safe, fun, child-friendly place for our kids to grow up.

## Don't forget: Curb your dog

Living in the Preserve has been great for all of us. With a uniquely designed development we have the luxury of open spaces and protected natural areas of beauty. Everyone enjoys these natural areas in different ways, such as jogging, walking, observing wildlife and yes even dog walking. The problem with some of our dog walking friends and neighbors is the lack of clean up. There have been several reports of dirty sneakers and "dog doo" being tracked into peoples homes. The worst was when a two year old child while walking with his Mom actually picked up a dog's mess to play with. Now this is an extreme case but the bottom line is we need to be considerate of our friends and neighbors when walking our dogs. It doesn't take much to clean up after your dog and it makes a big difference in the neighborhood, and it is the law! Soon our roads will be fully dedicated to the town and with that dedication the town will have the authority to write summonses to all that break the law. With regular patrols already appearing in The Preserve an example will be made. Don't be the first to get a ticket for not picking up after your dog!

## Fence Policy

As required by the Declaration and By-Laws, the HOA Board adopted a fence policy several years ago. The Declaration only allows fences consisting of wood or stone. Many residents prefer to install vinyl fencing or material other than wood or stone. Before the residents gained control of the Board, the developer and its representative permitted vinyl fences to be installed and the Board thereafter adopted a policy consistent with the granting of prior approvals. The Board has the fence rule in place to maintain the aesthetics of the community.

The Board requires that the portion of the fence facing the street be screened with landscaping. A copy of the HOA's fence policy is available from the managing agent and on the HOA's website. The Board has sent notices to numerous residents regarding fences that are not in compliance. Failure to comply will result in the imposition of fines. The Board notes that some people received a letter even though they were in compliance due to partial or incomplete records maintained by our former managing agent, Arco. Should you have any questions concerning the fence policy or any letter you have received from the Board regarding the fence, please contact the managing agent or a member of the Board.

## HOA Board Vacancies

The HOA annual meeting will be held on October 18, 2006 at which time five members to the Board of Directors will be elected. While there are five seats open for election, only present Board Members Jay Taylor, Becky Williams and Ken Bicknese have indicated their intent to run for re-election. Any other individuals interested in running for election to the Board should contact a Board Member or the Managing Agent. The HOA is a volunteer Board and relies on the good will of its residents to manage the affairs of the HOA which are of a benefit to all residents of the community. While the initial members of the Board in the formative years of the HOA were active and met on a frequent basis, the subsequent years have seen significant reduction in the time commitment required, and we believe that in the coming years, this time commitment will lessen somewhat further.

## About Us...

The Preserve at Somers Home Owners' Association is made up of board members and residents concerned about maintaining the quality of life we've come to expect... the reason we all moved to the Preserve.

Your thoughts and ideas regarding the content, form and style of future newsletters and our web site would be greatly appreciated!

If you have questions related to billing, or would like to correspond with the HOA board via USPS mail, please contact our property manager, Chris Ryba, of Heritage Management Group at:

Heritage Management Group  
ATTN: Chris Ryba  
PO Box 873  
Southbury, CT 06488

(800)724-0322  
**chris.ryba@preserveatsomers.org**

All other questions should be directed to the Home Owners' Association board at **board@preserveatsomers.org**

Thank you.

## Halloween Party – Register and Attend!

Don't forget to register for the first Preserve at Somers Children's Halloween Parade. Registration forms have been sent to all residents and are also available to download from the Preserve web site. The parade date is Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup> from 2:30-4:30 beginning at the Travis Road Pump Station (site of the Preserve Picnic). Registration, free but necessary for children to receive a treat and participate in the afternoon's activities, is due October 18<sup>th</sup>. For more information, see the Preserve at Somers web site or contact Sue McCormick, [tsmccormack@optonline.net](mailto:tsmccormack@optonline.net).

## Preserve @ Somers

Many members of our community are using the web site supported by your HOA board, located at <http://www.preserveatsomers.org>. This is one way we seek to encourage discussion among community members and the HOA board on subjects of interest to members of the community.

The web site provides several communication tools for your use:

- A public calendar ([preserveatsomers.org/calendar](http://www.preserveatsomers.org/calendar)) to submit calendar entries, go to [preserveatsomers.org/email/calendar](mailto:preserveatsomers.org/email/calendar)
- A discussion forum ([preserveatsomers.org/forum](http://www.preserveatsomers.org/forum))
- News from the New York Times, Yahoo! And other feeds ([preserveatsomers.org/news](http://www.preserveatsomers.org/news))
- A public document area for viewing, uploading & sharing files ([preserveatsomers.org/documents](http://www.preserveatsomers.org/documents))
- A section for favorite web links ([preserveatsomers.org/links](http://www.preserveatsomers.org/links)). To submit your favorite web sites, go to [preserveatsomers.org/email/links](mailto:preserveatsomers.org/email/links)

If you have any ideas on site improvements, or recommendations for additional functions, please send an email to [webadmin@preserveatsomers.org](mailto:webadmin@preserveatsomers.org).

We encourage you to register at the web site and contribute to the ongoing dialog within our community on topics of interest to you.

## Final Thoughts From Our HOA President...

What started out as a desire to have a mailbox at the end of my driveway and the school bus enter the Preserve quickly led to much more. Since I attended the first Annual Meeting and volunteered for the Board, I (along with other volunteers) have tackled a variety of issues including cold rooms, frozen pipes, sewer pump stations, basins, junked cars, speeding cars, coyotes, basins, dams and culverts to name a few. I realize as I prepare to leave the HOA board that over the years, residents may not realize the role of the HOA or fully understand what tasks the volunteer board members provide. As an example, few know that the flowering pear trees at the Loomis and Travis entrance ways were going to be removed because they were installed on top of the water lines. The Board acted quickly, recognizing this would be detrimental to our community, and successfully lobbied for the trees to remain.

The HOA is charged with collecting funds for and overseeing the maintenance of the common areas (entrance ways, basins and dams) and enforcing the Declaration of Restrictive Covenants. As a community, we don't have any amenities (common building, pool, sports facilities), but from the early days of the residents' involvement in the HOA, we realized that the HOA could serve a greater purpose – to be a resource for neighbors, a means of communicating common concerns and a way to enhance the reputation of the community among the local government and real estate community. I feel that goal has been realized. The HOA has a fence policy that balances the desire of residents to install fencing, but requires landscaping to soften the visual impact and maintain the overall appearance of the community. The Town government has listened to and respected comments from Preserve residents on wetlands, road dedication and the proposed (and defeated) placement of a cell tower on our water tower to name a few. Our HOA website and the forum are unique among our peer communities. I have been fortunate to work with other volunteers who have sacrificed late nights and weekend hours to make this a better community. I trust that when the call for volunteers continues in the future, that you will participate, whether it is to serve on the Board or be involved in a single project. At the end of the day, we - the Preserve community - all benefit.

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