

The Meadow Lark



A Monthly Publication by and for the Residents of The Meadows, a Family Condominium Community

New Board Meets

The Meadows' 2012 Board of Directors held their first meeting of the year on January 19. The first order of business at that meeting was the election of new officers for the year. Jason Spessard was elected as the new President of the Board, while former president Joan Orvis was elected to the position of Vice President. Irv Katz was elected to be the new Secretary, and Linda Lachappelle will continue as the Treasurer. Finally, Barbara Prescop was appointed to the position of Parliamentarian.

Looking for Old Timers

Now that The Meadows has passed its 40th birthday and is beginning our fifth decade of existence, we would like to recognize our long term residents. If you have lived here at least 30 years, or know of someone who has, please let the office know about this.

In particular please let us know if you are an original owner, the first and only owner of your home. Our homes were sold between 1971 and 1974 when the final build-out of the property was completed.

Please send your information to the office—we just need your name, the address, and when you moved to The Meadows. Recognition of our long-term residents will be published in a subsequent edition of this newsletter; for your privacy, we will only list the street that you live on.

Adopt-a-Highway

Many years ago as a show of community spirit and dedication The Meadows “adopted” St. Germain Drive as a part of VDOT’s program to keep Virginia’s highways and by-ways relatively clean and free of litter. Four times a year volunteers from the community picked up all the trash along both sides of St. Germain.

In the last year or two no one has been willing to volunteer for this worthy project. In order to have VDOT maintain the signs along the road we need to continue to perform the regular pickups of trash and all other debris.

So we are making one final call for volunteers for Adopt-a-Highway. Teens and others who need service hours for school or scouts can get credit for their time spent helping with this program. Please call The Meadows office at 703-830-4464 to volunteer or send an email to meadowsoffice@verizon.net.



Board of Directors Meeting: Thursday, February 16, 7:30 PM in the Clubhouse. Residents and Co-Owners are encouraged to attend. Agendas are posted online and at the Clubhouse on the Tuesday before the meeting. Minutes available upon request at The Meadows office and online at mymeadows.net.

Executive Committee: Thursday, February 16, immediately after Board meeting.

Special Board of Directors Meeting: Wednesday, February 8, 7:00 PM. No Guest forum.

Residents and Co-Owners are welcomed and encouraged to attend any committee meeting. All meetings are held in the Clubhouse.

Detailed Meadows Information

About a year ago this newsletter had a series of articles which presented in great detail information about what your condo fees are used for, how The Meadows operates and what our hired staff does for us. Lately some of our residents have been asking questions related to this information; accordingly this material will be provided again. It will be pages 5-8 of the online version of this issue of *The Meadow Lark*. If you do not have internet access, a copy can be provided to you if you just contact our office by stopping in, calling 703-830-4464 or emailing meadowsoffice@verizon.net.

President's Corner

With the new year comes a new Board and new ideas. We invite you to attend our monthly meetings and look forward to input from the residents. If you've never attended I urge you to look at the calendar and try to set some time aside this year. They are held each month on the third Thursday in the clubhouse.

As I write this there is some snow on the ground. I wanted to remind everyone to be safe over the new few weeks during any inclement weather. Be sure to shovel your walkways, parking space and adjacent walkways; and drive carefully through the neighborhood.

Also, as you go through the neighborhood, let the office know if you see things that need attention. Some examples are: loose shutters, chipped or cracked stairs or sidewalks, loose railings, trash for clean up, etc. We have regular inspections, but no one can see everything. Please be sure to notate the address so the office knows where to find the problem item. As residents we all need to work together to make sure The Meadows is a great place to live.

~ Jason Spessard

Board of Directors Motions

At the January 19 Meeting

- Passed a motion to deny towing reimbursement to a resident.
- Passed a motion to reaffirm all Board Determinations.
- Passed a motion to accept a bid of \$1100 from Katchmark for roof repairs.
- Passed a motion to accept a bid of \$6349 from Valley Crest for tree pruning.
- Passed a motion to spend \$124 for advertising to fill the position of Maintenance Supervisor.
- Passed a motion to accept our attorney's recommendations concerning three delinquency cases.

COMPLETE MINUTES OF BOARD MEETINGS
AVAILABLE AT THE OFFICE

Violations

Some people feel we have too many rules, and others feel we have too few. As a condominium association, we have to maintain a level of uniformity and compliance. The "small" issues, things on stairs, patios, balconies, etc., are just as serious as trash being put out early, wiring hanging from walls and windows, unkempt gardens, etc. For instance, if there are three units side-by-side, each having three "small" violations, that means in one small area there are *nine* violations. Nine violations, even small violations, in one grouping create a big problem in the overall appearance of that area.

We can not pick and choose which rule violations to pursue or alter the covenants procedures based on the inspector's interpretation of the seriousness of the violation.

Please review your *Rules and Regulations*—many of the items in question are covered there. If there are rules and regulations you feel are unfair or unnecessary, then please contact the office and ask that your concern be placed on a Board Meeting agenda.

Security Totals

December 15, 2011 – January 14, 2012

Vehicles Ticketed: 74

Vehicles Towed: 4

Calls for service and/or situations involving or requiring security assistance, by street:

Avocado Court: 2

Cool Oak Lane: 5

Golden Oak Court/Road: 7

Rustling Leaves Lane: 0

Saguaro Place: 4

Saint Germain Drive: 11

Strasburg Drive: 4

Turin Lane: 3

Calls referred to FCPD/FCFD: 2

The Meadows



Remodeling?

Any desired changes to the exterior or interior of your unit must be submitted on an ARF or Request for Interior Alteration form to the Board of Directors for approval PRIOR to the change being done.

Satellite Dishes in The Meadows



A/C UNITS

If you replace your air conditioning unit, you may install it inside your utility room or submit an ARF for proposed exterior installation.

Bits & Pieces

■ Regular Furnace Maintenance

It is critical to ensure safe and efficient operation of your furnace regardless of the age of the unit. Many heating and air conditioning companies offer discounted specials at this time of year.

■ Carbon Monoxide Detectors

The furnaces and most hot water heaters in The Meadows use gas. It is imperative that all homes have a working carbon monoxide detector. Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas which can cause death.

■ Security Corner

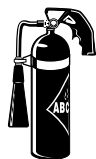
Please be aware of the 15 MPH speed limit within the community. Also, please secure your vehicle and remove or hide items such as GPS units. This will lessen your chances of a vehicle tampering IF area thieves do decide to enter The Meadows.

■ Lost & Found

In The Meadows office, 703-830-4464.

Fire Regulations

- Kerosene, or any fuel heaters, are forbidden by Meadows regulations.
- Residents should not store combustibles in furnace rooms. It is a serious fire hazard and is against County and Meadows regulations.
- Smoke detectors are required on *each level* of homes in The Meadows.
- Residents should maintain a fire extinguisher in their units. It should be rated at least 2A:10BC.



Meadows Website
www.mymeadows.net

Trash: They Don't Take It All

Did you know that the Fairfax County Landfill is unable to accept certain items for disposal? And other items can only be accepted at certain landfill locations, only under certain conditions and at additional cost.

Also, large items such as furniture, remodeling debris or certain appliances must be called into The Meadows waste management contractor *prior* to being put out for collection.

Recently some Co-Owners have placed prohibited or large items out for trash collection. If an item is not picked up by our waste management contractor due to County restrictions or unscheduled large pick ups, The Meadows staff often has to collect these items and take them to the appropriate facility. The Association then incurs the added disposal costs, such as mileage, wear on the company truck, lost maintenance time, dump fees, etc. When possible, these costs are billed back to the offending Co-Owner for reimbursement.

Below you will find an abbreviated list of items that the waste management company *can not pick up* from The Meadows:

Paint cans (even those with very little paint left)

Refrigerators

Tires

Large items not called in to the company in advance
(*special pick ups are on Thursdays*)

Recycling that has not been properly sorted

Chemicals

Lawn debris

It is also important to note that special recycling trucks are used to pick up your recycling at The Meadows. These trucks only come through our community on Mondays, so no recycling should be left out on Thursdays.

Again, these are just a few of the restricted or prohibited items for trash collection. If you have a question about whether or not a particular item can be collected or need to schedule a special pick up please contact The Meadows waste management contractor, American Disposal, directly at (703) 368-0500. They are more than happy to assist you with questions and/or scheduling.

Frozen Pipes = Big Trouble!

Our Management is trying to make sure that the utilities remain on and the thermostats are set to the proper temperature in all units to prevent pipes from freezing and breaking which results in water damage to the affected home as well as the possibility of water damage to surrounding homes.

You can help by reporting vacant units to the office as soon as you notice them. Send reports to the office via email, fax or phone. Make sure that you include the address.

Report any evidence of possible broken pipes or water coming from a unit immediately! See the back of this issue for office and emergency after hour phone numbers.

Council of Co-Owners

The Meadows

6100 Strasburg Drive
Centreville, VA 20121

The Meadow Lark is published each month exclusively for the benefit of the residents and owners of The Meadows. It is the official publication of the Council of Co-Owners and is under the purview of the Board of Directors. News items, personal ads, and such are welcomed and should be placed in the large mailbox in front of the Clubhouse, emailed to meadowsoffice@verizon.net or faxed to 703-815-0755. The deadline is the 20th of each month. Personal ads must be 25 words or less, on 8½x11-inch paper. Include your name, Meadows address, and telephone number. They must be renewed each month. The Meadows does not endorse any advertisers.

EDITORS: Bill Liedtke and Joan Orvis

Meadows Office

Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Phone: 703-830-4464

Fax: 703-815-0755

E-Mail: meadowsoffice@verizon.net

Website: mymeadows.net

24-Hour EMERGENCY ONLY

Service First: 1-800-309-4709

Security

703-628-9481

Towing

Battlefield Towing: 703-378-0059

American Disposal Services

703-368-0500

Call for special pick up, Thursdays only

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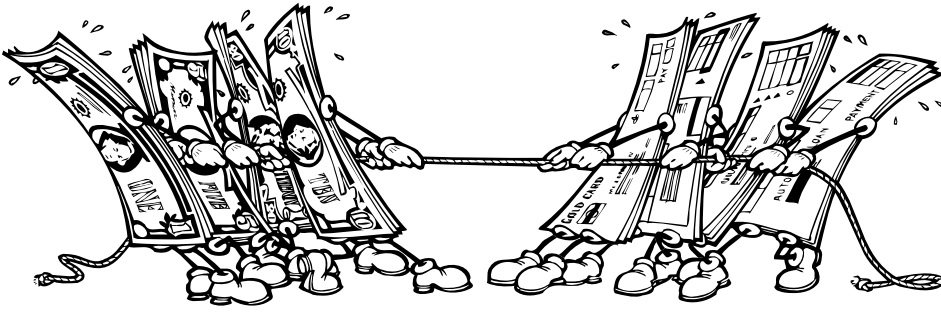
THANK YOU

**Glory Days
Grill**

13850 Braddock Road
Centreville, VA 20121

703-266-4100

**\$5 Burgers and Fries
All Day Every Monday**



Where Is My Money Going?

Most Co-Owner's dutifully pay their condominium assessment each month, but at some point realize they have no idea what their money is being used for. A copy of the Association's annual budget is published in *The Meadow Lark* each year (additional copies are available by request in the Management Office) and this provides Co-Owner's a snapshot of the expenses involved in the operation and maintenance of The Meadows.

Several big items are fairly obvious, such as trash service, security, pool, office and maintenance staff, maintenance repairs, grounds service, etc. There are other expenses required to operate the community that start small, like postage or office supplies, but when multiplied by the large number of letters and notices that are generated and mailed become big expenses. For instance, a postage stamp costs only \$0.45; however, we are likely to spend more than \$5,000 for postage this year. Another example is electricity: each unit is sub-metered so the Association only pays the electricity for the Clubhouse and security light poles. This doesn't seem like it would be too much, but the budget for this expense this year is \$36,000. Water and sewage with a budget of \$350,000, is another utility that is considerably more expensive than most people realize. Some other expenses that must be budgeted, but are not frequently considered by Co-Owner's are the Association's Master Insurance Policy, legal fees incurred to collect delinquent assessments, newsletter, taxes, tree maintenance, gutter cleaning and snow removal, just to name a few.

Hopefully, the next time you write out your check for the monthly assessment you will have a better understanding and appreciation of where your money is going and how it is used to maintain and protect your investment.

What Have You Done for Me Lately?

Many Co-Owners and residents occasionally question the function of the various departments at The Meadows. It is important to know what the responsibilities of our staff members are, so that we can have reasonable expectations. For example, if you were aware that The Meadows is comprised of 618 units covering more than 15 acres yet there is only one staff member whose part-time job function is to pick up trash, you would realize that a trash-free community provided strictly by the staff is not a reasonable expectation.

On the ensuing pages you will find a break down by department of some of the job functions for each department. Please keep in mind that since there are too many tasks to mention, this is just a general overview.

The lists provided are nowhere near all inclusive since listing the daily tasks of each and every person would require the pages of multiple newsletter issues. With only five full-time Association employees assuming the work of operating and maintaining a very large and labor intensive 40 year-old property, no one is ever idle around here. And two security guards patrolling over 30 acres and monitoring the parking in more than 900

parking spaces. Daunting to say the least!

We would love to have additional staff members to help in these duties, but as you know the budget is finite and additional staffing can only be funded in two ways: 1) eliminate other items from the budget or 2) increase Co-Owner's monthly assessments. It is a safe bet that no one wants to raise fees for this purpose; to keep our budget streamlined and condo fees down the budget does not include many optional services so cutting back would mean cutting essential services, which would harm the overall well-being of the community.

Ask Not What The Meadows Can Do for You, But What You Can Do For The Meadows

Glad you asked! At the end of the day this is *your* neighborhood. If you want to make it better, then you will have to assume some responsibility to make it happen. You can start by picking up loose trash you see when walking around the neighborhood or to and from your car. Another good idea is to review The Meadows Rules and Regulations, abide by them and talk to your neighbors about doing the same. For example, if you see a neighbor leaving trash out early or not cleaning up after their dog, politely inform them of The Meadows rules. If you are not comfortable talking to a violating neighbor yourself or if previous conversations have not remedied the problem, you can send the information to the Management Office. Your report should be in writing and include the nature of the violation, address of the violator (must provide an exact address-not "the guy who lives a few doors down on the top"), photos if available and the approximate date and time of the violation. Feel free to make your complaint anonymously. Management will then follow up with the violating Co-Owner in accordance with the governing documents. If you need additional copies of the Rules & Regs they are available on our website (www.mymeadows.net) or in the Management Office.

Another issue that requires your participation is that of overcrowded households. What can you do about that? Well, if you suspect a unit houses more individuals than appropriate please contact Fairfax County Health Department (703) 246-8421 and Zoning Department (703)324-1300 to register your concerns. Only the county can determine if a unit is truly overcrowded. You will be surprised at what the county code deems compliant. The Board has petitioned the County Board of Supervisors to revise current standards, but has yielded no change.

Also, if you see cars that are illegally parked contact Security at (703) 628-9481. If they do not answer leave a message and they will check on your complaint when they are available to do so.

Overview of The Meadows Departments

Management Staff

(Property Manager and Ass't. Property Manager)

- Property inspections (Common Elements)
- Exterior unit inspections (average 25 per week)
- Conduct Resale Inspections (current average 10 per month, but changes based on the market)
- Provide resale documentation needed to Management Agent
- Notify Co-Owners in writing of unit violations (average 40 per week)
- Track the violations pursuant to the governing documents, to include but not limited to:
 - Re-inspection
 - Second letters to Co-Owners
 - Assessing violation charges
- Issue parking passes/permits
- Issue pool passes
- Respond to various questions or concerns brought by residents via phone calls, emails and office visits (average 700 phone calls received per month, more than 500 emails received and 400 emails sent per month, average visits not relating to parking or pool passes 160 per month)
- Contracts
 - Locating potential bidders
 - Assist in providing specs
 - Meeting with contractors
 - Reviewing bids
 - Presenting bids to the Board and making recommendations
 - Scheduling work
 - Notifying residents of work, if needed
 - Communicate with contractors and maintenance supervisor on status of work
- Schedule routine maintenance with residents, maintenance department and/or contractor if needed
- Input all service calls to the database then generate and distribute work orders
- Process accounts payable
- Delinquent Co-Owner Notification, to include:
 - Preparing and sending delinquent notices to all Co-Owners more than 30 days delinquent-sent first class and certified or hand delivery (monthly average of 37 delinquent accounts)
 - Monitor the accounts for payment
 - Authorize revocation of parking and pool privileges
 - Turn unpaid accounts over to the collection attorney
 - Provide collection attorney with all documentation needed to pursue debt

- Respond to account questions from Co-Owners
- Generate all Co-Owner charge backs such as utility, trash, repairs, etc.
- Research governing documents and Virginia Condo Act when new policies or rules are suggested or those existing are challenged
- Contact legal counsel when necessary and directed to do so by the Board
- Act as liaison between the Board of Directors and Co-Owners, legal counsel, collection attorney, staff, contractors and government officials
- Directly oversee contractors, with the exception of the security contractor
- Generate agenda and Board packets for monthly meetings
- Attend evening Board meetings and provide Property Manager report
- Attend committee and annual meetings as necessary
- Assist in after-hours pool pass dates
- Respond to after-hours emergency calls
- Annual meeting notices, preparation and attendance
- File and oversee all insurance claims
- Maintain all staff benefits
- Payroll
- All additional tasks assigned by the Board of Directors, Management Agent, etc

Security Staff

(two full-time guards)

- Parking enforcement, to include:
 - Visual inspection of vehicles to ensure proper Meadows permit is displayed
 - Monitor use of visitor's passes
 - Issue warning tickets for those found in violation of Meadows parking regulations (monthly average of 42 tickets written)
 - Order towing of previously warned vehicles or those belonging to units with suspended parking privileges (monthly average of 12 vehicles towed)
- Respond to resident calls for service (monthly average 51 calls)
- The following issues should be reported to the Police; however, if called Security does respond when possible in the following matters, even when they ask the caller to contact the Police:
 - Noise disturbances
 - Suspicious persons
 - Consumption of alcohol in public
 - Persons appearing substance-impaired

- Fights/arguments on the Common Elements
- Various nuisance calls
- Document unlit street lights
- Detect, deter, observe and report crime or the potential for crime
- Create daily confidential service logs
- Act as a deterrent to would-be criminals
- Prepare tow reports, when needed
- Act as a liaison between the community and the Police Department
- The following are calls for service that security will not respond to:
 - Reserved parking space violations- this is the responsibility of the person who is assigned to the reserved space (see pg. 16 of The Meadows Rules and Regulations for more details)
 - Criminal or suspected criminal activity, to include, but not limited to:
 - » Vehicle tampering
 - » Domestic disputes
 - » Activity within a unit
 - » Restraining Order violations
 - » Burglary
- The Meadow Lark publishes Security totals in the newsletter. This is a good way for residents and Co-Owners to see what is happening in the community.

Maintenance Staff

(two full-time Techs and one full-time Working Foreman)

- Maintenance Techs
 - Pick up all loose trash from the Common Elements
 - When possible, collect large items or multiple trash bags left on the Common Elements by residents on non-trash collection days
 - Sort through trash bags and debris left by residents to try and determine the violator. If found, report information to Management Office for enforcement.
 - Put all office trash and trash collected from the Common Elements out for collection on designated days
 - Water plants at front entrance once per week and newly installed shrubs three times per week
 - Run all work order tickets (average 84 tickets per month)
 - Perform special tasks assigned by Board of Directors, Management or Working Foreman
 - Haul to the dump all trash that waste management contractor can not take (appliances, tires, paint, large items, etc)
 - Deliver notices and letters as directed by Management or Board
 - Remove and when appropriate replace reserved parking markers as directed by Management
 - Perform all maintenance on the Common Elements, to include, but in no way limited to:

- » Select concrete repairs
- » Shutter replacement/re-hanging
- » Outdoor spigot repairs
- » Select pool maintenance
- » Inspect condensate lines
- » Repair toilets
- » Select playground maintenance
- » Inspect attics when select pests are reported by residents
- » Inspect master antenna connections
- » Respond to after-hours emergency calls

➤ Working Foreman

- All items listed above in Maintenance Tech section
- Oversee Maintenance Technicians
- Inspect and oversee contractors performing contracted work to include, but in no way limited to:
 - » Assist in providing specs
 - » Meeting with contractors to inspect work needing to be done
 - » Reviewing the bids with the Property Manager and making recommendations to the Board
 - » Scheduling work
 - » Communicate with contractors, Property Manager and/or Board on status of work
 - » Regularly inspect the work being done by contractors
 - » Authorizing final payment based on inspections
 - » At any given time there can be as many as three contractors doing work on the property
- Inspect the Common Elements for needed repairs to include, but not limited to:
 - » Concrete
 - » Pavement and striping
 - » Roofing, guttering and soffits
 - » Outdoor spigots
 - » Drainage and grading concerns
 - » Handrails
 - » Siding
 - » Signage
- Track and follow up on all on-going work orders (some projects or reported issues could take months to resolve based on resident availability, contractor time tables and/or weather conditions)
- Order and maintain all maintenance supplies
- Inspect authorized alterations make by Co-Owners to ensure proper installation
- Attend Board meetings and present maintenance report as requested by the Board
- Meet with individual residents to identify any Association maintenance needs

You Know What They Say About Assuming...

This old adage is somewhat true in the case of violations. If you see a glaring violation at a neighboring unit, a mattress on the balcony for instance, don't assume that Management is aware of the issue. As another article in this issue points out, there are very few staff members as compared to the number of units and residents. *Please* call or email the Management Office to report these violations. If Management is unaware of the violation we will inspect and respond accordingly. If Management is aware and has already started the violation process hopefully you will be impressed!

Likewise, please don't assume that Management, the Board or Security is ignoring violations. Usually when we send violation letters Co-Owners are prompt to bring their unit into compliance (or their vehicle after a warning ticket is issued). Often though, Co-Owners are less concerned with the rules and do nothing. The Virginia Condominium Act and our By-Laws require that the Association afford a minimum of 24 days to correct most violations. If violations remain after the required correction period, charges begin accruing at \$10 per day that the violation(s) exist. You would be surprised to learn that many Co-Owners are currently accruing these charges. This is not income the Association wants to charge or includes in its spending budget. We would much rather have all units in compliance than go through the time and effort of writing letters and charging accounts. You may also be surprised to learn that many Co-Owners generate up to the maximum charges allowed by law (\$900) and upon inspection the following quarter, have the same violations and again begin accruing these charges. Likewise, there are some vehicles that have been towed three or more times, but continue to park here illegally. Sadly, you can do everything permitted by law to gain compliance, but you can't make people care.

You *should* assume that The Meadows Board and Staff want to do all we can to make this community the best it can be, because this is a fact. But to achieve this goal the aid and action of our residents are crucial. Please understand the massive job that the staff and Board face everyday and do your part to support, encourage and help them. You should also assume that we want, no better yet, crave your involvement! If you have a question, ask Management. If they cannot provide you with an answer, they know where to find someone who can. If you have a compliment, by all means send that along too. If you have a concern that Management cannot address, send it in writing to the office where staff will be happy to submit your topic for Board discussion in a future meeting. Above all get involved! Attend Board meetings to observe how your community is run, join a committee, run for the Board, attend Annual Meetings, become a part Neighborhood Watch, report violations and always do your best to be a good neighbor!

Maintenance Responsibilities

In a condominium community it can sometimes be difficult for residents to know what maintenance issues the Association is responsible for and what falls to the Co-Owner. Lately, many calls have been received requesting assistance in areas that are outside of the Association's scope of responsibility.

The Association is charged with maintaining the Common Elements; items such as roofing, siding, brick, concrete, playgrounds, swimming pools, parking lots, grounds, etc. On a property the age and size of The Meadows this takes an extraordinary amount of time and energy. It is more than a full time job for our staff, so to be pulled from these duties to respond to calls that are outside of our areas of responsibility would take a toll on the community at large. Unfortunately, we can not properly maintain the Common Elements and respond to calls that are outside of our areas of responsibility.

For a full list of maintenance responsibilities belonging to the Association, please refer to The Meadows By-Laws. A chart outlining maintenance responsibilities can be found as the last section of this document. As a general rule, the type of maintenance call the Association will respond to would be an issue involving the Common Elements or something affecting the community as a whole. For example, if you are in a lower unit and notice a leak from your ceiling you would need to contact a plumber to resolve the issue. The leak is likely an upstairs neighbor with a leaking toilet or appliance. This type of leak can not be caused by Association maintained plumbing; therefore, The Meadows would not respond. Your plumber will be able to determine where the leak is coming from and make the necessary repairs. If the leak is coming from a neighboring unit you should work with your neighbor or insurance company directly to resolve the issue. If there is a substantial leak coming from an upper unit and you can not reach the upstairs resident, you should contact the Fire Department and they will respond to shut off the water. Another example: If you are in a lower unit and experience water coming into your unit from the floor or through an exterior wall it may be caused by a crack in the foundation. Since the foundations are maintained by the Association, Meadows staff would respond. Likewise if you are in an upper unit and experience a ceiling leak on your top level, it could be caused by the roof, which is maintained by the Association so our staff would respond. Other examples of calls that The Meadows maintenance staff would respond to include trash bins, shutters, stairs, playgrounds and other fixtures of the Common Elements.

To report the need for maintenance simply call the office at (703) 830-4464 or send an email to meadowsoffice@verizon.net. Please keep in mind that there are only two maintenance technicians currently working for The Meadows, so response to service requests must be prioritized.