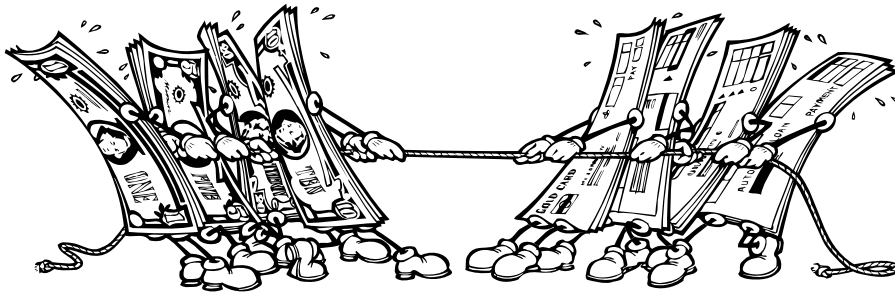


# The Meadow Lark

September 2009

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



## 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 MeadowLark each year once it is approved near the end of the year and 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 \$0.44; 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 over \$28,000. Water and sewage with a budget of \$231,000, 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 part-time staff member whose 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.

An overview of the job functions for each department begins on page 4 of this issue.



**Board of Directors Meeting:** Thursday, September 17, 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](http://mymeadows.net).

**Security Meeting:** Tuesday, September 8, 7:00 PM in the Clubhouse

**Social and Recreation Committee Meeting:** Monday, September 14, 7:00 PM in the Clubhouse

**Pool Committee Meeting:** Tuesday, September 15, 7:30 PM in the Clubhouse

**Swim Team Parents:** Wednesday, September 16, 7:30 PM in the Clubhouse

*Residents and Co-Owners are welcomed and encouraged to attend any committee meeting.*

## Board of Directors Meeting Change

Beginning this month the Board of Directors will be meeting once a month.

This meeting will be held on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in the Clubhouse.

Residents and Co-Owners are encouraged to attend.

## Meadows Website

[www.mymeadows.net](http://www.mymeadows.net)

## The President's Corner

September is here, and school is starting. Please be extra aware of children walking to their bus stops. Also, the pool is open through the Labor Day weekend; come out and enjoy.

There are plans in the works for a fall Yard Sale; please stay tuned for details.

I feel it necessary, once again, to mention that dogs are not allowed to run on The Meadows grounds without a leash. This also means that the leash of the dog must be in the hand of a person responsible for the dog. When walking your pet, please be sure to pick up any "droppings," and dispose of them properly. Please feel free to use the public trash cans that are placed around the property for the disposal of any drink cans or bottles, food wrappers, etc that you may have while walking through the neighborhood. Help us keep the grounds clean.

Also, please check the website for the new *Rules & Regulations*. A paper copy is available through the office.

Have a happy and safe September.

~ Joy C. Foshier

## Board of Directors Motions

### At the August 20 Meeting:

- Passed a motion to approve four Architectural Review Forms for a patio improvement, awning, new windows and condensate line.
- Passed a motion to continue with only one Board meeting per month unless special issues arise.
- Passed a motion for a partial approval of a towing reimbursement request.
- Passed a motion to install a handrail by Reliable Rails at a cost of \$550.
- Passed a motion to defer a decision relating to dogs.
- Passed a motion relating to action taken against a community volunteer.
- Passed a motion regarding action to be taken in three delinquency cases.
- Passed a motion to deny a request to waive a trash fee.

COMPLETE MINUTES OF BOARD MEETINGS  
AVAILABLE AT THE OFFICE

## Candidates Wanted!

If you wish to declare your candidacy for a seat on the 2010 Board of Directors, please do so before September 15 in order to ensure that your name appears in the initial list of candidates published in The October *Meadow Lark*. A biographical information sheet will be available at the office in September and must be submitted before October 15 to have a biography appear in the November *Meadow Lark*.

To declare your intentions, call the Office at 703-830-4464.

## Security Totals

July 15 – August 14, 2009

Vehicles Ticketed: 24

Vehicles Towed: 8

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

Avocado Court: 2

Cool Oak Lane: 9

Golden Oak Court/Road: 9

Rustling Leaves Lane: 2

Saguaro Place: 6

Saint Germain Drive: 10

Strasburg Drive: 9

Turin Lane: 4

Calls referred to police/fire/rescue: 5

## 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.



## 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.

## Satellite Dishes in 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.

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## Bits & Pieces

### ■ School's In!

School begins Tuesday, September 8. Please exercise extreme caution while driving through The Meadows at stop signs and school bus stops. Remember to come to a complete stop when school bus lights are flashing, whether you are approaching from the front, rear or side of the bus. Parents—please go over safety rules and behavior expectations at bus stops and on the buses with your child(ren) before school begins.

### ■ 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 beginning in September.

### ■ 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.

### ■ Needed

Your fall birthday and anniversary announcements! Tell everyone all about it! Send your announcement to meadowsoffice@verizon.net or drop it in the large black mailbox in front of the clubhouse by the 20th of the month. Please include your name, address and phone number. These will not be printed.

### ■ Lost & Found

In the Meadows Office, 703-830-4464.

## Meadows Website

[www.mymeadows.net](http://www.mymeadows.net)



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## Swim Team News

The Meadows Sharks concluded a very successful season at the 17<sup>th</sup> Herndon Swim League All-League Meets. A total of six medals were won by our swimmers at these meets, led by Jonathan Martin who won a bronze medal in the boys 7-8 breaststroke in the Championship Meet. This means that he is the third fastest in the entire league of 10 teams in this stroke. The leading medal winner at the All-Star Meet was Patrick Bergeron, who won a silver medal in boys 13-14 breaststroke and a bronze medal in freestyle. Also winning medals at the All-Star Meet were Gabriel Acosta in boys 8 and under butterfly, Ariana Feagan in girls 8 and under breaststroke and Jacqueline Sandoval in girls 9-10 freestyle.

Awards were presented at the team's annual banquet. The Most Valuable swimmers for their age group were Gabriel Acosta, Ariana Feagan, Nicholas Ney, Jacqueline Sandoval, Jon Gal-dames, Priya Beasley, Calvin Jones, Vicky Ney, Chris Jones and Taylor Reid. The overall most valuable awards went to Nicholas Ney and Calvin Jones (a tie) for the boys and Jacqueline Sandoval for the girls.

Coaches awards went to Taylor Reid, Amanda de Moraes, Daniel Portilla and Thomas Greer. Awards for most improved swimmers went to Beatriz de Moraes, Jacqueline Sandoval, Jasper Thompson, Ariana Feagan, Jonathan Martin and Ian Lachapelle.

## You're Invited...But It's Okay If You Can't Make It

Residents and Co-Owners are always welcome to visit the on-site office to offer comments or compliments, report violations, file ARF's, get parking and/or pool passes or just to say hello! We love to see you, but realize work, running the kids from activity to activity, and plain old fatigue can make getting in during office hours difficult. We can all commiserate with being over scheduled, over worked and overwhelmed.

If you have Meadows business to attend to, there is no need to let this add to your stress! While our on-site office has business hours of 8:30 AM-4:30 PM Monday through Friday, thanks to technology we can conduct just about all business via email, fax or telephone.

Just give us a call at (703) 830-4464, send an email to meadowsoffice@verizon.net or fax us at (703) 815-0755 and we will answer your questions or make arrangements to get you what you need in a method that fits your schedule.

For instance, parking permits can be hand delivered to your door if you fax or email us the registration and lease/settlement sheet, if not already on file. Temporary pool passes can also be left at your door with a completed pool registration form by fax or email. ARF's, violation reports or other requests can also be sent to the office fax or email. All Meadows forms to include those needed for ARFs, interior alterations, lease addendum, satellite addendum, installation waiver, autopay, etc can be found on our website [www.mymeadows.net](http://www.mymeadows.net).

For those who are less eager to use the computer or email to send information, there is a black mailbox in front of the office, in which you can deposit any letters, requests, documents, etc. Be sure to include your address and phone number on all forms of correspondence for follow up.

Again, we welcome you to come to the office when you have the opportunity, but if time does not allow (or if you just don't want to add another stop to your day), we are happy to offer these convenient methods of communication and assistance. Sadly, there is nothing we can do to relieve the stress of taxiing the kids from school to soccer or walking the dog.

# 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 4 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 (on average 13 per week)
- Issue pool passes (in season average of 60 per week)
- Respond to various questions or concerns brought by residents via phone calls, emails and office visits (average 700 phone calls received per month, in the month of June 566 emails received and 430 emails sent, 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 who have not paid by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month-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 pool and grounds contractors
- Generate Board packets twice per month
- Attend evening Board meetings twice per month 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 and preparation
- File and oversee all insurance claims
- Maintain all staff benefits
- Payroll
- All additional tasks assigned by the Board of Directors

## 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 MeadowLark has recently begun running 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 part-time Groundsman)**

#### ➤ Groundsman

- 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 sod three times per week

#### ➤ Maintenance Tech

- Run all work order tickets (average 84 tickets per month)
- Perform special tasks assigned by Board of Directors, Management or Maintenance Supervisor
- Assist the Groundsman
- 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
- 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

#### ➤ Maintenance Supervisor

- All items listed above in Maintenance Tech section
- Oversee Maintenance Technician and Groundsman
- Inspect and oversee contractors performing contracted work to include, but in no way limited to:
  - » Locating potential bidders
  - » Assist in providing specs
  - » Meeting with contractors to inspect work needing to be done
  - » Reviewing the bids and making recommendations to the Board
  - » Scheduling work
  - » Notifying residents of work, if needed
  - » Communicate with contractors and property manager 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
- When appropriate inspect units with reported leaks to determine the origin and area of responsibility
- 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 made by Co-Owners to ensure proper installation
- Attend one Board meeting per month and present maintenance report
- Meet with individual residents to identify any Association maintenance needs

As mentioned these lists 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 four full-time and one part-time Association employees assuming the work of operating and maintaining a very large and labor intensive 38 year old property, no one is ever idle for long around here. And two security guards patrolling over 15 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 their fees for this purpose.

## 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") 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](http://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.

## 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 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 of Neighborhood Watch, report violations and always do your best to be a good neighbor!

Council of Co-Owners  
**The Meadows**  
6100 Strasburg Drive  
Centreville, VA 20121

**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

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 or emailed to meadowsoffice@verizon.net. The deadline is the 20th of each month. Personal ads must be 25 words or less, on 8½x11-inch paper or emailed to meadowsoffice@verizon.net. Include your name, Meadows address, and telephone number. The Meadows does not endorse any advertisers. EDITORS: Dick and Lydia Miller

PAID AD

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**The Visitors Parking Pass will no longer appear in The Meadow Lark.**  
Please visit [www.mymeadows.net](http://www.mymeadows.net) and click on Meadows Business in the sidebar menu, then on Forms and Files and scroll down to On-line Forms and click to find the Visitors Pass. If you prefer, visit the Meadows Office to pick up copies.

## Classified Ads

Email your ad to meadowsoffice@verizon.net

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Meadows Resident Coupon

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