

MEADOWS AT MORRIS FARM BIRD CALL

Neighborhood Happenings

Fall 2021 Updates

Happy Fall! We hope you had a wonderful summer and took advantage of several benefits of our community. Despite the delayed opening and staffing challenges, the pool season was a success, with many residents enjoying the expanded shaded seating areas on the new pool deck and the extended season. The small but mighty Activities Committee worked extremely hard to deliver several fun events: movie nights, Food Truck Fridays, the July 4th Bike Parade and Sidewalk Chalk contest, and the Labor Day Barbeque! We're also pleased to have two Little Free Libraries in the community and volunteers keeping them organized.

Now let's talk about what's coming up for the rest of 2021!

Annual Meeting and Election of Board of Directors: November 18, 2021

Every fall, the Association members (Morris Farm homeowners) convene a meeting to elect members of the Board of Directors. The Board is comprised of five (volunteer) homeowners who oversee the management of the community, set the community's priorities, allocate funds, and much more. It's an important job, and it's critical that homeowners attend the Annual Meeting or send in a proxy form to SFMC to cast your vote. ***This is the only meeting of the year that requires 10% quorum to conduct any business – that's 66 households – so if there is only one meeting you attend all year, please make sure it's on November 18!***

This year, four of the five Directors' seats are up for election. If you are interested in serving your community as a member of the Board of Directors, you can nominate yourself by filling out a candidate form and sending it to Darnell Robertson (drobertson@sfmtcinc.com) by **October 15** (your candidate form will be included in the Annual Meeting notice that will be mailed to all households); or you can self-nominate from the floor on the night of the Annual Meeting. To read about the duties of the Board of Directors, you can request that information from Darnell, or you can find the description in the Files Section of the Morris Farm HOA Facebook Group.

If you cannot attend the Annual Meeting on November 18, please **be sure to send in a proxy form** to Darnell before the start of the meeting. You will receive the proxy form in the mail from SFMC a few weeks before the meeting; the document will also be in the Files Section of the Morris Farm HOA Facebook Group.

QUICK REFERENCE INFORMATION

HOA COMMUNICATION CHANNELS:

- **MANAGEMENT COMPANY:**
SFMC
9464 INNOVATION DR.
MANASSAS, VA 20110
- **COMMUNITY MANAGER:**
DARNELL ROBERTSON
703-392-6006, EXT 281
FAX: 703-392-5039
DROBERTSON@SFTMCINC.COM
- **TO RECEIVE EMAILS FROM SFMC,**
YOU MUST OPT-IN BY EMAIL TO THE
COMMUNITY MANAGER
- **COMMUNITY WEBSITE:**
MORRISFARMHOA.COM
- **COMMUNITY FACEBOOK PAGE:**
MORRIS FARM HOA
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/
MORRISFARMHOA/

TRASH & RECYCLING

- **TRASH DAYS:** M & TH
- **RECYCLING DAY:** TH
- **YARD WASTE:** TH (MAR-DEC)
- **AMERICAN DISPOSAL:**
703-368-0500

MAILBOXES

- **POST COLOR:**
 - VALSPAR CACTUS SHADOW GREEN
 - SHERWIN WILLIAMS ARTICHOKE GREEN (COLOR CODE SW6179)
- **MAILBOX COLOR:** OFF-WHITE
- **FOUR INCH NUMBERS**
- **ORIGINAL MAILBOXES INSTALLED BY MAIN STREET MAILBOXES (571-349-8454)**

Budget Planning for 2022

As 2021 winds down, we're ramping up our operational budget planning for 2022 in consultation with SFMC, our community management company. Here's a little context for the Board's upcoming budget discussions.

- Our assessments have stayed flat for at least five years.
- The Board commissioned an updated Reserve Study in 2021, which is a funding plan to ensure the Association has sufficient funds to cover long-term replacement projects (such as repaving roads) without unexpected, out-of-cycle assessments to homeowners. Several replacement projects are coming due in the next few years.
- In 2020, the community had a sizable surplus due to reduced operating costs in light of COVID. By law, the Association must zero-balance the budget (we could not carry over the surplus for operating expenses), so the Board invested much of that surplus into reserve funds to offset the rising cost of funding projects. The Board also returned part of the 2020 pool cost savings by investing in a new sun shade structure where the splash pad used to be.
- In 2021 and looking ahead to 2022, the community's contract services are increasing in costs, in addition to the rising costs of general maintenance services.
 - The new Virginia minimum wage law went into effect this summer, resulting in higher pool management and pet waste collection service fees.
 - New Prince William County code goes into effect on October 1 for yard waste collection, which requires an additional truck to service the neighborhood (at an estimated 23-25% cost increase on a six-figure service contract). Trash collection costs had already increased 20% from 2020 to 2021.

In the coming weeks, the Board will face decisions about how to balance the rising cost of day-to-day operations with preserving relatively stable homeowner assessments.

Upcoming Fall Activities

Thanks to a few dedicated volunteers, our community hosts several events through the year. Planning and implementing these events is a group effort beyond the small committee; please consider lending a hand for an hour or two when we post a sign up. Without help, events may be canceled!

See event details and be notified of updates by RSVPing to each activity in the Events Tab of the Morris Farm HOA Facebook group:

- October 9: Fall Festival
- October 16: Fall Yard Sale
- October 22: Food Truck Friday
- December 5: Hay Ride with Santa

Stay Informed! Opt in to Emails and Join the Morris Farm HOA Facebook Page

Recent changes to Virginia law allow expanded use of electronic forms of communication with homeowners. The Board will consider reducing the printing and mailing budget to reallocate funds to other rising costs. **It's more important than ever that homeowners opt in to electronic communication.**

- **Join the email list.** Did you know you must **opt-in** to receive emails from SFMC? Email our Community Manager, Darnell Robertson to opt-in: drobertson@sfmtcinc.com
- **Join the official Morris Farm HOA Facebook page.** The Morris Farm HOA Facebook page is the official social media presence for our community. This page, managed by volunteers, was created to provide greater reach to our homeowners and residents for timely community information. When joining, simply request approval to join and verify you are a resident by providing the household name on file with SFMC and your street address. www.facebook.com/groups/MorrisFarmHOA/

Pet Waste Stations

The good news: this summer, the Board approved the addition of four additional pet waste stations on both sides of Rollins Ford Road along the sidewalk on both sides. The bad news: installation is on "HOA Time" – everything takes longer than we'd like! As of the writing of this newsletter, we are waiting on word to get on the contractor's schedule. The timeline is extended in part because the service provider is short-staffed.

Prince William County Mandates New Yard Waste Collection Procedures, Effective October 1

Beginning October 1, 2021, Prince William County requires residents to separate yard waste from regular trash from March through December. This will result in a separate weekly truck to service our neighborhood for yard waste only (at additional cost to the HOA).

Morris Farm yard waste collection will be on Thursdays beginning in October 2021.

Yard waste must be placed in a paper yard waste bag, loose in a trash container labeled for yard waste, or bundled and tied (branches). No plastic bags are permitted for yard waste.

Go to www.pwcva.gov/yardwaste for more information.

ARC Application Process and Expectations

If you are planning on an exterior modification to your home, it's probable that you need HOA approval before starting the project.

Important planning note: Allow 60 days for a decision on your project once you submit a completed application!

Things to Know About Submitting Your Arc App:

- Review the Architectural Guidelines (if you do not have the hard copy, sign in to your account at morrisfarmhoa.com and click on the document under the Governing Documents tab, or review the Files section in the Morris Farm HOA group) and submit the application to SFMC via email to arcapplications@sfmtcinc.com.
- SFMC reviews your application for completion before submitting it to the Board of Directors for review.
- Absent a Covenants Committee, the Board receives a package of completed applications weekly for review.
- Decision may take up to 60 days for review, although the Board typically returns them much sooner if there are no extenuating circumstances.
- No work should begin prior to receiving an approval.
- If you request a variance from the Architectural Guidelines, the Board may ask you to attend a monthly Board of Directors meeting to discuss your application.

Including all requirements and abiding by the guidelines (or explaining the need for a variance) saves everyone time in processing the application. **If the Board (in the absence of a Covenants Committee) invites you to a meeting to discuss your application, it's because there are questions; participating in that conversation may prevent a denial or extended timeline for review.**

We need a Covenants Committee!

Do you not agree with the rules as set forth in the Architectural Guidelines?

Do you not agree with how those rules are being implemented?

Do you think it takes too long to receive a response to architectural applications?

If so, please consider volunteering to stand up a Covenants Committee, which has been vacant for years due to lack of volunteers. It requires a monthly but manageable time commitment.

The Board is acting as the Covenants Committee in addition to Board duties.

We need **five** active and reliable volunteers to stand up the committee; we currently have one.

If interested, send the volunteer form at the end of this newsletter to Darnell Robertson: drobertson@sfmtcinc.com.



**HELP OUR
COMMUNITY**

VOLUNTEER

BE INFORMED

What Does the HOA Do, Anyway??

Ever wonder what your assessments pay for? Do you think "the HOA" just goes around looking for ways to harass residents?

We invite you to stay informed of and provide your input on Board business by attending Monthly Board of Directors Meetings! **We typically have zero homeowners in attendance who are not regular volunteers on a committee or there for an arc app. Monthly meetings are the method to interact on Board business directly with the Directors.** Listening in on a meeting also helps familiarize you with what decisions are required to manage the community and where your money is going.

Board meetings are virtual, so you can dial in from anywhere. The dial in number and link are sent via email & posted to the Morris Farm HOA Facebook page a few days prior to the meeting.

"Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much." ~ Helen Keller

Out of our 660 home community, we have fewer than a dozen regular volunteers, including the Board members! Our community management service does not do everything on our behalf; homeowners and residents' involvement makes a huge difference in making our neighborhood a community. "The HOA" is all of us!

Landscaping projects that make sense, dog swims at the pool, fun events, pitching new/improved amenities, community beautification/clean-ups -- these are all examples of things that require volunteers! It may be an hour or it may be a sustained effort over weeks/months, depending on the scale of the project. What can you offer?

Join a committee or sign up for an hour to help make a single event run smoothly. Use your talents and skills while getting to know your neighbors, enjoying the outdoors, planning fun events, keeping people informed, and protecting the beauty of our neighborhood.

We are still looking for 4 volunteers to stand up a functioning Covenants Committee. As a part of this committee, you will review architectural applications and recommend updates to the Architectural Guidelines. It requires a monthly time commitment, but it is a great way to have a direct and lasting impact on our community.

The rest of our committees (Activities, Grounds, Communications, Pool) currently only have 2-3 volunteers each and could use more to keep the fun going and to get things done in a more timely fashion! We all have busy lives and multiple commitments -- with more people pitching in, we can spread out the work to something very manageable for all.

If you are interested in helping to make a positive impact, please contact Darnell (drobertson@sfmtcinc.com) to submit the volunteer form (provided with this newsletter).

Keeping our Community Beautiful

Bottom line: we are spending more money than we should to address what appears to be intentional damage to our community's property. Damage to our park property, trail signs, and the brand new Little Free Libraries is a recurring issue.

- If you see damage to our common area property, please notify Darnell Robertson (drobertson@sfmtcinc.com).
- Be patient while we assess damage, contact a contractor(s) for an estimate, and schedule the work. Things don't happen as quickly as we'd like in most cases.
- Remind our kids in particular that not respecting our community's property is something that we all pay for.

MEADOWS AT MORRIS FARM

Full name: _____

Address:

Phone: _____

Email address: _____

Committee Volunteering for (Activities; Communications; Covenants; Grounds; Pool):

Please share why you would like to serve on the committee:

Have you ever served on an Association committee before? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Please return the complete form to SFMC, who will forward on to the Meadows at Morris Farm Board of Directors for review and appointment. SFMC will notify you via email when the Board has voted on committee appointments.

Email to: drobertson@sfmcinc.com

Or mail this form to:

Meadows at Morris Farm Community Association, Inc.

c/o Darnell Robertson, Community Manager

SFMC, Inc.

9464 Innovation Dr.

Manassas, VA 20110