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COBBLESTONE ASSOCIATION INC.

January/February 2008
Newsletter



Management Firm or?

As many of you already know, but some may not, our association needs volunteers to step forward. It takes a lot of volunteers doing many things to run an association in an efficient matter. If volunteers are not forthcoming and residents continue to be in arrears with the yearly assessment, then the only way to get things done is to hire a management firm. This costs considerably more than we collect yearly. Several management firms have been contacted and the cost runs anywhere **from \$4 to \$6 per unit per month**. So, we can hire a management firm and see our dues increase drastically or maintain our current dues of \$50 per year and keep our affairs in house. We charge so little because there is no clubhouse or pool to maintain like other associations which charge considerably more. Our major cost is the care of the common grounds in our community which consists mainly of city easement property. While the city is supposed to maintain these areas, they don't, and rely on the community to pitch in and help. Picture this:

The volunteer method of residents caring for the property, particularly the Parkway, got old real quick and volunteers dwindled to none. (This has already been tried.) The entrance sign is worse than ever, tree branches are low enough that they scratch the roof of your car; the grass and weeds are waist high, and the children trying to cross the street have to play hide and seek with the cars coming down the parkway. Beer bottles, soda cans, food, dead animals and paper waste is everywhere. The ditches are filled with trash. The association has placed many calls to have the City to come and clean this up, but due to the economy, services had to be decreased and the Parkway is not a priority. What do you think your friends and relatives will say when they see the Parkway like this? What kind of impression do you think this will leave with your friends and relatives about your neighborhood?

The association is over eighteen years old and dues have been mandatory since 1997, so there is no reason for anyone to not know that we exist. When the association was formed, the month of March was picked as our anniversary date for the simple fact that you would be able to use your tax refund money to pay for the assessment instead of having to build it into your budget. **Statements are sent in February each year** for the collection of the dues. This has been ongoing for approximately eighteen years.

The association is listed with the State of Florida Division of Corporations and also with the City of Jacksonville Housing & Neighborhoods Community Development. Here's the link:

www.coj.net/Departments/Housing+and+Neighborhoods/Community+Development/Directory+of+Neighborhood+Organizations.htm

If a realtor told you that Cobblestone does not have an association and that there are no covenant and restrictions, then they did not do their homework. All realtors and title companies received from us a copy of our By-Laws and the covenant and restrictions many years ago. (Thanks to a wonderful volunteer (she knows who she is) who built a data base of all the Realtors and Title companies in our area.) The covenant & restrictions were created by Dostie Builders (the original developer) and **filed on every lot** in our subdivision. When your paperwork is filed with the City, the covenant and restrictions are part of the property description which is on the Warranty Deed you signed. This is not new.

Our association helps the neighborhood to maintain its value and increases security, thanks to the pride of its members, formation of activities and our neighborhood watch program. As a member brought up at the last meeting, "You are required to register your vehicles every year, the same holds true for the association. If you want to use your car you need to pay the registration fee, the same applies to the association". Everyone benefits from a strong association. Why would you not take advantage of ownership in your community? It takes money and involvement to maintain property value.

You have a decision to make. Volunteer to be on the board or a committee; pay the association dues **or** continue the process to hire a Management Firm and pay more.

The annual meeting is on February 19th at **Regional Park II on Monument Road, in the PAL Multipurpose Building at 7PM** and last approximately one hour.



WHAT ARE COVENANTS & RESTRICTIONS?

The Covenants and Restrictions are the governing legal documents that set up the guidelines for the operation of the planned community as a non-profit corporation. The C & R's were recorded by the County recorder's office of the County in which the property is located and are included in the title to your property. The governing legal documents for the association may be viewed online at our website.



GARDENING TIP

Steps: Proper Pruning of Crepe Myrtles

- Most pruning is done in the winter so.....
- Study branches before pruning.
- Establish a strong framework.
- Prune for safety whenever needed.
- Remove thin twigs and stems from base and lower trunk.
- Cut back to just above outward pointing bud.
- Thin out branches at their tips
- Remove seed balls from younger plants,
- Remove branches that grown inward toward plant's center.
- Remove one of pair of rubbing branches.
- Remove damaged or dead wood at any time.

Something to remember: As with any flowering tree, to create more blooms on any flowering tree, you only need to remove the spent blooms before they go to seed.

STORMWATER/WASTE UPDATE

Your association - working for you

Back in April 2008 the City of Jacksonville sent us all an invoice for the new fees on our property. Fees (Stormwater and Waste Management) which when received were quite a surprise. Recently you should have received another letter from the city about our community where we were granted a discount because of our retention ponds. The notice from the city required you to fill out an exemption form. The association filled out this form for all the residents in our community. If you did not fill out the required form personally, you might not have gotten this notification. This discount will be automatically applied each year. There is no need to reapply. If you have already paid your invoice, you need to check your next invoice to be sure that this discount is applied. The eligible homes will receive a discount of 30% which amounts to a \$9.00 credit. In order to find out if your home was on the list, come to a meeting or you may check with the City of Jacksonville, here is the website link:

<http://www.coj.net/Departments/CityFees/default.htm>

For more information go to our website newsletter. page 3

“Discount will be automatically applied each year to all eligible homes”

OUR ASSOCIATION

Homeowner associations are not about complaining about your neighbors, but helping your neighbors.

- Did you ever stop to think that the cause of your neighbors' property not being maintained might be due to an illness or death?
- Or maybe they are first time owner and don't know when or how often items need to be looked at for maintenance?
- Maybe they don't have a green thumb and can use some guidance.
- Or even a bigger problem is that the Realtor didn't tell them about the association, leaving them in the dark about where to turn for answers to daily maintenance of a home.

Your association can help with these things. With participation and membership comes a wealth of knowledge.

The November & December Meetings main intent was to revitalize our Neighborhood Watch Program. No volunteers came forward to help with this program.



Our neighborhood is only as safe as we make it. Have you checked the crime stats lately? Go to our website and click on the link.

BEGINNING VEGETABLE WORKSHOP

Duval Co. Extension is hosting a Beginning Vegetable Workshop on Saturday, **February 29th from 9 am to noon.** Learn about general requirements for growing vegetables, organic gardening tips, container gardening and managing pests followed by hands-on practice working with vegetable transplants that you can take home for your garden. Cost is \$10 to attend. Call 387-8850 to register.

Duval Staffers are hosting a workshop on Identification and Control of Invasive Plants and Native Plants for Northeast Florida. The date is **February 23rd from 10am to noon** at the Duval Co. Extension Office 1010 N McDuff Avenue. There is no charge for the workshop, but call 387-8850 to register.

Would you like to receive this newsletter via e-mail and discontinue snail mail? If yes, please e-mail us and request to have your email address added to our newsletter list

THE SEARCH IS ON...



What are we looking for in a management company?"

If we contract with a Management Company, here's what we get:

- Collection of assessments (which would mean an increase)
- supervision of subcontractors,
- obtaining bids for subcontracted services,
- providing financial statements and collection reports,
- provide general clearing house for problem solving,
- communications with homeowners and the Board of Directors,
- to serve in an advisor capacity and
- Other items as deemed necessary by the Board.

The management company reports directly to the Board and all decisions are made by a majority vote of the Board of Directors. Once a management company is approved, their services will be made available online on our website. If you know of a management firm, please have them send their proposal to: Cobblestone Association, Inc, PO Box 350042, Jacksonville, FL 32235-0042



"Financial Report"

As of: 1/15/2009

BBF:		6,632.48
INCOME:		
EXPENSES:		
Website	110.00	
Newsletter	307.37	
Activities	97.11	
Maintenance	400.00	<u>1,014.48</u>
BALANCE:		5,618.00

Dues statements will be mailed in February. Annual dues are \$50.00 due in the month of March

*Payment should be made payable to:
Cobblestone Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 350042
Jacksonville, FL 32235-0042*



Next Association Meeting

For those of us who have been involved in volunteer organizations, you know how frustrating it can be to accomplish the goals set out for the group. In an all volunteer organization like ours, any failure to achieve goals is rarely from lack of desire, but more often from a lack of time and resources coupled with the fact that there is very little to hold an individual accountable if a task is not accomplished as envisioned. Every volunteer group struggles through this dimension.

The association amazingly has been functioning with just a few members who have been successful in keeping it together. Fresh ideas and new energy is needed to improve our community. We need more residents to be engaged and help complete the tasks at hand. To keep us strong we need to have a good turnout at our next meeting as we will be voting on the open positions on the board. **Please save February 19th on your calendar. Meeting at Regional Park II on Monument Rd. in the P.A.L Bldg. from 7pm to 8 pm.**

Stormwater Fee Continued:

So, now you ask: How will I be billed the solid waste fee and the Stormwater fees?

The City of Jacksonville sent the first bills on April 30, 2008. The solid waste fee billing period is nine months, from April 1 to December 31, 2008. Starting in 2009, the bills will reflect charges for the whole calendar year (January through December).

How much will I pay for the Stormwater fee?

Your fee is based on the amount of the impervious area (that which does not allow water to percolate directly into the ground). For a typical homeowner, that would include not just the house itself, but things like patios, driveways and sheds. The average homeowner will pay \$5 per month, or \$30 for the first bill and \$60 annually.

(Information obtained from coj website)



Retention ponds can be beautiful.

E-Mail:

cobblestonemail@comcast.net

Website:

www.cobblestoneassoc.com

Report a violation:

cobblestoneconcerns@comcast.net

Our Purpose:

To keep our neighborhood safe for our children, our streets clean, and be courteous to our neighbors.

SHOW YOUR PRIDE

VOLUNTEER

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Happy New Year

2009

*This bright New Year is given to us,
To live each day with zest,
To daily grow and try to be at our best.*



Holiday Spirit Wow!! Our neighborhood looked fabulous! We certainly had the Christmas spirit in Cobblestone. Pictures are available for viewing on our website. Check and see if your home is there. Our luminary event was also quite a success. Would you like to see this again next year? Respond by going to the "Blog" on our website.

FOR THE KIDS: Use the bottom of this to make a valentine card. Fold in half and you can use the picture as the outside of the card or it can be the inside of the card. You can draw your own picture and write your own words

**Happy
Valentine's
Day**

