

Spring 2019

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# Leewood Times

## Annual Meeting Update

The annual Leewood Home Owners Association meeting was held on March 12<sup>th</sup> at the Philips School with a full quorum. There were two vacancies on the Board. Mr. Bill Rubenstein and Mr. King Chu were elected as the new board members. The complete Board and positions are shown in the left banner of the newsletter and are also listed in the Contact Us section on the website.

Leona informed the members that this meeting marked the end of her term, and she thanked Pat Willingham, Dayna Roy, Nathan Parsons Schwartz and Janet Rourke for their work on ARC. She also thanked Stephen Greer for editing the newsletter and Catherine Perkins for welcoming new residents/owners. Thanks also went to David Taylor who is the webmaster and also volunteered to work on number plaques for the community. Leona also thanked others who had volunteered and those who have been observing and reporting issues relevant to Leewood.

An update on 2019 projects was also provided:

- The Architectural Review Committee is still working on the annual review cycle. The next round of inspections will take place as extensions expire and people correct the reported violations. The process will be to re-inspect and issue second notices and then move onto hearing notices, if needed, to complete the annual cycle.
- The board, with assistance of former board member Leona and an engineering consultant, will focus on finishing up the street, curb and sidewalk repairs started in 2018.
- We have more tree work to do in 2019. The process in 2019 will be to concentrate on trees affecting drainage and roots affecting people's individual property.
- The covenants are in need of an update. Amendment of the covenants is necessary in order for the board to have additional enforcement mechanisms. The Board consulted with the association attorney, and he recommended some guidelines and advised what is required to amend the covenants. The Association would have to get 75% of the owners to sign a notarized letter/document saying that they are in favor of the changes. This is expected to be a multi-year project.

Leewood's new community manager Angela Weed was introduced. Her contact information is in the left banner and also on the website.

**Trash Talk**

Our neighborhood has experienced a challenging couple of years concerning trash and recycling. While the Board continues to work with the contractor American Disposal to improve pick-up operations, many issues result from the trash and recycling preparation and management by residents. The following chart presents common problems observed accompanied by requirements or suggestions:

Common Problems or Violations	Requirements or Suggestions
Setting out trash/recycling too early	Trash must be set out AFTER dusk, meaning once the top of the sun has passed the horizon.
Setting out trash/recycling too late (i.e., missing pickup)	Be observant; if you attempt to set out your trash and notice no other trash bags are present or recycling bins are empty, that means American Disposal has already picked up. Return your trash/recycling to your home until the next pick-up day.
Not removing containers after pick-up in a timely manner	Containers must be retrieved no later than before dawn the day after pick up. Bins are subject to removal and may be retrieved by emailing <a href="mailto:board@leewood.us">board@leewood.us</a> .
Storing bins on front porches	Bins should be stored in the rear of your property or in your house. Residents storing bins on the front porch are subject to violation letters.
Not breaking down boxes (i.e., should be cut less than 3 feet square)	Take the time to break down or cut boxes and place them in neat piles.
Not using recycling bins (i.e., using plastic bags that might get missed by recycling crew)	Do not put any recyclables in plastic bags. All recyclables should be un-bagged in recycle bins, except paper (only) that may be placed in brown paper bags.
Not using trash bins or heavy trash bags (i.e., using thin trash bags or plastic and paper grocery bags susceptible to rodents)	Consider using bins or heavy black trash bags for trash. Squirrels are out now, already eating through thinner trash bags. If you see your trash bag eaten through with trash spilling out, be a good neighbor and pick up your trash and place it in a new bag. Plastic grocery bags or dog waste bags should never be placed on the curbs.
Mixing trash and recycling (e.g., stacking trash on recycling bins) causing trash to be skipped	Some neighbors are working together to separate trash from recycling on the curbs. Consider using separate curb corners for each. This will assist crews to more easily recognize trash vs. recycling and ensure proper pick-up.
Not retrieving trash if missed	If missed on pick-up day, you must take your trash and recycling back to your premises. The trash is your responsibility until it is picked up by American Disposal.
Confusion on holidays or delays caused by weather	The American Disposal holiday schedule is linked to the Leewood website under Trash FAQs. Consider enrolling in Sentry Community Pro, which will enable you to receive email notifications.

The Board is working to strengthen our policy enforcement mechanisms to keep our neighborhood safe and clean for all residents. However, we each play a significant role in helping to maintain our property values -which includes taking pride of ownership to follow the rules and guidelines. You can encourage your neighbors to do the same and/or email [board@leewood.us](mailto:board@leewood.us) and Sentry to report violations. See the following link for more information regarding Trash FAQs: <http://leewood.us/faqs/faqstrash.htm>

## Cleaning Your Brick Steps

A number of owners have been cited for discolored bricks on the front steps. Fixing this problem depends on the reason for the discoloration which can result from:

- Darkening from dirt/mold/algae/pollution
- Leaching of lime (such as efflorescence, calcium deposits, or silicate deposits); and/or
- Excess mortar or mortar residue from prior brick or stoop repair.

For stains or discoloration, the repair can be as simple as cleaning the bricks, using vinegar, bleach or other commercially available cleaners. You may be able to scrub some of the powdery stains off using a dry, stiff-bristled cleaning brush. You also may be able to power-wash the surface.

Where the cause of the discoloration is excess mortar residue, the remedy may depend on the amount of excess mortar. For instance, you may be able to sand or scrape off small amounts of excess mortar using a wire brush or other sanding tool. For clumps of mortar, knock those off first by carefully using a chisel. Muriatic acid, properly diluted, can be used on any remaining mortar. For minor smearing of mortar on the brick, white vinegar works well too.

Identification of the origin of the efflorescence, stain or foreign material is the first step in returning brickwork to its proper appearance. Some stains are often misidentified or are mistaken for efflorescence. Misidentification may result in application of an inappropriate correction method, resulting in further staining or damage. When in doubt, consult a professional.

## Drainage

The Association engaged an engineer to review drainage issues that had been reported by homeowners during 2018. The engineer came to Leewood and inspected the various areas along with a few other areas throughout the community. The engineer made recommendations, and the Association did contract with Professional Grounds to correct some areas -taking down trees and regrading. The engineer came out again this year for another inspection, reviewing the work that was done and looking at the Common Areas behind most of the units in the community. The results of that inspection will be compiled and recommendations presented to the Board for consideration. Some of the recommendations are quick fixes; others are longer term projects to consider.

A number of homeowners asked if the Association could report on what was learned about drainage. A lot was covered in the two meetings with the engineer, and additional research was

done with the County and the Association attorney. We will report on the findings over the next few newsletters starting this time with some basics on drainage.

Leewood houses were originally built with a back gutter and one splash block. Drainage from roofs was meant to go into backyards. The backyards were not planned for any improvements. Homeowner may have added backyard features, reducing the ability for rain runoff to drain (or not wanting to drain in their own yard). The same construction applies to the front of Leewood houses. The houses were built with a gutter and downspout going to a splash block. The splash block absorbs the impact of the water coming down from the roof to reduce erosion and then directs the water away from the foundation.

Fairfax County currently has no requirement for gutters on new construction. The idea is that normal stormwater runoff will go to the ground and be absorbed. And the foundation is waterproofed to keep the water from entering the house.

**TIP FROM THE ENGINEER:** Leewood houses are cinderblock basement with ½" cement parge and an exterior layer of waterproofing that is painted or sprayed onto the cinderblock. Over time, the paint/spray layer oxidizes or cracks. So water can enter through the cinderblock if the paint/spray layer does not continue to direct the water down below the foundation. Water will begin to fill in the cinderblocks, creating mold/mildew. After 40 years [Leewood was built in the late 1970's], you can expect leaks in the paint/spray layer as you are past the useful life for the waterproofing. It is very expensive (5 figures) to replace the waterproofing. A number of companies are offering less expensive internal solutions, but these solutions do not solve the core problem with the external waterproofing.

English common law -which is still the law in Virginia- is that a landowner cannot dispose of water in a way to adversely affect a neighbor. Per the Association attorney, Virginia is in a minority of states that allows the Lot [owner's land] to be improved [house built on the land] and allows the natural drainage of water, regardless of the consequences to a neighbor, except when the water is diverted by an artificial means. In other words, the owner is allowed to get water away from the house but not in such a way that it adversely affects other property.

Section 4.5 of the Leewood Architectural standards covers gutters and downspouts. All houses are to retain and maintain the gutters and downspouts. Splash blocks can be used to help divert the water away from the foundation. Downspout extensions are specifically restricted as follows:

*Downspout Extensions:* **Extensions to downspouts are permitted but must not be visible from the Common Area**. Downspout extensions that extend/open during a rain and then retract when the rain has stopped are permitted. Extensions to downspouts should be positioned in such a way as to not direct water runoff onto a neighbor's property, cause damage to the Common Area, or create a safety hazard.

Here are some tips on drainage for your yard:

- Downspouts and downspout extensions should not direct water towards your neighbor.
- Downspouts and downspout extensions should not direct water onto the Common Areas or the sidewalks. Water directed onto sidewalks can freeze in the winter, causing a hazard to pedestrians.

- Downspouts should drain into a proper drainage system, such as a drywell or onto pavement or a splash block that routes the water downhill away from the foundation.
- Yards should be graded so that the elevation next to the house is higher to promote rain runoff away from the house. Over time, erosion may have caused the yard to level.
- Solid surfaces -terraces, walkways, decks- need to have proper slope to drain. In addition, such structures in back yards need to be designed so that stormwater has a place to drain and the stormwater is not diverted onto neighboring properties.
- If you have a tree where there is limited grass growth underneath, consider adding a mulch ring to provide means for absorbing some water. This helps with erosion around the roots.
- Clean your gutters regularly. Most mosquito issues arise, not from standing water on the ground after a rain, but from clogged gutters.

### **Volunteers Needed**

Even with a management company, there are opportunities to get involved:

- Webmaster: Leewood has one webmaster. We are interested in getting other(s) involved in website maintenance so that we have backup resources.
- Architectural Review Committee: We need people to review and approve applications for exterior changes. We also need people to review resale inspections.
- Covenants amendment process: We are looking for people to help with the process of obtaining notarized documents from owners on the Covenants amendment project.

Contact the Board or Sentry if you want to volunteer.

### **A Letter from Sentry Management**

Dear Leewood Community,

I would like to relay first that I am working hard to address the issues currently being experienced regarding trash. I have asked the Board to allow me the opportunity to relay some of the background issues that are occurring.

You may be aware from various news articles and other media that the waste disposal industry is in country-wide meltdown at the moment for many reasons, including the overwhelming amount of packaging that online ordering has added to the average household's waste per day, the fact that recycling now costs more for waste companies to dispose of than trash, the reduced desire to enter the industry as a worker due to safety concerns, financial restrictions on companies due to evolving insurance costs, special licensing requirements that reduce the potential employee pool...There are so many factors.

Locally, Leewood's service provider American Disposals is also encountering a few extra obstacles on top of this...butterfly effects of the above. Three major local disposal services have gone out of business, and these areas are being absorbed by the remaining providers. The winter brings with it a rush of high demand for yard waste removal, as does spring, and this has been a major contributor to a lot of the interruptions you all have experienced recently.

Nikki, Leewood's ADS representative, also noted that she acknowledges that the workers are being haphazard and attributes it to being too time-stretched, but also that the company is hiring in desperation and putting people into trucks that may not be trained enough yet.

**Nikki has relayed that they are doing the following things to try to move through these issues and provide the expected level of service:**

- 1) They service a number of towns on the 81 corridor. They have cut these contracts (ending June 30) to reintroduce 12 trucks into local circulation.
- 2) They will reimburse the Association for days missed.
- 3) They will provide notifications as early as possible so that the community are informed.
- 4) Nikki will maintain open lines of communication with me, relaying any and all updates - good or bad.

I would also like to explain the factors that influence the response that many of you have emphatically called for – termination of the contract. All waste disposal companies seem to have the best lawyers in town...they have contracts that are incredibly difficult to contradict, especially where the implied breach is 'beyond the provider's reasonable control'. Leewood is currently engaged in a five-year lease, and to exit this lease would cost the Association 6 months' worth of fees – over \$20,000. Without disparaging any other service, I can relay that the challenges being experienced by Leewood are also being experienced by other communities who have different providers. In addition to this, there are a very limited number of service providers large enough to cater to a community the size of Leewood.

The Leewood Board is thinking laterally and taking many actions to work toward a better outcome to this ongoing issue. These include:

- **Curb painting** – the Board propose to designate specific areas for trash and separate, specific areas for recycling. These areas will have color-coded painted curbs to make it easy for the ADS workers to identify what is what and move through quickly, without leaving items behind.
- **Transparent, open communication to the community** – communications such as this letter explaining the various challenges and factors at play.
- **Community Education** – The Board is committed to continued release of instructive information so that all residents, including those who are new to the community and those who are renting and may not be aware of the Rules and Regulations and the resolved Trash Policy, are aware of the trash procedures. (These are available on the Leewood website – [www.leewood.us](http://www.leewood.us) as is the link to American Disposal.)

Please always feel welcome to contact me regarding your concerns. My email address is [aweed@sentrymgt.com](mailto:aweed@sentrymgt.com). Please also register for Community Pro at [www.sentrymgt.com](http://www.sentrymgt.com) so that you will receive all email notifications regarding delayed services, community improvement projects, etc. This method of communication allows you to be informed straight away and does not draw from the community's funds. Go to [www.sentrymgt.com](http://www.sentrymgt.com), 'My Account' (top of page), 'New User Registration' (blue box, bottom left of page).

Thank you!

Angela Weed  
Community Association Manager

