

**Chapel Hill-West Meadow Civic Association**  
**Membership meeting**  
**Maclary Elementary School**  
**January 16, 2020**

**2019-2020 Board**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>E-mail address</b>
Rob Kunicki	President	chwm.president@gmail.com
John DiMaio	Vice-President	chwm.vicepresident@gmail.com
Bill Snyder	Treasurer	chwm.treasurer@gmail.com
Tricia Wampler	Corresponding Secretary	chwm.corsecretary@gmail.com
Stephanie Thompson	Recording Secretary	chwm.recsecretary@gmail.com

**In attendance:** Approximately 35 neighbors were in attendance.

**Guests**

Senator Dave Sokola, SD 8  
Representative Paul Baumbach, RD 23  
NCC Councilman Tim Sheldon, District 9  
Joe Day, NCC Property Maintenance office

Each of the elected representatives gave updates on the various projects, committees, and legislative actions they are involved with, and answered questions from members. Joe Day provided information about code violations (additional details below).

Senator Sokola and Representative Baumbach both hold regular constituent coffees. Check their Facebook pages for upcoming dates and/or changes.

- Senator Sokola- February 24 at the Backburner Cafe in Hockessin (evening)
- Representative Baumbach- Typically one Wednesday morning a month at 8:30 AM at the Greene Turtle in Newark.

**Upcoming dates**

Tuesday 4/21: Civic association membership meeting, 7:00 PM at Maclary Elementary

Yard sale: We will set a date in May. We're working to align our date with the sale event at Holy Angels if possible, to increase buyer traffic.

**Treasurer's report**

As of January 16, 2020, we have received \$8340 in dues income, and spent \$1164. Current funds available are approximately \$13995.

**Dues update.** 218 of 294 households (74%) have paid dues for the current year. This is a significant increase over the previous year.

The civic association, as required by the state, follows the state's fiscal year of July 1-June 30. Our current fiscal year began July 1, 2019. Anyone who paid dues after July 1, 2019 has been credited with paying dues for the current fiscal year. The next round of dues collection begins July 1, 2020.

For anyone who has not yet paid, dues for 2019-2020 are \$35 and can be mailed to the address below. Checks can be made out to Chapel Hill-West Meadow Civic Association. Please make sure the address for which you are paying is on the check, or add the address on the memo line.

Chapel Hill-West Meadow Civic Association  
PO Box 7513  
Newark, DE 19714

**Dues increase proposal**

CHWM civic association dues have not increased for approximately 12 years. The board is proposing an increase to \$50 per year. Income from the proposed increase would allow the civic association to move forward with maintenance and updates at the entrances, reinstate the neighborhood hospitality committee (welcoming new neighbors, acknowledging other significant events), possibly add an annual neighborhood event, and create a small cushion in our account for varying snow removal costs from year to year. The proposal will be voted on at the next meeting on Tuesday, April 21 2020.

**Holiday light contest and Santa visit**

Rob Kunicki announced the winners of this year's holiday lights contest: 14 Aronimink, 12 Bender, and 14 Balanger. Each of the winners will receive a gift card. Congratulations to the winners! Several members commented positively about the number of homes with lights in the neighborhood this year. Thank you to everyone who participated.

Rob reported that Santa's visit to the neighborhood, courtesy of Aetna Hook Hose & Ladder, was also a success. Lots of canned goods were donated by neighbors. We plan to hold this event again next year, trying for an early evening time when holiday lights will be on.

**Snow removal update**

Our current contract with Delaware Lawn & Landscape is "per event" meaning we are billed based on each snow event that requires plowing. As of 1/16/20, we have not used the snow

removal service. Generally, we will be using DelDOT's guidelines for the [Snow Removal Reimbursement Program](#) combined with weather forecast information when deciding when we need to call for road treatment or plowing.

## **Landscaping**

Rob Kunicki has asked Delmarva to replace the orange bulbs in the overhead street lights at each entrance with LED bulbs. The LED bulbs are currently on backorder.

Judy DiTomasso and others have continued to research options for entrance lighting. Industrial-quality solar lighting at the Chapel Hill entrance is likely cost-prohibitive, and the entrance is heavily shaded. Inexpensive solar lights are currently in place at the West Meadow entrance, but the consensus so far is that they are not very effective.

An electrician has looked at the hookups at the entrance- we would need to have these repaired and turned back on in order to add electric lighting. Rob Kunicki noted that past civic association records show that we previously paid about \$60/month for electricity when the electric lights were in use.

For now, we will wait to see the impact of the new LED bulbs at the entrances before deciding how to proceed with additional lighting if needed. Judy and the committee have paperwork in hand for a grant through Councilman Sheldon's office that, if successful, could offset some of the cost of solar entrance lighting.

We do not currently have a contract in place for landscaping/maintenance at the entrances. Bids have come back high; we are continuing to look into options. Rob Kunicki mentioned that other developments in our area with a divided entrance use river rock rather than mulch, which would be lower maintenance.

## **Neighborhood concerns**

**Road maintenance.** Paul Baumbach explained the allocation of Community Transportation Funds for repairs and paving on community streets. If you are aware of a pothole or needed road repair, please send him an email. Allocation decisions are made each fall. Currently, Eileen Drive is slated for repairs/paving.

Rep. Baumbach also reported that the re-alignment of the CH entrance with Old Possum Park Rd. is still an active project, and that there should be a public input phase at some point in the future.

**Speeding/road safety.** Residents expressed ongoing concern about speeding in and near the neighborhood.

Rep. Paul Baumbach reported that installation of a speed bump on Aronimink between Decker and St. Regis is proceeding. Residents asked about traffic cables that appeared to be laid in a location that does not align with the desired speed bump; Rep. Baumbach believes these are part of an unrelated speed study and that the speed bump will go into the neighborhood's location of concern.

Residents expressed concern about the 50 mph speed limit on Possum Park Rd. Rep. Baumbach said that speed limits are typically based on speed studies, and the limit is set within about 5 mph of the speed of 85% of drivers. Because we are "not getting accidents" the speed limit is generally considered safe for the road. Residents expressed that there *have* been accidents at the entrances. Resident Drew DeLuca noted two recent ones at the Eileen Drive entrance to West Meadow. Rep. Baumbach stated that the intersection realignment project for St. Regis and Old Possum Park might help with this by providing a longer turn lane and a pedestrian refuge island, among other things. He will ask DeIDOT to review accident data along Possum Park Rd. as well.

Residents asked about removal of foliage that blocks visibility at the neighborhood entrances, and/or blocks road signs on Possum Park. Rep. Baumbach said that residents can email him, and an aide will get the information to DeIDOT so that the foliage can be trimmed back.

**Development and open space.** Sen. Sokola reported that open space has recently been added at both Middle Run and White Clay Creek State Park.

Councilman Sheldon and Rep. Baumbach both reported on the status of a proposed annexation by the city of Newark at 734 Paper Mill Rd. and 5 & 11 Possum Hollow Road (to build 12 single-family homes). This has not yet been approved and an unusual Friday evening planning commission meeting about the proposal has been postponed. CHWM residents, while we don't live within city limits, should keep an eye on the city of Newark's planning commission and city council agendas to stay on top of city plans that may impact our neighborhood.

Councilman Sheldon also mentioned possible revisions to state rules that allow communities of <50,000 to annex adjacent properties, adjusting the threshold downward to <20-25,000. This would limit the city of Newark's ability to annex and develop adjacent properties, and make it harder for developers to thwart New Castle County's somewhat stricter rules on development by requesting annexation into the city.

Councilman Sheldon, who is on NCC's open space and land use committee, discussed a proposal that would enable a referendum system to raise funds for purchasing open space,

allowing residents within a 5-mile radius of the space to participate in decision-making about such purchases.

**Code violations.** Joe Day from the NCC's Property Maintenance office provided an update on properties in our neighborhood. 102 Decker is vacant and went to sheriff's sale on 12/10/19. The ongoing code violations at the Aronimink property are being dealt with per county procedure. The owner had brought the property into compliance late last year, but had reverted by December 2019. The owner is ticketed as appropriate, with each successive ticket carrying a higher fine. Unpaid tickets have the fine doubled. These fines are eventually added to the owner's property tax bill. Mr. Day noted that a typical property tax bill for our neighborhood (not including school taxes) is around \$700-\$800. The owner of the Aronimink property most recently paid \$3180. The next step for the property is abatement, where the county will send someone out to clean the property to bring it into compliance. The bill for this creates a lien on the property that is recovered if it ever sells. Mr. Day said that residents should keep calling, as each visit results in new tickets and pressure on the homeowner to comply with code.

Property records, including taxes paid and code violations, are publicly available using NCC's [Parcel Search](#) function.

**Crime.** Councilman Sheldon shared an update on police reports in our neighborhood for the past few months. There were multiple welfare checks, a noise complaint, one disorderly conduct arrest, two burglar alarm calls, and one reported theft (on Decker). Councilman Sheldon reminded residents to lock your homes, and to lock cars and remove valuables from them!

**Clean up after your pet!** One resident expressed frustration with the number of neighbors who do not pick up after their dogs. This is a reminder that you are responsible for cleaning up after your pet, INCLUDING in open spaces in the neighborhood. We will include a reminder in the next CHWM newsletter and look into the possibility of adding signs in open space areas.