

River Oaks Newsletter

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 8

NOVEMBER 1990

ANDEN UPDATE III

This is the third installment in the continuing saga of the River Oaks Board of Directors' efforts to hold the Anden/ESR Corporation to its commitments to the City and the subdivision regarding promised public improvements and amenities. There is a certain amount of urgency in the negotiations, because Anden risks defaulting on a \$47,205 maintenance bond if certain public improvements are not completed to the City's satisfaction by the time the term of the bond ends on December 22, 1990.

To recall the state of affairs as of the October Newsletter release date, Anden had just sent the City an October 2 letter responding point-by-point to the River Oaks Board's September 26 letter which detailed work needed in 19 areas, including landscaping required by City Ordinance 828. Events since that time are as follows:

Anden's October 16 Letter. Anden sent the City attorney a letter on October 16, responding to River Oaks' call for action on the landscaping work required by City Ordinance 828. Anden's response was basically that the ordinance was passed without their knowledge or approval, and that the City had made a mistake in passing it.

Anden's Initial Remedial Work. Anden representative Rusty Henson called the Board on October 26 to indicate that remedial work would begin on October 31.

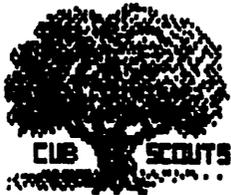
Anden contractors have worked in the subdivision, beginning on October 31, performing the following tasks:

- Installation of an S-shaped pipe to extend the Upper Common Area storm water discharge pipe down closer to the grade of the river, plus some regrading to cover the pipe.
- Limited excavation and sealing of pipe joints for the leaking storm sewer line in the Upper Common Area. (Anden had indicated that they would excavate and repair the entire run of pipe; thus far, they have excavated at two points only. Anden contends that the whirlpools and geysers formed along the line during heavy rains is the work of gophers!)
- Installation of rip-rap (roughly 4-inch diameter stone) to help control erosion at the large storm sewer discharge in the Lower Common Area.
- Installation of a spacer on the manhole cover between Lots 56 and 57 to bring the cover back up to grade.
- Replacement of the solid storm sewer manhole cover at Lot 17 with a beehive cover, to allow excess water to escape during heavy rains (as suggested by the City).
- Replacement of some of the problem sidewalk squares.

River Oaks' Discussions with City. Board members and the River Oaks attorney have had several conversations in this interval. City attorney Barry Moss told us that the ordinance is binding, regardless of any part Anden may or may not have played in its passage. City Manager Jim Connors indicated that Moss would send a letter to Anden on November 9, responding to Anden's position on Ordinance 828. Also, we have been informed that Anden's maintenance bond will be released automatically on December 22, unless the City puts a hold on it.

November 9 Meeting, Letter. The next major forum for River Oaks / Anden issues will be the City Public Works meeting on November 13. Board members John Christiansen, Fred Gervase, Toni Oster, and Linda Saxton met informally on November 9 to draft a letter responding to Anden's October 2 and 16 letters, in preparation for the November 13 Public Works meeting. Our letter will cover our assessment of work completed and work yet to be done, including Ordinance 828 issues.

RIVER OAKS GREENED BY CUB FORESTERS!



On two Saturdays in October (the 6th and 13th), the River Oaks lads of Cub Scout Den 8, Pack 86 set us all a fine example by planting 23 small River Birch seedlings in the Common Areas along the river bank. The tree planting was part of the boys' work toward their Forester badges, which they will be receiving this month. River Oaks thanks Brandon Carlson, Russell Christiansen, Eric Ray, Joey Vainisi, and Justin Wierema for their good deed!

EASEMENT SIDEWALK PLANTING

The Beautification Committee reports that the first stage of the landscaping for the south side easement sidewalk (between Lots 51 and 52) has been completed. Twenty-five Ninebark shrubs and two upright Canarti Junipers were planted and mulched on October 24th. The Ninebark shrubs, which are of the 'tall dwarf' variety, will grow to a height of four to six feet. They are planted in north-south rows on either side of the easement sidewalk, with junipers at the north end of each row.

RIVER OAKS KIDS SPEAK OUT!



The Question: *With Thanksgiving coming up, what are you thankful for?*

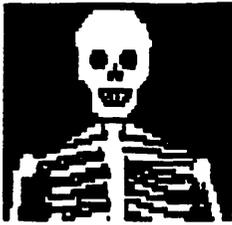
The Answers:

JJ Highland and Tyler Bradley - Nintendo
Dana Gervase and Tisam Masoud - Friends and family
Tiffany Durso - My parents
Carrie Berland - School
Julie Berland - Education
Laura Christiansen - My girlfriends
Hillary Saxton - Going to Louisville, best friends, & NKOTB
Maureen Saxton - My sister
Jordan Bradley - My house
Matthew Gervase - Bush helping in Saudi Arabia
Justin Wierema - My dad because he puts up with me

ATTENTION: YOUTHFUL THINKERS...Be on the lookout next month for Mrs. Gervase, the roving Newsletter reporter. The question will be: **What can you do to make another person's Christmas happier?** Think about it carefully. She's looking for unique ideas FROM YOU, especially ones that go beyond gift-giving. Your name and answer could appear in the December Newsletter!

... submitted by Leona Gervase

YARD GHOUL WINNERS!



All of those Halloween decorations that scared our trick-or-treaters were examined and found amazingly spooky. It was a very difficult decision for our independent judge,

Alderman Dave Carroll, to choose among the ghosts, goblins, and cryptic images, and the Newsletter Committee appreciates his effort to do so. Alderman Carroll came at dusk on Halloween and made several circuits around River Oaks to see all decorations, both in daylight and in artificial light. AND THE WINNERS ARE:



First place to Lot 15:
the Dursos!



Second place to Lot 21:
the Gervases!



Third place went to Lot 23:
the Salyers!

The Newsletter Committee will be contacting the winners shortly to award their prizes. Great ghouls, guys!

...Submitted by Becky Christiansen



BIRTHDAY KIDS!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, NOVEMBER KIDS!

Sara Vainisi

Brian Oster

Michael Highland

Jordan Bradley

Scot Moore

River Oaks Homeowners Association sponsored the annual Halloween Party at the Warrenville Community Center on Sunday, October 28. There were terrific costumes of different sizes, shapes, and colors in many types: scary, funny, cute and very original. The costume contest was won by all as every child dressed in their own special way. However, our judges did honor several outstanding children's costumes and they were:



Ages 0 to 4 (preschool) : Bobby Modene (Pumpkin), Brittany Highland (Poodle), Miki Adachi (Little Red Riding Hood), and Michael Highland (Devil).

Grades K - Second : Mark Nagode (Clown), Tyler Bradley (Spider), Laura Christiansen (Fairy), and Lauren Wierema (Sorceress),

Grades Third - Fifth : Justin Wierema (Hockey Player), Hillary Saxton (Pirate), Matthew Nagode (Grim Reaper), and Laura Bocker (Baby).

Grades Sixth - Eighth : Jamie Salyer (Clown on Skates), Jacqui Salyer (Gift Box), Tamara Stanley (Court Jester), and Scot Moore (Beetlejuice).

There was a guest appearance by Garfield the Cat who also gave out treat bags to all the Children. We would like to thank our special panel of judges for taking time out of their Sunday to join our party: Our mayor Vivian Lund, Warrenville Digest Editor Barbara Natzke, and White Hen Pantry Owner Maryann Cosgrove.

A big thank-you to Jan Berland and Johnson PTA for allowing us to use their Fun Fair Games. Also, thanks to Maryann Cosgrove for donating the Halloween bags (with coupon for free soda), to my committee and others who helped: Michael Oster, Bob Oster, Frank and Ana Vainisi, Tom and Linda Saxton, Lois Hitchcock, Joe and Tina English, Karl and Jan Berland. Last but not least is to thank all the homeowners for donating the goodies for the children's treat bags.

...Submitted by Toni Oster,
Entertainment Chairperson

STOW THE MOW

Now that the grass growing season is behind us, it is time to put away our lawn mowers until the fecund breath of Spring again awakens that sleeping potential for the swelling thrust of new growth. (YO !) A couple of hints for storing lawn mowers over the winter:

1. The gas tank should be either drained (if plastic) or left completely full (if metal). Draining a metal gas tank will expose the interior to the possibility of rust formation. If the tank is left full, a gasoline stabilizer should be added to prevent the gas from going stale.
2. Remove the sparkplug, and pour one teaspoon of oil into the cylinder and (slowly) pull the starter cord to complete one piston cycle. Replace the spark plug. The purpose of this exercise is to coat the interior of the cylinder with oil, thus protecting it from corrosion. This also lubricates the piston rings.

.... Submitted by Tom Sinnott



Announcements

GRATE DEAL!

There is quite a lot of firewood left over from the removal of dead trees, stacked along the north fence in the Lower Common Area. Help yourselves!

Linda Saxton recommends a wonderful holiday craft show, HOMESPUN HOLIDAY, on Sunday, November 18, from noon until 4 P.M. at Wheaton Inn, 301 W. Roosevelt in Wheaton.

TAXES!!!

Tax Assessments went up this year, as if you didn't know. A number of our neighbors have already called the office of the Winfield Township Tax Assessor, Mr. Charles G. Kaelin, or have been in to speak with him in person. The complaints are generally summarized in the words "My house isn't worth this much!" Or, as one homeowner wrote as his return address in his letter of complaint to the assessor, 25--- River Oaks Drive (not the Taj Mahal). Mr. Kaelin talked with the Newsletter on Wednesday, October 31. This is a summary of that conversation, as well as some of what the Newsletter has heard around the subdivision.



First, Mr. Kaelin explained that any homeowner may file an appeal of his assessment at any time, as long as it is before November 26. However, he would like to suggest that you wait until AFTER November 15 to do so. By then, he will have evaluated whether or not he should change the assessments in River Oaks. In addition, he said that his two field workers will be coming into our subdivision within the week, to see if there are any changes on the property record cards they keep on each house to determine assessments. They will be looking for changes in the property visible from outside, e.g., air conditioners, decks, fireplaces, etc. He did say they wouldn't be peeking into basement windows to see if the basements had been finished. A note about these property record cards: you can get a copy of your record card for 50 cents if you go to the assessor's office and ask for it. This card lists the items that are being assessed in your home, e.g. rooms, dimensions, air conditioning, decks, porches, etc. There are some homeowners in River Oaks who have found mistakes on their property record cards. One family without a basement found that their card listed a basement and that they were paying taxes on this basement. If you think your assessment is out of

line with the rest of River Oaks, you may want to check on this.

In case we have to appeal to get our assessments lowered, here are some facts about how our houses are assessed that might be of some use. As background, property must be reassessed every four years (this is state law). So why is this happening to us every year? The first year's assessment for new homes (in our case, for 1988) is based on a pre-sale price for these homes, using data from the builder. Usually this number is lower than the actual sale price for the home and is often subject to reassessment the next year to better reflect the sale price. In addition to this, DuPage County has, for the past few years, requested reassessments every year, with the threat that the county would reassess at a flat rate county-wide if the townships did not reassess. Mr. Kaelin said that this would have increased assessed values by approximately 12% in 1988 and in 1989 if figured county-wide.

In 1989 and 1990, our reassessments were done by the township, rather than the county. The rate of increase of assessments, Mr. Kaelin emphasizes, is not determined on an individual home basis, nor is it township-wide. Mr. Kaelin's office divides the township into "neighborhoods" and assigns a percentage increase to each "neighborhood". Within Warrenville, there are several "neighborhoods". Each subdivision, e.g. Summerlakes, Fox Hollow, Winchester Square, etc., is considered a "neighborhood", except in the case of River Oaks. The rest of Warrenville is another "neighborhood", and it is in this group that the assessor has put River Oaks. He determined that the Warrenville neighborhood needed to be raised approximately 9.7% in assessment to reflect the "fair market value", or "FMV" of the homes, and so our assessments went up by this amount. According to Mr. Kaelin, he still has Warrenville at only 28% of FMV, rather than the prescribed 33 1/3%. He bases this on the sales figures for the whole "neighborhood". Mr. Kaelin said he would like to put River Oaks in the Fox Hollow neighborhood eventually, as he thought this might be more comparable.

(For comparison, Fox Hollow went up over 10%.)

The sales figures that enter into the assessor's 1990 evaluation are those from the calendar year 1989, NOT 1990. Mr. Kaelin stresses this point, because he says that the housing market was "going great" in 1989. Also, "fair market value" and "purchase price" are not considered the same thing. Mr. Kaelin says that the sale prices of homes that he considers "bad sales" do not reflect the FMV of the homes. He considers "bad sales" to be, for example, any houses sold under a deadline (e.g. job transfers), any houses that are vacant, or that are rented. If the "seller is under pressure", he does not believe that the sales price reflects the FMV. In real estate transactions, Mr. Kaelin considers only the conditions at the instant in time when the sale is made. He knows if the seller is transferred, or leaves the property, or is renting the home, **AT THE TIME OF THE SALE**. One of the comments brought up to him many times by our neighbors is that the history of houses that have not sold, that have been on the market for a long time, is important to determine the FMV, and that some of the houses that he shows in his book as "bad sales" were put on the market for months while occupied and with no immediate deadline, that they did not sell for values under the FMV he assigns them. Does Mr. Kaelin buy these arguments? No one will know until November 15.

An option open to us is to make use of an independent certified assessor, who for a fee would make an evaluation of your assessment and give an opinion as to whether an appeal would be useful. **THIS WOULD BE DONE ONLY ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS.** Jody Bradley, 393-6109, has contacted such an assessor, who does these evaluations for a \$50 fee. If he did 10 or more evaluations here in River Oaks, he would lower his fee.

...Submitted by Becky Christiansen

Letters to the Editor

Dear River Oaks Homeowners:

I have lived in three subdivisions: one with 80 homes and without a homeowners' association, one with 1600 plus homes and the association run by a homeowners' board and various property management companies, and in River Oaks. As far as comparisons go - River Oaks is managed far better than that which was run by the property management companies. I sit on the board; my committee is City Liaison. Let me explain why I ran for a position on the board. It is so easy to be uninvolved with the development, but still to be extremely concerned about what happens to my dues. It was so easy to feel - I wanted to do something totally different than that which was done, or chosen to be done. Well, the only way to know for sure was to accept a nomination to run, and observe how my money was being spent.

I have served almost my first full year and I'd like to say, it is an experience to be a board member. I was involved with the association in Florida and let me say I take my hat off to those who have served before me and now with me. Once a month we attend our meetings to make sure we are adequately addressing all matters put before us plus our standard agenda. Invariably we have a complaint or two of how and what we are doing for "me the homeowner". Making a decision to enhance an area or provide an enjoyable function or to spend a dollar, takes a lot of time and consideration. It amazes me that with each decision we make - it was not to the satisfaction of at least one homeowner. I care about River Oaks as I know all of the board members do. We give up numerous hours a month for this privilege, and we all have jobs and numerous obligations to occupy our time but we are concerned enough to volunteer this time for the Homeowners Association.

I guess what sums it up best is a famous quote "Never judge a man till ye have walked in his moccasins for five miles". If you care about your development association's decisions then take part

by running for a board position or serve on a committee for whichever area you are interested in most.

The board is an important part of River Oaks and you must understand that it is comprised of elected members chosen by you the homeowners to take on a three year term. If you are truly concerned about the issues considered by the board then place your name in for nomination and take on this obligation and educate yourselves on how the association does work for you.

I'll close by saying that our association is being run to the best of our abilities and we are trying.

Always,

Amy Salyer (Lot 22)

To the Editor:

The entire River Oaks neighborhood owes this year's Board of Directors a great big THANK YOU for the great work they are doing with Anden. The Board is a VOLUNTEER position which requires many hours per month, but this year the Board has put in extra time to meet with the City of Warrenton and Anden to get work completed in the subdivision. For those of you who don't know:

- Linda Saxton has spent hours poring over microfilm records at City Hall to review correspondence and rules/regulations which could pertain to River Oaks.

- Linda, Bob Modene, John Christiansen, and Fred Gervase have spent time (days and evenings) attending meetings with the lawyers and city to represent River Oaks.

- The above members and others have walked the subdivision, more than once, with Anden and members of the City Council.

This is the second time that River Oaks has banded together to take on Anden and get work completed in our subdivision. It shows what a good community can do, when everyone is working together to accomplish the same goal.

This year's Beautification Committee is doing a nice job in getting the front entrance and sidewalk areas planted.

The Entertainment Committee has put on three terrific parties for all of us this year.

The Newsletter Committee keeps everyone informed of the happenings here in River Oaks.

River Oaks is a great place to live! But remember; your neighborhood, like your life, is what you make it. If you want neighbors to be friendlier, then you need to be friendlier. If you want more things accomplished in the neighborhood, then you have to pitch in and volunteer for a committee or the board.

Thanks again, to the Board of Directors, for the great job with Anden and the City.

..... Mike and Lois Hitchcock (Lot 33)

Last month's letter from Mrs. White (Lot 4) prompted several responses:

Dear Neighbors,

I would like to make a clarification regarding the recent flyer requesting information for the Newsletter. To be exact, that request was written purely in an intentioned humorous vein and was definitely not meant to disparage anyone who lives in River Oaks. I, personally, would like to affirm that River Oaks is a friendly neighborhood. There are many caring people here and as for myself and for my family, we couldn't ask for better neighbors. We feel fortunate to live among all of you.

Sincerely,
Doris Ehret

To Mrs. White:

I was very upset by your article in the last River Oaks Newsletter.

Although you did not mention any names, your accusations included the whole subdivision. I resent being called unfriendly and cold, and I resent my neighbors being called that as well.

It seems to me that you have a very short memory. Yours was one of the few families that moved into the subdivision and was honored with a "welcome to the neighborhood" party.

That is exactly what being friendly means. Besides, when do people rely on "delivery persons" to rate their neighbors' friendliness?

..... Ana Vainisi (Lot 2)

WE NEED YOUR NEWS! Won't you help us with the next edition of the River Oaks NEWSLETTER? The NEWSLETTER is for, by, and about the residents of River Oaks. We will gladly print any announcements, classifieds, craft ideas, kids' stuff, recipes, etc. If you have a scoop for us, just jot it down along with your name, and drop it off to any member of the Newsletter Committee:

- John & Becky Christiansen, 2S600 River Oaks (Lot 19);
- Doris Ehret, 2S530 River Oaks (Lot 35);
- Leona Gervase, 2S572 River Oaks (Lot 21);
- Judy Molina, 2S510 River Oaks (Lot 37);
- Toni Oster, 29W620 Ridge (Lot 4).

... in the mailbox is fine. **Remember!!** The Newsletter will not print anonymous submissions.

The deadline for submitting news for the next Newsletter issue is

NOVEMBER 30.

COMMITTEE NEWS

Groundskeeping Committee: October 15, 1990. In attendance: John Spartz, Tim Phillips, Fred Gervase, Dave Polak, Cheryl Mahowald. Absent: Jerry Vicino.

The meeting began approximately at 7:35 P.M. Fred sent H&B Landscaping a thank you letter for the extra weed and feed application they gave us. The weed control program seems to be working well.

Fred sent a letter to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) requesting information and a Plat of Right-of-Way for the land bordering the western edge of the River Oaks subdivision. The primary concern was whether there is a strip of land between the Homeowners properties bordering Route 59 and the Right-of-Way property, and if so, who owns it? It was discovered that this strip of land is state property. The state allows minor landscaping to this area if we choose to do so.

Fred sent a response letter to Herbo Tree Service accepting their estimate for clean-up and rake-up of the brush piles located in the Common Area behind Lot 39. The letter was sent with the approval of the Board of Directors of the River Oaks Improvement Association.

Concern was brought up regarding the dumping of grass clippings by River Oaks homeowners into the branch of the DuPage River running through our subdivision. It was decided that it was too late in the season to monitor/take action against this activity. However, the mention of informational flyers and requests not to continue this practice could be sent out to homeowners next spring. The primary concern is the environmental effects the dumping has on the river.

Fred brought up the issue of property repairs that Anden is still responsible for and is committed to complete. It was urged at the meeting that if anyone has a complaint against Anden regarding

their property they should submit their remarks in writing to Fred Gervase. Anden wants a complete list of repairs before commencing work.

A vote was taken and approval given by all in attendance to give Mike Oster the job of seal coating the driveway and apron area between Lots 31 and 32. The cost is at a discount because its being done for the Homeowners Association.

Regarding further landscaping business, we are due one more cutting at the end of October. The next seeding will be done in the spring.

It was suggested we increase the number of grass cuttings beginning next spring to every week instead of every other week due to observed appearance and associated problems with not cutting more often, i.e. the insects - children are unable to play in these areas.

Changes in the need to maintain our Common Areas demand a revision of our current bid for services rendered. New items to be included will be fertilizing the plants in the entrance island and removing fallen branches from large and small trees in the Common Area. Fred plans to present an increased budget request to the Board when he meets with them on Thursday, October 18th.

The meeting was officially adjourned at 9:20 P.M. The next meeting will be on Monday, November 19th, 7:30 P.M., at Fred Gervase's home.

..... Minutes submitted by Dave Polak

Newsletter Committee: The Committee met on Wednesday, October 24 at 7:30 P.M. The Halloween Decorating Contest was discussed. It was suggested that an independent judge from outside the subdivision be invited to judge the house decorations in the late afternoon on Halloween. It was suggested that someone ask children in the subdivision to say what they are thankful for, and list the results in the Newsletter. The next meeting will be at 7:30 PM on Wednesday, November 28, at the Christiansens'.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
RIVER OAKS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
October 18, 1990**

IN ATTENDANCE: Fred Gervase, Veronica Williams, Amy Salyer, Linda Saxton, Toni Oster, Gloria Langston, John Christiansen.
ABSENT: Karl Berland.

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 PM. The minutes were reviewed and approved.

TREASURER: Gloria Langston gave report. Much discussion was had on the dues issue. Veronica made the motion that effective April 1, 1991, the dues will be paid on a semi-annual basis instead of quarterly, to reduce administrative costs associated with keeping track of four bills per household per year. Bills will be sent April 1 and October 1, with the net amount due in 30 days. Bob seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

BEAUTIFICATION: No report. Bob Modene will contact Karl about the planting of bushes along easement.

GROUNDSKEEPING: Fred Gervase gave report. H & B has one more cutting before the end of October. We are going to request that the city sealcoat the pump station driveway. Amy Salyer will draft the letter. It is probably too late in the year now, but we want to be on the city's maintenance list for next spring.

ENTERTAINMENT: Toni Oster reporting. The Halloween party will be held at the Warrenville Community Club from 1-4 PM on Sunday, October 28th. The judges are not from the subdivision. A Special Guest will be there and there will be lots of surprises. Bob Modene made a motion to give the committee \$200 for the party. Gloria seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

NEWSLETTER: John Christiansen reporting. There will be a house decorating contest. Winners will be announced in the November Newsletter.

CITY LIAISON: Amy Salyer reporting. No news.

NOMINATING: Veronica Williams gave report. Becky Christiansen is joining this committee. The ballots will be attached to the December and January Newsletter.

OLD BUSINESS:
Board reviewed the October 2 letter from Anden on these specific points:

a. Item #5 (sewer pumps): We really aren't satisfied with this reply. This sewer pump issue is one of our major problems.

b. Item #7 (retaining walls): We want Anden to define and put in writing what will be done with the three walls on private property. This was explained verbally but this information needs to be passed on to homeowners.

c. Item #10-12 (sidewalks): The problem with the concrete is more extensive than the lots listed. We have opinions that state that this problem arises from a poor concrete mix, not a salt problem.

d. Item #11 (driveways and streets): we need a definite time frame on this job.

NEW BUSINESS:

The board received a letter about biodegradable lawn and leaf bags. If we are interested the bags have to be ordered in batches of 1000.

A letter was received from Mayor Lund in regards to our Christmas banner. Bob made the motion to give the city a \$25.00 donation, Amy seconded; passed unanimously. (Note: we purchased a Christmas banner from the city last year which was hung on Route 59. The city puts up this banner and garland, takes it down, and stores it for us each year. This donation is our token of appreciation for their help.)

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM. Next meeting November 15th at Veronica Williams'.