



# oak leaves

January  
2000

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Issue 7

## Calendar

- **Thursday, January 13**  
Board of Directors Meeting, 7:30 PM, at the Saxtons', 2S 539 River Oaks Dr.
- **Thursday, February 17**  
Annual Meeting, River Oaks Improvement Association, 7 PM, in the City Council Chambers at Warrenton City Hall

## Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the River Oaks Improvement Association is scheduled for Thursday, February 17, at the Warrenton City Hall in the council chambers. All homeowners are encouraged to attend this annual meeting. The proposed budget will be discussed and new Board members will be elected.

The annual meeting is a chance for homeowners to discuss subdivision issues, to ask questions, and to give opinions.

One of the main topics on the agenda this year is the entryway renovation

and new subdivision sign. Drawings of the proposed sign will be on display. In addition, the brick mason who gave us the best bid for the sign installation will be present to answer any questions.

Formal notice of this meeting will be sent to all homeowners by mail. Included with this notice will be an absentee ballot for Board of Directors elections. If you cannot attend the meeting, please fill out this absentee ballot and hand it to a Board member.

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## Board Nominations

Nominees are needed to run for the Board of Directors of the River Oaks Improvement Association. There will be four seats up for elections this year, each seat having a two year term.

The Board of Directors meets once a month at the home of one of the members. The primary responsibility of the Board is to oversee the maintenance of the Common Area. In addition, the Board sponsors the annual River Oaks Picnic, the Halloween bonfire, and other events according to the interests of the homeowners. The Board also produces a Newsletter and sponsors a landscaping committee that handles improvements to the Com-

mon Areas.

The amount of time required to be a Board member is not great. It is a good way to directly influence the projects sponsored by the Board and to involve oneself in the community. It is a good way for new homeowners to get involved with the homeowners association.

To nominate yourself, or anyone else, for the Board, please fill out the tear off nomination form attached to this Newsletter and return it by January 31 to a Board member.

## Proposed Budget

The fiscal year of the River Oaks Improvement Association ends at the end of February. A budget for the next fiscal year as proposed by the Board is in the table on the right.

Most of the budget categories are budgeted for the same amount for the next year as they were set for this year. The landscaping budget is based on the cost of mowing and maintenance of the Common Area by Brickman Landscaping, for

\$7,872. per year.

The entrance sign is budgeted at \$7,100. Since this money is currently available from unused funds, it did not have to be figured into the dues assessment.

There is no change in the dues, which remain at \$160 per year. This is based on the budget and a total of 64 houses (assuming that 2 houses might become in arrears).

ROIA Budget		
Category	1999	2000
Annual Meeting	70.	70
Annual Review	500.	500.
Discretionary	350.	350.
Entertainment	300.	300.
Insurance	250.	250.
Landscaping	8,200.	8,200.
Newsletter	350.	350.
Property Tax	80.	80.
Treasurer	140.	140.
Entrance Sign	0.	7100.
<b>TOTALS</b>	10,240.	17,340

## Entryway Sign Survey

The Board has received several responses to the recent questionnaire regarding the proposed entryway sign. The Board thanks all homeowners who have called, e-mailed or written with comments and suggestions. Here is a brief summary of the comments that have been received and the Board's responses to these comments. The Board hopes homeowners continue to provide comments, and plan to attend the annual meeting on February 17<sup>th</sup>, when the entryway will be on the agenda.

### • Replace the Sign

The current wooden sign is almost 11 years old now, and is splitting horizontally. It was installed at a time when there were no funds available for a more expensive sign. Most homeowner responses agreed that it was time to replace the sign.

### • Remove Sign from Island

The entryway island is small and does not offer a lot of space for a sign. In addition, City officials indicate that there are safety issues involved – a sign blocks the line of sight for cars waiting in line to exit the subdivision. For this reason the City would be unlikely to give the necessary approval to put a new sign in this area. The homeowner responses indicated that removing the sign from the island was not a problem.

### • Working With The City and Homeowners

When The Board began consideration of entryway sign replacement, the first task was to determine where to put the new one.

Both sides of the entryway are in City utility easement / right of way which is part of the homeowner's property. Any sign in this location would need a City variance, as well as covenants agreed to by the homeowners to allow such a sign. The Board will continue to work with the homeowners involved to reach mutually acceptable agreements.

The Board has had numerous conversations with Ron Mentzer, Director of Community Development, and Mike Smith, Superintendent of Streets. The Board is aware that it must submit drawings and necessary paperwork to the City Plan Commission for their approval and subsequently to the City Council for their approval before obtaining construction permits.

### • Drawings

Several homeowner sign survey responses asked for drawings of the proposed entryway design. The Board must submit a drawing to the City for the signs. The requirement is a simple black and white drawing indicating the dimensions of the sign, the building material, and other structural details like the concrete base

required. We will try to have these and any other drawings available at the annual meeting.

### • Sign Contractors

The Board did not solicit proposals from landscaping companies for the erection of a brick sign because masonry signs (called monuments) are not erected by most landscaping companies. If they do install signs, they subcontract that work out. Most sign companies, also, do not construct brick signs. They usually do the signage portion and hire a mason to do the supporting brickwork.

Many of the brick signs you see at subdivisions, especially multi-family housing subdivisions, were, in fact, put up by the subdivision builder, using his own bricklaying personnel.

Proposals were obtained from several different sources for the sign. The difference in cost between the proposed brick signs from a sign company and from a mason specializing in brick signs is very significant. The proposal from one sign company was for \$12,000,

while the one from the mason was for \$6,000, for exactly the same work.

#### · **Landscape Design**

Landscape design is offered by landscaping companies, as well as by qualified landscape designers. Some landscape companies subcontract their design work to a designer with full credentials. Some create their own designs with no professional design input, and with uneven results. River Oaks is already familiar with this problem from the previous attempt to have a landscaping company landscape the entryway in 1989. The plants that were planted were totally inappropriate for the area, and they subsequently died. That lesson cost the homeowner's association \$1,000.

It might be wise to contact a landscape designer directly, rather than using an intermediary source like a landscaping company. This would keep costs down, as well as insure that we are working directly with a professional who understands our needs and goals. The cost that has been quoted for creating such a plan is around \$200. This includes a professional landscape drawing. Such landscape drawings are overhead schematic drawings that basically act like a map of the area and don't attempt to render the scene artistically.

#### · **Lighting the Sign**

Several survey responses suggested that the signs be lighted. The City Plan Commission has been receptive only to minimally lighted signs. And lighting the signs does not simply involve taping into an existing light circuit. Regulations require installation of complete electrical service. This includes a meter, switch boxes, fuse protection, photoelectric controls, and under-the-street augering to run the lines. An electrical contractor who does this kind of work was contacted and suggested an approximate figure of \$3,000 to \$4,000 for the installation. This

does not include the lights or the monthly expense. It might be prudent to first put up the signs, and if lighting is necessary, determine exactly what kind of lighting, would be the best. We must keep in mind that these signs are on private property and any lighting that might be installed must respect the homeowners' wishes.

#### · **Signage on the Brick Structure**

It has been suggested that the lettering on the sign be gold letters which would reflect light and perhaps be more visible at night. These letters would be attached to the brick (like Adare Farms in Wheaton), rather than etched into a limestone insert. The Board will try to get cost estimates for both treatments. The Board has discussed potential problems with attached letters that might fall off or have the paint peel off, requiring future maintenance.

#### · **Fate of the Island**

Several responses included the suggestion to remove the entryway island. This is a City decision that could not be implemented until the roads are resurfaced in several years. Whether they would consider its removal is not clear. The island does serve as a safety device to clearly divide the two-way traffic at the entranceway and would be replanted at the time the areas around the new signs are planted.

#### · **Using Reserve Funds**

The Board believes that it is fiscally responsible to have a reserve fund to be available for emergencies. The current budget is \$10,240. The Board feels that one years' dues kept in reserve is financially prudent.

Why is a reserve necessary? The homeowner's association owns and is responsible for nearly five acres of Common Area, which contain drainage infrastructure, retaining walls, etc. These Common Areas are maintained out of the annual budget. They are obviously exposed to the whims of mother nature. The

reserve would assist in future expenditures outside the annual budget should they be needed. If there were no reserve fund, these unforeseen expenses would have to be met by a special assessment imposed on all homeowners.

Last year, unbudgeted monies were needed to repair a broken pipe that was essential for drainage of ground water and sump pump flow in the lower bowl of the common area. This was not damage to the storm sewer system, which would have come under City jurisdiction, but damage to the drainage installed by the homeowner's association to alleviate the mud hole problem that was taking over the lower bowl of the Common Area. This is just one of the unexpected repairs that might be needed.

#### · **Special Assessments**

Another survey response included a suggestion to finance a more extensive treatment of the entryway by assessing the homeowners a one-time fee of \$100 per household to increase the budget without touching reserve money. The Board has spent over a year exploring all aspects concerning the entryway signs. The Board is attempting to proceed cautiously, and believes homeowners desire to spend funds judiciously rather than dipping into the reserve funds or instituting a special assessment.

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## River Oaks Chronicles — A Brief History of The Entryway

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When River Oaks was still being built (1987-1988), the entryway was landscaped by the builder.

And so There was in the Entryway:

- A line of arborvitae shrubs under the billboard that was erected on the south side of the entrance.
- One silver maple tree planted in the entryway island

After most of the houses were sold, the billboard came down. The newly-formed River Oaks homeowner's association decided to put up a sign, using a dues increase to pay for the work since there were no funds in the till. Some hearty homeowners helped to remove the maple tree to make way for the sign. The year was 1989.

And so There was in the Entryway :

- A painted wooden sign, at a cost of \$1300.

After the sign was decided on, the homeowner's Board contacted three landscape companies for plans and bids to landscape the entryway, which was performed in the spring of 1990. The work was done for \$979.80.

And so There was in the Entryway :

- 5 Burning Bushes, 3 Anthony Spirea, 25 geraniums, 3 flats of Dusty Miller, 1 Tree, and Mulch

The tree went into the upper cul-de-sac circle. Unfortunately, the plantings soon died. The sign looked bare again, and so the Landscaping Committee members drew up their own plan after re-searching what kinds of plants could tolerate the road salt and constricted conditions. The cost for this planting, which they did themselves, was less than \$200..

And so There was in the Entryway :

- 'Sea Green' Junipers, 'Truehedge' green Barberries, 'Golddrop' Potentillas, one tall 'Wintergreen' Juniper, and two dozen 'Stella d'Oro' daylilies.

Over the years since they went in, some of these plants have died, and some have survived. Some have been replaced by homeowner donations. The lesson learned is that the entryway island is a difficult environment for plant survival.

Then fate struck in 1997 – the sign was hit by a motorist driving on the icy road. Although there was no real damage, the insurance company of the driver paid \$250 in damages to the homeowners association. This was just enough to hire a painter to repaint the sign, which was showing weathering.

And so it goes.

Where They Are Today

To make room for the sign back in 1989, several of the homeowners dug up the silver maple tree and replanted it in the Upper Common Area. It stands there today, growing happily near the grove of evergreens on the high ridge between the Common Area bowls. The line of arborvitae which looked abandoned once the sign came down were offered to any homeowners who cared to dig them up. Some of the shrubs can still be seen in the front yard of Lot 41.

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*The Minutes from the last two Board meetings follow this section. There were no meetings during the months of September, October, and November due to lack of quorum and postponement.*

Board of Directors			
Marnee Sinnott	President Landscaping	393-2808	tsinnott@megsinet.net
Andy Gorski	Vice-President Nominating	393-0886	
Mark Moore	Treasurer	393-6473	mt@megsinet.net
Marilyn Hayes	Secretary	863-1424	hayesmarjm@aol.com
Linda Saxton	Entertainment Neighborhood Watch	393-2206	saxton@mcs.com
Becky Christiansen	Newsletter	393-4946	becky@cyberoak.com

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## Nomination Petition

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### Board of Directors River Oaks Improvement Association

I nominate \_\_\_\_\_ for the position of  
Director, River Oaks Improvement Association, to serve a term of two years.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

Please return this form to a Board Member before January 31, 2000.