



# Walnut Grove Homes Association

*News in a Nutshell*

*March 2015*

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## Annual Meeting

The primary function of this issue of the newsletter is to share the annual meeting minutes with all Walnut Grove residents. It includes many updates and issues concerning our neighborhood.

The Walnut Grove Homes Association Annual Meeting took place on Sunday, January 25, 2015 at noon at Stark Company Realtors, 702 North High Point Road. President Eric Lewandowski called the meeting to order and a quorum was established. The minutes of the 2014 annual meeting were reviewed and there were no questions, comments or additions noted.

## Board Changes

The current board of directors was introduced and thanked for their service. Mary Kay Battaglia and Tom Wall, long time board members, have elected to step down. Tina Hogle and Karen Kolath expressed interest in joining the board and their nominations were ordered and approved. In addition, Mark Schmitt was elected to serve a regular two-year term as vice-president.

Many thanks to Mary Kay Battaglia and Tom Wall for their many years of dedicated service!

## The State of the Neighborhood

### *President's Annual Report*

I am happy to report that the State of the Walnut Grove Neighborhood continues to be sound.

We continue to live in one of the most desirable areas in Greater Madison. Our average individual property value is approximately \$269,000 and is reported to be rising, based on resale figures. When homes go on the market, they sell quickly and we continue to attract numbers of new, largely younger homeowners with growing

families to complement the sixty plus percent of homeowners who have lived here at least ten years. We have a stable population of residents, the vast majority of whom (over 95%) own their own homes. We pay higher taxes, on average, than other areas in the city but we enjoy municipal services consistently rated as excellent.

Despite sporadic reports of traffic- and mischief-based petty criminal behavior, there is no statistical evidence indicating anything other than misperceptions of increased crime in Walnut Grove. Contacts with Alder Skidmore and other city officials, Lieutenant John Patterson and Captain Victor Wahl of the Madison Police Department and information provided at a public meeting on safety and security support this. We especially continue to encourage vigilance and common sense approaches to preventing crimes of opportunity. Other municipal services such as fire and EMT response are excellent – as was seen at a major fire on Farmington Way on September 11, when one of our neighbor's homes was seriously damaged, but she and her pets emerged safe. Average response time between the initial 911 call and the first response was reportedly less than three minutes. Happily, our neighbor is back in her home.

### *Greenways*

Our Greenways continue to be the glory of the neighborhood, and I want to acknowledge, with gratitude, the hard work of our Greenways Chair Gabe Anibas, and other members of our expanded Greenways Committee in keeping this so. The deferred maintenance situation is no longer an issue and all lighting fixtures on the Greenways have been replaced with new, more efficient units. Gabe has enlisted the support of a number of "regulars" on the Greenways Committee who have actively

been working to maintain the wooded areas along the greenway paths.

We have adopted a pro-active approach to Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) mitigation with the advice and assistance of our contractor Jeff Olson of Arbor Systems, and with support from the City Forester, Marla Eddy and members of the City Planning and Parks Divisions, as well as Alder Paul Skidmore.

Walnut Grove Park continues to serve as a municipal gem for walkers, joggers, soccer, and informal sports enthusiasts. On October 13th, Mayor Soglin, Alder Skidmore, new Parks Director Eric Knepp, and about fifty attendees (and their dogs) inaugurated the new Walnut Grove Dog Park.

### *Board Activities and Future Emphasis*

Some of the otherwise transparent activities of the Board, important to the efficient running of the Walnut Grove Homes Association, include a number of administrative reviews. Given the steady aging of the neighborhood from a development standpoint, i.e., going on fifty years, we are reviewing certain overall business-related policies, practices and procedures.

The Bylaws review committee was initiated and is ongoing and has produced a red-lined copy of the Bylaws that we will continue to refine. We expect a copy will be ready to roll out for general consideration by the next Annual Meeting. I've also undertaken a compilation of business procedures to capture in an administrative manual for future presidents and Board members. We also have put out for bid and adopted a DNO (Directors & Officers) insurance policy with a modest annual premium and unprecedented protection for our board members, who otherwise may be personally liable for their actions taken on behalf of Walnut Grove. This is becoming standard among other HOA's nationwide and also is a much welcome tool for helping to recruit and retain board members. Another vital administrative review relates to our Covenants and Architectural Control guidelines. This is extremely important and I want to publicly thank Denise and the team of ACC Committee members she has pulled together to tackle it.

In 2015, we will be taking a careful look at comprehensive communications, including the directory, the newsletter, e-communications, block captains, and other modes of news and information delivery. We want to see where we can speed up the timely flow of information, while making sure that everyone – even folks who are not electronically connected or comfortable with online networking – get the news and information they need. ■

## **Committee Reports**

### *Block Captains*

A new block captain is needed for Westfield, condos on Walnut Grove (close to Westfield area) and Foxboro Circle. Eileen Goode, chair of the block captains, explained the role of the captains and how information should flow from the board to the block captains and then to the residents.

### *Communication*

Those attending meeting were asked how many are currently on the list-serv and nearly all in attendance were currently on the list-serv. The new newsletter chair and Block Captain and website coordinator plan to meet and discuss best way to communicate with residence to accommodate all residents needs. Tina Hogle will be replacing Mary Kay Battaglia as new newsletter chair.

### *Greenways*

Gabe Anibas addressed the current state of the greenways. LED bulbs are reducing the electricity cost to the budget. There have been some lights vandalized and police reports have been made. Please keep an eye out for any vandalism to the lights or greenway areas. Thanks to Diane Littman who coordinated a spring neighborhood invasive weed pull in the greenways and we expect to do another this spring. Maintenance on the trees will continue including pruning oak trees.

Eric added that there is a DNR grant available that he and Gabe will be looking into that will help identify Ash trees on resident lots so they can make an educated decision about treating trees.

### *Social*

Kathy McComb reported that several social events were not held this year due to the construction of the dog park. The annual bonfire and the Packer tailgate party were great successes in 2014. This year's first event was on Feb. 22 at Schwoegler's with a focus on new members. Eighty five people attended and had a great time!

### *Treasurer*

Currently down to 3 residents who have not paid their dues, which is a very good. Dues will remain at \$70 annually. See page 4 for the budget summary.

### *Architectural Control Committee*

Denise Clearwood, ACC chair, presented information about the committee she has formed this year that is trying to discuss Walnut Grove ACC guidelines and the difficulty with updating them to accommodate current residents, city ordinances and needs of the community but maintaining the focus of our original by-laws. The

**Light or Greenway issues?**  
Contact Gabe Anibas at 287-6495

committee has sent out two surveys. Several of the issues of controversy include: fences, seasonal vehicle parking, chicken coops, etc.

Please respond to future surveys to help the committee discuss and get a feeling for what our residents think about issues on the by-laws. Some of the issues the committee is dealing with are city ordinances being different than our Walnut Grove By-laws. This will be a year-long investigation and discussion so please contact Denise if you have any suggestions or input. ■

*For Kids of All Ages...*

### **Tumbling and Pizza Party!**

March 22  
Mad Town Twisters  
Old Sauk Road  
4:00-5:00 Tumbling and Gymnastics  
5:00-5:45 Pizza party

### **City Alder Paul Skidmore Speaks**

*Remarks made at Annual Meeting*

Paul Skidmore, City Alder discussed how pleased he is with the engagement of the Walnut Grove neighborhood. He said the city has noticed our efforts on EAB, social gatherings and even informing our residents of current issues and praised our community. Mr. Skidmore covered the new budget that included fees for EAB assessment.

Mr. Skidmore feels the new police chief has provided a good working environment for the community and is addressing new issues including the racial factors seen throughout the nation. He continues to be concerned with the 911 center and problems associated with this program. He is looking to form a city wide 911 center. Crime in our area is stable and mostly opportunity crime. Please call the police if anything out of the ordinary occurs so they can help.

On the transportation front, the development at Junction Road and Mineral Point is complete and has been deemed a great success. The focus now will be on expanding Highway M to Verona. The road resurfacing in our neighborhood is mostly done but there is a small section that is not complete. He discussed the new sound wall on the Beltline. It has created sound problems for secondary areas and plants are being planted.

There have been several new playgrounds updated on the west side. If Walnut Grove is interested in upgrading the playground, those interested should contact the city

as there are funds for additions. The new dog park seems to be a success.

There is a new development being proposed by the CDA (Community Development Agency). This development will be on Tree Lane near condos as you turn toward Mineral Point. It is proposed to be up to 40 apartments to house homeless families and managed and run by a full time staff from Hartland Inc. and YWCA. The advantage is the city owns the property, its near groceries and bus-lines and not near a lot of poverty. The city will thoroughly review this proposal, which will take some time, but the hope is to start construction next spring. There is currently a similar building on East Washington that has just been approved and is considered to be phase one. The proposed Tree Lane site will be phase two. The families that are approved for tenancy will be selected after an intense review process. ■

### **Opportunities to Stay Connected**

#### **Walnut Grove List Serv**

- An email communication tool for neighborhood members.
- To join: go to [walnutgrovemadison.org](http://walnutgrovemadison.org)
- Click on **Email List Sign Up**
- Type in your email address (twice)
- Look for an email that instructs you to click on a link
- Click on the link

#### **Next Door Walnut Grove**

A social media connection point for sharing information, asking questions, and learning about your neighbors. Share as much or little about yourself as you want.

Sign up at [walnutgrovewi.nextdoor.com](http://walnutgrovewi.nextdoor.com)



#### **Block Captains**

Block captains have volunteered to be your link to the board. Not sure who your block captain is?

Contact Eileen Goode at  
[Eileen@goodesolution.com](mailto:Eileen@goodesolution.com) ■

## Neighborhood Social Events

### Bridge Club

*First Tuesday of the month*



### Bunco

*Third Thursday of the month*



### Book Club

*Second Monday of the Month*



Contact Kathy McComb at 829-3446 for additional information or if you have an idea for a new group or kid's activity.

## Budget

Walnut Grove Homes Association				
2014 Annual Meeting (1/25/15)				
December 31, 2014				
	2014	2014	2015	
	Budget	Actual	Final Budget	
BEGINNING CASH BALANCE	25,554.71	25,554.71	28,757.77	
<b>INCOME</b>				
Membership dues current year	21,140.00	21,290.00	21,140.00	
Membership dues prior years	-	455.00	-	
Interest income	40.00	28.10	25.00	
Other income	-	-	-	
Total Income	21,180.00	21,773.10	21,165.00	
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Insurance	2,000.00	1,481.00	1,550.00	
Electric utilities	1,400.00	1,210.70	1,150.00	
Water & sewer	870.00	934.91	950.00	
Bank charges	20.00	52.70	50.00	
Block captains	650.00	392.00	500.00	
Circles reimbursement	120.00	118.96	120.00	
Circle Renovation Projects	1,500.00	-	1,500.00	
Greenways				
Electrical work	1,000.00	737.17	1,000.00	
Greenway Improvements	-	-	-	
Maintenance	12,000.00	9,583.64	12,000.00	
Miscellaneous	400.00	150.75	300.00	
Newsletter/publications	100.00	61.44	100.00	
Postal	575.00	394.69	575.00	
Annual meeting	550.00	529.16	550.00	
Community donations	200.00	200.00	200.00	
Website	175.00	178.32	175.00	
Social	2,700.00	2,544.60	3,000.00	
Total Expenses	24,260.00	18,570.04	23,720.00	
Net inflows (outflows)	(3,080.00)	3,203.06	(2,555.00)	
ENDING CASH BALANCE	22,474.71	28,757.77	26,202.77	
<b>Cash Summary</b>				
	12/31/13	12/31/14		
BMO Harris checking	1,408.87	3,108.00		
BMO Harris savings	4,145.84	5,649.77		
BMO Harris CD due 1/13/15		10,000.00		
BMO Harris CD due 4/7/15		10,000.00		
BMO Harris CD due 1/13/14	10,000.00			
BMO Harris CD due 1/7/14	10,000.00			
	25,554.71	28,757.77		
M&I Park Fund	2,814.45	2,817.27		