

The Greenbrier News

"GNA" - the Greenbrier Neighborhood Association

Summer 2003 (rain/vacation delayed)

Web Pg. avenue.org/gna (send Pete Brecht - editorials or comments you wish to post regarding the neighborhood.)

GNA President - Ned Michie - NedMichie@AOL.com, ph 296-6961

V.P. - Lise Dobrin - dobrin@virginia.edu

Sec. - Judy Looney - jmlooney@highstream.net.

Tres. - Jon Perkins

Web Master - Pete Brecht - PJBrecht@yahoo.com

SEND YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Our neighborhood e-mail list is continuing to grow. It allows neighborhood news and announcements to be spread around quickly and economically. We are actually maintaining two lists. One is a list of e-mails of people who want to receive neighborhood announcements but wish to keep their e-mail addresses private; the second list is designed to be more of an electronic community which helps us communicate with each other and foster a better sense of community. So far, the open list is by far the largest list, and I hope that continues to be true. Send your name, street address, and e-mail address to: NedMichie@aol.com. **Do it now while you're thinking about it!** You can remove your name at any time if you want to go back to being uninformed.

MOSQUITOES - Remember -- **NO STANDING WATER = NO MOSQUITOES**. So check your yard weekly and dump any potential breeding pools -- even small puddles. If you collect rainwater or have other standing water that cannot be helped, you can purchase special natural bacteria cakes or powders that kill mosquito larvae but are apparently harmless to plants and animals. I have seen these products locally at Plow and Hearth and also at various websites online.

TRAFFIC ISSUES

PARK STREET BRIDGE CLOSING

The latest word is that work on the Park St. bridge will begin the first week of August. We anticipate increased traffic cutting through from Rio Road to the Bypass at Meadowbrook or to Hydraulic at Brandywine, although the cut-throughs should not be as severe as they were when Rio closed a couple years ago. At our April Association meeting, we voted to ask the city to put up a temporary stop sign at the Greenbrier and Banbury intersection and to have greatly increased police traffic enforcement during that time, in an attempt both to discourage and to control the cut-through traffic. Assuming the City follows through on our requests, keep in mind that the police **WILL GIVE TICKETS TO EVERYONE WHO VIOLATES THE TRAFFIC LAWS (E.G., SPEEDING, NOT COMING TO A FULL STOP AT STOP SIGNS, NOT HAVING UP-TO-DATE STICKERS ON YOUR VEHICLES)**. The police are not going to cut neighborhood residents a break, so behave accordingly.

CONDOMINIUM PROJECT AT THE CORNER OF MELBOURNE AND PARK

If you have not heard, a developer has purchased the old white house up on the hill at the corner of Melbourne and Park and plans to tear down the house and build 52 upscale condominiums on the property. The house was built in the 1890s by the Randolph family (of Jefferson connection) and was sold in the 1920s to the family of the present owners. The owners have been trying to sell the property for many years and had hoped the house would be saved and used, but they have been unable to find a buyer on those terms. This developer considered including the house as part of his plan but decided it would not work.

The property is already zoned to allow multi-unit dwellings and could apparently have accommodated up to about 100 units. So the development is "as of right," and the City has little power over what happens there. Fortunately, the developer is only putting in 52 units, which seem to be attractively designed, with a tree border around it and a foot path connecting to the Rivanna trails. Of course, we must expect that these 52 new family units will come with at least 52 cars (and probably more like 104). The main entrance to the condos will be off of Melbourne near the end of the black fence closest to Park St. There also will be an exit for right turns only onto Park St. Undoubtedly these folks are going to add traffic to our neighborhood. Indeed, it seems likely that anytime

they want to go to the Hydraulic Road area, they will choose to cut through on Grove rather than fight the traffic on Park St. and then the light at McIntire. It is also likely that at times that they will find it more attractive to cut through the neighborhood to Rio instead of getting directly onto Rio.

We discussed this project in our e-mail list, and there was not a groundswell of support to try to fight it to the very limited extent that we could. But the residents of Grove, in particular, are very concerned about the likely increase of traffic the condos will bring. It seems that a logical course of action will be for us, as a neighborhood association, to seek more traffic-calming measures in our neighborhood, particularly along Grove Rd., but I know not everyone agrees. Consequently, I asked a known traffic calming opponent and a known advocate from Grove Road to write out their positions for the newsletter, and they were kind enough to do so.

TRAFFIC CALMING IS BAD FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Bob Hodous

Traffic calming ultimately does the following in a neighborhood: 1. It becomes more of a nuisance to those who live in the neighborhood and have to deal with it everyday than it does to anyone else. 2. People get upset with it and speed from calming area to calming area, thus creating more dangers. Note the history several years ago when the police monitored and enforced speed limits in Greenbrier. A vast majority of those ticketed (I believe the official report was around 85%) were Greenbrier residents who thought they should be permitted to speed in their own neighborhood. We need better neighbors who control themselves and their children. This is also historical information which will be vouched by most police officers. 3. Emergency vehicles are slowed down and cannot respond as well. This factor is noted in the City's own documents concerning speed humps and traffic calming. 4. Most restricting and slowing structures actually increase safety problems for alternative transportation, such as bicycles. Problems with such structures are again noted in the City's own material on traffic calming. I would encourage instead better traffic flow and streets. We shall not get people out of their cars unless they want to do so. Therefore, the best means of protecting true neighborhood streets is to provide good traffic flow around neighborhoods. For those streets going straight through a neighborhood, provide good traffic flow and reasonable supervision. Sincerely,

TRAFFIC CALMING IS GOOD FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Henry Wiencek - Grove Road

Dear and fellow Greenbriers, Mr. Hodous is correct when he says traffic calming is a tremendous annoyance. I don't like it either; but unfortunately, annoyance is exactly the point of it, and the people who actually live in Charlottesville (as opposed to those who just drive through) seem to want more of it. Every new speed hump and stop sign sends a silent message: your car is an annoyance to this neighborhood and we wish you would not drive here. Neighborhoods all over town are begging for stop signs, humps, roundabouts and speed traps because they are simply overwhelmed by cut-through traffic and they hate it. That's what happened to Park Street, and take a look now at the Perry St./2nd Street NE/Parkway mixing bowl, where a rotary has gone up and more traffic-pinching obstacles seem planned. If you look at the Locust Grove neighborhood comments on the city's website you will see that they have three concerns: traffic, traffic, and traffic.

People who live on isolated cul-de-sacs simply have no idea what it's like to live on a short-cut. Look at what they had to do on Meadowbrook Heights, with all the stop signs, because commuting folks who live elsewhere use that street and Yorktown/Greenbrier/Rio as a cut-through to reach 29 North. The commuters care nothing for the peace and quiet and safety of that neighborhood, and they have made that beautiful street impossible to walk on during the afternoon and evening. Might as well put up a sign: Street Closed to Residents. As for Grove Road, the stretch from Meadowbrook Heights to Concord is the major access for emergency vehicles to CHS, and I don't see how the city could install any serious calming devices, such as speed bumps, without putting the high school at risk. Melbourne is another matter altogether. I think we should calm the heck out of it, which would make Grove less inviting to the nightly speeders and commuters.

Mr. Hodous is right when he says "We shall not get people out of their cars unless they want to do so." Traffic is so bad that I no longer do errands between 3 and 6 PM unless absolutely necessary. My habits have changed. I drive at 25 mph in the city and avoid short-cutting through quiet side streets because I want others to extend the same courtesies to me. In the next few years as gridlock inevitably descends on Emmet (Welcome, Best Buy!), Hydraulic (Welcome, massive new mall and mini-city!), and 29 North, perhaps commuters will begin to think of car pooling, or other ways of reducing their car trips. Some will say that people can drive wherever they please. Maybe so, in theory. But when cut-through traffic gets bad enough and neighborhoods really get fed up, they demand blunt solutions from the city, and then the issue simply becomes political. City voters will get what

they want from city government, and it looks like it will be more traffic calming. I hope we can find creative solutions such as new one-ways, but the real hope is to persuade our neighbors to be more neighborly and keep their cars on the main roads and out of neighborhoods. If the trip takes a bit longer, so be it. It's not fair for neighborhoods to bear the congestion, pollution, noise, and danger created by drivers who are just cutting through. We need to make people aware of the annoyance and danger their cars create, and inspire them to plan their local trips with courtesy for their neighbors.

TO TRAFFIC CALM OR NOT TO TRAFFIC CALM – THAT IS THE QUESTION

Please give this issue some thought. I would encourage you to pass your opinions along to me (NedMichie@AOL.com, ph 296-6961, 1704 Concord Dr.) and/or our City Councilors. While I have mixed feelings about the Meadowcreek Parkway, I do think that if and when it is built (see below) that it would then become the preferred route for the Condo people instead of traveling through our neighborhood.

THE APRIL 2, 2003 MEETING At our meeting we had a good question and answer session with Kevin Lynch. He told us the City Manager's Office has decided not to give neighborhood allotments this year, so that the City could use the money for a large drainage project that no neighborhood was ever going to use its money on. It is also their plan to take the neighborhood allotments about every three years for these large kinds of projects. At our meeting a number of people were unhappy about this decision to cut off the neighborhoods every third year from funding for neighborhood improvements; other people seemed to feel that it was the right thing to do - at least in these tight budgetary times. Due to the City's decision, we did not bother to spend time at the meeting to discuss our neighborhood funding priorities.

Kevin Lynch also told us that the Meadow Creek Parkway was still moving forward but that the county and VDOT had not come to an agreement over the design of that section of the road. I think the intersection at the 250 Bypass and McIntire is also still up in the air (traffic light, traffic circle or interchange). As you may have heard, there is also a relatively new plan to have a road connecting Hillsdale Road (behind Toys-R-Us) to Hydraulic Road. The current design has this connector going in front of the Seminole Shopping Center, then through the abandoned Terrace Theater next to K-Mart. In fact, on the drawing I saw it continues through Hydraulic between Kroger and Virginia Power and then turns and connects up with Rt. 29 (ending before hitting Holiday Dr). This road has pretty much been approved by the City, the County and the Seminole Square merchants, and I personally think it will help our neighborhood without bringing too much additional traffic noise (since it is now routed away from the creek). So this road, which will only cost a paltry few million, may well happen sooner than the Meadow Creek Parkway. We did not discuss funding priorities for the neighborhood since we are not getting any funding this year.

CRIME We are making slow progress toward getting onto the city call watch system for crimes in our neighborhood. As described in our last newsletter, anyone interested in receiving a computer-generated call about crimes in our neighborhood should let me know your name and phone number. In the alternative, just sign up for our e-mail list, as I will be sending out reports to the group when I get them. For now, I note that I have heard through good old-fashioned word of mouth/rumor that some items were taken from a car (presumably unlocked) on Concord Dr. and that very recently a bicycle was stolen off of a carport on Brandywine.

POLICE CONTACT INFORMATION - For emergencies, call 911. For non-emergencies where time is not of the essence, it is very helpful to the police and the emergency call center if you do not call 911 but instead call 977-9041 – or, better yet, report the incident/crime at the police website, www.Charlottesville.org, and an officer will be assigned to the case and file a report. Below is direct contact information for our police officers:

Ronnie Roberts - traffic (requesting more speed limit enforcement): Roberts@charlottesville.org, ph # 970-3294;

Catherine Burch - daytime officer for Greenbrier - Burch@Charlottesville.org, cell ph # 989-9035;

Lynn Childers - evening officer for Greenbrier - Childers@Charlottesville.org, cell ph # 989-9068.

GREENBRIER SCHOOL NEWS

“Summer Reading Pays in Many Ways” is the theme for Greenbrier’s summer reading program. Greenbrier students are earning Reading STARS for books read over the summer. The students write their names on the STARS and place them in a container at school. On the first day of school, one name will be drawn to win a bucket of money. To help encourage summer reading, the Greenbrier library is open Tuesday evenings in July from 6 to 7 p.m. Students (current and new) can check out books and earn STARS. Ice cream treats also are given to the Reading STARS. Summer reading ideas are on the school web pg. www.ccs.k12.va.us/SCHOOLS/GREENBRIER.

Greenbrier students are becoming more avid readers. Did you know that although the enrollment at Greenbrier has remained steady over the last five year, the school library collection has increased by 56% and student use has increased by 40%?

If you are new to Greenbrier school, please visit soon to register your child(ren). Kindergarten Camp will be held July 28 through July 31. This is for new kindergarten students and their parents. Orientation for other new students and parents will be held on August 4. Please reserve your spaces for these events. For more information on any of the programs at Greenbrier, visit our web page or call at 245-2415.

GREENBRIER GRIPES (If you have a gripe, let me know: NedMichie@AOL.com or 296-6961)

I received a complaint that on occasion people have been riding dirt bikes on the trails in the Park. If it was you – Stop It. If you hear it happening, please contact our men and women in blue as described above.

I received a complaint about low limbs in the way on sidewalks – Those of you with the benefit of sidewalks in front of your houses, please remember that they carry with them the burden of keeping them clear for travel, including cutting branches and shoveling snow within a reasonable amount of time of it falling. Similarly, the people who live on corners should cut back trees and bushes that obstruct the view of drivers using the intersection.

Finally, I received a complaint or two about poorly maintained lawns/yards (fortunately it was not mine). All of us should keep in mind that the way our homes and yards look does affect the visual appeal of our neighborhood for all of us and can even affect the values of our homes. I also note that the city code prohibits lawns on which the grass/weeds exceed 18 inches in length. It further prohibits people accumulating any “offensive” or “unhealthy substances” on their property, including refuse, garbage, trash, vegetable matter and stagnant water. The code further prohibits keeping more than one inoperable vehicle at your house, and if you have the permitted one inoperable vehicle, it must be screened from view. An inoperable vehicle means any vehicle or trailer “which: (i) is not in operating condition (including, without limitation, any motor vehicle, trailer or semitrailer which, for a period of sixty (60) days or longer, has been partially or totally disassembled by the removal of tires or wheels, the engine, or other essential parts required for operation); (ii) does not display a valid license plate; (iii) does not display a valid inspection decal; or (iv) displays an inspection decal that has been expired for more than sixty (60) days.”

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION HELP NEEDED

The distribution of the Greenbrier Neighborhood Association newsletter depends on many faithful volunteers who hand carry it to each house in the neighborhood. A very special thank-you to all these wonderful folks!

We can always use more volunteers to distribute the newsletter - many hands, or in this case, feet, make light work! Please call Linda Seaman (973-8753) or email her (linda_seaman@hotmail.com) to volunteer. We need your help, and it can be a great addition to your fitness plan! So please call now.

NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING -- I have been contacted by one group interested in advertising in this newsletter but the Executive Committee needs to decide on a policy (i.e., should we allow it at all? If so, what should we charge?) I would like to know if there are others interested in advertising, but obviously, the advertising cannot be of a time-sensitive nature, given that the publisher cannot be counted on to get the newsletter out in a timely manner.

COMMITTEES

If you are interested in helping out on one of our committees, contact Ned Michie. The choices currently are: (1) **Traffic and Sidewalk** - involves considering possible future traffic calming measures and evaluating what sidewalk projects should be funded. (2) **Communications** - writing, editing, and/or formatting this newsletter (the current goal is to put out 3- 4 newsletters per year); helping with the web page and/or e-mail directory; possibly design a neighborhood brochure for real estate offices. (3) **Recreation/Leisure and Greenbrier Park** - considering ideas to improve the Park, considering organizing and sponsoring recreational activities such picnics or a 5-K fun run through the neighborhood. (4) **Security** - The function of this committee is to consider actions we can realistically take to make us all safer.

DUES FOR MEMBERSHIP

Dues are \$10.00 per year (January 1 – December 31). These dues will primarily go to pay for newsletter printing but will also be available for other purposes such as those described above. Please support our efforts to have an active and useful Neighborhood Association by sending in your check (made payable to “GNA”) to our Treasurer, Jon Perkins, 2411 Brook Rd., 22901.