



Sherman Oaks Homeowners'
Association, Trussville, Alabama
Newsletter, January, 2023
www.shermanoakstrussville.com

Board of Directors Meeting February 7, 2023

Our first 2023 Sherman Oaks Homeowners' Association Board of Directors [SOHA BOD] meeting is **Tuesday, February 7, 2023, 6–8** at the Trussville Public Library, 201 Parkway Drive. You received an invitation to the meeting with your annual dues invoice in early January. See you there!



Consider serving as a director, it is a good way to get to know and appreciate your neighbors and to learn what is happening in our neighborhood and the city. You will have the opportunity to review our financial statements, which are available to all property owners in good standing, but which we don't make public. Chit-chat before and after meetings includes news about restaurants, churches, new businesses, city inspections, the entertainment district, and city council decisions. Our goal is to protect our neighborhood's quality of life and property values.

Our 2023 officers are Don McGriff, president; Sue Evans, treasurer; Eli Kirkley, webmaster, Dawn Lunsford, assistant secretary and hospitality chair, and George Fritsma, secretary. Our directors are Pam Cargo, Jack Evans, Mike Ford, Susan Short, and Rory Wysong.

Closing Agent Communications

If you are planning to sell your property, your closing agent contacts SOHA to confirm that you are current in dues, assessments, and liens. All outstanding debt is settled at closing. To thwart potential investors, we use the closing correspondence opportunity to inform closing attorneys of our "owner-occupied" restriction and we require a *signed statement of compliance*. We assess the closing agents a modest compensation to cover our expenses.

No Renters in Sherman Oaks

The article on the next page appeared in our June 6, 2022 Newsletter. As of fall of 2022, there are no renters in Sherman Oaks. Meanwhile, in a recent meeting, the Directors voted unanimously that homeowners may rent a portion of their home to relatives provided the homeowner continues to reside in the home.

Here is our June 2022 Article About Home Investors

You've probably read that single-family home rentals are surging in response to US consumer demands. This year, the single-family home rental business is expected to reach \$50 billion according to Bloomberg News. National brokers aggressively seek property, especially in attractive neighborhoods like ours. Rising home prices and interest costs further increase the pressure to invest. Sherman Oaks homeowners receive cold calls, emails, and texts offering to buy their property. If you list your home, predatory companies offer more than your asking price in cash without an appraisal or inspection.



When you ask an investment caller whom they represent, you can't get a clear answer. Renters, for whom nameless nationwide investors may waive background checks, pay \$2000–\$3000 a month for homes like ours, but learn that when they require maintenance, the manager is unreachable. Resident homeowners know that rentals change the character of a neighborhood and may reduce property values.

In 2019, the SOHA BOD recognized rental risks and amended our covenant to restrict our properties to "owner-occupied." The amended covenant, which appears on our website, was approved by a majority of homeowners in a 2020 mail ballot and was subsequently filed by Attorney **David Blount** with Jefferson County Probate Court.

Sherman Oaks is one of Trussville's most desirable neighborhoods for its beauty, home quality, location, and property values, and new owners are warmly welcomed. Since 2021, several Trussville homeowner association presidents, facing similar risks, have contacted SOHA's BOD, asking how we amended our covenant. Several have asked for copies. If you list your home, please direct predatory investors to our covenant.

Added 12-31-22: From January 1, 2019 to today, thirty Sherman Oaks homes were sold, mostly to young couples with children, a delightful development. Our newer owners bring enthusiasm, judging by their creative Christmas decorations, number of newly-built "jug lights," comments posted on Linda Peek's "Sherman Oaks Neighbors" Facebook page, the number of new homeowners who attended last October's annual neighborhood meeting, and their suggestions that we hold a neighborhood get-together.

Dues

Our 2023 annual dues remain at \$225, billed in January. In 2022 we provided Hallmark's billing address for those who pay by check:

Hallmark Bookkeeping and Accounting
3015 Eagle Ridge Lane
Birmingham, AL 35242-5461

You may also pay online through "Cheddarup" at shermanoakstrussville.com.

Please continue to address *non-dues correspondence* to:

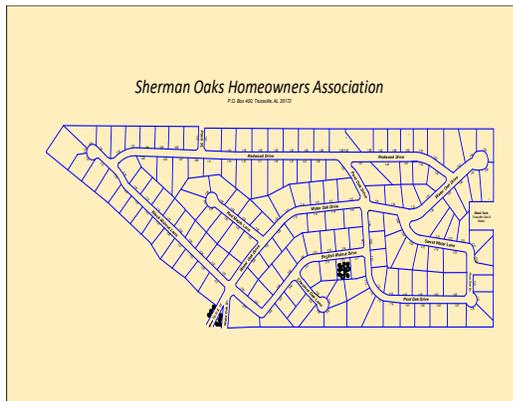
Sherman Oaks Homeowners' Association
PO Box 400, Trussville, AL 35173

The 2023 invoice, mailed January 3, lists a February payment deadline. Those of us who miss the deadline receive a second payment notice with a \$25 late fee added. Failure to pay in response to the second notice or *failure to add the late fee* with your late payment results in a third billing with an additional \$50 fee. To honor faithful residents who pay cheerfully and to protect our property values, when a resident's total of past dues and assessments exceeds a predetermined limit, our attorneys help us choose the best legal action, which range from filing property liens to wage garnishment or lawsuits.

Covenant Variances

In January, 2023, eight letters were sent from Blount-Davis Attorney Sharon Davis specifying the nature of our covenant restriction variances. Six of us have vehicles or trailers that are stored in a location visible from the public right of way, and two have property maintenance concerns. All are invited to meet with the SOHA BOD on Tuesday, February 7, 6–8 at the Trussville Library to establish terms. Those of us who choose not to meet with the BOD are required to correct the specified issue within 90 days to avoid assessments. Those who come to the BOD are treated fairly, and in some cases are offered assistance to correct their variances.

One resident asked, “Why does the letter come from Attorney Davis and not the association?” Since 2017 two delinquent homeowners’ attorneys have written to threaten lawsuits and a third actually sued, demanding a jury trial. While the plaintiff’s lawsuit was frivolous, and eventually withdrawn, it cost \$10,000 of your dues money to defend SOHA. The suit was filed before we had D&O liability insurance, and threatened two directors by name, endangering their property and assets. Consequently, the directors have purchased D&O insurance and decided that variance letters will be mailed by our attorney, not on our personal letterhead. This approach protects SOHA directors and makes the letters harder to ignore.



SOHA Map

Here is our subdivision map, first prepared in 1994 when sectors three and four were opened. The SOHA BOD maintains expanded copies of this map with residents’ names appended to each address. You may view a copy of the annotated map at any SOHA BOD meeting, including **Tuesday, February 7 at 6:00 PM in the Trussville library.** To protect residents’ privacy, the map with residents’ names is not distributed to the public. **When you update your phone number or email address, please forward the change to the SOHA BOD.**

SOHA Message Board



If you have a message you’d like to place on our board, please send it to **George Fritsma** at gfritsma@gmail.com. Make it short enough for drivers to read. We post *yard sales, graduations, church activities, birth announcements, school and city information*, or anything of interest to Sherman Oaks residents. The sign also provides our web site address, and we sometimes display the speed limit in hopes of controlling traffic to the Trussville Sports Complex.

Current SOHA Board Activities

- The directors provide welcome materials to new homeowners.
- We address homeowners' concerns.
- We update the entryway message board and encourage neighbors to suggest personal notes for the sign.
- We use the FLOCK system to count vehicles passing through our entrance and driving along Back Walnut Drive and Redwood Drive on their way to the Trussville Sports Complex. FLOCK also enables us to spot vehicles that may be involved in questionable activities, as it gives us a direct connection to the Trussville police.
- We periodically request Trussville officials to install speed cushions on Black Walnut Lane to discourage speeding by people using Black Walnut to get into the Sports Complex. We get no response from Trussville police, fire, or Mayor's office, but we keep trying.
- We periodically communicate with the city clerk, mayor, police chief, and fire chief, requesting they install four-way stop signs at the limited visibility intersection of Water Oak Drive and Post Oak Drive, but with no response.
- We provide documents for home sale closing agents who request confirmation that sellers are current on dues, assessments, and liens. For sellers who are delinquent, we collect the balance at the time of sale. We use this occasion to inform closing agents, sellers, and buyers of our requirement that the home be owner-occupied.
- We maintain the front entrance park. We contract with Green Life, Inc. to cut the grass, maintain the flowers, shrubs, and trees, spread mulch, weed killer, and apply fertilizer. We maintain the flag, bridge, irrigation, and lights. We contact Alabama Power to maintain the entryway street lamps.
- We arrange with "Holiday Decoration and Lights" to decorate our entrance park and we lay out the jug lights.
- We provide jug lights to our residents at cost.
- We communicate with Trussville Streets and vacant lot owners to control overgrowth.
- We communicate with several fellow Trussville homeowners' association officers.
- We review properties for covenant restriction variances and for outstanding maintenance.

Homeowner Commendations

The directors review Sherman Oaks properties to thank the owners for exceptional maintenance. Eight letters have been mailed to the owners of eight especially beautiful properties. The letters ask if we can publicly acknowledge their efforts in a subsequent newsletter or on Ms. Peek's Sherman Oaks Neighbors Facebook page. If you have a neighbor you'd like to honor, send us a note through our web site and we will add the neighbor to the list.

Newsletter in Print

We don't send the newsletter via US mail. Please print a copy or pick up a printed copy from Dawn Lunsford or George Fritsma and give it to your non-computerized neighbor.