



Sherman Oaks Homeowners' Association Trussville, Alabama

Newsletter, May 30, 2023
www.shermanoakstrussville.com

Thanks to President Don McGriff



After devoting countless years presiding over the Sherman Oaks Homeowners' Association [SOHA] our leader and dear friend **Don McGriff** has retired from the board. Through his leadership, Don has helped accomplish SOHA's goals to protect our neighborhood's quality of life and property values. The list of Don's accomplishments would fill this newsletter. In response to a gift from the directors, Don wrote, *"I would like to thank the SOHA Board for the gift card, it was very thoughtful. I feel like I should be giving the Board a gift for all the help you have provided me while I was president. You are a very valuable asset to the SOHA. You made my job easy. With the leadership of this*

board our neighborhood will continue to be one of the most desirable subdivisions in Trussville."

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

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. During our infrequent meetings, 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.

Fire

In February, **Susie** and **Larry Abbott** reported that their next-door neighbor **Connie Thomas**, 103 Black Walnut Lane, suddenly faced a "fully involved" house fire that started in her fireplace chimney. If you drive by today, you'll see that her home repairs are underway. Thanks to SOHA organizing efforts and Hallmark Accounting documentation, many neighbors joined to provide a cash gift. In response, Connie wrote, *"Dear Sherman Oaks friends, thank you so much for the monetary gift. It was very unexpected, but I am truly appreciative. Your thoughts and prayers are much appreciated. I am glad to be a Sherman Oaks homeowner. Love, Connie Thomas."* According to insurance adjusters, many metal-flue chimney fires tend to spread in the attic of single-family homes.



Graduates

We celebrated a “bumper crop” of Sherman Oaks graduates, as listed on our entrance message board. Congratulations to all! We had so many that we ran out of 1.5 inch “As”, “Ls”, and “Ss.” This explains the odd sizes and the upside-down “Vs”. This was a good problem to have, but it prompted SOHA director **Rory Wysong** to contribute a new set of letters. Watch for more orderly messages in the future thanks to Rory.

Yard Sale

Cahaba Springs Church on Deerfoot hosted a yard sale on Memorial Day weekend. Thanks to our many Trussville residents for shopping. The proceeds go to the work of the church, which supports several mission activities. If you’d like to post your event on our message board, contact SOHA secretary **George Fritsma** with the details. We post holidays, yard sales, graduations, church activities, birth announcements, school and city information; anything of interest to our residents.



Neighborhood Progress



Of our 150 Sherman Oaks properties, 30 have changed hands since January 1, 2019. Most sellers have sold to young purchasers, many with children. We welcome our new neighbors and we hope you enjoy your neighborhood. Sherman Oaks is attractive to buyers because we are convenient to Trussville schools, churches, retail, the sports complex, pickleball, the library, the senior center, and restaurants, but especially because of the value and beauty of our homes and property. Despite the efforts of predatory investors, we are a 100% owner-occupied community. We invite you to visit the

website at shermanoakstrussville.com [If you just Google "Sherman Oaks" you will end up in Los Angeles]. On the site, you will find our articles of incorporation, bylaws, our 2020 covenant amendment, and past newsletters. If you have any suggestions, please post them on the website or write privately to any SOHA director via Trussville PO Box 400.

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 seller debt, including filing, release, and attorney fees, 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. We also ask for purchasers’ contact information including email and phone in an effort to keep our residents’ roster up to date.

Dues

Our 2023 annual dues were a modest \$225, billed by *Hallmark Bookkeeping and Accounting* in January. Hallmark's address for those who pay by check is:

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

Most of our residents prefer to pay online through "Cheddarup" at shermanoakstrussville.com. Cheddarup adds a "convenience fee" which covers your credit card charge.

Please address your *non-dues correspondence* to:

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

In 2023, several residents failed to receive dues invoices. There appeared to be a US Postal Service breakdown, and in response, the SOHA directors voted to suspend our customary late fees.

Each fall the SOHA BOD establishes the dues for the following year based on current expenses and the percent of collections. Owing to human nature, all homeowners' associations expect a 90% compliance rate. For 2023, 136 of our 150 property owners [91%] have cheerfully paid. If you've forgotten to pay, this is your chance to get caught up without a late fee. If not, the amount that you are in arrears will be listed on your 2024 invoice. The BOD attorney files property liens on habitual non-payers.

On April 18, 2023, the SOHA BOD adopted an updated *Delinquent Dues and Variance Policy* to be placed in effect beginning January 1, 2024. You may review the complete document at any BOD meeting. Some highlights of the policy are:

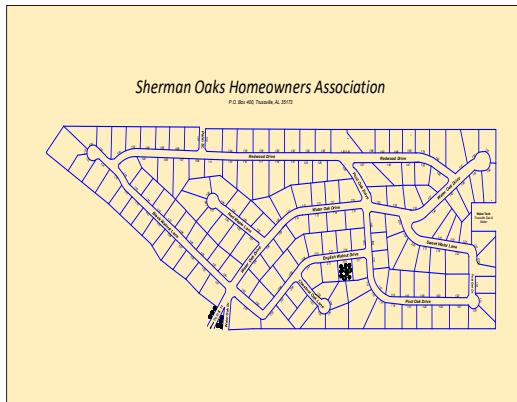
- Property owners are invoiced for dues and assessments each January with a 30-day deadline. The deadline is announced on the entryway message board, a November newsletter, the web site, and via a blast email to all residents for whom we have email addresses. Acknowledging that our US Postal Service may be unreliable, the BOD requires payment even for those who didn't receive a mailed invoice.
- Those who miss the deadline are assessed a \$75 late fee, which will first appear on the subsequent year's invoice. For those who miss two years' deadlines, a property lien is filed.
- For chronic delinquents, further legal measures are taken such as lawsuit, garnishment, and repossession.
- The BOD, charged with stewardship of property owners' funds, cannot offer installment payment terms.

Covenant Variances

If you watch TV, you may gain the illusion that homeowners' associations are a nuisance. One Sherman Oaks resident with a sense of humor posted a sign, "Defund the HOA!" Association directors are often characterized as power-hungry. If you walk around Sherman Oaks, you can admire the condition of your neighbors' lawns and shrubs. This is mostly because our residents love to beautify their property. In a few cases, you can thank your homeowners' association for enforcing covenant restrictions by documenting variances, usually in response to neighbors' concerns. It's not a power play, it's a chore, but in nearly all cases, residents are content to meet our standards.

In January, 2023, eight letters were sent from Blount-Davis Attorney **Sharon Davis** specifying the nature of our covenant restriction variances. Six of us had vehicles or trailers stored in locations visible from the public right of way, and two had property maintenance issues. Most of these eight properties are now in compliance to the betterment of our quality of life and property values.

In May, 2023, additional letters were mailed listing variances. As in January, all recipients are invited to meet with the SOHA BOD on **Tuesday, June 20, 6–8 at the Trussville Library** to openly discuss variances. 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.



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, June 20 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.**

Current SOHA Board Activities and Accomplishments

- 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.
- Directors address homeowners' concerns.
- We update the entryway message board.
- We provide welcome materials to new homeowners.
- 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 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 fellow Trussville homeowners' association officers.
- We review properties for covenant restriction variances.



Comments

We welcome your comments, and we hope you are enjoying Sherman Oaks.