

AMBERLEA NEWS

Amberlea at South Riding Newsletter

Spring 2016

WHAT DOES YOUR MANAGEMENT COMPANY DO?

We receive non-compliance notices from the management company. We send our assessment checks to the management company. We report common area maintenance problems to the management company. So, the management company makes all of the important decisions regarding our community, right? WRONG! FirstService Residential's function to our association is administrative in nature.

The management company works on behalf of the Board of Directors to oversee the operational issues the association must deal with on a daily basis. The Board of Directors is the principle policy-making body which sets policies, standards, procedures, programs and budgets. Management's function is to carry out these Board decisions. Management implements decisions of the Board and administers the programs, services and activities of the association within the policies and guidelines set by the Board.

One of the most important roles that our management company has is to act as the communication liaison between you, the homeowner, and the Board. If you have any association related questions or have an issue that you would like the Board to address, please take advantage of our management company's desire to assist you and contact them. When communicating with our management company, please keep in mind that although the Board has given them the authority to make many of the day-to-day operational decisions, some requests are going to need the approval of the Board of Directors. Here are some tips to help facilitate your communication with the board:

- ◆ When in doubt about your request, put it in writing
- ◆ Attend the Open Forum portion of the Board of Directors meeting
- ◆ If your request is "non-emergency" in nature, please be patient. In most cases, management will research the issue for the Board so that they can make the best educated, business decision possible
- ◆ If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the Customer Care Center at 703-385-1133

BASKETBALL HOOPS

Why are basketball hoops not allowed in the Amberlea? Basketball hoops are not allowed within the community for the safety of residents and the liability to homeowners personal property. There are many basketball courts throughout South Riding that provide a much safer experience. If you need help finding a court, visit Southriding.net and click on Amenities.

The next HOA meeting will be Wednesday, May 11, 2016, 6:30pm at the South Riding Center located at 42420 Unicorn Drive.

This will be the 2016 Annual Meeting. All residents are encouraged to attend.

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SPRING CLEANING

There are few rites of spring more satisfying than the annual clean. For many people, however, the pleasure comes only after the work is finished. Your spring cleaning may never become effortless, but you can make the project more manageable - and even enjoyable.

- **BATHROOM/KITCHEN**
 - Reseal grout lines. The cement-based material between wall, floor, and countertop tiles is extremely porous and stains easily. Protect it with a penetrating grout sealer; it's best to apply with a small foam brush
- **WHOLE HOUSE**
 - Outdoor AC unit. Spray the fins of the AC unit using moderate water pressure from a hose nozzle. Direct the spray from the inside out. Clean your outdoor unit on a day that's at least 60 degrees F. That's about the minimum temperature at which you can test your air conditioner to make sure it's working
 - Change the furnace filter at least once every month for air conditioning and every 4 to 6 weeks during heating season
- **LAUNDRY AREA**
 - The vent on a clothes dryer can become clogged with lint over time, causing the dryer to dry less efficiently and resulting in dangerous house fires. To clean your dryer vent, remove the outside cover on the vent, and use a special lint brush with an extendable handle to clean the inside of the pipe
- **OUTDOOR AREA**
 - Scrub driveways and walkways - Treat mildew spots with a solution of 1-part oxygen bleach to 3-parts water using a deck brush
 - Wash outdoor furniture - Most materials, including aluminum, plastic, wood, and wicker, can handle a solution of mild dishwashing liquid and water and a soft-bristle brush
 - Patching a screen - Tiny tears in nylon or fiberglass screens can be mended with a few drops of instant adhesive; small splits in metal screens can be fixed with epoxy. Larger rips, however, require slightly more attention

Double car garage units have vinyl decks called Duradek. These decks require special care when cleaning.

Ideally, Duradek vinyl cleaner should be used, it is available from an authorized Duradek contractor or directly from Duradek. Follow the directions on the label. While all cleaning products are not always available in every market, the best option is to use a cleaning product that states it is safe for use on vinyl. Choose a gentle cleaner and always follow the manufacturers recommendations for use.

Here are a few popular examples:

- Vinyl Deck Cleaner (available from Duradek)
- Simple Green
- Tide Detergent (diluted)
- Cascade Powdered Dish Detergent (diluted)

Use warm water and a stiff broom, scrubbing in a circular motion to loosen the dirt. Spray with a garden hose (under pressure) to wash away the loose dirt. Flush thoroughly with clean water.

Note: It is very important to remove all residue from cleaners used on your deck. *While the cleaner itself may be gentle, it is when the sun 'bakes' the chemicals into the surface that your deck can experience discoloration.*

While Duradek is manufactured with UV and mold inhibitors, in some rare cases mold growth can be a frustrating issue with a little more work required to clean. If you are experiencing mold on your Duradek, Clorox® recommends using their "Outdoor Bleach" product diluted at 1-part Outdoor Bleach to 6-parts water, as per their recommendations for cleaning vinyl surfaces. Apply early or late in the day when the membrane surface is cool to the touch. Apply solution with a garden sprayer and allow to sit on the surface for a minimum of 10 minutes. Re-apply the solution to areas that begin to dry during this period. Use a soft bristle brush on a pole to scrub the membrane surface. Small remaining spots can be cleaned using a firmer bristle brush. Then rinse the entire area thoroughly with a garden hose.

MAKING CHANGES? DON'T FORGET TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FIRST!

Fido Faux Paws

It's hard not to be a dog lover; after all, mankind entered into a societal pact with them centuries ago. In exchange for food, our dogs will offer us unconditional affection, companionship, and play. In fact, did you know that dogs really want nothing more than to please their masters? It is an undisputed fact, and if you don't believe me tune in to The Learning Channel the next time they profile man's best friend.

Some dogs will roll over and play dead on command. Others will fetch your slippers and newspaper. Some canines have even been known to traverse incredible distances to be reunited with families who were lost in a move. However, one thing that our bowzer buddies are unable to do is to clean up after themselves. If you have a canine collaborator, please pick up his droppings for him - remembering that he doesn't have opposing thumbs with which to handle a pooper scooper.

Failure to do so is not only inconsiderate of your neighbors, and disconcerting to the landscapers, but can you imagine the embarrassment Fido would feel if it ever got out that it was his droppings that all his puppy pals were discovering out in the open like that?

Sensitivity: It's a dog thing.

The Amberlea is a Condominium Homeowners Association and our governing documents require that the Association approve all proposed architectural changes before any work is started [By-Law 5.7]. The exterior walls and everything beyond is considered "common elements". The importance of this requirement cannot be overstated when you consider the reason for such a restriction. Membership in a community association requires compliance with pre-existing conditions and regulations. One of the biggest advantages of these conditions is the protection of our property values. The value of each home is directly related to the condition, appearances and aesthetics of our community as a whole. By regulating the kind and types of architectural changes that can be done, our Association is better able to maintain our property values.

Getting the Board to approve all proposed architectural changes is not just a good idea to protect your investment, it is a requirement! To make a request for any modifications to your property, go to the Amberlea website <http://dcmetro.fsrconnect.com/amberleaatsouthriding>. A link can also be found on the SouthRiding.net website. Once you log in to the site, click "My Community", "Forms and Documents", "Association Documents". The "Architectural Modification Form" is located on the last page. Fill out the request form completely, including signatures from your neighbors, and mail it to the address at the top of the form, or you can email it to arc.dcmetro@fsresidential.com or fax it to 703-591-5785. Attach any photos that are applicable to your request as well. Some of the more common modification requests include screen doors, satellite installation and plant material. If you're not sure if you need to fill out a modification request form, please feel free to contact FirstService Residential.

PROTECT YOUR HOME WHILE YOUR AWAY

While you're away from home, make sure your personal property doesn't end up in the hands of a burglar. Protecting your home can be as easy as making it look occupied while you're gone. Here are some simple measures you can take that can pay off in security and peace of mind: Have someone you trust pick up mail and newspapers every day. Leave a radio on. It signals to a burglar that someone's home. Also, turn the volume adjustment on your telephone bell down so a prowler will be less likely to hear the ringing of an unanswered call. Use automatic light timers. Set them to turn lights on and off in different rooms at different times. If you plan to be gone for just a few days, park a car in the driveway or ask a neighbor to park a car there. This not only gives the impression you're home but also stops burglars from backing up a van and loading your possessions.

WE NEED YOUR VOTE

The Board is working to change the language of some of the By-Laws. We need your vote. To make changes to the By-Laws requires 2/3 approval by the homeowner's. Ballots are included with the newsletter. Please complete the Amendment Ballot and email it to ASRBoard@gmail.com, or you can mail it to FirstService Residential. Please note the ballot requires the signatures of all grantees on the deed. If you have already voted, thank you; you need not vote again.

TOWING ENFORCEMENT

Road Runner has been given permission to patrol the community and tow any vehicle found in violation of any parking regulations. The most common towing violations are vehicles parked in no parking zones (typically marked by yellow curbs) or parked obstructing traffic (parking in alleys or over 2 feet away from the curb). Most other parking violations will receive a warning before towing is implemented, but a warning is not required. Driveways are limited common element, within public view and vehicles in violation of parking regulations can be towed from them. Revoking a units amenity rights may also include being allowed to park on common element (street) parking. Losing these rights is due to remaining in violation of the governing rules and regulations. Your designated parking spots (garage and driveway) are the only allowed parking spots you may utilize if your amenity rights have been revoked. Take the extra time to ensure that your parking is within regulation and avoid the unnecessary costs and inconveniences of being towed or receiving a violation.

MONTHLY ASSESSMENTS: DON'T GET BEHIND — IT COSTS MORE!

We all know that if we run out of money before all of our bills are paid each month it ends up costing us more money in the long run with late-fees and interest accumulating. It's easy to understand how important it is to have enough money available each month to meet our financial obligations. However, when deciding which bills to "juggle" and which to pay remember that your monthly association dues are just as important as your mortgage payment.

The Association must also meet financial obligations and in order to do so, it depends upon the timely receipt of your monthly association dues. When our community's budget is approved by the Board, it assumes two things: the amount of income must equal the amount of expenses, and, that each homeowner will pay their association dues in a timely manner. If one or the other fails to happen, the association has a cash flow problem and it usually results in costing all homeowners more money. If you let your assessment become delinquent, in order to bring your account current, you will have to pay more than the original monthly association dues amount. Late fees, interest charges and, if applicable, various administrative and legal fees must also be paid. The bottom line: Don't juggle your monthly assessment payment. Pay on time and avoid paying more (and possibly losing more!) in the long run.

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

The Board of Directors and FirstService Residential work hard to keep the community safe and in good repair; however, they can't be around all the time. One of the best ways to deter crime and vandalism in a community is to have a network of neighbors looking out for each other. Taking part is simple. The only thing you need is the participation of yourself and your neighbors. If you have an issue that you would like to bring to the attention of the Board, please contact FirstService Residential at 703-385-1133 or e-mail the Board at ASRBoard@gmail.com. All information is kept confidential.

INSTALLING CABLE

Are you having cable, FIOS or a satellite hooked up?

The contractor will need access to the utility closets in order to complete your installation. Make sure you call management to schedule access to the utility closet prior to your cable contractor arriving. Gaining access without permission is trespassing and will be prosecuted to the full extent allowed by law. Call 703-385-1133 to set-up access to the utility closet prior to the arrival of your contractor to avoid any delays of your installation. Please note, no satellite may be installed on the roof. Any satellite installed on a roof will be immediately removed at the owners expense.

May Is A Great Month To...

Start planning for your summer vacation. Check out the Sunday travel section of the newspaper. Send for brochures of far away places with strange sounding names.

Maybe you're willing to save up for an extra special vacation next year, and make this the year you visit interesting places in your own hometown.

GOVERNING DOCUMENTS AND THE HONOR SYSTEM

So, you live in a condominium association development. You've got your association's by-laws, and rules and regulations to contend with? What do you do about it? You may be surprised. Many association homeowners really do read through the documents and know what they are supposed to do or not do. Others merely go with the flow, taking hints from their neighbor's actions (which is okay - if the neighbor is right!) until they get a notice of noncompliance.

Generally, an Association is legally obligated to perform three basic functions: to collect assessments; to maintain the common area; and, to enforce the governing documents. Receiving a letter indicating you are in violation is the Association's attempt to do their job as prescribed in the By-laws, and uphold the governing documents that you accepted when you purchased the property. Board members and property managers cannot be on every corner watching for violations like Orwellian "Big Brothers". They should not have to be; you have a copy of the governing documents to read.

Violations are sent out to help ensure the high quality of living within our community which in turn helps maintain and preserve our property values. The main thing to remember is that an Association, its Board of Directors and management are not a police force. They typically rely on the honor system, with periodic walkthroughs. With a little help and understanding from all owners, the community can work together to maintain the integrity of each individual property and continuity of the community at large. Communication is key. If you have concerns or questions, contact us to help get the violation resolved before you end up with additional consequences. Ignoring notices sent from FirstService Residential will only cause more heartache.

RESIDENT CONCERNS

Sometimes residents may feel timid bringing questions or concerns to the attention of the Board members or may feel their voice goes unheard and turn to other sources to release their frustrations. The Board members are aware of every complaint that makes its way to the South Riding Community Facebook page and in most cases have personally contacted the individuals to see what they as parents, residents, and/or Board members can do to help. The Board members take great pride in our community and really do go above and beyond to help ensure we have the best community possible. The Board members want the residents to know that they can contact them anytime, for anything. The South Riding Community Facebook page seems to be a great source of information, but please don't be hesitant to voice your concerns directly to the Board as well. The Board does want to hear from you and does want to help. You can email the Board of Directors at ASRBoard@gmail.com.

Our Monthly Assessment - Get Your Money's Worth!

Each month at bill paying time we take out our check books and pay a multitude of monthly bills: credit cards, car payment, mortgage, etc. However, one of the least understood bills that we pay is our association maintenance assessment. Just where does our money go? Every year the Board approves a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The budget is then mailed to all homeowners for their review.

The budget lists all the anticipated expenditures for our association. Those expenditures include insurance, common utilities, common area maintenance costs such as landscape maintenance and snow removal, and administration costs such as professional management, postage, etc. It also pays for amenities such as our pool and gym access, community wide celebrations like the annual BBQ and 4th of July fireworks.

In addition, a portion of our monthly assessment is set aside to fund our reserves. Our reserve fund pays for the repair and/or replacement of the capital assets owned by our association. An adequately funded reserve reduces the chance that a special assessment will have to be passed in order to pay for repair or replacement of those assets. So, when you write out that monthly assessment check, remember that it covers many items necessary to ensure that our association maintains, preserves and enhances our property values.

CONTACTS

FirstService Residential, DC Metro, 703-385-1133; don.giacomo@fsresidential.com or Crystal.Gray@fsresidential.com

AAA – 703-818-8222

Animal Control – 703-777-0406

Sheriff's Office – 703-777-1021

Town Hall – 703-327-4390; townhall@southriding.net

Toll Brothers Warranty – 703-327-1692; cbolinger@tollbrothersinc.com

Road Runner Towing – 703-450-7555

Board of Directors – ASRBoard@gmail.com

Amberlea website – <http://dcmetro.fsrconnect.com/amberleaatsouthriding>

2016 HOA MEETINGS

The Board meets the second Wednesday of May, July, September and November

CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Join our community on-line!

The Amberlea at South Riding website provides a variety of tools to enable resident's access to the information about our community. From this website, you can access HOA meeting minutes, our governing documents, and forms, such as the ARC Modification request. If you haven't already opened an account, we encourage you to do so at <http://dcmetro.fsrconnect.com/amberleaatsouthriding> and follow the on-screen prompts for "Register without a Code" by entering your e-mail address.

PLACE
STAMP
HERE