

# RIVER'S EDGE ESTATES ASSOCIATION



DECEMBER-JANUARY-23/24

## RIVER'S EDGE COMMUNITY NOTICES



### Board Meetings

January 17, 2024\*  
February 21, 2024\*  
March 20, 2024\*  
April 17, 2024\*  
May 15, 2024\*  
June 19, 2024\*

July 17, 2024\*  
August 21, 2024\*  
September 18, 2024\*  
October 16, 2024\*  
November 2, 2024-Annual Meeting  
November 20, 2024\*

\*Board Meetings are held at the HOA Office at 4:30 pm on the 3rd Wednesday of each month unless otherwise notified. Please call the HOA Office if you plan to attend a meeting to allow Linda time to add additional seating if needed.

## ANNUAL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION MEETING

We want to thank all of you who took time out of your busy schedules and attended our Annual Meeting on November 4<sup>th</sup> at the Victory Christian Center in Ellijay. With the 50 members (representing 34 households) who attended the meeting and the 28 households who submitted their proxies, we had a quorum and were able to vote on community matters.

The meeting opened with Board President, David Ratner, introducing the members of the Board. Followed by the introduction of our guest speakers from our Firewise partners, and their presentation to the homeowners.

One of our guest speakers for the Firewise Presentation was Mike Davis, Forest Fire Management Officer for the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest with the US Forest Service. Mike started his presentation by warning homeowners how dry it is this fall and how easily fires can get away from you in this atmosphere, so please be extremely careful until we get a significant amount of rain. In fact, the Atlanta news stations later the same day reported a 10-acre wildfire that started in Gilmer County on Saturday afternoon along with a large fire in southern North Carolina not too far from here. Walker County has experienced a 100- acre wildfire and in the last week, the Gilmer County newspaper said we have had 18 fires.

Mike said that it is very important to keep our yards nearby forest clear of forest debris and leaves to prevent the fast spreading of any fire that may start. One concern is that the

### HOMEOWNERS RIVER'S EDGE

25 Blackberry Mtn. Dr, #8101  
Ellijay, Georgia 30536

No short-term rentals allowed

#### OFFICE MANAGER

Linda Black

Phone 706-273-3100

Fax 706-273-3201

After Hours Water and  
Gate Systems Emergencies  
(leave name, phone #  
and message)  
706-889-5640

Should you require assistance with  
obtaining medications or groceries,  
let Linda know.

#### EMAIL

riversedge@ellijay.com

#### WEBSITE

Webmaster:

Penni McDaniel

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Ratner, President

Tom Ostby, Vice President

And Water Manager

Jim Carr, Treasurer

Dave Schmitt, Secretary

Byron Trotter, Member at Large

#### DESIGN COMMITTEE

Dave Schmitt, Chairman

Esther Lax

Jim Carr

#### Firewise Coordinator

Byron Trotter

Newsletter Editor

Judy Carr

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Inclusion is neither an endorsement  
nor recommendation. Participation  
is a personal choice based on your  
own evaluation.

## Annual Meeting Continued

part-time residents and unimproved property owners are not here to keep their property cleaned up.

The presentation continued with Aubrey Brown, Wildlife Urban Interface Specialist and Chief Ranger for Gilmer and Pickens Counties. Aubrey let us know that Georgia is the 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation with 126 communities in the Firewise Program, thus making it harder for communities to obtain grants. He reminded us that their first objective is to educate communities so that here in the East part of the country, we do not have the same wildfire problems as the West. Byron will have a follow-up article in this newsletter about the Firewise Red Flags to protect your home.

Before the presentations by the Board Members, a motion was made and seconded to approve last year's Annual Meeting minutes. The minutes were approved.

Vice President and Water Manager, Tom Ostby began his presentation by explaining that in the last year, we have spent more money on our wells than ever before emphasizing that this equates to the age of our wells and the fact that parts and labor have also gone up. In addition to the regular replacement of valves, pumps, occasional tanks, and breakage of lines, 3 wells were struck by lightning this year and ceramic heaters have been purchased for all thirteen well houses as to prevent freezing of the pipes should we have a repeat of last year's weeklong frigid weather. Tom also complimented our well company mentioning the fact that they drop everything and come to our aid as it seems late Friday afternoons and weekends are notorious for water problems.

Dave Schmitt was the next speaker. He is our Secretary of the Board and Chairman of the Architectural Committee. Dave and his committee of Jim Carr and Esther Lax have reviewed 30 projects through October of this year. Twelve (12) of these projects were for tree removal, nine (9) were for deck and railing replacement or upgrades, five (5) were for new home construction, room additions or garage additions and four (4) were for household upgrades (new windows, doors, or a fresh coat of paint.

Dave has worked in the forest products industry for more than 4 decades and has a strong interest in our forest lands. Over that period, he has come to find out that a healthy forest has 65-100 trees per acre depending on the species and specie mix. As timber density climbs and the forest floor becomes cluttered, it can add to a fires ability to spread at a faster rate and be more intense. A conservative estimate may indicate River's Edge could have a count closer to 400 trees per acre. By removing standing dead timber, downed timber, diseased trees, or damaged trees, it could all play out to be a move in the right direction for a healthier and safer community. Trees within 5 feet of your driveway or walkway along with trees that are inside of 10 feet from your home may be removed at the homeowner's discretion. It never hurts to submit a DCR TREE REMOVAL PERMIT so we can respond properly when neighbors call in..

Dave then moved on to chipping and cleanup. We currently are hoping to stay on a pattern of chipping twice a year, spring and fall. The community's total efforts definitely show in a positive light and is appreciated by everyone. We thank you all. We hoped to continue with the efforts to groom common areas, but additional funds earmarked in that direction were needed for wells. Several common areas are maintained by homeowners who live around the specific areas. We thank you for your generosity, support and time. We have targeted Lakeview Terrace and Lakeview Circle's common areas for 2024 to be groomed. We are fortunate that a group of volunteers step up and help in clearing off the roadsides, better known as "ROAD SHOULDERS" as they were referred to by the Forestry Service guys at the annual meeting. This is not only a safety concern, it may also be a positive contribution toward extending the life of our roadbed. The cleaning up of our road shoulders is being done in tandem with our chipping schedule so we can avoid the accumulation of brush piles along our roadsides or any extended period of time.

Our budget for COMMON AREAS-MAINT/CHIP/MOW during 2023 was \$25,750. For 2024 it is \$27,000. The request was made that our grounds service clean up the area around River's Edge gate where Meg Earle and Catherine Webster weed, water, and strive to nurture an inviting entrance.

To all our property owners, volunteers, those mentioned and not mentioned, we thank you for all your help, generosity and hard work. We are the community we've become due to your insights, efforts, and contributions. Thank you.

Dave Ratner thanked Peter Gonsalves, Paul Gegenheimer, Dave Schmitt, Bryon Trotter, and Jim Carr for always taking care of our community when we have trees down, for working on our crown clean-up and for always being there when our neighbors are in need.

## ANNUAL MEETING CONTINUED

Our next presenter was Byron Trotter. Byron is a Board Member at Large and the Fireside Coordinator. He started his presentation by explaining that he is fairly new to the Firewise arena and when he contacted Firewise to request a grant, he was informed that the first thing that needed to be done was the assessment that happens every five years and this is the year! So, by the time you read this, the Firewise group will have been here for a comprehensive assessment. They will ride around our neighborhood and point out the good, the bad and the ugly as pertaining to a safe Firewise community! Some of the assessment may include homeowner's properties while other parts will include common areas and the general community. Byron said that he would contact the homeowner directly with any comments concerning personal property. The suggestions pertaining to common areas and our communities will be shared later in this newsletter.

Byron went on to remind us of the earlier Firewise presentation discussing that Georgia is the 5th in the nation for Firewise participation and that Georgia now has 126 Firewise communities. And this means that it is going to be harder to receive grants.

Byron also restated what the two guest speakers said about having our part time homeowners and unimproved lot owners not being here to clean their properties which puts all of us in more danger to the spread of wildfires. The Board will discuss this issue.

Another landowner asked about the dry hydrants we were obtaining a grant for last year. Byron explained that we did not receive the grant due to our decision to stop the project. At the beginning of the research for the hydrants, the firefighters that came out and talked to the Board were all excited about the project. So we started the grant paperwork. More research on and where the hydrants go and how many were needed was performed. But when Mary Ellen Cates and Jim Carr went back to the firestation and talked directly to the Fire Captain, he told them that the firetrucks would not be using the hydrants and it would be a waste of our money! They were told that if the trucks needed additional water, they would go to the ponds and get water without the use of the hydrants. A question arose about whose property would be the access to the ponds, Byron said he had given permission to use his access if the occasion arose to help a neighbor in need.

Last of the presentors was Jim Carr, the Board's Treasurer and member of the Architectural Committee. Jim started his presentation on the reason for the slight increase in the quarterly HOA dues stating that in 2013 and 2014, the well expenses were around \$3,600 per year. By 2016, the annual well expenses increased to \$12,000 - \$14,000 and by 2021 and 2022, the well expenses were between \$20,000 and \$23,000 per year but the dues were not raised the full amount to cover our expenses. In 2023, the well expenses have increased to over \$35,000 due to the conditions that Tom talked about in his presentation. To offset some of this year's well expenses that were not budgeted for, the money for the well repairs was taken from the money earmarked for our common area clean-ups so we did not have to take money out of our reserves.

Jim explained that until this year, our reserve funds were sitting in accounts that did not make any money for us. SO, this year the Board has tried to make our money work for us and in the first quarter of this year, \$145,000 of the reserve money was put into a CD at 4.1%. Another \$25,000 was put into a CD making 5%, while two more CDs were opened with \$10,000 in each. One making 5.5% and the other 5.6%. These reserve CDs are in varying amounts so that if we need to take some money out for an emergency before they mature, we will not lose all of the interest we are collecting rather only on what we need. At the end of 2024, we will have made in excess of \$11,000, as compared to the previous years when we made nothing. Our total reserve account equals \$193,000. That may sound like a lot, but when we need to do road work, the expenses will add up quickly.

Jim also stated that a total of \$10,500 has been collected this year in impact and water connect fees.

Dave Ratner asked for a motion to pass the budget. It was made and seconded. The budget passed unanimously. A motion was also made and seconded to vote on Dave Ratner continuing as a member of the Board for another 3 years. The motion was made and seconded and he was voted to remain on the Board.

Dave then talked about the mailboxes. Phil Teagarden and Jim Carr had found out that 7 of the package boxes were "broken". In other words, most of the 6 no longer had keys ! So they found a locksmith who would re-key the locks at a cost of \$25 for each lock and the two of them replaced the locks repairing 6 of them. One box will need a whole new door around \$200.

## ANNUAL MEETING CONTINUED

Even though that gave us 4 more boxes, the landowners voted to purchase 2 sets of 6 additional package boxes. It was mentioned that this would not take care of any package that was too large to fit into the boxes resulting in those packages being returned to the post office. Jim Carr, Phil Teagarden and Dan Libby offered to set up the new boxes after they arrive. Also a one time assessment of approximately \$68 will be made to allow for this purchase.

The question of the over-abundance of deer was also brought up. Dave Ratner explained that the Board had met with DNR this year and that the reduction of deer is a multi-year process at approximately \$5,000 per year. The DNR would need to come to our community to do the assessment, decide how many deer to eliminate, and talk to the community members about the elimination stations. However, this process would not work if we do not stop feeding the deer.

And with that, Dave Ratner asked if we could adjourn the meeting and eat lunch!

## KEEPING UP WITH THE BOARD

It has come to the Board's attention that people in our community think we have a River's Edge Facebook page. We do not, nor have we been approached by anyone to ask if we should have one. So, whatever is out there, is totally the opinions of whomever posted on the site and is not sanctioned by the Association!

By now many of you know why we were asking for help on the River's Edge Website. Our dear friends, Penni and Brian McDaniel have put their home up for sale and will be moving closer to their children. As of this newsletter writing, no one has volunteered to pick up the baton to help out our community. PLEASE! If you like to work on computers and have just a little time to keep our website updated, please call (706-273-3100) or email Linda Black at [riversedge@ellijay.com](mailto:riversedge@ellijay.com)

**From the RIVER'S EDGE ESTATES RULES, recorded in Book 2152, Page 165 of the Gilmer County Real Estate records, and located on page 40, titled the same as above in your RIVER'S EDGE HANDBOOK:**

- I. **No signs whatsoever, including without limitation, commercial, political, "for sale" and similar signs, visible from any street or neighboring property, shall be erected or maintained upon any Lot or Common Areas, except:**
  - a) **Residential identification signs of a combined total face area of three (3) square feet or less for each residence approved by the Design Committee.**
  - b) **During the time of construction of any residence or other improvement, job identification signs have a maximum face area of six (6) square feet per sign and of the type usually employed by contractors, sub-contractors and tradesmen.**

### **GILMER COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT -----EFFECTIVELY IMMEDIATELY!!!!**

After consulting with the Georgia Forestry Commission, the total outdoor burn ban for Gilmer County that has been in place since Monday, November 6, has been extended. The areas pertaining to this burn ban include all of Gilmer County, including the cities of Ellijay and East Ellijay, GA. If you have any questions concerning the burn ban, please contact Headquarters Station 1 at phone number 706-635-1333

## FIREWISE FALL/WINTER FIRE PREVENTION TIPS

By Byron Trotter

- **Fireplaces**
  1. **Gas log fireplaces**
    - a) If you use a gas or propane log fireplace they should be professionally inspected and if necessary, cleaned on an annual basis to prevent a debris blockage that could cause small amounts of carbon monoxide to enter your living space. See Judy's full set of gas log fireplace tips in this newsletter.
  2. **Wood burning fireplaces**
    - a) If you have a wood burning fireplace, especially if you frequently use it (1½ face cords or more), have your chimney professionally inspected and cleaned every year.
    - b) Burn dry hardwoods such as white oak, ash, birch, red oak, etc. These will help to limit the amount of smoke coming out of your chimney and creosote buildup inside of it. Chimney fires can cause massive damage to your chimney and in worst case scenarios, your home.
    - c) Make sure that your chimney cap is screened to help prevent embers from escaping and to keep birds and other animals from entering.
    - d) Keep a fire extinguisher handy and on the same floor as your fireplaces.
- **Firewise Prevention Tips**
  1. **Vegetation**
    - a) Clear vegetation from around your house and decks in the zero-to-five-foot zone when practical. If you are planning to plant new bushes or shrubbery, plant them further out than 5 feet to allow for growth that remains outside of the 5-foot zone.
  2. **Trees**
    - a) Have tree limbs trimmed so that there is at least 20-30 feet of clearance around the entire perimeter of your house. It's important to make sure that the trimming includes limbs that are well above the roofline so there's no canopy forming over your roof.
  3. **Clearing fall leaves and debris**
    - a) Clearing fall/winter leaves from around your property is an ongoing, not-so-much-fun process. I have raked and blown leaves five times in the past two weeks and have twice been on a ladder cleaning out leaves from the gutters and roof creases. But until the leaves stop falling you just have to do it to eliminate potential fuel for a fire.
  4. **Chipping**
    - a) If you use a chipper to dispose of branches or small logs, spread the chippings to avoid creating a mound of fire fuel.
  5. **Address visibility**
    - a) If the fire department or an EMT ever need to come to your home, make it easy for them to identify your home. Firewise recommends an address sign with clearly visible, 4-inch, reflective (or light colored and contrasting) numbering.
  6. **Under porch/deck skirting**
    - a) During the Firewise risk assessment it was noted that under the porches and decks of many homes there was a buildup of leaves that provide a lot of fuel for a fire. Either vented skirting or screened lattice is recommended to prevent leaf buildup. It will also help to keep small animals from invading your space.
  7. **Firewise 2023 membership has been renewed and we will be applying for 2024 grant funding as soon as the application is available.**

**Fall is in the air! Did you get your chimney cleaned yet? You need to because it is time to have our cozy fall fires and hot chocolate! If you haven't done so, make that call now. Even clean-burning gas fireplaces need regular cleaning and inspection. Servicing a gas fireplace is less messy than cleaning a wood burning fireplace, but you may still want an experienced serviceman to do it. The steps necessary to service a gas fireplace are as follows:**

**\*\*\*\*Inspect the exterior making sure the unit is properly mounted and there are no gaps or cracks in the framework.**

**Check the glass for cracks, loose glass panels, make sure the door gaskets are airtight and clean with vinegar.**

**\*\*\*\*Inspect the logs which can deteriorate over time.**

**\*\*\*\*Check the gas ignition. Test the gas ignition under the logs and make sure it lights correctly. Turn off the gas and clean all the valves and ports under and amid the logs by gently rubbing with steel wool. Check for gas leaks by brushing with water and dish soap while looking for bubbles.**

**\*\*\*\*Vacuum the interior. Dead bugs, dust bunnies and pet hair can accumulate and cause a fire.**

**\*\*\*\*Check your carbon monoxide detectors! If you do not have one, get one.**

**\*\*\*\*Inspect your chimney. With gas fireplaces, the biggest threat is condensation. Damp patches on the walls, ceiling stains, and white blotches on the exterior masonry are signs of a compromised chimney.**



## ARE YOU WINTERIZED AND READY FOR COLD & SNOW

This is a reminder for everyone who lives here full time, new residents, and our part time residents who are used to warm weather!

Even though the Farmer’s Almanac only predicts some cold weather, other predictions for us are to have a hard winter. As we have already seen the first of November, it is hard to tell when cold and freezing weather will appear, but here are a few suggestions that could help us from having a disastrous outcome should the freeze come!

### Fuel and Heat

Check your propane tank fuel level. Don’t rely on your propane company to routinely check your tank. As it gets colder, the propane companies get busier. During the winter months, it is a good practice to keep your tank no less than 25% full, higher if you leave your home for extended periods of time during the winter months. Do you have an alternative heat source like a fireplace? If so, make sure your chimney is clean and you have a good supply of seasoned wood.

### Water

Protect outside spigots and water pipes with insulated covers. If it sounds like there is a possibility of electricity loss, remember that we are on the same circuit as the county jail and therefore we should not be without power for long periods of time. However, when the electricity goes out, so does the water so you should have a supply of water on hand for drinking, cooking and to flush toilets. If you plan on being away for an extended period of time, you may want to consider shutting off the water supply and draining the inside water lines. Also set your thermostat at 50 degrees or above and open cabinet doors where the water pipes are located to prevent freezing.

### Roads

Our roads are not plowed by the county. If you are concerned about getting out of your home due to snow or ice, make sure you have a supply of ice melt to apply to your porch, sidewalk and driveway.

### Other Staples

You are advised to keep a supply of bottled water, medications, batteries, flashlights, and non perishable food items to make your day a little more pleasant.

### Old Farmer’s Almanac

Gilmer County is not with the rest of Georgia in The Farmer’s Almanac! We are with the “Deep South”, Region 8 (along with Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana)

Region 8 predictions are as follows:

Precipitation will be above normal, coming in the form of rain. The highest threats of snow are in mid and late January and mid-February (no surprise here). We do not expect a White Christmas!

Temperatures in North Georgia should be above normal for the most part with the coldest temperatures predicted for late December and early to mid-February.

Looking at the spring and summer months, the Farmer’s Almanac forecasts April and May will be warmer and wetter than usual. If the predictions are correct, North Georgians should be excited by the summer 2024 outlook.

### REINDEER “FACTS”

- \*\*\*Norwegian scientists have hypothesized that Rudolph’s red nose is probably the result of a parasitic infection of his respiratory system.
- \*\*\*Most of Santa’s reindeer have male sounding names, such as Blitzen, Comet, and Cupid. However, male reindeer shed their antlers around Christmas, so the reindeer pulling Santa’s sleigh are more likely to be female since they keep their antlers through December!
- \*\*\*Assuming Rudolph (or Ms. Rudolph) was in front, there are 40,320 ways to arrange the other reindeer.
- \*\*\*Reindeer are unable to walk and pee at the same time, so they have to take a bathroom break roughly every 6 miles. The distance between stops is so regular that in Finnish, this distance is known as “poronkusema” and is a description of distance in the countryside.



**FUN STUFF TO DO  
NEAR US**

\*\*\*\*VCC Adult Pickleball, Victory Christian Center, 208 Victory Circle, Ellijay. The Victory Christian Pickleball Club plays on Wednesday from 5-8 pm and on Saturdays from 9am to noon from September-December. Please visit the website <http://uccellijay.com> for more information.

\*\*\*\*SCROOGE! The musical Live Theater, 2591 East Main Street, Blue Ridge, GA Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays (7:30) and Sundays (2pm), November 16 – December 10. 706-632-9223

\*\*\*\*Holiday Lights of Ellijay opens on November 20<sup>th</sup> and runs until December 23<sup>rd</sup>. A holiday light spectacular held at the Lions Club Fairgrounds and is a walk-through light show promising to be the highlight of your Christmas season. Wander through thousands of twinkling lights while sipping hot chocolate and meeting Santa Claus.

\*\*\*\*LIGHT UP ELLIJAY begins November 24 with the community tree lighting. The Celebration continues on Saturday December 2 with a parade downtown at 6pm, followed by a visit from Santa, carols, vendors and more.

\*\*\*\*Christmas in Lights. November 23 – December 23, Mountain Country Christmas in Lights is a holiday treat. The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds will transform into a spectacular, magical light show immersed in Christmas. Music, arts, crafts, food, fun, entertainment, and a visit with Santa Claus. Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays through December 14 and after that, every day until December 23. Come early on Saturdays for the craft show and stay for the lights at 4pm -9pm. Admission is \$7.00 with children under 12 free.

\*\*\*\*The Helen Chamber of Commerce is holding the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Christkindlmarkt on the Marktplatz November 30<sup>th</sup> -December 1 and December 7-8. The Christkindlmarkt is a traditional German event that offers everything from unique gifts and decorations to an assortment of savory and sweet foods, drinks and candied treats. Free Admission.

\*\*\*\*Tour of Trees, Blairsville, Union County Community Center, 129 Union County Rec Road, Blairsville, December 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31, 9:00 am – 5pm. “Not open on Sundays”. Free Admission.

\*\*\*\*Kris Kringle Market, December 2<sup>nd</sup> from 10am to 2 pm at the Union County Farmers Market.

\*\*\*\*Atlanta Pops Orchestra Christmas Concert, December 10<sup>th</sup> at 7pm -9pm, Victory Christian Center, Ellijay. \$40

\*\*\*\*Cars & Coffee in Ellijay, (for All you people who are having car show withdrawals) December 30, 9am -11am, Smokehouse Country Grill. Free coffee provided. Breakfast is available. Bring your ride (car, truck, bike or whatever) and enjoy free coffee and great conversation.

\*\*\*\*Decorating Ornaments with Alcohol Inks, Saturday December 2, 1:00 – 4:00 pm, class fee \$45 plus supply fee of \$20. Decorate glass or plastic ball ornaments with colorful alcohol inks, metallic inks and glitter. No experience needed. The instructor is Joyce Clair and the workshop is held at the Gilmer Arts Gallery, 207 Dalton St, Ellijay

**MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL! AND TO ALL A GOODNIGHT!!**