



THE MOUNTAINEER

Walnut Mountain Property Owners' Association

Vol. 121

January 1, 2010

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1/14/10 – Garden Club
Potluck 6pm at Clubhouse

1/16/10 – Board Meeting
9am at the Clubhouse

1/16/10 -POA Meeting
11am at the Clubhouse

1/22/10 – Game Night
6:30 pm at the Clubhouse

2/11/10 – Garden Club
Potluck 6pm at Clubhouse

2/20/10 – Board Meeting
9am at the Clubhouse

2/20/10 – Game Night
6:30 pm at the Clubhouse

3/11/10 – Garden Club
Potluck 6pm at Clubhouse

3/20/10 – Board Meeting
9am at the Clubhouse

See Bulletin Board for
More Information and
for other events

IN RETROSPECT - 5 YEARS.....

by Gerald Spavins, On Site Property Manager

As we move into a new year, it is hard to believe that almost five years have passed since my arrival. With many challenges still ahead of us, I thought it would be insightful to look back at the achievements and changes that have taken place. This I feel would be helpful to the Board Members as well as informative to all of the Property Owners.

April, 2005, saw a change on Walnut Mountain in personnel, as prior employees moved on to bigger and greater things. As in most cases the transition from the old guard to the new was a bumpy one, but patience prevailed and procedures started to fall into place.

A Water Advisory Board was created, made up from long time residents of the mountain. In some cases, these homeowners were residents of the mountain at the inception of the use of surface water. This was very different from the previous well system that proved to have a high content of iron and was really not suitable for high quality potable water. The Advisory Board was of great assistance to us, not only for their history of the system but the placement of various components of the system.

In the months that followed, in 2005, it became apparent, through records and operations, that the 20 year old water distribution system was not functioning as it should. The Water Plant was running twenty four hours a day, withdrawing its allowable capacity of 100,000 gallons per day. On many occasions the plant exceeded the permitted 100,000 gallons due to usage but mainly from lost revenue water (leaks). It was estimated that of

the 100% of the water going to the system, 76% was lost revenue, (water leaks) and only 24% was actually going to the system as billable usage. The State of Georgia Environmental Protection Division accepts, in their criteria, an acceptable loss of 12% to 15%, a far cry from 76%. It was obvious that leaks had to be gotten under control and that the distribution system was of the utmost priority.

With the construction boom on second homes in full swing, various State Agencies were now looking even closer at small sub-divisions and gated communities popping up all over North Georgia. These included: The Department of Natural Resources, The Environmental Protection Agency, The Georgia Soil and Water Commission, and the Safe Dams Agency to name but a few. More stringent rulings were almost a daily occurrence, updates on changes in regulations, procedures and operations, changes in classifications, it seemed the changes or amendments were endless. Walnut Mountain's

Water Plant is classified as a Class 1. This is the same classification as much larger municipalities, but being a small operation with a maximum withdrawal rate of 100,000 gallons daily we still are under the same stringent regulations as Hall County, Forsyth County, Cherokee County etc. Every three years the Environmental Protection Division gives us what is referred to as a Sanitary Survey. This includes our Water Plant, Water Distribution System, record keeping, storage of chemicals etc., anything you could think of that is directly or indirectly related to the safety and quality of our water. In 2005 we attained a 59.7% out of a maximum of 100%, in 2008 we attained a score of 84% out of a maximum of 100%. From these percentages you can see we are headed in the right direction. In 2011 we are aiming for 87%. These scores don't happen by chance; it is only with the hard work and determination of our staff that we have progressed so far.

Each of our staff who is licensed to operate the Water Plant has to re-classify in June of every year. They have to attain 16 points by attending classes and seminars to retain their licensing. WMPOA currently has: two Class One operators - both part time, one is O.R.C (Operator Responsible in Charge) (required by State); three Class Three Operators (all operators are Water Distribution System certified) (one part time) and one Class Two (Laboratory Technician) who is the Plant Manager. Through our leak detection program we have repaired over 600 water leaks, reducing Water Plant operating hours from 24 hours a day to an average of 10 hours a day, depending on usage. This reduction effects wear and tear on motors and pumps, reduces chemical usage, labor costs, and utilities, and many other things associated with operating the Water Plant.

Also, getting away from the water plant, all of our outdoor employees are State certified flaggers for traffic control & Confined Space Entry. Professional skill level improvements are encouraged and we have a staff that readily accepts these challenges.

The achievements and goals that our staff have accomplished over the past five years are:

Water Distribution Map (State requirement)	New ground water storage tank
Leak Detection program and Map	Chemical Metering (State requirement)
Zone metering and Replacement meter program	Flushing program (State requirement)
Back up pumps and motors (State requirement)	Tank maintenance plan
Separate chemical storage (State requirement)	Safety Meetings
Leak log	
Construction standards for distribution system (State requirement)	
Standard Operational Procedures (State requirement)	
Double walled bulk storage chlorine tank (State requirement)	
Extend drinking water lake dock to accommodate 2 nd withdrawal pump in deeper water.(State recommendation)	

It has been a long hard struggle to attain these goals and achievements and stay within budget restraints. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to call me at the Administration Office 706-635-2565.

I hope this has been an informative insight into the goals that have been achieved. We continue to improve our distribution system, update our Water Plant and see that our employees attain their continuing education points through the Georgia Rural Water Authority and the State.

FROM THE PRESIDENT, Chuck D. Burnfield

At a recent "town hall" meeting concerning the hours of the Welcome Station and a measure to cut cost, I must admit that I was disappointed in the tenor of this meeting. Especially when I observed several longtime dedicated residents leaving the meeting due to the raucous behavior of a few, spewing unfounded innuendos, or droning philanthropic platitudes, and even a former member of the board making unnecessary disingenuous comments. However, I have seen this theater played out on several previous occasions - during the evolution of the new CCRs ten years ago, the resignation of some employees, and other situations involving a lack of information. However, my greatest disappointment in the meeting was the general misunderstanding of the role of our excellent Property Manager, Gerald Spavins.

Gerald was hired following the resignation of our former maintenance/water plant manager who departed for a job with a better benefit package. It was during this time of transition that Gerald discovered that several vital compliance issues directed by the State of Georgia DNR/EPD had to be improved. I happened to be on the mountain during a no-notice EPD inspection of the water plant several years ago when I was serving as treasurer. I cannot go into detail about my conversation with the inspector, when I was summoned to the water plant, but the short story is that he threatened to shutdown the water plant the next day unless certain compliance issues were corrected. Gerald and his staff focused on those areas of deficiencies, and the water plant has continued to improve each year. It is ironic that many of the improvements didn't involve Gerald standing in a ditch with mud up to his knees as some residents project the role of a Property Manager to be. Instead, he was able to delegate many repair orders while he managed a careful and deliberate effort to make significant improvements to Walnut Mountain's administrative and compliance processes.

Water regulators demand good documentation (paperwork), and they consider it to be essential to produce the final product that comes out of your spigot. Finding a Property Manager that has that unique blend of willingness to work with his staff in the ditches as well as being a manager and administrator behind a desk is difficult to find with the payroll restrictions that a small community faces. If you haven't met Gerald, after a few words of conversation, you can easily tell that he is an Englishman not a good old boy. He grew up outside of London and after graduating from high school, he attended Luton Polytechnic College for four years. He later served for twenty years with a local British fire department. After following his sister to the United States, he worked nine years with the city of San Angelo as Director of Facilities. Later, he moved to North Georgia and was hired as the part-time Property Manager at River's Edge, and later assumed additional responsibilities at Blackberry Mountain.

He has managed the improvement of our water plant from a DNR/EPD evaluation score of fifty-nine percentile to eight-four percentile. He discovered a new high-tech leak detection system and planned a demonstration on the mountain. This device cost \$20,000, but has produced savings of lost water and electricity into the hundreds of thousand of dollars. He also recently negotiated the contract on the new water storage tank that saved Walnut Mountain about \$60,000. He has worked closely with our engineering consultants to generate the design specifications which were submitted to the State for the Lake Dakwa siphon system project. He assisted in the negotiations of the cell tower contract that will double the annual revenues within the next two years. He has built a very competent staff and has motivated them to obtain additional water certifications. His

newest maintenance employee is a former United States Marine who received his technical training in aircraft ground equipment repair, and continues to save the mountain expenses for small equipment repairs. And yes, he does have pictures of his horses on his computer, but for the elderly gentleman that complained, it is called a screen saver!

As President of your Association, I see the daily commitments of the entire staff and especially the dedication of our current Vice President and Board Property Manager, Lynn Robey. She is a powerhouse, with a great deal of energy and class. However, finding volunteers to take the Vice President's job without having a fulltime Property Manager would become increasingly difficult. A \$650,000 small business that has to comply with State and Federal mandates just cannot function without having someone who is competent, literate, dependable, and a resourceful manager. That is the role of Gerald Spavins and he needs and deserves the complete support of all residents.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW RESIDENTS

The following have purchased lots or homes on Walnut Mountain in the past three months. Please extend to them a warm Walnut Mountain greeting when you see them:

- Adelaide DeAnnuntus – a home at A86
- Michael & Jeanette Meadors – a lot at B67
- Wayne and Mary Jo Hooper – a home at F316
- Lorraine Bauman – a home at J297
- Molly Perry – a lot at B73
- Philip Savrin – a home at M224
- Doug & Bonnie Robinson – a home at M133

WALNUT MOUNTAIN HEMLOCKS

The last Saturday in November, I attended a seminar on Hemlocks and what we can do to save them. Walnut Mountain is going to treat the Hemlocks on the common property with injections around the base of the trees. We have purchased an injector to treat them, with Kevin Johnson providing the training. We found all the trees near the creek have some degree of infection. All trees being marked will have a small red circle near the base of the tree. Treatment will start sometime in March.

If you are interested in preserving the Hemlocks on your property, please contact Kevin Johnson at 866-883-2420 or Mark Shearer 706-864-4787. If you are interested in learning how to treat your trees and borrowing our injector, you will need to take a training class. Please contact Twila, so we can provide you additional information in the next 2-3 months.

Lynn Robey, Property Manager

WATER PLANT TOURS

Our Water Plant is the most important part of Walnut Mountain. A few years ago on the 4th of July we had a major water problem – we were all without water for most of the day. Since then, many changes have been made to the system. Many residents have not had the opportunity to see how the plant operates, so Danny Tatum, our Water Plant Manager, is offering half hour tours of the Water Plant starting in January. The Water Plant size will only allow five residents at a time to take the tour. All guests must sign in at the time of the tour because it is a restrictive area. Please call Twila to sign up for one of the tours below. If we have more interest than the times being offered, we will provide additional dates. Those dates are: Saturday Jan. 30th, Monday Feb. 1st and Tuesday Feb. 2nd.

ACCESS FOR REALTORS

All local real estate companies will be issued codes to enter Walnut Mountain. This will provide access to Walnut Mountain seven days a week during and after hours of the Welcome Station. Any resident using a non-local realtor will need to provide access to Walnut Mountain on their own.

911 NUMBERS FOR HOMES

All emergency vehicles entering Walnut Mountain need to have a visible house number, such as 123 Walnut Mountain, **NOT** the lot number. When you are the one having an emergency you don't want them driving around longer than necessary. All emergency vehicles have their own access code to enter. Walnut Mountain has the stakes and the numbers and will install them for \$12.00. We would prefer to install them so the water lines won't be affected. Please call **Twila** for installation.

LOWER YOUR PROPERTY TAX

When a Gilmer resident turns 65 before April 1st they are entitled to a discount on their county property tax starting that year. They will no longer have to pay the school mileage rate. You must go to the Tax Office and fill out a form.




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