
The Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association, Inc.

1998-

Winter 1999

Membership

It's that time of the year when we ask for your financial help to support your community association. Your participation assures that the Association will continue to act on all the issues that will affect the quality of life in our neighborhoods. **The annual dues for each household remain the same for 1999—\$40.**

The Association serves an important communication function with the approximately 3,000 families within our boundaries by means of the **newsletter, personal zoning alerts, and the annual meeting.** We also sponsor the **annual bonfire and a spring cleanup.** Members receive an annual **membership directory.** Board members and our executive director are always available to answer questions and to help with neighborhood problems. The Board is working to serve you—to ensure that our community will provide an enjoyable lifestyle for generations to come, but we cannot do it without your financial support.

Please pay your dues now, using the enclosed card which shows your name, address, and telephone number as they will appear in the 1999 membership directory. If you would like your email address listed in the directory, please print it clearly directly below the label. If you would like to provide it for our records only, please print it on the back of the directory card.

As always, please let us know if you have any concerns or suggestions. The office telephone/fax number is 410-377-4700 or you can email us at ruxrider@bcpl.net.

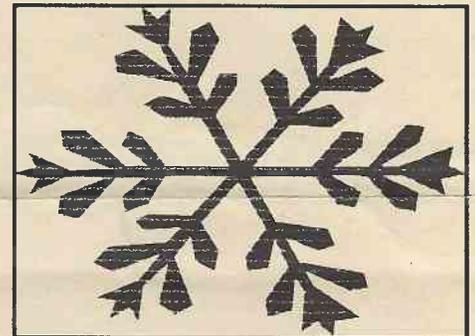
Thank you!
Carol Shear, Treasurer
and Membership Chairperson

Annual Bonfire A Roaring Success!

Several hundred people—the biggest crowd yet—bundled up late one Sunday afternoon before Christmas and brought their children and singing voices to the annual bonfire.

The event, sponsored by the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association, was started four years ago and has been growing steadily each year since. But the founders agreed this year's bonfire was the most successful. Some great advance publicity through a Graul's advertising circular helped draw more people this year to what old timers call the "old rugby field" just off L'Hirondelle Club Road in Robert E. Lee Park.

Once there, they enjoyed cookies and apple cider and watched the lighting of the fire. For the first time, this year Michael Allman, Riderwood Elementary School's music director, agreed to lead the singing, which he did with the help of some of his students.



St. Nicholas finally appeared—his entrance was delayed by a flat tire on his four wheel drive—and provided some distraction and candy for children. Some families tried to roast marshmallows (a little hot up there next to the flames) while many others took a relaxed break from the holiday madness to talk to their friends and neighbors.

Many people in the community and outside helped with the event. Thanks to Fred Campbell of Fire Safe Inc., the Baltimore County Fire Department, J. Harold and Dennis Graul, Stephanie Esworthy of the Baltimore City Department of Parks and Recreation, and Michael Allman.

Members of the association's board who helped make it all happen are: Sarah Lord, Harry Gormley, Barry Truax, and Fred Rasmussen. Anyone with ideas for next year's bonfire, please contact us.

Annual Meeting

Tuesday, May 25, 1999
7:30 p.m.

Church of the
Good Shepherd
1401 Carrollton Avenue

*The Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland
Area Improvement Association, Inc.*

*P. O. Box 204
Riderwood, MD 21139*

*Telephone/FAX 410-377-4700
ruxrider@bcpl.net*

President's Letter

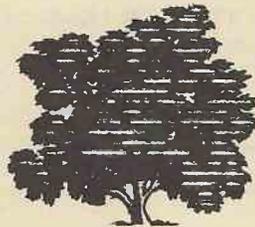
This seems to be the time of year when the "state" of various organizations is addressed—the "State of the Union", the "State of the State", maybe there is even a "State of the County". So, perhaps it is appropriate (and hopefully not presumptuous) to talk about the state of the Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association (RRLRAIA). A few examples of what we have been doing and what's in store:

The Good:

- The developments at Greenspring Station have been temporarily halted. Our organization, represented by Rick Huether, was part of a coalition of community associations that challenged these proposals, met with Dutch Ruppberger and other officials, and participated in several meetings. Perhaps partially due to these efforts, Councilman McIntire introduced some timely legislation which has derailed the development projects...at least for now.
- The expansion plans for Loyola High School were modified thanks to a fast acting group of neighbors and the RRLRAIA. Kudos to board member Biff Hearn and some residents of Chestnut Avenue who helped get a neighborhood consensus and mobilized an excellent effort in record time. Loyola, for their part, was great to work with and has been very amenable to the neighborhood desires.
- The first (and hopefully annual) stream and Lake Roland Clean-Up was a great success. Driven by the energy and enthusiasm of local volunteers ranging in age from 4 to 75 and Sarah Lord, 25 bags of trash and 12 tires were hauled from Towson Run and the shores of Lake Roland. It was a day of good family fun.

- The annual Bon Fire at the old rugby field drew a record crowd of approximately 500. Cider and cookies from Graul's, some wonderful winter weather, a terrific fire, and Christmas caroling led by Michael Allman from Riderwood Elementary all combined to create a magical evening. Thanks to master planners and firebugs Barry Truax, Harry Gormley, and Fred Rasmussen who put it all together.

- There was a serious initiative to either create a RRLRAIA land trust or to join an established one. Jim Smith and David Whitman have been sorting out all the various options and elements and trying to determine interest and/or viability of this type of land preservation in our area.



- The new occupants of the old Seventh Day Church on Joppa Road, (now the Full Gospel Baltimore Church), were persuaded to modify their exterior plans for an addition making it more compatible with the community. Thanks to Reverend Lee and his group who went the extra mile to be good neighbors.
- Current plans are for the old Woodvale School across from the post office to be torn down and a Manor Care assisted living facility to be erected...but that's not the "good" part. Although this project will be larger than we may have liked, there are some real positives to this situation. First, thanks to a timely letter from board member Joe

Coale, the little yellow house on Bellona, which was to be razed, has now been saved. Second, thanks to some excellent work by a task force led by Skip Miller and Carol Shear, some restrictive covenants have been attached to this development which will insure accountability to the community.

The Bad:

- Although the Greenspring Station development plans are on "hold", we know we have not seen the end of development at this already overcrowded intersection. Traffic is bad...and it probably going to get worse. The Meadowood parcel (the "corn field") at the southwest corner of Greenspring Valley Road and Falls Road is slated for conversion into recreation fields. This certainly is preferable to development, but it will inevitably create more traffic and congestion.
- Charles Street traffic and traffic patterns are a growing concern. With the aforementioned Loyola expansion and the new assisted living facility being built just north of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, we can expect to see increased traffic and U-turns. One ameliorating factor may be the proposed employee access road to GBMC on Towson towne which may ease some congestion at Charles and Malvern.
- Towson University's proposed Regional Sports Complex will create some traffic and cut-through problems our community. We are working with the Greater Towson Council of Community Associations on that front.

The Ugly:

- General "in-filling", the process of developing all available land, has certainly escalated. More and more often it seems that zoning variances are being granted for construction projects...some good, some bad. Unfortunately, there have been too many situations in which the decisions just "don't make sense" from environmental and/or community compatibility standards.
- Light Rail has the funding and is in the process of planning double-tracking through the areas in our community that are now single track. We may not be able to prevent this, but as long as we are resolute, we will be able to prevent a stop in our area. However, as long as the philosophy seems to be "if we build it, they will ride it...", we must be vigilant and continue to oppose any stops in our community.

So, in sum, there have been some successes, some challenges, and a lot of concerns. To paraphrase a book title, sometimes it seems that instead of "Barbarians" there are "Developers" at our gates. We are certainly not opposed to reasonable, responsible, and compatible development but, as stated above, so many projects just "don't make sense". To try to squeeze a few extra bucks at the expense of the environment, or just general aesthetics and community compatibility, is anathema to what we stand for.

Finally, I would like to thank and acknowledge the commitment and contributions of our board members who have served for 6 years (two 3 year terms) and will be coming off the board in May:

- George Grose, the quintessential team player, who is always there, always willing to help, who has done so much from spearheading our zoning committee to re-organizing our committee structure.

- John Dahne, who has been our Cal Ripken, missing only one meeting in 8 years (filled a vacant position and then was elected twice), doing everything from serving as president to manning the rake at the bon fire.
- Carol Shear, treasurer nonpareil, who has made it look easy (it isn't) and, in addition to her treasurer responsibilities, has always been there to do what was needed, from stuffing envelopes to attending county meetings.
- Jim Smith, who has done so much to give life to the possibility of an area "land trust" which could be

a partial solution to over-development.

- Louise Hildreth, who has undertaken some of the toughest and most demanding jobs, such as membership, with dedication and enthusiasm and, most importantly, positive results.

And one necessary post script: I would like to thank and acknowledge the exceptional work of our Executive Director, Peggy Squitieri. She goes above and beyond and all other directions to make it work for all of us.

Sincerely,
Michael Sicher

Greenspring Station Area Developments

Although located outside of our boundaries, development around Greenspring Station will have a direct impact on our neighborhoods. We are, therefore, monitoring it closely. Legal fees have already been incurred to oppose two proposed developments at Greenspring Station. If you would like to contribute to this cause, you may include a check payable to

The Valleys Planning Council
Greenspring Station Fund

with your dues payment. We will be happy to forward it for you.

Also, if you feel strongly about the traffic at this intersection, please share your concerns with:

Wayne Skinner
Councilman, Fourth District
400 Washington Avenue
Towson, MD 21204
410-887-3389

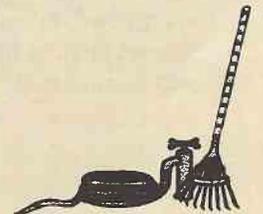
It is important that he be aware of the issues that affect our residents.

Board Forms Beautification Committee

At the January meeting of The Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Area Improvement Association, a committee on beautification was appointed to review the general state of maintenance and appearance of the community. Public, park, roadways, and other highly utilized and visible open spaces appear to be under stress caused by development, traffic, and simply, general neglect. This decision followed the observation that certain areas of the community have become unkempt and are accumulating trash and undergrowth debris.

The committee will evaluate the suggestion that a private landscape contractor be hired to periodically sweep and provide basic maintenance services to critical areas. This would augment the volunteer work of spring and fall cleanup days that has been so well received by our residents.

Several other neighborhoods in the north Baltimore area have secured such services with very beneficial results. The committee will consider the extent and level of effort required and report their findings to the Board. Committee members are Alan Edelman (321-7575), Rick Huether (821-6070), Bruce Boswell (823-4829), and Joseph Coate (321-4703). Should you have any comments or suggestions for this group, please make them known. You may also call or fax Peggy Squitieri at the association office at 377-4700.



Development Updates

Loyola High School

Loyola plans to expand the gymnasium and move the tennis courts. Enhancements to the Chestnut Avenue approaches and entrance are proposed along with the expansion or replacement of Sheridan Hall and finishing off the north end of Wheeler Hall.

Loyola and the area residents have worked diligently to address each others' concerns. Loyola and some of the residents have entered into covenants that place restrictions on the fields north of the current gym, enrollment, and lighting on Hargaden field and along Chestnut Avenue. All parties are concerned about the amount of traffic generated by Loyola and have agreed to commission a traffic study to determine the best possible patterns. The goal is to limit traffic on Chestnut Avenue and the surrounding neighborhoods.

The proposed changes in front of the gym should greatly alleviate the current traffic problems that occur at dismissal times.

Loyola has been extremely cooperative in listening to the residents' concerns. This has been a remarkable example of a large development plan and the area residents' needs being amicably negotiated to a reasonable conclusion. The needs of Loyola are being met with the least conceivable impact on the neighborhood.

Arden Courts Assisted Living Facility

Manor Care appeared before the Baltimore County deputy zoning commissioner in December to request necessary variances and a special exception to permit a 60-bed assisted living facility on the site of the former Woodvale School. Except for a request for a larger sign, all variances were granted.

However, an appeal has been filed. A hearing will be held on Wednesday, February 24, 1999 at 10 a.m. in Room 48 of the Old Courthouse at 400 Washington Avenue. If you plan to attend, it is suggested that you check with the Board of Appeals or our office the day before to check for any schedule changes.

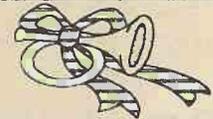
Full Gospel Baltimore Church (West Joppa Road at the Beltway)

The Church plans a two-story addition to their church. We are working with the Church and the Baltimore County Planning Office to ensure this addition will be compatible with the surrounding area.

Korean Methodist Church (Falls Road at the Beltway)

We just learned that this church also plans a two-story addition. We will monitor this and report as more details become available.

St. John's Church Hosts Christmas Caroling



Christmas got a delightfully early start December 2, 1998, with community caroling at the tiny St. John's Church off Bellona Avenue. This fascinating piece of Ruxton history dates back to 1833 when Aquila Scott and four other free African American men purchased property for the purpose of worship and interment of their Bare Hills/Ruxton congregation. The original stone parsonage still stands, but the current chapel is the third built on the site, dating from 1886, set on the foundation of a second structure, a log church which burned in 1876. (The proximity of the railroad to the church and cemetery likely was responsible for the first chapel's demise as well.)

In the 1950s, St. John's fell into disuse and gradual ruin. But in 1980 former RRLRAIA board member Gail O'Donovan spearheaded its preservation -- mobilizing private and public fundraising and coordinating the volunteer efforts of everyone from the Scott family to architect Tom Spies; W. Boulton Kelly, chairman, and Tom Offutt, treasurer, of Baltimore County Historical Trust; John McGrain, County Historian; Joseph Coale, Governor Harry Hughes' liaison to the Maryland Historic Trust, and the Boy Scouts to name a few.

Today, St. John's Church is on the National Registry of Historic Buildings. Its services are occasional throughout the year; it is a lovely location for weddings.

Last March architect Janet Reynolds and her husband Paul became tenants in the tiny parsonage, which means they are caretakers of the church and grounds. "Being able to live in such a historic place is really special," she says.

Reynolds and church trustee Carolyn Scott Levere made an effort to publicize the Christmas caroling this year saying, "We need to get more of the community involved in this little gem." And indeed, on the evening of December 2nd St. John's pews were quite full, as whites and blacks lifted their voices together. Janet Reynolds led the singing, Elvira Rideout played the old portable organ, and Viola Rideout read the lesson. It was a quiet, unfettered, charming way to herald the season.

Next Christmas the RRLRAIA Newsletter will alert its readers to the date and time of the St. John's Church caroling.