

The Foothills Clusters

Homeowners Association Newsletter

Volume 3, Number 1 Winter 2016

www.foothillsclusters.com

Today's highlights:

- Re-coating your roof? Contact the Architectural Control Committee first.
- What's happening with repaving our roads? Quite a bit! Details below.
- Do we need to change our CC&Rs? Time to start thinking about that.

Message From the President

Good February, everyone. For those of you who have been unable to attend our monthly Board Meetings, where have you been? We need you and your neighbors to come. We meet at 6:30 the 1st Monday of the month, with certain exceptions, at Catalina Foothills High School. We are in House No 1 in the Seminar Room. Please join us. It will be much easier for us to accomplish our goals if everyone attends. Don't worry about us running out of room. If we need to, we will move to a larger meeting space.

Speaking of goals, how many of you saw the table set up to get signatures for Pima County to repave Evans Mountain Road? How many of you signed the petition?

On to our private roads. We are moving forward in accomplishing the work on our roads. I am fairly certain there are very few residents of The Foothills Clusters who aren't concerned about our roads. Unfortunately, we will need a high percentage of our homeowners to get this much-needed work accomplished. Back to paragraph No 1—Where have you been on Monday evenings?

Please, everyone, come to the meeting on Monday, March 7th so you can be in the know. See you then.

Aletha Kalish

VP Viewpoint

The board and many of our committees continue to accelerate the addition of energetic new members with new skills and fresh new ideas. We're also retaining many wise old sages, leaving the board fully staffed for the first time in recent memory – well, mine, anyway.

Goals, plans, and schedules are effective tools for keeping us all on the same page, keeping us on task, and increasing productivity. To that end, this board is attempting to finalize a schedule for most board and committee plans for 2016. We intend to publish a calendar on the Foothills Clusters website shortly.

You will read a lot about our roads in this newsletter. I sincerely hope that you're hearing a lot while talking to neighbors and others as well. **THIS IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST THINGS THE HOA HAS DONE IN A VERY LONG TIME.** And, not surprisingly, this will involve the commitment of a large amount of the HOA's money. This board, and the Roads Committee in particular, has been working extremely hard to find the most appropriate and effective means for getting our roads in good shape.

Please get involved! At least read newsletters, read reports on the web site, and attend board meetings. You are always welcome at board meetings, and it gives you the opportunity to keep up with current status and to ask questions. We welcome questions!

Bob Newcomb

Treasurer's Tidbits

It is that time of year again when annual assessments are due. I am happy to report that as of February 9, 302 out of 367 assessments have been paid. Reminder statements were mailed last week and since we are in the mandatory 14-day grace period, no late fees were assessed. However, statements that will be mailed the first of March will reflect a \$20.00 late charge.

As I receive payment, I notice that many homeowners write "2016 HOA Dues" in the memo line. In fact, these are not dues, they are an assessment. Dues are defined as "a charge or fee for membership" whereas an assessment is "an amount that a person is officially required to pay".

While this might not seem like a big difference, legally it is huge. The failure of a homeowner to pay their assessment gives the Homeowners Association the right to foreclose on the property. This is not something that anyone wants to see happen. As an HOA we understand that there are times when circumstances make payment difficult, if not impossible. If you have fallen on hard times or feel that you are being assessed for years past that have already been paid, contact me at fhchoa.treasurer@gmail.com or call me at (520) 559-0654 and I will be happy to work with you to come up with a reasonable solution to the problem.

On a lighter note, we are trying to get something done with our streets. There is a very real possibility that significant changes will have to be made to the governing documents to make this happen. When you receive notice about an informational meeting, please make an effort to attend and ask questions if you have concerns. You have a voice and it needs to be heard.

Brian Bickel

Committee Reports & Information

Architectural Control Committee

Fhchoa.architecture@gmail.com
812-7292 (Bob Newcomb)

Please don't forget to contact the Architectural Control Committee before beginning any additions or changes to any type of structure. This includes houses, garages, storage buildings, walls, fences, etc. *This also includes solar panels and roof resurfacing.*

The committee tries to make the process as quick and painless as we can, but we're required by law to review all changes. Our CC&Rs are legally bound to our properties and we're all required to adhere to them. Please feel free to contact the committee any time if you have any questions.

Obtain Architectural Change Forms from:

- Website – www.foothillsclusters.com
- Email – fhchoa.architecture@gmail.com

Submit completed applications via email or to the HOA post office box, below.

Bob Newcomb

CC&R Enforcement

We continue to enforce our CC&Rs, as required by our governing documents. After a period where not all violations were enforced, we find we have several violations in the neighborhood (particularly white roofs) that we now must address. WHITE ROOFS ARE PROHIBITED by our CC&Rs; this is not a subjective area. This committee intends to poll the neighborhood shortly to get a representative opinion from neighbors on whether to update our CC&Rs to accept white roofs and possibly other items. Until such vote, they are still illegal.

Bob Newcomb

Communications Committee

This committee is working to make our website the "goto" online location for keeping apprised of HOA happenings, documents, reports, etc. Please check it out. It will be going through changes and improving in the near future as we add more content and structure. We are grateful for the tireless help of Douglas Everett who, though not a part of the

committee, helps with the mechanics and internet know-how.

Bob Newcomb

Landscape & Roads

Roads Rehabilitation/Renovation Project

We applaud the community efforts to petition Pima County to upgrade Evans Mountain Drive and a large portion of Ventana Canyon Drive. The County owns both, but do you know:

- **We own the Cul-de-sac streets in our neighborhood**, and the FCHOA is responsible for maintaining them.
- **Our streets are 40 years old**. They have reached a state of deterioration and systematic structural failure. Further arbitrary repair is a waste of money that could better be used for reconstruction.
- A portion of your **association fees goes toward street maintenance**. The HOA has enough cash to contribute \$400K toward reconstructing our roads. Preliminary cost estimates indicate this is ½ of what we need to reconstruct the 3.33 miles of Clusters streets.
- **Options to fund the needed work** include a special assessment, borrowing money or some combination of both.
- Good streets improve the value of our neighbor homes, improves ride and makes it safe for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The Board hired an independent engineering firm (PSOMAS) to assess the costs and benefits of various pavement repair options. As part of their services, they commissioned a soils report and pavement design from a local geotechnical firm. The December 2015 soils report says the pavement on each street shows substantial cracking due to age. The pavement material is “brittle” and is subject to more and more cracking under the continued traffic loads. After evaluating several pavement options, **PSOMAS recommends that we perform a total reconstruction**. The final draft of PSOMAS’s report is under review by the Roads Committee. Once accepted, the final report will be

posted to the Clusters web site (foothillsclusters.com).

We need your help to make a decision on how to fund the needed improvements. Sometime soon, we plan to canvass our neighbors door-to-door to get your opinion and answer any questions you may have.

Landscape

Our responsibilities include maintaining the Clusters entrances at Skyline and Alvernon (vegetation and lights). Pima County is responsible for vegetation management along Evans Mountain Drive and Ventana Canyon Drive. Currently, we have outstanding service requests to the County including:

1. Street sweeping on Evans Mountain and Ventana Canyon Dr.
2. Overgrown vegetation in island at the Alvernon Way entrance.
3. Clear concrete catchment south of intersection of Alvernon and Evans Mountain.

Lights at the Skyline entrance are off due to a power drain. We have an electrical engineer working on this issue.

2016 Spring Cleanup March 11-13 and 18-20

The dumpsters will be delivered on Friday, March 11 & 18 and pulled on Monday March 14 & 21. **The same rules apply, no concrete, block or bricks. No hazardous materials.** Please cut your yard waste in small pieces, 4-6 feet long, so there is room for everyone’s trash.

Irene Barg, Landscape and Road Committee

Nonnative Grass Control in the Foothills Clusters

Southern Arizona has been invaded by a number of fire-adapted nonnative grasses that threaten our areas habitat, wildlife, and biodiversity in general. Perhaps the most notorious of these invaders is

buffelgrass. Buffelgrass originally hails from the African savannah and is an aggressive invader that flourishes with fire, very unlike our native Sonoran desert scrub. Fountain grass is another nonnative grass that promotes and thrives with wildfire. These fire prone, nonnative grasses out-compete native vegetation for water, nutrients, and sunlight. As the plant community slowly begins to change, so does the fire-regime. A wildfire that occurs in an area infested by these grasses burns hotter, is far more damaging to native plants and wildlife, and can carry itself over the landscape which is abnormal in desert ecosystems. Nonnative grasses therefore alter the ecosystem by increasing the frequency, duration, and magnitude of wildfires in a region that otherwise evolved largely in the absence of fire.

Buffelgrass occurs within the Foothills Clusters neighborhood in relatively small, disjunct patches. It is commonly observed along paved roadways where there is more soil moisture and where vehicle tires and undercarriages transport seeds from other infested areas. Fountain grass, because it was historically used in ornamental landscaping, is far more prevalent in our neighborhood and while a less-aggressive invader, still presents a significant fire hazard to the common area as well as to personal property. The FHCHOA Board strongly encourages homeowners in our community to take initiative and remove fountain grass from your properties, or provide permission for volunteers to do so. There are many native plant species that are also beautiful in landscaping and do not pose a fire risk to you, your neighbors, or the common area.

January 23rd marked southern Arizona's annual Beat Back Buffelgrass Day. It's a day every year that concerned community members take the opportunity to meet some of their neighbors, remove buffelgrass and other nonnative grasses from infested areas, and promote general awareness within their communities. This year, several community members from the Foothills Clusters joined neighbors from the adjacent community to the east (A.K.A. "The Foothills Weedwhackers") and participated in the event. We had a total of 12 people volunteer to focus efforts along Skyline between Alvernon and Sunrise. All total, we filled 29, 40 gallon yard bags with nonnative grasses in

under two hours! Thank you volunteers! Those that participated will tell you that the work isn't that strenuous and is actually quite enjoyable. Nothing wrong with getting to know your neighbors while protecting our ecosystem on a sunny, beautiful morning! The best part is seeing what a radical difference the effort makes! Please see the before and after pictures provided.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, every day is "Beat Back Buffelgrass Day." These annual events serve an important purpose in generating public awareness, but effectively controlling nonnative grass invasion requires diligence and a continued commitment to the effort, sometimes 3-4 visits to an area is required to eradicate nonnative grasses due to the soil seed bank where ungerminated but viable seeds occur. The Foothills Weedwhackers meet during the morning of the 1st and 3rd Saturday of each month for 1.5-2 hours of work. Using Nextdoor.com, we'll try to remind Foothills Clusters residents of each opportunity to volunteer to help the Foothills Weedwhackers in their efforts, as they have and will continue to assist us with ours. Nonnative grasses don't care about property lines between HOAs, and building a coalition between our communities gives us the best chance to protect our area.

To learn more about buffelgrass, fountain grass, and the risk these plants pose to our beautiful Sonoran Desert, please visit the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center at www.buffelgrass.org.

Jeff Servoss

NOW Is The Time!

For those neighbors concerned about the parasitic effects of mistletoe, this time of the year is ideal for spotting the clumps in your trees and removing them.

If the growth is small, you will be successful simply by breaking off the growth where it emerges from the branch. You may need to do this a couple of times to eliminate it because it begins its foothold by sending its root into the limb. This happens after being deposited onto the limb in bird droppings, or

as a bird wipes the sticky seed-bearing berries from its beak. It then grows like any other plant, by using sunlight. Its "soil" is the host tree. The root will die if it is not supported by sunlight. You may ensure this by wrapping the area (and 12 inches toward the tree's trunk) with black plastic.

If the growth is substantial, it is recommended that you trim the infected branch 12 inches below the growth site (ie: toward the tree trunk). Esthetically, you may wish to trim that branch back to where it emerges from the limb (or an infected limb from the trunk).

Mistletoe is still widely seen in many of the trees growing on our privately owned lots. It can also be found in trees located in the several Common Areas throughout and bordering the Clusters. While you are encouraged to remove mistletoe from trees on your own property, you may not remove any vegetation from the Common Area. We need the Master Association's permission to address the mistletoe growing in trees within the Common Area(s).

Dale Prescott

Job Posting - Paid Administrative Assistant

The Board is seeking an individual to help the Board perform various clerical and office tasks. The Paid Administrative Assistant will perform the following tasks:

- Attend monthly Board meetings and record the minutes.
- Distribute typed meeting minutes to the Board shortly after a meeting. It is the Secretary's responsibility to request Board approval at the next board meeting.
- Publish approved minutes on the Clusters web site.
- Create monthly Board meeting agenda and request approval from board, seeking additional items to add.
- Assist in producing periodic FCHOA Newsletters.

Interested persons should contact the FCHOA Secretary at fhchoa.secretary@gmail.com to **obtain a complete job description.**

Future Meeting Dates & Times

(Dates after April are tentative)

March 7, 2016	6:30 pm
April 4, 2016	6:30 pm
May 2, 2016	6:30 pm
June 6, 2016	6:30 pm
July 11, 2016	6:30 pm
August 1, 2016	6:30 pm
September 12, 2016	6:30 pm
October 3, 2016	6:30 pm Rosh Hashana
November 6, 2016	2:00 pm (Annual mtg)
November 7, 2016	6:30 pm
December 6, 2016	6:30 pm

All Board Meetings will be held at
CFHS House #1 Seminar Room

Contact Information

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The mailing address for the Association is:

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Tucson, AZ 85728

Email Addresses Please!

Thanks to everyone who has consented to receive the newsletter by email only!

News & Notes

If you have items of interest, send them to the HOA PO Box or email them to the board email address to my attention and I will include what I can, based on space. Thanks!

Bob Newcomb
Newsletter Editor

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Current Resident

Upcoming Events

March 7, 2016, 6:30 PM, Board Meeting

March 11-13 and 18-20, Spring Cleanup

April 9, 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM, Yard Sale