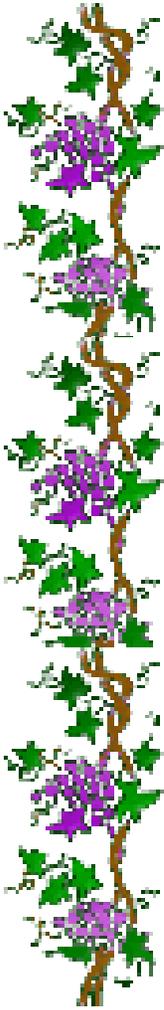


# The Grapevine

The Churchill East Village Community Newsletter

Winter 2009



## BOARD NEWS

### *Don't Be Late!*

Why does my bank pay arrive late resulting in a late fee on my HOA account? Bank pay does not mean that funds are immediately transferred from your account. For smaller companies (such as Churchill East) or private individuals, the bank must cut a paper check and mail the check to the creditor. Some banks subcontract this work out, which results in additional delays. And regular mail is subject to weather conditions, Federal holidays, and such. For a homeowner that writes a check and mails it each month, it can take 3-5 days for the check to arrive at the HOA Lock Box at our Bank in Baltimore, MD. If homeowners request their bank to pay, and a bank subcontracts the work out, it could take even longer for the payment to arrive at the lock box. Plus, if the postal service reduces its hours as proposed, that will mean even more time for your check to be in transit. The ONLY way to ensure your payment is received before the late fee is charged is to (1) mail your payment or direct your bank to pay **before** or **on** the 1st of the month (all payments are DUE the 1st of the month, not the 15th), or (2) use Direct Debit, which is immediate transfer of funds. The form for applying for Direct Debit can be obtained by contacting Vanguard Management at 301-540-8600, or downloading the form at <http://www.vanguardmgt.com>.

### *Sidewalk Replacements*

In the fall, the HOA contracted to have many sidewalks replaced that were heaving and creating trip hazards. Sidewalks are replaced every 5 years or so, and this work is very costly. So it is very dismaying that a few of the children in our community felt it necessary to mark up the freshly poured concrete with their names, silly messages, or inappropriate language. Even though the children probably thought this was no big deal or even fun, make no mistake about it, it is vandalism. This vandalism resulted in the association paying out more money to have many of the new sidewalk areas resurfaced. All this resulted in the work taking longer than usual to complete and cost overruns that prompted the Board to halt the work until we could figure out how to get the sidewalks replaced without children damaging them and control costs. This is the first time in the 20+ years of the community that we have experienced this problem with newly poured sidewalks being damaged. The Board plans to get bids in the spring to try to finish the work with minimal problems.

### Your volunteer, community-elected Board members:

**Jamie Breckinridge**  
*President*

**Bill Harris**  
*Vice President*

**Ruth Watkins**  
*Secretary*

**Patti Ryan**  
*Treasurer*

**Gerrit DeJager**  
*Director*

### The Management Company:

Vanguard Management  
[www.vanguardmgt.com](http://www.vanguardmgt.com)

Agent  
**Jeanette Broadwater**  
[jbroadwater@vanguardmgt.com](mailto:jbroadwater@vanguardmgt.com)  
301-540-8600 x3310

### Website:

<http://www.churchilleastvillage.org>

Your Newsletter editor:

**Ruth Watkins**

Upcoming Board Meeting Dates: Monday, February 23, URSC  
Monday, March, 23, URSC  
Monday, April 27, URSC

Board of Directors meetings are scheduled for the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m., usually at the Upcounty Regional Services Center (URSC) unless otherwise posted.

The Board is considering replacement of tot lot equipment, but the tot lots are experiencing the same problem as the sidewalks. It seems that in the last year or so, the cost of repairing/replacing damaged equipment has increased. Some of the problems are due to age and some are due to misuse.

The amount of money spent on replacing signs, repainting items, and repairing tot lot equipment is very expensive, and all it takes to reduce these costs is parental oversight and community involvement. So we are asking our residents to “adopt” their cul de sacs or nearby tot lots to try to prevent this type of activity. If you see children or young adults damaging property, talk to them. If you know the parents, let them know what is happening. If you aren’t comfortable with doing that, you can contact the nonemergency police number and request assistance. At the very least, contact our management agent at Vanguard Management and request a violation/complaint letter be sent to the offending unit owner, so we can at least cite them and possibly bill them for repairs. We need to come together as a community and help curtail this type of activity to keep our HOA fees reasonable, keep our community attractive, and home values up.

### ***Snow Sense***



It’s that time of year again, when we have a love/hate relationship with the weather. Most people would agree that when we have snow or ice on weekends, it’s beautiful and we can relax in the warmth of our homes and enjoy the snow. But when snow falls during the workweek, it’s a really big pain. We are a community of tightly clustered townhomes and parking spaces, and the best way to survive our snow/freezing rain Washington winters is patience, good common sense, and even more patience.

The HOA contracts to have snow removed from common drive lanes and the main roads through the community. The main roads are plowed FIRST; then the drive lanes in the cul de sacs are plowed later. The contract calls for snow to be plowed at 3 inches and for chemicals to be applied at the direction of the property manager. Homeowners are expected to shovel the sidewalks leading to their home and the common sidewalk in front of their home. The shoveled snow should not be put in the drive lanes—it just creates more of a mess and more “edge” snow that comes off the blades and accumulates in front of the parking spaces resulting in homeowners having to shovel even more. We discourage use of some abrasive ice melting products because they damage the sidewalks by eating away the smooth concrete surface. If you see a badly pock-marked sidewalk, it’s usually the result of chemicals being applied. Sand or kitty litter should be considered as almost any chemical abrasive damages concrete, is poisonous, or kills lawns.

T-parking creates problems in good weather but in snow or ice, creates even more problems. T-parking is when a homeowner has two assigned spaces in front of their unit and then parks a third car in back of those spaces. T-parking is a violation of our rules and is very inconsiderate. It creates a hazard for those trying to navigate down the street or get in and out of their parking spaces and poses problems for emergency vehicles, which may not be able to get by the parked cars. T-parking also affects snow/ice removal because it makes it virtually impossible for snow plows to get up and down the cul de sacs and do a good job of snow removal. Worst of all, it creates tension and bad feelings among homeowners. So please do not T-park. We have instructed our “courtesy” patrol to ticket vehicles that are T-parked and help us enforce our rules.

#### **Important Contact Numbers:**

Police and Fire Emergency

**911**

Police Non-Emergency

**301-279-8000**

Recycling Information

**240-777-6410**

Animal Control Emergency

**240-773-5900**

Lost and Found Pet Reports

**240-773-5960**

Allegheny Power

(For street lights only)

**1-800-255-3443**

Code Enforcement

**240-777-3785**

## ***Protect Your Auto From Crime***

Although crime is very infrequent in our community, every now and again an incident occurs. If you check out <http://www.crimereports.com> you'll notice most crimes in Germantown are those involving theft from vehicles.

Did you know—

- 95% of the victims of auto theft did not have a theft prevention device?
- 63% had one or more doors unlocked at the time of theft?
- GPS systems, IPODS, laptops, are all the reason behind many car thefts?

There are easy steps you can take to protect your auto and the property inside:

- Keep you car doors locked at all times and never leave your keys in the car.
- Remove all valuables from inside the car. When you step out and close the door, attempt to think like a thief for a moment. Are there any valuables **clearly visible** inside the car that would attract entry and theft?
- Don't leave appliances in your car that might indicate the item is in the car (such as a GPS mount or plug).
- Keep the registration in your wallet or purse rather than in the vehicle. Thieves can use the registration for re-title activities or to represent themselves as you!

The above steps don't cost a cent and can save you the heartache, expense, and hassle of losing something of value.



And finally, help light up our community. Our "courtesy patrol" has noted that few homes have porch lights on. By putting low-cost fluorescent bulbs in all outdoor fixtures, we can brighten up our community. These bulbs last thousands of hours. They will help light up the fronts of the homes and the alleyways at the rear of the homes. **We can all help brighten our community by simply changing a light bulb.**

## ***Home Heating Bills Can Be Scary!***

One way to help adjust the temperature in your home is to understand how those funky levers on your ductwork in the basement work. That's right—those levers, called "damper controls" have a purpose and that purpose is to direct heat or air conditioning to specific levels of your home and **save you money**. Remember, heat rises. So, in winter, you want to close the lever that goes to the upper floors and open the lever to the bottom floors. In summer, the reverse—open the lever to the upper floors and close the lever to the bottom floors. As a rule, the damper will be wide open when the lever is pointing in same direction as the air is flowing in the pipe. These levers are located on the ductwork close to the heating/air conditioning unit.



*Under our Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation, Churchill East pays fees to the Lake Churchill Foundation to maintain the lake and its perimeter areas. A few years ago, the Board contacted the Foundation Board to see if they would assist with a costly tree removal problem. This has resulted in a partnership that continues to help our community. The Foundation has agreed to help us fix the damaged "headwall" that connects Thackery Place (the pool) to Pickering and Thunderhead via the asphalt path. They have worked with contractors and Montgomery County to develop a renovation plan, which includes erecting a bridge over the stream. If all goes as planned, we expect construction to being this spring. This new bridge will help us avoid costly repairs during flooding and also help the integrity of the path on each side. Additionally, the Foundation sponsored a local Boy Scout Troup in a cleanup project in our flood plain. We are very thankful to the Foundation for their efforts in helping us maintain this area.*

### ***Changes to Pool Pass Distribution***

It may be cold now, but soon you will receive your pool pass application from **Vanguard Management**. The all-volunteer homeowner committee has disbanded after providing 5 years of service to the community and savings of thousands of dollars. Vanguard Management will be handling all aspects of pass distribution. However, there are other changes that will affect our pool patrons. Most noticeably, the Buddy Pass will go away. The guards were having a difficult time figuring out which guests were with which authorized pass holder and some adults were bringing in children on buddy passes and leaving them unattended at the pool. Plus, children were constantly hanging out around the pool fence yelling for buddy passes and creating a disruption. Instead of the Buddy Pass, each unit will receive two (2) 10-punch cards for their guests. Each time an authorized pass holder brings in a guest, the guest card will be punched. Additional cards can be purchased for \$15.00 each, which means the cost for a guest is \$1.50, instead of the \$3.00 that was charged for each guest pass in past years. Also, since Vanguard will be handling passes full-time, there will be no late fees charged on applications.



When you get your application package, **pay careful attention to what you need to do.** As always, if you have outstanding architectural problems or did not receive your passes last year for architectural problems, you must get those straightened out to receive passes this year. Also, those units that have outstanding balances on their HOA fee (even if it's just \$1.00) will not receive passes until those accounts have \$0 balance due. Some of our accounts have small amounts due, which were probably an oversight when we changed fee amounts or some late fee charges. Please contact Vanguard and work with them to resolve any balance issues *before* sending in your application—it will save you time and aggravation and ensure you get your passes.



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