



Walnut Country - The Signal | Volume 2020, Issue 10 | Office Phone: 925-687-9961 | Email: businessoffice@walnutcountry.com

Upper Tennis Courts Now Open



We are very pleased to announce that the upper tennis court resurfacing project has been completed and are now open to all for use! This project was completed several days ahead of schedule and significantly under budget!

Per the most recent reserve study, the Association's budget for resurfacing all four upper tennis courts was \$36,000. The total cost for this recently completed work ended up costing \$22,800! We were also able to

install several new nets for these courts and will be looking into replacement windscreens and benches.

Next spring, the Board will have the lower courts inspected and will discuss whether these courts are in need of resurfacing at that time.

A note to all tennis players - if you visit the upper courts you will no doubt see what might look like white stains or watermarks. This is just leftover chalk that will blow away over

time.

The Association is also still actively considering and discussing options for additional Pickleball courts throughout the community. If you have any specific feedback or suggestions related to these projects, you are welcome to attend any monthly Board meeting and mention it during the Open Forum at the beginning of the meeting! Meetings are currently being held via Zoom videoconference.

Pools Will Remain Open Through October 25th

The CHOA Board met on September 24th and discussed the pool schedule for the remainder of the 2020 season. A large number of homeowners were in attendance and provided very valuable feedback to the Board for consideration during the Open Forum portion of the

meeting - we appreciate all who took the time to attend!

At this meeting, the Board approved keeping all three pools open through Sunday, October 25th with no changes to the current pool hours or schedule!

The Board will review the pool schedule again at their next

open meeting, currently scheduled for October 22nd, and at that time will consider closing the pools for the year after the 25th, or potentially keeping them open into November. Please keep in mind that, due to the Pool Monitors required by the county, there is

Walnut Country THE CROSSINGS

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October Schedule

Board of Directors Meeting

- Thursday, October 22nd @ 7pm

Annual Meeting of the Members

- Thursday, October 22nd @ 6:30pm

Architectural Committee Meeting

- Thursday, October 15th @ 6pm

Pools Closing (Tentative)

- Monday, October 26th

Meeting Info

The Board of Directors meet on the fourth Thursday of every month at 7pm. Meetings are currently held via Zoom and owners are welcome to join by phone or by utilizing the Zoom app. Meeting information is included on the agenda, which is posted at the Business Office and also available online at the HOA's website.

The Architectural Committee meets on the third Thursday of every month at 6pm - please contact the Business Office for the Zoom info if you are interested in attending!

an added expense in keeping the pools open.

Thank you to everyone who attended the meeting and provided feedback regarding this topic, and hope that all residents are able to get some much-needed (and hopefully relaxing) pool time in this upcoming October!

Treasurer's Report (Year to Date) Balance Sheet as of August 31st, 2020

Current Assets

Cash - Operating	\$ 72,796
Cash - Reserves	\$ 2,411,582
Receivables	\$ 7,892
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 42,142
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 2,534,412

Current Liabilities

Liabilities (Prepaid Assessments, Accrued Payables, Deposits, etc.)	\$ 121,378
---------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------

Assessments Received vs. Assessments Billed

Assessments Billed	\$ 103,014
Assessments Received	\$ 98,474
August Delinquent Assessments	\$ (4,540)



A LOOK at the BUDGET

Year-To-Date Budget Report

	Actual	Budget	Variance	Monthly Actual
Total Revenue (Accrued)	\$ 873,793	\$ 869,368	\$ 4,425.00	\$ 103,619
Operating Expenses				
Administrative/Legal	\$ 254,735	\$ 213,064	\$ (41,671)	\$ 23,166
Repairs & Maintenance	\$ 243,118	\$ 234,840	\$ (8,278)	\$ 20,148
Utilities	\$ 137,376	\$ 98,992	\$ (38,384)	\$ 32,879
Miscellaneous (Payroll)	\$ 42,990	\$ 108,224	\$ 65,234	\$ 14,639
Reserve Transfer	\$ 214,259	\$ 214,256	\$ (3)	\$ 26,782
Total Operating Expense	\$ 892,478	\$ 869,376	\$ (23,102)	\$ 117,614

New addition to the Treasurer's Report: Assessments Received vs. Assessments Billed. Because HOA accounting is done on an accrual basis, it can be difficult to distinguish how much the Association is collecting in assessments every month, since accrual-based accounting considers this income earned. We have now added a report detailing exactly how much was actually collected for a given month, which should give a more accurate picture of the actual revenue coming in (not just what was "earned" - as that may not have been collected!

All Playgrounds Now Open!

We are pleased to announce that all Association playgrounds are currently open! We have posted signage required by the state as well as removed all temporary fencing.

Please note that California is specifically requiring all visitors to playgrounds to comply with the following requirements in order for playgrounds to successfully re-open:

- Face masks over the mouth and nose are required for

everyone 2 years of age or older with caregiver supervision at all times to ensure face mask use

- Do not use the playground when different households are unable to maintain a physical distance of 6 feet
- Caregivers must monitor to keep adults and children from different households at least 6 feet apart
- Consider coming on different times or days to

avoid wait times and potential crowded times

- No eating or drinking in playground, to ensure face masks are worn at all times
- Wash or sanitize hands before and after using the playground
- Elderly and persons with underlying medical conditions should avoid playground when others are present

- Limit visit to 30 min per day when others are present

We have also posted flyers at the playgrounds reminding everyone of these state requirements. Please ensure that you have read these requirements before using the playgrounds and be courteous to all residents by making sure everyone is wearing a mask and children are closely monitored and properly social distancing. Thanks everyone for your attention to this matter!

President's Corner - October 2020

Hello Walnut Country,

Below are some items that were discussed at our last Board Meeting on September 24th. Remember that you can attend future monthly board meetings via Zoom. Details for the meetings are sent out by eSignal email approximately a week before the meeting.

The Board and I wish you continued safety and health.

Annual Meeting

Every year, we have an Annual Meeting in September. During a normal year, the meeting generally consists of watching volunteer homeowners counting ballots from our annual election under the supervision of the inspector of elections. This year, no ballots were mailed out because we had an election by acclamation (three applicants for three vacant seats). That would usually make for a fairly short annual meeting, where the board summarizes the previous 12 months of Association business.

Unfortunately, we had to

postpone our annual meeting that was scheduled for September 24th. Senate Bill 323, which went into effect last January, has a new requirement related to HOA elections for Board of Director positions. The law requires the mailing of a "Candidate Registration List" prior to ballots being sent out. Since our election this year was by acclamation and not ballot, it appeared this mailing was not required or necessary. The new law is unclear on how to handle this requirement during elections by acclamation. Senior staff at our Association management company have reviewed this issue and recommended that we ultimately postpone our annual meeting until this mailing can be sent out, to err on the side of caution. The annual meeting is now scheduled for October 22nd at 6:30pm. We apologize for the delay.

Pool Hours

Per our Association rules, our pools close for the season after the Labor Day

weekend. At the September meeting, the Board voted to keep the pools open for another 30 days through at least October 26th. We appreciate the homeowners who joined us at the meeting and provided their input. Homeowner input is always welcomed by the Board and helps in our decision making.

Bikes on the Greenbelt

Since the pandemic started, we have had an understandable increase in the use of our greenbelt path by walkers and bicyclists. As you might have noticed, the Association installed signs at five locations on the greenbelt reminding those riding bicycles to yield to pedestrians last month. We have also mentioned this requirement in several Signal publications since the Spring and several times in eSignal emails. This was in response to complaints of bicyclists not yielding to walkers that have persisted since April.

We still continue to have residents complain of close calls where they are being passed by bicyclists who are

riding bicycles too fast for the given conditions and too close to pedestrians. In one instance, a resident was sideswiped by a young bicyclist, causing them to fall. Most complaints are related to bicyclists who are either young children or early teens. We ask parents to please speak with children about the proper safe etiquette regarding bicyclists yielding to pedestrians. Please understand that failure to follow these safety rules could cause a homeowner to be called to a hearing and potentially be fined or face a temporary suspension of their access to our common areas. Please help us in keeping our walking path safe for all.

Thank you all for your time and attention to these matters. If you have any questions, please reach out to our GM in the Business Office Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm. We also hope to see some of you at our monthly Board meetings every 4th Thursday of the month!

Mike Kindorf
CHOA Board President

Architectural Committee Corner

While it may not seem like it, summer is in the rear-view mirror and fall is upon us. This is a good time to think about doing some fall cleanup work around the house. Leaves will start falling and it's a good idea to have gutters and downspouts cleaned out before we (hopefully) start getting a little rain. Clogged gutters can lead to dry rot...and that's not a good thing.

I'd also like to remind everyone that we are required to keep garbage cans out of sight except for pick-up days. Cans should be stored in the garage or behind a fence, not

just pulled up beside the house where still visible from the street.

Let's all work to keep our neighborhood looking like the great place to live that it is!

Ken Dixon
Arch Committee Chairman



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GM Update - October 2020

Hi everyone! This month it's cooling off and we're losing sunlight, but hopefully you can squeeze in a few more hours at the pools before they shut down for the winter!

Just a quick update for you from the GM side of things...it's been a busy September and we still have lots of projects planned going into 2021!

- The Annual Meeting has been postponed until October 22nd – this is because Senate Bill 323 requires a new election mailing that was not initially sent out to make everything “official”. This mailing usually went out before the ballots, but because we had an Election by Acclamation it was assumed it was not needed for CHOA. After reviewing with management, we have decided to postpone and mail the notice to avoid any potential election-related issues down the road. Sorry for the inconvenience!
- The four upper tennis courts were resurfaced and new nets installed and

are now open for play! This job was completed ahead of schedule and under budget per the most recent Reserve Study. We will be looking at the lower courts next spring to determine whether they are in need of resurfacing work as well.

- Some landscape refresh and irrigation upgrade projects were recently completed, with more to come!
- We added some more dirt to the dog park for residents to use to help us fill in holes/gopher activity – thanks to all the regulars to help with that!

Another book recommendation from the GM that no one asked for but I'm putting it in here anyway...

Reincarnation Blues by Michael Poore

A book that manages to be unique, hysterical, moving... all those cliché adjectives in one. If you like Douglas Adams or Neil Gaiman, I think you'll love this!

Tennis Court Guest Issues

We have received multiple reports of residents abusing the Association's guest rule for the tennis courts, including large practices of non-residents taking place on weekend mornings between 8am and 10am.

As a reminder, residents may extend the use of the tennis courts to no more than three guests at one time, and that resident must be present on the court. If you notice a large number of non-residents frequently using the tennis courts, please contact the Business Office and provide the approximate time the

courts were being used. The fob entry system keeps a log of all transactions and is able to provide information about what fob was used to open a gate at a specific time.

Residents who are found to be breaking these tennis court rules will be called to a hearing in front of the Board, where they might be fined and all common area privileges revoked. If you have any questions about this rule, or think you see someone bringing in more guests than the HOA typically permits, please contact the Business Office.

Walnut Country Swim Team Update

Happy Fall Walnut Country residents! WCST is currently holding our Fall Clinic which has been extended through November 13. Our practices, however, will be only on Thursdays & Fridays from 3-7pm at the main pool. WCST has been and will continue to operate with a limited number of swimmers and following all protocols to avoid the spread of the coronavirus. In addition, we continue to monitor air quality to ensure safe swim practices.

Please stay safe and healthy!
WCST Board of Directors

Why do the pools close due to “air quality concerns”?

You may have noticed that the pools were closed several times this summer due to “air quality concerns”. We wanted to take some time to detail the thought process behind this as it may be confusing to some as to why the Association closes its outdoor pools when the air quality is less than ideal.

If you're a regular denizen of the HOA pools, you've likely seen the Association's Pool Monitors. These monitors are wearing orange safety vests and have HOA name-tags, and one is always on the clock while any of the pools are open. The County requires the Association to provide Pool Monitors to ensure that state and county guidelines are being adhered to, like the wearing of face coverings and social distancing.

Because these Monitors are actively visiting each of the three pools as frequently as possible, they are typically walking or biking between the pools multiple times per hour. As we've seen from the recent fires over this summer, the worsened air quality makes it particularly strenuous and potentially dangerous for our monitors to be outdoors for such an extended period of time.

Even on days where we might not smell or see smoke, the smoke particulate (usually measured as “AQI” on sites like airnow.gov) can still get into respiratory systems and aggravate those who are particularly sensitive, or even cause lasting, long-term damage. Out of an abundance of caution for our employees, we have been closing the pools whenever the AQI has ventured into the “unhealthy” zones per airnow.gov, usually measured at any AQI value over 151.

There have also been a few days where the pools were impacted by a significant amount of ash in the air, which collected on the surface of the water and the pool decks. While rare, the pools will usually be closed if we see more “ash rain” like we did last month. This is mostly from a maintenance standpoint, as the ash could potentially clog some of the pools components, and make a mess of stains or debris on the deck or in the pool itself.

We hope this information is helpful and clarifies why we typically close the pools when the air is unhealthy due to nearby fires. If you have any questions, please reach out the Business Office for more information!

HOA Helper - Neighbor Issues & Disputes - Who Can Help?

This is a new edition to Signal that we would like to incorporate moving forward - the HOA Helper column will go over the inner workings of HOAs and hopefully address frequently asked questions that we often get from homeowners!

-Bill, General Manager

The Business Office frequently receives calls with questions about how to deal with neighbor-to-neighbor issues, and we wanted to take this time to help clarify some examples of items that the Association can help address, as well as issues that are outside of the Association's jurisdiction or responsibility.

In general, the Association's primary function is to maintain the Common Areas, including all landscaping and facilities like the pools and clubhouse, and to enforce the Governing Documents (namely the CC&Rs and the Rules & Regulations). The Rules usually detail things like maintenance requirements for houses and landscaping on a owner's Lot, as well as appropriate conduct when using the Common Areas like the greenbelt, pools, and tennis courts. Very rarely do HOA rules specifically address what are called "neighbor-to-neighbor" issues, such as noise complaints. The CHOA CC&Rs do have a mention (albeit a vague one) of not permitting any "noxious or offensive trade, commercial acidity, or other activity...upon the Lot, nor shall any anything be done therein which may be or become an annoyance to the

neighborhood." The trouble here is what is considered an annoyance, as this is often subjective and difficult to prove.

Issues with neighbors are usually the most frequent types of calls the HOA receives - things like noise complaints, reports of frequent cigarette smoke coming from the backyard, or maintenance issues like a shared fence needing to be replaced or a neighbor's tree encroaching into another owner's backyard.

In general, "civil" or "domestic" complaints - issues between neighbors that are typically behavior-based - are issues that are difficult for the Association to address directly. If a neighbor is reporting another owner's activity as annoying or irritating, oftentimes the amount of subjectivity involved makes it tough for the HOA to take action. Because of this, anything that is subjectively aggravating or obnoxious and is only reported by a single neighbor is typically treated as a "neighbor-to-neighbor" issue, unless the activity is specifically prohibited by the Governing Documents. In a "neighbor-to-neighbor" issue, the Association may be able to draft a letter to the owner, but usually cannot take action beyond that without clear-cut evidence or corroboration by another party. This of course depends on the exact activity and the amount of subjectivity involved. For example, if we receive a report from an owner complaining of

THE RULES FOR HOA FIGHT CLUB



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loud music being played in the evenings, the HOA can usually draft a letter letting the neighbor know that we've received a complaint, but it would be difficult to take further action.

While it is not necessarily an attractive solution, the police department, City Code Enforcement, and local courts are where these sorts of issues should really be addressed. These departments are better equipped to handle neighbor-to-neighbor disputes, as this ultimately falls outside of the Association's jurisdiction.

That being said, if we receive multiple corroborating reports of the same activity from multiple neighbors in the area, it is much easier for the HOA to take action. For example, if we receive reports from three different neighbors about one specific home continuously having loud parties late into the evenings, impacting the quality of life of all neighboring units, the HOA would likely be able to take action and treat this as a violation of the Governing Documents.

Ultimately, neighbor issues are more likely to be successfully resolved if the HOA receives multiple reports of the same activity, rather than just complaints from a single owner alleging that it is an annoyance. This is because it helps remove some of the subjectivity from the matter.

Additionally, many owners

within the community share a fence with a neighbor. This is typically called a "Party" fence or wall. The CC&Rs require that the "cost of reasonable repair and maintenance" of these fences shall be shared between Lot owners. An issue we frequently see is neighbors who don't see eye-to-eye on whether a shared fence is in need of maintenance, or owners who are not able to successfully get a hold of their neighbors to discuss options. If you are unable to contact your neighbor about this issue, the HOA is able to reach out on your behalf as well, typically by mail (we do not always have everyone's phone information). However, if the issue is the neighbor refusing to assist in replacing it, or refusing reimbursement, that is not something the Association has any jurisdiction over, and would need to be handled by something like Small Claims Court.

Another important note is that all streets within the community are public, meaning they are owned, maintained, and enforced by the city of Concord. If you have any parking concerns or issues, owners will need to contact the City directly as the Association does not have any jurisdiction over public streets. This also includes street maintenance and traffic enforcement.

Feel free to reach out to the Business Office during normal business hours if you have any additional questions!

Clubhouse Open to Vote on 11/3



We have confirmed with the county that the Walnut Country Clubhouse will be used as a polling station for the upcoming elections on November 3rd.

Please reference the Voter Information card recently sent to you by the county to confirm that this is your registered polling station. If you have any questions, please visit www.cocovote.us or call 925-335-7800. And most importantly, get out there and vote!

Halloween & Trick-or-Treating in 2020

Unfortunately due to COVID and social distancing requirements, this will be a much different type of Halloween. While the Association does not have any official guidelines or recommendations for how to handle Halloween 2020 (as that is something better left to the experts), we did want to include some information from the CDC and Contra Costa Health Services that we hope is helpful!

Contra Costa Health Services recommends doubling down on dress-up and decorations and reducing risk by avoiding trick-or-treating, haunted houses, or big social gatherings. COVID-19 can easily pass from person to person through close contact, and it's difficult to maintain a safe distance on porches and doorsteps, especially in neighborhoods where trick or treating is popular.

The CDC recommends focusing on lower risk activities, like carving or decorating pumpkins and displaying them, arranging for a Halloween-themed scavenger hunt or a trick-or-treat scavenger hunt in your house/backyard rather than going house to house, a virtual costume contest, or having a Halloween movie night.

"Moderate risk activities" usually include one-way trick-or-treating, where individually wrapped goodie bags are lined up for families to grab and go while continuing to social distance (such as at the end of a driveway or at the edge of a yard). The



CDC advises that those preparing goodie bags wash hands before and after preparing the bags. However, it is important that anyone participating carefully manage their distance and wear masks whenever outdoors, and that this still could put individuals at risk for transmitting and contracting COVID-19.

In general, traditional trick or treating and going door to door is not recommended and is considered high risk for transmitting COVID-19. Another important item of note is that the Association has no jurisdiction over this type of activity. Concerned owners, or anyone with questions related to celebrating Halloween this year, should reach out to the local authorities.

The CDC has a helpful guide for dealing with holidays in the COVID-19 era, which can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>.

Most of all, please just be safe and courteous and practice common sense if you or your family are doing anything "social" or outdoors on Halloween.

We're Impressed!

Thanks to all the owner who are spending their hard-earned time and energy keeping their properties looking great! A special shoutout to some lots that caught our attention this month:

- 4494 Hock Maple Ct
- 4421 Marsh Elder Ct
- 4397 N. Sweetbriar Ct
- 4398 N. Sweetbriar Ct
- 4394 N. Winterberry Ct

thank you

Driving through the community, there are just so many properties that look fantastic - thanks all for your hard work! We know it isn't easy and we appreciate you!

Gym Update - Will Remain Closed

Residents may have recently seen the County's updated openings schedule, which now permits indoor gyms to open at 10% capacity. However, at this time, the CHOA gym will remain closed due to logistical issues tied to the Clubhouse and Clubhouse employees.

Currently the only entrance to the gym is through the Association's clubhouse, and

gym patrons are required to sign-in with the Clubhouse employees before use. Since the Clubhouse is closed and no employees are actively working at the facility, we cannot accommodate opening the gym at this time. We do apologize for this inconvenience but will continue monitoring the situation. If there are any changes, they will be posted on the HOA website at www.walnutcountry.com.

What are all those small colored flags I see in the greenbelt and landscape?

You may have noticed lots of small flags placed throughout the Greenbelt and in some of the Common Area landscaping. These are installed by the HOA's landscape vendor to indicate areas of gopher activity. They are typically put in a few days before the gopher abatement vendor comes out for regular service.

By many accounts, the gopher activity this year has been nearly record breaking - the HOA landscaper, says it's been just about the worst he's seen over the last 20-30 years in this area. We've been using a new vendor for the last several months and have seen improvements, but this will be continuing battle going into 2021.

There is always a concern when residents hear about gopher abatement methods, usually from dog owners worried if dogs might accidentally get into some leftover gopher bait. We asked the current vendor about their abatement methods and what they've seen historically, and this was their response:

In 20 years of business we have never had a dog get into or be affected by our gopher bait. We use bait in the tunnel system, not near the holes so that it is not accessible to dogs who are curious about gopher holes and want to smell or dig around them. We also only use a very small amount in each run. The bait is organic so it decomposes quickly so very little would remain after a week or two. And the gophers that eat the bait remain underground so they are not accessible to other animals. If a dog were to get the gopher, they would have to eat it to have any exposure to the bait which in general is not what dogs do if they find something dead (they usually just carry it around or roll in it).

To be on the safe side, when walking dogs through the greenbelt or common area landscaping, please ensure that they are leashed at all times. Additionally, please do not let them dig through the HOA landscaping - so that they do not inadvertently get into gopher bait, but also because it damages the landscaping and costs the Association additional money for repairs (which ultimately may impact the monthly assessments).

Vegetation Along Public Right-of-Ways

Just a quick reminder to everyone who has landscaping abutting a public right-of-way (like sidewalks) to make sure those are trimmed back regularly to allow for pedestrians to walk through without issue. This is especially important in areas

along main streets like North and South Larwin with dedicated bike lanes and frequent vehicle traffic.

This is also a requirement of the city of Concord, and owners are welcome to report right-of-way issues like this directly to the Code Enforcement division.

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