



# Hallcrest Herald



December 2016

## President's Report

### HOME INSPECTORS

One of the more important tasks this Association does is to stay informed on various pieces of State and Federal legislation, where provisions could significantly impact certain aspects of this community. Getting the 2009 Virginia budget to include funds for our 1500 foot sound wall is a case in point; the mandated 17 items in disclosure packets whenever a home is sold; requirements for engineering analysis of aspects of our infrastructure; or County funds for sidewalks to Metro stations -- all affect our quality of life and our property values. Not many Homeowner Associations make the effort to stay tuned on these things, which is unfortunate because if legislators are not kept informed of our concerns, the results could be quite negative.

Last year the Virginia General Assembly passed a bill requiring the licensing of home inspectors when a buyer contracts to purchase a home. Luckily this bill set in motion a process for the drafting of regulations on exactly how this provision would be implemented. Thanks to our state delegate, Rip Sullivan, this association was registered to express our concerns during the six month period for the drafting of these regulations. This was of some importance because several Hallcrest home sales were hurt by home inspectors who used these reports to try and lower the asking price, plus requiring sellers to spend funds addressing "problems" of questionable value. This was confirmed by a number of real estate agents who represented sellers here.

After an interesting article on the subject in the Washington Post Real Estate Section, we found out that many other states have a strict licensing requirement for home inspectors exactly to avoid the kind of problems we experienced. Therefore we contacted the committee of Virginia's Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR), which was given the task of drafting such licensing regulations. Because the key meeting of this committee was to be held in Richmond on September 29, 2016, the very time when I was going to be out of the country, I engaged a real estate agent and appraiser who has long experience with home inspectors to attend that meeting and submit the statement that I had prepared. Mary Anthony of Keller Williams, who has sold homes here and is very familiar with home inspections, sent us the following report:

*continued . . .*

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### Reminders:

*Return all trash containers  
to yards after pick up.*

*Blue recycling bins should not  
be left on the front stoop.*

*Seek AC approval before  
any changes to home's  
outside appearance.*

*Leave outside lights on  
(front & rear) on at night  
for security.*

*Pick up after your dog!*

**THANKS!**

... continued from p. 1

I was honored to be invited by your president, Clark Tyler, to attend a meeting on September 29<sup>th</sup> in Richmond on the new licensing requirements for home inspectors. It was held at the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) that regulates all kinds of licenses from architects to “wetlands professionals” and includes contractors, Realtors, interior designers, opticians and trades such as polygraph, cemetery and geology, to name a few. On July 1, 2017, home inspectors will be added to the list of tradesmen that must be licensed to practice. The change is long overdue for such a pivotal role in any real estate transaction.

Public comments were encouraged at the meeting and I read the statement Clark had prepared with his concerns about the inspection process in general and obstacles encountered here at HH. The committee then did the messy work of “making sausages” and the result, after numerous revisions, is a draft of the licensing requirements to be presented to DPOR’s (full) Board for Asbestos, Lead and Home Inspectors. The draft is available at [www.DPOR.virginia.gov](http://www.DPOR.virginia.gov) and further public comments will be accepted up to January 15<sup>th</sup>.

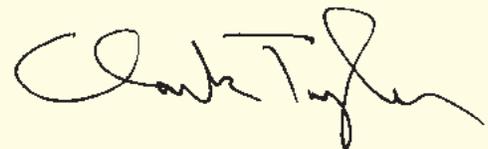
The new regulations will cover training and experience requirements, the vetting of classes and instructors, ethics and what to do about violations. Previously, inspectors could voluntarily become certified through ASHI, the American Society of Home Inspectors. ASHI’s highest category, “Certified Inspector” required performing 250 inspections and passing an exam. As of July 1, a license will be mandatory.

Question: Should I get a home inspection before I sell my house?

Answer: Not necessarily because different buyers can have different concerns and because different inspectors can notice different things. But if the owner knows that something is not working, or if it is a water-related issue, it’s best to repair (or else state in the contract that it conveys “as-is”). Busy working people in our area do not want to take time to make repairs to their ‘new’ home and statistically they mentally estimate the costs as 3X actual cost to cure. When in doubt, make the repairs before hitting the market.

*Mary Anthony has been a Realtor for 28 years and is affiliated with Keller Williams McLean.  
She is licensed in all 3 jurisdictions and holds a license as a Certified Appraiser.*

I strongly suggest that any owner of a home in Hallcrest, contemplating a sale, review the draft regulations found at [DPOR.virginia.gov](http://DPOR.virginia.gov), especially as to requirements of experience, required continuing education courses, insurance, specific inclusions and exclusions, fees, examinations, review, and contracts, both now and at the conclusion of the time for public comment. This draft report is some 41 pages, but only pages 20-31 are critical. For the record, I have included my statement to the Board, which I hope will be addressed in the final regulations.



## STATEMENT OF HALLCREST HEIGHTS HOA

### Before DPOR Special Committee

Hallcrest Heights is a 158 town home community in McLean, Virginia, bordering on the toll road just outside Tysons. The Board of Directors asked Mary Anthony to represent us at the September 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of this committee, and she briefed us on the proceedings. We have had very mixed experiences with home inspectors. Recently, a home was sold for a record price of \$690,000. In this instance the seller was given a very large list of “corrections” that needed to be addressed following a home inspection by the buyer. This, clearly, was part of an effort to drive down the asking price. Happily, this tactic did not work. This has happened before. We ask that this committee address this possibility in implementing the act before you now.

In so doing, we would hope that the regulations involved would be based on how other similar jurisdictions have considered the problems of the home inspection. Montgomery County Maryland is such a case in point. Other concerns are:

- What is the term of the proposed license, and how are problems arising during that term addressed?
- What is the priority of home inspection concerns, for instance: asbestos, lead paint, radon, termite protection, conformance with building codes, etc.
- Will there be variations among various jurisdictions in Virginia?
- How are the various costs of corrections determined, and by whom?
- What should be the relationship between contractors, real estate agents, technical experts and the home inspector?
- Will there be a requirement for including the date of installation and condition of major systems and their components, such as, HVAC, electric, roofs, water and sewer, remodeling efforts and architectural control history?
- Will home inspectors have to identify and give the experience of various technical consultants to be contacted?
- How will the concerns of HOAs be assessed and addressed?

In the past, various noticed problems and the cost of remedial actions have been assessed and addressed in the negotiating process between buyer’s agent and the seller as to asking price and the specifics of recent comparable sales. Can this process be emphasized or required? This community has been blessed by the sales experience of agents with considerable knowledge of the dynamics of this community; but there are always “outliers”, and that’s where the problems come from. Hallcrest Heights is a 40 year old community and we have considerable experience with any endemic, perceived, or recurring problems such as rodents, noise, settling, covenants & guidelines, crime, parking, contractors, infrastructure, utilities or codes. It is critical that licensed home inspectors have an awareness and understanding of such things, and be required to investigate such.

The Washington Post’s real estate section recently had a column by Ilyce Glink and Samuel Tamkin which pointed out that some home inspectors seem only interested in cosmetic problems at the expense of not noting deeper problems such as roofs, foundations, structural problems and major plumbing and electrical trouble. The authors suggested:

“when you’re interviewing prospective home inspectors, you must ask a few key questions: what does your inspection consist of? How long does it take? What kind of written, oral or video report can I expect? What isn’t included? And are there any parts of the home you don’t inspect?” Will the implementation regulations address such things? I hope so.

We thank this committee and our elected representatives for at last substantively addressing the problems associated with the home inspection process.

M.L. Clark Tyler ML.CT2@verizon.net , 703-893-3336  
President

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## FAIRFAX WATER AND VA. POWER

Hallcrest has been well-served by two of our utilities this month, these pictures show. First is Dominion Virginia Power, which owns and maintains the 22 streetlights around our community. These lights, installed some 30 years ago, are fairly complex with such things as time sensors. When one goes out, look for the little metal plate on the pole and make a note of the numbers before calling Clark. He will report same and get a work order number to check on the repair. Then we are fortunate to have a “disciple of forward progress” named Randy, who will show up and fix or replace the light involved.



Here, Randy replaces a light near 7414 HD

The other utility was Fairfax Water, who showed up immediately after a water main leak was discovered, and encountered another leak only 20 feet away. They not only repaired the leaks, working until midnight that day, but then re-paved the block between 7371 and 7388 Hallcrest Drive, leveling some depressions caused by the leaks. Pay your water bill with joy and gratitude!



The Fairfax Water crew re-paves a block of Hallcrest Dr.

## NEW BOARD MEMBER

Board member Jack Schwab, who has served as vice president as well as head of our architectural control committee, has resigned after two-plus years of yeoman service.

Jack, who is one of Hallcrest longest residents, wrote a new software program to streamline our AC efforts, making it more simple, fair and consistent. That duty has been shifted over to Board member, Ben East, and will be assisted by two long-time residents to make up the AC committee. The Board of Directors has recruited and elected Claudio Ternieden, a lawyer with a marvelous background in utilities and government affairs. Claudio, a native of Brazil, has a wife, Marie, who is a PhD in education. Hallcrest wins again!

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## **PROGRESS ON THE LITTLE FREE LIBRARY**

As we noted in last year's Annual Report, and demonstrated at this year's annual meeting, architect Martha Suzuki, resident county teacher, Paige Saba, and super construction engineer (and Board member) Glenn Crumley have produced a miniature townhouse-inspired Little Free Library, which will be installed on December 31 on the Eldorado Oval, next to one of the East side benches. This is one of 40,000 mini libraries placed in communities around the nation. You may have seen some in Arlington County or all over Richmond where they have been wildly successful in lending free books to residents of all ages. This idea was the brainchild of a man in Wisconsin, who set up a non-profit company to help design and charter these libraries to re-interest all ages in re-establishing the reading habit. The result has been to bring together residents in communities such as Hallcrest by providing donated books (not discarded books) of interest to all ages. Our plan is to see what excitement there is in this effort before building two more to be located in Dibner Park and the Eldorado Court circle.

A special notice of the timing of this inauguration will be sent out showing the design and describing how it works.

## **PROGRESS ON A POSSIBLE SMALL PLAYGROUND**

After last year's comprehensive community-wide survey, 37% of respondents expressed a desire to examine the prospects and costs involved in providing a small playground. With only 24% of respondents showing some reservation, the Board set up a committee to investigate the costs, regulations, liability and interest in pursuing the matter. A presentation was made to the Board at its December meeting and the Board voted to go ahead exploring the details, costs and possible location. Contact was made with the Fairfax County Park Authority to seek guidance, possible discounts on equipment, and other details. The results of all this will be made in subsequent notices.

## **PROGRESS ON SIDEWALKS**

The County has informed the association that a contract will be let in early 2017, and construction will be accomplished later in the year for completing a new sidewalk extending from Great Falls Street, on our side of Dolley Madison Boulevard, up to the McLean Metro station. The County has also approved a short connection that we can make to this at the beginning of the long brick retaining wall near Great Falls Street. As reported earlier, the completion of the sidewalk going up Chain Bridge Road to Anderson has been rejected because of utility line problems.

Speaking of the 600 foot retaining wall, the selected contractor has finished the first 200 feet of cleaning, repairing and restoration of this critical piece of our infrastructure, with 2 more years of work to come.

## **HERE'S A GOOD PLUMBER!**

After encountering problems finding a reasonable, responsive, and diligent plumber, we finally found one. He is Gary, a one-man company who came when called, had the right tools and materials, solved the problem, gave me options, told me upfront what the cost would be, and warranted the work. He is the Pipe Doctor and can be reached at 703-388-6529 ([www.thePipeDoctor.com](http://www.thePipeDoctor.com)). Gary also offers a 24-hour emergency service at an extra cost. I found him on Angie's List.

# Board of Directors

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Secretary	John Aranha	7317 Eldorado Street	703-462-9791
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See our website at:  
[www.hallcrestheights.org](http://www.hallcrestheights.org)

Layout by Sam Tyler

**The next Board meeting will be held on  
 January 3 at 7:30 PM at 7327 Eldorado Street**

**Hallcrest Heights Associates, Inc.**  
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❖ *Hallcrest Herald* ❖

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