



## OFE GAZETTE

 [www.oldfarmestates.org](http://www.oldfarmestates.org)

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We've got some interesting things on the horizon happening here in Old Farm Estates. We intend to a) improve our web site Internet interactive capability, b) improve the material and c) improve the links. Great Rivers Greenway will soon deliver their 'finalized' proposal for the OFE portion of the biking/hiking/walking trail that will eventually stretch from Forest Park on the east to Creve Coeur Lake Park on the west and then to the Katy Trail and beyond. St. Louis County will be instituting trash districts in unincorporated St. Louis County next year. We anticipate less expensive trash pick-ups for our residents. The Trustees will be holding subdivision meetings of a proposed indenture change described on page 5 'Proposed Pool Amendment.' Notifications of these meetings will be publicized well in advance for your attendance.

At this time of year, we give thanks for many things in our lives. I, for one, would like to suggest we say 'Thank You', to each other. The people who live in this subdivision are the ones who make our community a nice place to live. Come to the general meetings. Make an effort (and spend the money!) to maintain and enhance your property, assist your neighbor, volunteer for the Fourth of July parade, contribute to or participate in the Easter Egg Hunt, pick up trash, and notify the police about suspicious activity. Volunteer to be on the Board of Trustees (board approval required) or committees, work at the pool or do any one of the hundreds of other things that require you to give of yourself in order to make good things happen. Thank You from this neighbor.

Kathy Schweitzer, President

### OLD FARM ESTATES TRUSTEE MEETINGS

Thornhill Library (Auditorium),

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 pm.

Dec. 11, 2007

Jan. 8, 2008

Feb. 12, 2008

March 11, 2008

April 8, 2008

May 13, 2008

May 22, 2008 - 7:00 p.m. General Homeowners Meeting

June 10, 2008

July 8, 2008

August 12, 2008 (location To Be Determined)

Sept. 9, 2008

Oct. 14, 2008 (Small Conf. Room)

Oct. 22, 2008 - 7:00 p.m. General Homeowners Meeting

Nov. 11, 2008

Dec. 9, 2008

### DISTRICT FIVE REPRESENTATIVE NEEDED

This district includes Pickfair Dr., Burlewood Dr. and Gatehouse Dr. Please contact me for more information.

Kathy Schweitzer, President

## **PRESIDENT**

Kathy Schweitzer 576-5891 kathyschweitzer@excite.com

## **DISTRICT TRUSTEES**

1 Jerry Goldberg	434-2566	jerryfrang@sbcglobal.net	Gazette Editor
2 Lynn Reyner	878-9095	Douglynn1@earthlink.net	Chairperson Architectural Review, Communications, Internet and Streets and Sidewalks Committees
3 Kathy Schweitzer	576-5891	kathyschweitzer@excite.com	Chairperson Cul-de-Sac and Long Range Planning Committees
4 Karla Reichelt	434-4207	r_reichelt@sbcglobal.net	Chairperson Recreation Committee
5 Vacant			
6 Larry Jackson	878-4068	lgjackson@sbcglobal.net	Vice President and Chairperson Common Grounds Committee
7 Gary Hall	878-3149	sallyh1938@aol.com	

## **AT-LARGE TRUSTEES**

Ted Campbell	542-0727	jcampbell_1@charter.net	Treasurer and Member of Pool Committee
Sam Craig	576-1514	samcraig@mbemail.com	Chairperson Neighborhood Watch and Pool Committees
Nancy Gray	434-8223		Chairperson Welcome Committee
Kelly Brinkman		kelly_strayrescue@charter.net	Secretary
Shane Niefert		ksneifert@juno.com	
Les Schenberg	391-0850	lshenberg@hotmail.com	
Dane Slayton	392-9063	dane.slayton@charter.net	
David Voeller	878-3178	dvoeller@hunter.com	

## **IT'S YOUR SUBDIVISION**

The resident attendance at the monthly trustee meetings is embarrassing. Perhaps one or two owners or renters are present. Why the dismal interest? Are the meetings boring (I doubt it) or do you believe that your comments are ignored? Not true. We may or may not agree with your thoughts but we pay attention to all comments. The resident or the trustees may not be aware of all the facts; we all learn via communication. There are two sides to every opinion. Send our president an email kathyschweitzer@excite.com (preferred method) or call 576-5891 naming your topic and she will place your name on the agenda.

The attendance at the last two general meetings has greatly improved. We have chosen topics of high interest that impact OFE and are appropriate for a question and answer follow up. Our method of mailing a flyer prior to each meeting is an expense for us, but the dividends prove that it is money well spent.

Have you taken a walk around your immediate neighborhood? I appreciate neighbors taking the time and energy to maintain the appearance of their property. Maintain the trimming of trees, the cutting of grass or picking up debris. Sidewalks can be a danger with an accumulation of leaves, especially when wet, or gum balls. Raking into the street is not acceptable as they eventually end up clogging the storm sewers.

Keeping an outside light on at night and removing old newspapers from the lawn and sidewalk will help to make our area safe. It's a pleasure to just look around and see the beauty of well kept homes. Be proud to be an OFE resident and appreciate that we live in a community that cares for one and all.

Jerry Goldberg, Trustee

## OLD FARM ESTATES GENERAL MEETING

October 25, 2007

7 -9 pm. Thornhill Library

Editor - Many thanks to Kelly Brinkman for her excellent notes and typing the data.  
Attendance 55.

Kathy called the meeting to order and reviewed the budget for our treasurer Ted Campbell.

### Treasurer's Report –

The following updated report replaces the report presented at the meeting.

As of September 30, we have approximately \$62,000 in cash and investments. We expect to end 2008 with approximately \$65,000. Revenues are expected to exceed expenses by approximately \$9,000. These surplus funds will be set aside for future maintenance and improvements of our common grounds. Major highlights for 2007 are: investment income is expected to be \$3,090 compared to only \$43 in 2006 due to our decision to invest our cash balances in a money market fund; insurance cost declined by approximately \$3,000 due to lower insurance rates; common ground maintenance is expected to exceed 2006 by approximately \$4,300 mainly due to tree removal and trimming work done along the main entrance of Old Farm Drive and common ground improvements are expected to exceed 2006 by approximately \$10,000 mainly due to the new landscaping at the front entrance and repair and improvements at the pool.

The annual assessment for 2008 will remain unchanged at \$100 per household. For 2008, we have established two long term capital funds to accumulate funds for long range planning and projects. These funds will be used to finance larger projects and replacements of non-pool common grounds and pool common grounds. The projected full year results for 2007 and the budget for 2008 are shown below:

	Actual 2006	Projected 2007	Budget 2008
<b>Revenue</b>			
Assessments collected	68,103	56,993	55,800
Interest & recording fees	<u>44</u>	<u>3,090</u>	<u>3,382</u>
Total Revenue	68,147	60,083	59,182
<b>Association Operations</b>			
Insurance	13,047	10,676	13,000
Lighting – electrical usage	4,827	5,490	5,500
Collection/ mailing fees	5,668	4,857	5,000
Other	<u>5,220</u>	<u>3,708</u>	<u>5,207</u>
Total association operations	28,762	24,731	28,707
<b>Common Ground Maintenance</b>			
Mowing, trimming, fertilizer, etc..	9,491	12,222	10,338
Water	1,463	1,174	1,200
Playground	-	431	400
Tree removal	<u>-</u>	<u>1,511</u>	<u>1,000</u>
Total common ground maintenance	10,954	15,338	12,938

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### **Common Ground Improvement**

Landscaping replace & improve	43	4,458	2,000
Street lights	-	313	4,000
Pool – repair and improvements	<u>930</u>	<u>5,986</u>	<u>22,000</u>
Total common ground improvements	973	10,757	28,000
Total expenditures	<u>40,689</u>	<u>50,826</u>	<u>69,645</u>
Net change in cash & investments	27,458	9,257	(10,463)
Beginning of year cash & investments	<u>28,225</u>	<u>55,683</u>	<u>64,939</u>
End of year cash & investments	<u>55,683</u>	<u>64,940</u>	<u>54,476</u>

### **1. Guest Speakers – Scott Jordon, Civitas and Patrick Owens, Great Rivers Greenway**

The Great Rivers Greenway District (formally known as the Metropolitan Park and Recreation District) was established in November 2000 by the successful passage of the Clean Waters, Safe Parks and Community Trails Initiative (Proposition “C”). Great Rivers Greenway is funded by a 1/10 of 1 cent sales tax to create an interconnected system of greenways, parks and trails that will encircle St. Louis and eventually link Forest Park to the Katy Trail. When finished, over 600 miles of trails will be created that link St. Louis City, St. Louis County and St. Charles County. Civitas is the company designing and planning the greenways and trails. This is being created for the benefit of walkers, bikers and joggers with the goal of feeling like you are in the country. Like other St. Louis County Parks, it will not be lighted so it is designed for a dawn to dusk usage. The trail will avoid traffic and city streets wherever possible.

These two speakers spoke about the part of the trail that will connect Creve Coeur Park with Forest Park, specifically, the part that goes from Creve Coeur Park through Old Farm Estates common ground and on to 270.

They hope to finish this leg of the trail by 2009. They gave a very impressive computer animation of the trail from Forest Park to Creve Coeur Park. In order for the trail to go through OFE, the Board of Trustees must grant an easement to the GRG District for the trail. The trustees have proposed a route for the trail that follows the creek, a proposal currently being surveyed for feasibility.

Maintenance of the trail will be the responsibility of St. Louis County Parks. The speakers felt that the trail would be well cared for in the coming decades as the funding is the sales tax in perpetuity. The State of Missouri passed a bill several years ago which eliminates any liability of a subdivision or associated with any public walk or bikeway. The trail would be strong enough to handle utility trucks. The crossing over Bookbinder would be elevated to deter cars from speeding on this section.

Many residents asked questions regarding security and parking. A trail head exists near Creve Coeur Park with a large parking lot. Neither speaker thought many users would park near the OFE pool. They suggested resident decals be created and any car not bearing a decal could be towed. A few residents felt the issue should go to a homeowner vote and Kathy noted the indentures allow the trustees to grant easements.

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## **2. Guest Speaker – Laura Mathers - Solid Waste Management - St. Louis County Public Works**

Laura spoke about the creation of eight waste districts for the unincorporated county areas. OFE is in District 3. The goal is to create a reliable, cost efficient service, decrease the amount of truck traffic through a subdivision and decrease pollution. She noted the County is hoping to get the price down to \$10 per month for waste and recycling but wasn't sure at this time. Included would be two yearly bulky pick ups for those items not normally accepted.

Each resident will receive a free 45 gallon recycling container starting in January 2008 and finish by April. Recyclables would not need to be sorted. Waste and recycling will be collected once per week but she wasn't able to say if it would be on the same day or not. Yard waste would be an optional service and be available for purchase on a quarterly basis. For the once a week lawn waste, the cap is at 105 gallons. She noted that additional lawn service/pick ups will be offered for purchase.

Trash haulers are currently submitting bids for a three year contract. All billing will go through the trash companies as part of the contract; the haulers are required to establish a customer service center.

She noted a subdivision can opt out with a majority vote of the trustees and have multiple carriers. The time frame to opt out is Nov. 1 – Jan. 21, 2008. Her office is planning a public hearing for each district and the trustees will be notified as to when the meeting for District 3 will be.

Editor comment: Detailed info at [www.stlouisco.com/index.cfm?ViewMe=10337](http://www.stlouisco.com/index.cfm?ViewMe=10337).

## **3. Proposed Pool Amendment – Sam Craig, OFE Trustee/Pool Committee Chair**

Sam noted the pool was purchased in 1980. The indentures require that the users pay for the operations of the pool and this fact has created a lot of conflict for the subdivision including a lawsuit in the 1990s. The previous proposed indentures changes (A/B lots, etc.) tried to work around the existing indenture provision but didn't address the essence of the problem. The major difficulty experienced each year is the fact that the pool management company fee is 70% of the pool operating budget and the contract must be signed before residents purchase their summer memberships. Sam noted that we never know if enough people will sign up to cover these costs.

The four parts to the Proposed Amendment are:

1. Removes the clause in the indentures requiring users to pay for the operations of the pool and all homeowners can use the pool
2. Increases the annual assessment to \$195
3. The assessment may increase annually (board decision) but would not exceed the Cost of Living index. (He noted that it has averaged about 3% annually over the past 25 years)
4. Gives the Board the authority to create a two payments per year assessment plan

The benefits of the Proposed Amendment:

1. No longer have to pay over \$2K in sales tax
2. Simplify accounting requiring only one set of financial books
3. Increased usage
4. Maintains our largest asset
5. Increased ability to make long term plans

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## TRIVIA NIGHT

Sam noted that the proposed amendment has not been voted upon by the board (approved at Trustee meeting November 13) and because of the lack of time to answer questions, additional meetings will be scheduled for the homeowners.

Submitted by:

Kelly Brinkman, Trustee

Editor comment: Any indenture change requires 60% of all votes cast.

## JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> EVENT

The 4th of July was typical; hot and humid with the threat of thunderstorms. We had a big crowd at the pool celebrating the 4th in a neighborly fashion, which is what the holiday is all about. The parade featured the return of the "Lawn Chair Brigade." Steve, from Classic Red Hots sold lots of hot dogs, brats, burgers, and those delicious gyros. The kids all enjoyed their games and prizes. The Brockmans on Strawberry Way were the lucky winners of our 50/50 raffle. Thank-you to Joyce Lehman, Pam Mahon, Maureen Roth, Samantha Thomas, Alexandria Stanley, and Barb Dobbert for helping with the festivities. Please patronize the local businesses which donate attendance prizes to our celebration; Dobb's Auto, Heavenly Ham, Dairy Queen, Kathy Renaud and Jim Moll, Coldwell Banker, Smelly Dog's, Ace Hardware, and Classic Red Hots. Go on-line to [www.classicredhots.com](http://www.classicredhots.com) to see the catering menu offered by Steve, an Old Farm resident.

Karla Reichelt, Trustee

Old Farm held its first annual Trivia Night at the pool on July 28. This event was open to all over the age of 18. We had ten tables of 10 who competed for a cash prize. Many local businesses were sponsors of this event: Koester's Lawn and Landscaping, Kathy Renaud and Jim Moll of Coldwell Banker Realty, Curves, Montgomery Bank, Ortman Stipanovich Mortuary, Everything Pets and Creve Coeur Animal Hospital, Cartridge World, and Go 8 Journeys. Please thank them for their support by patronizing their businesses. Trivia Night earned approximately \$1200 which will be used to buy some new furniture for the pool. Thanks to Nancy Gray, Susan Murray, Kelly Brinkman, and Sue Rozier for their help with Trivia Night. FYI: The winning team (Nicholsons, Voellers, Bellows, Zwicks, and Blocks) donated their winnings back to the pool. We hope to see you at this event next summer.

Karla Reichelt, Trustee

## HALLOWEEN NIGHT

Halloween night was warm and wonderful this year. It was great to be able to actually see the costumes since it didn't get dark until later this year. Everyone who came (approximately 150 people) enjoyed hot dogs, soda, candy, costumes, and the camaraderie of their neighbors. Thanks to Skip and Sue Hart, Joyce and Jerry Lehman, Doug and Maureen Roth, Michelle and Ron Tischer, Kelly Brinkman, and Shannon Murray for helping with this event

Karla Reichelt, Trustee

## NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION

Call the St. Louis County Neighborhood Preservation 314 615-7333 to report houses and lots that are rundown such as peeling paint dilapidated siding, weeds, tall grass, etc. They will visit and investigate the offending property and take action

Larry Jackson, Trustee

## **ADDITIONAL POOL INFORMATION!**

At the general meeting in April of 2007, I presented my treasurer's report for the first time as Treasurer of our subdivision. As those of you who attended are aware, a general discussion regarding the pool followed. There were many opinions expressed both favorable and unfavorable. As I listened and answered questions it became more apparent to me that we needed to better understand why subdivisions own and operate pools and how owning and operating a pool affects the relative value of the community. I realized that we needed to get away from everyone simply expressing his or her personal opinions and focus on factual and relevant information.

So I left the meeting determined to learn more. I spoke with several trustees about this and we embarked on a mission to collect as much information as possible. We decided that our approach would be to see what the professionals had to say. What we discovered was overwhelming. We found and read articles written by real estate consultants which help outline the issues. The issues really boil down to providing amenities at a reasonable cost. Amenities such as a pool, community center, hiking/biking trails etc. at a low or reasonable cost help attract purchasers to the community. We discovered that there is a tipping point to the cost and that our subdivision at \$100, and even the proposed \$195, operates at a cost well below this tipping point.

We contacted real estate agents in the area to ask what their experience is with respect to subdivisions owning and operating pools. Each agent very strongly suggested that having a pool available was a valued attraction. One agent went as far as to study the sales statistics for subdivisions in our area and concluded that the relative days on the market were dramatically less for communities with pools.

We asked the St Louis County Planning Department to compare 10 years of sales history for our subdivision to a nearby subdivision that provides for universal use of their pool and is roughly the same age as ours. This information was also overwhelming. On average, our resale values are 10% lower per square foot.

We discovered a study by a real estate professor at the University of Florida. This study considered things that impacted the relative value of a home and calculated the impact of each. The study considered the affect of a pool and concluded that in the Midwest having an in-ground pool added approximately 6% to the value of the home. That equates to approximately \$12,000 – 15,000 per home in Old Farm Estates. Does a subdivision pool add more or less than a backyard pool? That was not part of the study but some say more--some say less. It is not likely that the additional value is zero though.

We contacted St Louis area home builders engaged in building large scale subdivisions and discovered that when they do build large subdivision (300 or more homes) a pool is always added. Having a pool attracts more buyers and while not having a pool negatively impacts the salability of those subdivisions. The importance of having a large number of homes is essential as the cost per lot will exceed the value of the pool amenity if the subdivision has few homes. There are 558 home in Old Farm.

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As it stands now, the entire subdivision owns a pool but not everyone gets to use it. As it is, it is difficult to operate a facility when the revenue to support it is uncertain. It is difficult to plan and keep the facility looking and functioning well when funding sources are limited. We now know that we all benefit by having a pool available. All the evidence we found in our research points to having a neighborhood pool!

You should realize that there are 14 Trustees and of these 14, only four used the pool in 2007. What is it that these other Trustees see of value in supporting the pool? As Trustees, we are concerned about the relative value of our community. We recognize that we need to provide valued amenities at a reasonable cost and we realize that our current situation impedes us from doing that. We encourage you to attend the upcoming special informational meetings which are open and available to all homeowners. So don't miss this opportunity to help increase the value of our homes!

Ted Campbell, Trustee

### **OFE 2006 EXAMINATION OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURES**

Per Article III Paragraph L of our Indenture of Restrictions, the income and expenditures were examined for the year ending December 31, 2006. Trustees Ted Campbell, Sam Craig and Nancy Gray, conducted the examination on January 27, 2007 at the home of Ted Campbell. Dan Bellows the Treasurer during the year 2006 was not present. The following procedures were performed:

- Obtained copies of all bank account reconciliations noting that bank reconciliations were prepared for each month and all balances agreed to the bank statement and revenue & disbursement statements. Reviewed reconciling items and agreed to subsequent bank statements and revenue & disbursement statement.
- Compared all brokerage statements to revenue and disbursement statements noting that the market value adjustments to the preferred stock holding were sometimes recognized in the following month. Verified funds from closing of the US Bank brokerage account were properly and timely transferred to the St. Louis Bank money market account.
- Compared St. Louis Bank balances to revenue & disbursement statements noting all balances agreed without exception.
- Obtained copies of all City and Village statements and agreed all balances to the bank deposits and revenue & disbursement statements noting all deposits were made in a timely manor with the exception of April 2006. The April deposit for \$1,193 was not made. Further investigation regarding the April deposit noted that this check was deposited to the OFE Recreation account. Discussed this with the OFE Recreation Committee Treasurer. These funds were returned to the OFE Treasurer in March 2007.
- Reviewed all expenses and tied each to copies of cancelled checks and disbursement ledgers noting all agreed, all checks had dual signatures, and all appeared to be reasonable expenses for OFE.

### **Conclusion**

The revenue & disbursement statements for 2006 appeared to be in good condition and accurately reflected the income and expenditures of the association.

Sam Craig, Nancy Gray, Ted Campbell, Trustees

## EMAIL TO THE EDITOR

### POOL PROPOSAL

At the General Meeting in October, Sam Craig of the Pool Committee made a presentation concerning the pool and the value this “asset” may have for the value of homes in the subdivision. Also presented was a proposal which may be placed before the owners to amend the indentures to effectively provide that the pool be owned AND use expenses paid by all lot owners. All would be eligible to use the pool at no extra cost. Also stated was the opinion that it is time to resolve the issue once and for all.

I COULD NOT AGREE MORE.

Regardless of whether or not property values go up or down, it is time to vote once and for all on the issue of universal pool membership and all that entails. Do away with the periodical pool votes by passing or rejecting this current issue before us soon. Then live by the results. This would end the divisive nature of our number one problem. Let the lot owners decide, with real consequences for the winners and losers.

I propose a three part plan which will end the rhetoric and opinion often given associated with this issue. Pass or fail, this would be it. Everyone should be informed that we will have universal membership OR close and dismantle the pool and buildings depending on the outcome of this vote.

1) Vote on the proposal to come before the subdivision.

If passed, END OF PROBLEM.

2) If it fails, get bids on closure costs and submit the cost to the lot owners

For a one time assessment to pay for closing/filling pool.

If that passes, do it. END OF PROBLEM.

3) If that assessment fails even after publicity explaining the dramatic measures which WOULD be taken to pay for the pool closure, do the following:

Cancel EVERY expenditure in the subdivision until the number one priority (the pool closing) is paid for. The only exceptions: this publication, insurance, indenture required expenses, legally required expenses, and costs associated with buying reflective stop signs and other reflective signs.

END OF PROBLEM

This proposal will end the division over the pool issue. Discussion about the pool will soon end as the reality of losing sets in for that side and the subdivision adjusts to life as it now would be.

I would hope both sides see the value in ending the problems we always have by not holding a final vote. I would hope both sides would campaign hard for their sides.

Let us END THE PROBLEM.

Dan Kuhlman, Resident

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