

# Briarcliff Grapevine

SPRING 2017

BRIARCLIFF HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

WEST BLOOMFIELD, MICHIGAN



## So much to do... ...So little time!

What is it about spring that makes us want to get things **d-o-n-e**? If you're anything at all like me, you're making 'to do' lists—one after the other—right now!



Connie Claybaker

I have 'to do' lists to get my life organized, 'to do' lists for improving my space and 'to do' lists for personal enrichment (now that I'm retired)!

But my most important 'to do' list right now is the one I'm working on with your Board for the Briarcliff Homeowners Association.

As your President, I field a **ton** of phone calls from residents, each of whom educates me a little bit more on the challenges we collectively face. And each enlightens me just a little bit more about what you feel we, your elected Board, are doing right and what we could be doing better.

One thing I've learned from all these conversations is, for the most part, as neighbors we all share the same

concerns...we seem to all be on the same page.

It's not brain surgery, folks. We all want a safe, clean, friendly, community in which to reside and raise our families. And we want to protect the major investment we've made in our homes, continuing to watch our property values increase in the future.

For the most part, I think we're doing pretty well in the subdivision. But, as in all neighborhoods, we have our challenges.

## Our Goals: A clean, safe and friendly community

On other pages of this newsletter we will detail some of our plans to reach our objectives for Briarcliff as we go forward, and how you can help. There seems to be a few specific residents who are the subject of the vast majority of the complaints I receive; we want to focus on those individuals and work with them to improve the issues their neighbors

are concerned about. As a Board, we are committed to holding these homeowners accountable, and you will hear more about our plans in the near future.

In the meantime, let's commit to working **together** to achieve our mutual objectives.

We are in the process of investigating ways to improve the '**clean**' part. You can do your part by picking up litter when you walk by it. You can also help the '**safe**' aspect by making sure your outside lamp post and garage lights are in good working order. Keep your front porch light turned on at night. Keep your car and home doors locked. Drive at posted limits. Use care at the curve and intersections. Most importantly, keep your eyes and ears open for anything out of the ordinary.

And the '**friendly**' part is easy! Smile! Be considerate. Help when and where you can. Reach out to offer assistance or guidance to your neighbor. And as always, look out for each other! Make "being a good neighbor" the top entry on your 'to do' list! Have a great spring!

- Connie



BRIARCLIFF HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION  
P.O. Box 250022

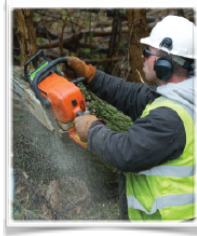
West Bloomfield, MI 48325-0022 [www.ebriarcliff.org](http://www.ebriarcliff.org)



# What's Going On? Neighborhood News and Notes

## TREES, TREES, TREES:

Sadly, the heavy winds of February and March left many of our trees and bushes broken, bent and on the ground. Several of you still have limbs and branches to dispose of. GFL is picking up yard waste and will take any branches and brush properly bundled.



Branches between 2" – 6" in diameter will be collected with the garbage (solid waste) provided they are bundled and tied. Bundles should be **4 feet maximum in length** and a maximum of 60 pounds each.

If you have trimmings larger than 6" in diameter, contact either GFL Environmental at 844.464.3587 or a private tree service contractor.

Additionally, DTE has been, and will continue to be, in and around the neighborhood replacing **utility poles** and trimming more trees which encroach on the power lines. Per their website:

*"DTE Energy is committed to providing reliable, affordable, safe electricity for its customers. Because trees are often responsible for power outages, trimming problem trees is a common sense solution to prevent outages from happening in the first place. In fact, areas where we've trimmed have seen up to a 75 percent reduction in outages."*

Please be cautious on the roads when the crews are present and be extra careful with your children and pets while the crews are in your yards.

## AND THE CLEANUP CONTINUES...:

Although the DTE tree-trimming efforts will be beneficial in the long run in reducing power outages, the project leaves behind some unsightly areas where brush and trees have been pruned and/or removed.

Although DTE removes the **debris** they create, they are not responsible to re-landscape any areas on your property which may require attention.



We are presently reviewing bids to remove some of the additional debris that has been stuffed into the bushes along 14 mile road. And some safety trimming we did at the entrance was later butchered by the DTE crews.

We will be addressing this as well. It is unsightly and does not contribute positively to the image of our neighborhood. In the meantime, **please refrain** from adding your own debris to that of the crews.

## WE NEED YOU!

In a small neighborhood such as ours, "wants and needs" usually exceed the "can do's" the budget allows. To bridge that gap, we rely on the efforts and contributions of volunteers. We frequently need to hire professionals to do specific tasks, but we would *always* prefer to have one of our own residents to consult with first. Won't you consider lending a hand or sharing your expertise?

We are looking for assistance on several levels. It may be as simple as providing an answer, referral or direction. Our existing volunteer pool is small; if you think **your** profession, skill, passion or abilities can help us, please call Connie as soon as possible.



Particular needs right now include, but are not limited to:

- Landscape Design/Architect
- Graphic Artist
- Real Estate Attorney
- Local Realtor
- Plumber/Electrician
- Brick Mason

## UPCOMING ROAD REPAIRS:

At the annual meeting in December, a budget of **\$18,000** was approved to repair some areas of our subdivision roads. Each year, we identify priorities in our roads that require attention and budget the necessary funds to address them.

These repairs will be done sometime late spring/early summer and will involve some re-paving and rubber crack filling. If you recall, last year road repairs were delayed so the funds could be allocated to ensure a timely installation of our new water storage tank. We are eager to reinstate those repairs for 2017!



In an article written for West Bloomfield Today last year, realtor Karen Thomas (Coldwell Banker Weir Manuel—248-505-3066) wrote **"...the condition of the street has a direct impact on the value of your home...Crumbling streets drag down home values..."**

As we have repeatedly said, increasing property values is a priority for your Board. We take great pride in the condition of our roads here in Briarcliff and work hard to keep them in optimum condition. Great roads add to the curb appeal of your home and thus, help to increase **all of our** property values!

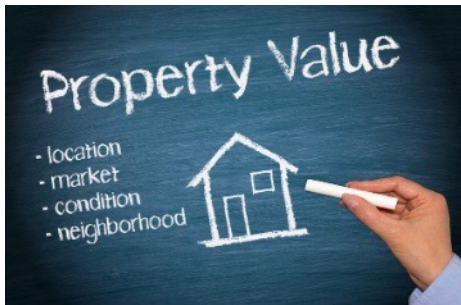
**Mark Your Calendar Now:**  
**General Membership Meeting**  
**Wednesday, June 14, 2017**

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# Investing in our Future = Higher Home Values

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One of the main reasons for the existence of the HOA is to ... "protect the property values " of the residents . But what is that and how do we do it? In reality, it's a fairly broad task and encompasses several different actions and activities.



For example, by the time you read this, we will have finished providing water line blowing services to 179 of our 193 residents; improving your water pressure could certainly be viewed as contributing to your homes' value. A more tangible example would be our new generator and water storage tank. For the past five years, our priority was to shore up our finances to provide for these much needed and necessary investments. Now, any prospective home buyer knows that *this* neighborhood is serious about preserving and improving its mechanical infrastructure.

But there's a lot more than just *physical* infrastructure contributing to the value of our properties. As a Board, we want to work diligently to make Briarcliff the 'go to' neighborhood for realtors and prospective buyers in search of perfectly sized, well-maintained, mid-century modern homes in a safe, clean neighborhood.

In Briarcliff, we are lucky to live in homes that check several of the boxes on the list of factors *contributing* to a property's value:

1) **LOCATION:** The classic real estate refrain says, "Location, location, location." Could there be a better location than here? We can get to *any* major freeway in a matter of minutes and would be hard pressed to identify too many retail outlets not within an easy ride. Parks, natural preserves and cultural amenities abound. And water is everywhere nearby!

2. **MARKET:** While homebuyers used to swoon over ample square footage, many have fallen out of love with the McMansion. Both millennials and empty nesters don't want the upkeep and care of those huge houses, and they are searching for ranch homes like ours. Layout is a key factor because our open-concept design can look much more spacious and the lack of stairs provides safety and security.

3) **CONDITION:** Condition is a huge factor. Real estate experts will tell you people will pay more for homes that have been well maintained and updated thoughtfully.

4) **NEIGHBORHOOD:** A February 2016 article in Forbes magazine spoke of the value of *mature trees* in adding value to a home. We may take our trees for granted here in Briarcliff, but because it's a common practice for developers to cut down most of the trees on a property to build homes, our trees are *very attractive* to buyers! Trees are a huge part of how our neighborhood looks and feels to us and those who consider relocating here. 'How we look,' or the *aesthetics* of our neighborhood, is where we plan to focus our efforts this year, because frankly, at 63, she's starting to show her age. The good news is that there's several things we can, and will, do to bring back her luster.

We have had many spirited discussions about neighborhood beautification for some time. Now is the time to take some action. Our goal is to both provide a more updated, visually appealing surrounding for our residents, and encourage quality prospective buyers who want to set down roots and enjoy the beauty of Briarcliff.

We have formed a committee to review new plans for our **entrances**. We are looking at new **signage, planting and landscaping** options. We are looking at ways to improve and invest in **Rauch Park**. And more. And we welcome any ideas or suggestions you have. This will be a several-phased effort, so we ask for your patience.



We can't do it alone. Each and every one of us needs to focus some individual attention on our own homes. Cut your grass. Get rid of the dandelions. Weed, trim, paint. Pick up your trash. Plant some colorful flowers. Hide your 'stuff' from view. Fix your falling fence. Your property values increase when everyone else's do....we're all in this together.

We are currently reviewing options to **fine and assess** those residents who repeatedly and routinely disregard the rules of code enforcement. These are the people who are responsible for most of the calls and complaints we get. The vast majority of our residents take terrific care of their property and have pride in their homes. We thank you and hope we can get your neighbor to step up his/her game!

## BOARD VACANCIES

The recent relocation of one of our residents has resulted in a vacancy on the Board of Directors. The Board is responsible for "... establishing the general policy to be followed by this Association in furthering its intended purpose." And, according to our ByLaws, that purpose is "...to protect the property values within and promote the general health, welfare and safety of the residents..."



Won't you join us? We have room for one or more residents who are interested in the future of their community. You will find it a rewarding and interesting experience, and meet some new friends in the process! Call Connie Claybaker for details.

## BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!



You know what 'they' say: "Michigan has only two seasons, winter and road construction." It does seem like every single road in the West Bloomfield area is, or soon will be, under construction! Planning is essential if you want to be on time going ANYwhere! So check out the closures, detours, and completion schedules of the various projects on Maple, Orchard Lake Road and elsewhere before you hit the road. Check out <http://www.wbtwp.com> or <http://www.rcocweb.org> for road commission updates!

And slow down!

## EXTERIOR WATER LINE INSURANCE—WHAT'S THE DEAL?

You may have received a solicitation from AARP, or a private insurance company offering insurance on your exterior water line. This solicitation will likely have come as an official-looking document that appears to have a utility company's blessing.



Although it is true that each homeowner *is* responsible for any repairs required to the line that connects your home to the main supply in the street, it is VERY rare that any resident would experience the kind of break or problem that these companies offer to insure. Although homeowners are free to purchase any insurance they choose to, online research of the subject suggests that this type is both unnecessary and costly.

If you feel you want to purchase this supplemental insurance, you may want to discuss with your home insurance agent first. Do your homework and make the right decision you feel best for your family.

## ANOTHER WORD ABOUT POWER OUTAGES



This past winter we fielded a few calls from residents wondering why our new generator was not working during the power outage.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Our HOA generator serves as back up power to the **pump house** to ensure the pumps run and you have no disruption to your WATER service. You will

need to purchase your own home generator if you want to make sure you have **electrical service** during power outages.

Bottom line, the generator was working perfectly. (and hopefully, the tree trimming will mean that the power outages are fewer and far between)!

# BRIARCLIFF BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017

## PRESIDENT

Connie Claybaker

248-752-8762

[president@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:president@ebriarcliff.org)

## CO-VICE PRESIDENTS

Phyllis Weeks

Roberta Work

[vice\\_president@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:vice_president@ebriarcliff.org)

## TREASURER

Kendall Weeks

[treasurer@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:treasurer@ebriarcliff.org)

## SECRETARY

Denise Gordon

[secretary@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:secretary@ebriarcliff.org)

## WATER SYSTEM MANAGER

Dan Gordon

[water@ebriarcliff.org](mailto:water@ebriarcliff.org)

248-421-3184

## TRUSTEES

Lynn Abraham

David Howard

Richard Rauch

Sean Warren

## BOOKKEEPING SERVICES

Connie Claybaker