



Photo courtesy of Dick Ruddy

Your Homeowners News

NEWS AND EVENTS

Message from the President

By Marilyn Smith



The title of this column sounds rather grand, particularly when I consider most of you reading this have not met me. As a partial introduction, I am Marilyn Smith, and my husband Carl and I have lived in either Thomas Village or the Meadows for some 33 years. This is only my second year on the Board.

When it was suggested that I would be nominated to be president of the Homeowners Association, I thought this just meant that I would preside over board meetings every other month, peruse my email, and maybe write a few thank you letters. Surprise! It hasn't been that simple. I had my new title less than 24 hours before I got my first interesting phone call. Then, after hunkering down to read the bylaws, protective covenants, and Board minutes from the last few years, I acquired a more realistic view of my position and a better perspective on the workings of the Board.

I found that members of the Board have been, and continue to be, a very dedicated group of people, and that a lot has been accomplished to resolve questions and problems over the course of our relatively short history. It took an amazing effort to set in place processes to manage our collection of property assessments, maintain the landscaping and walls, monitor architectural changes in our neighborhood, and publish this newsletter. All this did not come easily to neighbors volunteering their time.

The Board has wrestled with a number of issues in the past, and it seems safe to say that we have not seen the last of such challenges. It appears that the nature of such issues is to come in bunches, and sometimes that pushes our officers and committees fairly hard. While I may be the president — and sometimes the queen of fast-flying emails — it takes each of the nine members of the Board, contributing their various talents and time, to take care of the business that comes before us.

Financial Update

By Jim Nelson, Treasurer

On behalf of your Board of Directors, thanks to those property owners who have paid their annual assessment of \$200 for the Meadows on Rio Grande Homeowners Association. The funds you provide allow your Association to continue maintaining and improving our shared spaces.

Payment of Assessments

As of August 31, 93 families — about 85 percent of all Meadows homeowners—have paid all or part of the May 2009-April 2010 assessment. A second-notice invoice was mailed in July to those who have not yet paid.

Here's where we stand as of August 31, 2009:

Year-to-date income: \$19,540 (89% of budget)

Year-to-date expenses (May, June, July, August): \$6,296 (29% of budget)

The year-to-date expenses include payment in full of our Association's annual insurance premium.

Wall Maintenance Reserve Fund

Besides paying our monthly landscaping fees and utilities, the Association is depositing a portion of your assessments into a long-term fund established to maintain the common-area stucco walls. We have completed Phase 1 of this maintenance and we hope to initiate Phase 2 soon.

Property Liens Filed

In accordance with the policies of the Association, claimant liens have been filed and recorded against properties that have a history of non-payment of assessments and/or fines. For a property to be sold or refinanced, any liens recorded against the property must be removed. This process of collecting assessments generally will result in some delay before recovery, but it does ensure that all property owners contribute equally.



The Meadows on Rio Grande



Photo courtesy of Dick Ruddy

LANDSCAPING UPDATE

Why We're Staying with Heads Up

By Gene Finch

Most of our homeowners' dues go toward the maintenance of our common landscaping on Don Fernando and Don Quixote drives. (Maintenance of Dulcinea Park is the City's responsibility.) We contract with Heads Up Landscaping to maintain our common areas for a little over \$800 per month. For this fee, two or three workers come once a week to trim all the bushes, clean up leaves and spray for weeds. They are well equipped with the necessary tools to do the job and have good supervision. We pay an additional cost to have broken tree limbs removed and dead bushes and trees replaced.

We tried another company in the past at a lower cost. Unfortunately, they did not have the manpower or the necessary tools to do the job adequately. As with anything, you get what you pay for, and we have been happy with the work of Heads Up.

Our irrigation system is now 20 years old, and we have had several water problems over the past few months. When our monthly water bill increased from \$20 to more than \$100, we knew we had a leak — several leaks, actually, and they have been difficult to find. The system runs three nights a week, but to find the leaks, Heads Up had to turn the water on during the daytime, which was costly.

Heads Up did not bear the responsibility for these leaks since the company did not cause them. The good news is that we believe we have found all of the leaks, and they have been repaired.

HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS



Marilyn Smith, President
Stann Sandoval, Vice President
Jim Nelson, Treasurer
Alan Chaulk, Secretary
Gene Finch, Landscaping
Susan Finch, Newsletter
Kent Morrison, ARC chairman
Alvan Romero
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QUARTERLY QUOTE

"Everyone must take time to sit and watch the leaves turn."

~Elizabeth Lawrence

*Special thanks to Denise Davis
for printing this newsletter.*

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Remember the Covenants

By Kent Morrison, Committee Chair

Are you planning to make renovations to the exterior of your home? All new construction and/or modifications to the exterior of your home — including changes to the home's exterior appearance, such as color changes — are governed by a set of Protective Covenants. Before beginning your remodel, you'll need to submit a Request for Design Approval to the Board and obtain ARC approval for the project. Forms can be obtained from our website, www.meadowsonriogrande.org

We have added two new members to the committee, **Stann Sandoval** and **Alvan Romero**. Both are longtime residents of the Meadows on Rio Grande and bring considerable experience to the ARC.

The committee thanks all who have submitted their plans for approval. We recently approved the construction of three patio covers/gazebos and a photovoltaic solar array (see Stann Sandoval's article on solar panels). We appreciate your support as we work toward the goal we all share:

In Memoriam

It saddens us to announce the passing of Meadows resident Helen Todd on her 97th birthday this past May. The Summer 2008 issue of this newsletter featured an article about Helen and her husband, Jay, who were often seen walking through the neighborhood. Jay and Helen were married for 66 years. Helen is survived by Jay, her daughter Edith, who also lives in the Meadows, a second daughter named Melissa, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



Solar Energy Systems

By Stann Sandoval

That's a very broad subject today, as there are many types of systems designed to capture the sun's energy. Some are very simple and others quite complex. There is also an abundant amount of information available on the Internet. I've borrowed liberally from some of that information, and you can use the Web to get even more. An excellent place to start is the New Mexico Solar Energy Association web site at [HYPERLINK "mailto:info@nmsea.org" info@nmsea.org](http://www.nmsea.org) From there, you can follow any of the numerous links provided, depending upon the type of information you are seeking or the types of systems you may be interested in.

First, here is a generalized description of some system types:

Passive solar systems are used for water-heating or space-heating that captures the sun's energy and moves the heated air or water without the use of fans or pumps. Passive systems often incorporate thermal mass storage elements, like Trombe walls or water containers. Typically, thermal energy is stored in these media during the day and released into an occupied space at night.

Active solar systems rely on the use of pumps and/or fans to move the captured energy from its collection point to its storage point or direct usage point. They can be air systems or liquid systems incorporating heat exchangers that transfer the collected energy for immediate use, or into storage for use at a later time.

Photovoltaic or PV systems have become increasingly popular in recent years. These systems use solar cells to convert sunlight directly into electricity, which is either used immediately or more commonly stored in batteries for later use. They are generally designed or sized to meet some or most of a home's energy needs. Because they generate electricity, these systems can easily be connected to the power grid and excess electricity can be re-sold to the power company. PNM has an active program for homeowners interested in this type of system ([HYPERLINK "http://www.Pnm.com" www.pnm.com](http://www.Pnm.com)).

Choosing Your Solar Collectors

The heart of any solar system begins with the solar collectors, or panels. Once again, there are also many types of solar panels used for energy collection. Flat panels consist of a glass- or plastic-covered frame and absorbing material, often metal, which is coated with special black paint. Sunlight absorbed through the glass heats up the inside surfaces, and air is passed through the collector to move the heat into the living space.

Flat collectors are normally mounted at an angle to maximize the amount of sunlight that can be absorbed. They can also incorporate coils that contain water or antifreeze. The liquid is circulated through heat exchangers to heat (or preheat) water for direct hot water use or radiant-heating loops.

Collectors can also be parabolic, or bowl-shaped. This type of device provides greater efficiencies and higher temperatures, but usually at a higher purchase price and maintenance cost. Parabolic collectors reflect energy from their surface onto an absorbing tube in the center of the collector which, in turn, heats up a circulating fluid.

Collectors of either type can be stationary or tracking. Tracking collectors are designed to move and follow the sun during the day, much like a sunflower. Again, tracking systems tend to be more expensive to buy, install and maintain.



Many of the web sites accessible via the NMSEA site can provide additional information about types and costs of solar systems. Some sites have solar system calculators built in to help you size your system and estimate costs. Others offer professional help for these estimates, from local companies that install solar systems.



Additionally, there are tax incentives and rebates from both the state and federal governments that help defray the initial cost of the system.

In these times of high energy prices, increasing demands on fossil fuels, and emphasis on green living and reducing our carbon footprints, it might just be time to look or re-look at alternative, renewable-energy resources, including solar. If you are considering a solar system for your house, please remember to work with the Homeowners Association and the Architectural Review Committee to have your plans approved **before** you proceed.



Photo courtesy of Susan Finch

CLOSE TO HOME

Bow Wow Blues

By Susan Finch

When you walk into Bow Wow Blues, on Rio Grande just south of Griegos, you know you're not in a typical pet store. Large dog statues grace both sides of the entrance, while a myriad of products for your canine friend awaits you inside. Bow Wow Blues brims with hand-painted dog bowls, stylish collars and accessories, and healthy dog food. Moreover, the shop welcomes canine visitors, hosts animal-friendly events throughout the year, will deliver pet food to your door, and is committed to supporting animal-welfare organizations.

Owner Crissi Letherer opened the business in 2001 in the 100-year-old adobe that adorns this North Valley location. Crissi's dream was to build a pet and pet lover's mecca — a destination for pet zealots like herself. While you shop, your pets can play in the dog-bone-shaped, grassy fenced yard behind the store.



Photo courtesy of Dick Ruddy

Crissi Letherer, Bow Wow Blues owner, in her store

In addition to carrying your favorite pet products, Bow Wow Blues offers pet training classes, theme birthday parties, weekly dog-play groups and special events — like Pug-tober Fest, a party for all pugs to benefit N.M. Pug Rescue, coming Saturday, October 24. Don't have a pug? Then you and your four-legged friend can attend the Howl-o-Ween Party on Saturday, October 31. Donate \$5 per dog to enter the costume contest and enjoy games, food, and fun. All proceeds benefit East Side Herding Small Dog Rescue.



Photo courtesy of Susan Finch

Five years ago, Bow Wow Blues held a photo contest and I entered a picture of my then-new puppy, Bentley (left). He won the "Just Too Cute" category and was showered with prizes, including a hand-painted mug with his winning image. So take your dog to Bow Wow Blues and check out

the latest happenings ... your dog could be a winner, too. Oh, and they carry items for your feline friends as well.

Bow Wow Blues
 3845 Rio Grande Blvd. NW, 341-4484
 Monday - Friday 10am - 6pm
 Saturday 10am - 5pm
 Sunday 10am - 3pm

MEET THE NEIGHBORS

Blackie the Cat, Alias Diablo

By Dick Ruddy

Some of you may recall stories of Blackie the Cat on the TVNA list serve. With Halloween nearby, it seemed appropriate to bring you up to date on this mysterious black feline.

Neighbors have reported sighting Blackie in the park or walking the walls on either side of Don Fernando since early 2009. You might have seen him curled up somewhere in your backyard, a definite free spirit.

Fans of the feline will be happy to learn that he is still around and now domesticated, with the name Diablo. Gerry Barr made the effort to be friends, and after some food and a bit of affection, Blackie, i.e. Diablo, is now a one-man cat. He loves Gerry, but usually stays clear of most everyone else.



Photo courtesy of Kay Ready