



# CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

February 2011

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Citizens' Association*

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*Residents of Carderock Springs and surrounding areas may join the Citizens Association for an annual due of \$50 for a membership year ending December 31, 2011. Dues and family information for the Carderock Springs telephone directory may be mailed to the Carderock Springs Citizens' Association at P.O. Box 237, Cabin John, MD 20818-0237. Our Association represents the Carderock Springs community and implements its land covenants.*

## Citizens' Association Monthly Meetings

**Next Meeting:**

**Monday, February 7, 2011 7:00**

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## Notes from CSCA January 2011 Board Meeting

In January, the CSCA Board conducted the following business:

Previous minutes accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Financially, the CSCA is meeting its monthly needs. Time to think about dues for the coming year.

New business: Two surveys were included in the December 2010 newsletter: 1. Alternatives to leaf and snow removal, and 2. Best way for the Board to communicate with the community. Over 130 households responded to the surveys. Given these results (and believing it represented sincere community input), the Board made the following decisions:

- The Board will not pursue any further efforts to become involved in the county's curb leaf removal program. Most residents want to continue to compost, mow, or use current county removal of bagged leaves to dispose of fallen leaves.
- The Board will not pursue any further efforts to organize snow removal from non-county maintained cul-de-sacs due to lack of interest by those residents living in these cul-de-sacs.
- The Board will use a monthly, printed "green-colored paper" newsletter as its official means of communication with the community. However, the Board will also continue to use the CS-chat.

ARC: The Board appointed Margit Meisner as the ARC/Community Liaison to facilitate the new process of submitting proposals to the ARC (see article in this newsletter on 'New Architectural Review Committee Procedures'). It is hoped that this new position will help improve communication between the community and the ARC. The Board is still looking for a person to replace Steve Kunin on the ARC as a member. If interested, please contact Mary Lou Shannon (CSCAatlarge2@gmail.com)

Tree Removal Guidelines: The Board reviewed and voted on the edited tree removal guidelines submitted by Lisa Deyo, the tree removal consultant. These guidelines are printed in this newsletter (See article on 'Tree Removal in Carderock'). The goal of these changes is to make the guidelines more user-friendly and flexible. The Board wants to thank Lisa for her time and effort to create guidelines to keep the integrity of our environmental concerns and the personal needs of each resident.

The next meeting of the Board will be Monday, February 7th, 7:00 pm at the Club. All members of the community are welcome. One item on the agenda is the planning and organizing of a community-wide international potluck supper in March to celebrate the cultural diversity of Carderock Springs. Interested? Join us for a discussion. The CSCA Board meets on every first Monday of the month at the Club, beginning at 7:00 pm. The Architectural Review Committee (ARC) also meets monthly on the first Wednesday of each month at the Club, beginning at 7:30 pm. All members of the community are welcome to attend these meetings. The next meeting of the Board will be Monday, February 7th. There will be a discussion about leaf removal. There will also be a discussion about the relationship between Carderock and Carderock South.

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## **Communication – A Must**

The CSCA Board has been concerned about what may be the best way to communicate important issues with the community. We recognize that there are many who use the CS-Chat ([cs-chat@yahoogroups.com](mailto:cs-chat@yahoogroups.com)) and CSCA website, as well as many others who do not have access to the internet, thus are not "on line." In our last newsletter, we asked how you would prefer the Board to communicate with you. The overwhelming response was for having a monthly, "green-colored paper" newsletter. Even a few who responded they would like us to use the CS-chat as a way of communicating, went on

to say they would also appreciate a printed newsletter. So... the CSCA Board at its January meeting voted to have a monthly newsletter printed and distributed to the community as the "official means of communication to all residents of Carderock Springs." We are grateful that Noëlle Lewis is willing to be the editor. The Board will continue to use the chat and website to communicate with the community (including any emergency concerns), but will use the newsletter as its main means of getting information out to everyone. Anyone interested in submitting something for the newsletter should get information to Noëlle ([CSCAnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:CSCAnewsletter@gmail.com)) prior to the 15th of each month. The Board will review all articles before publishing.

The two recent surveys in the last newsletter (re: communications and the leaf and snow removal) received many responses (over 130 households). The Board feels that using the CSCA Newsletter to survey the community for opinions on various subjects will be more successful than holding community meetings (where turn out in the past has been minimal). However, when there is a need for community discussion before an important vote or pronouncement, the board will continue to hold community meetings instead of relying on the CS-chat.

We hope you will carefully read the newsletter each month and continue to communicate with the Board on all issues and concerns.

*Phil Rider, President CSCA*

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## **New Architectural Review Committee Procedures**

Carderock Springs' covenants require that any homeowner who wants to make changes to the external structure of their home and/or landscaping must submit an application/proposal to the ARC for their deliberation, advice, and eventual approval. The three members of the ARC are volunteers (and professionals) who

have done an excellent job in dealing with each proposal presented to them. As many homeowners will affirm, they have been especially helpful in offering great advice to enhance the final plan. Our community is very lucky to have such volunteers to offer this professional advice while, at the same time, upholding our important covenants.

In order to ease the burden of their work, the Board voted to create a new position that would be responsible solely for communication between the community and the ARC. Margit Meisner, the newly appointed ARC/Community Liaison, will ensure that each homeowner's proposal is complete when first presented to the ARC, and Margit will communicate any advice/decisions after the ARC has reviewed the proposal.

### **New Procedures for Presenting Proposals to the ARC**

1. Go to the CSCA website and download the ARC application form. If you don't have access to the web, contact Margit to get the form ([CSCAarc@gmail.com](mailto:CSCAarc@gmail.com)).
2. Read the requirements carefully before submitting the application to Margit. It includes creating specific plans, "permission" from neighbors, etc.
3. Once the application is completed, submit it to Margit, who will review it and make sure that all things are covered before presenting it to the ARC. If something is missing, she will contact the homeowner and request further information. All Applications need to be completed by the 20th of the month in order to be reviewed at the next ARC meeting (the first Wednesday of the month).
4. Once the application is complete, Margit will pass it on to Scott Wilets, an ARC member. Scott will be the main contact person on the ARC.
5. After the ARC deliberates on the proposal, Margit will inform the homeowner of any advice/decision made by the ARC. She will also post on the CSCA website any decisions that are made so the community will know if a neighbor has obtained approval for changes. Margit will further

offer to each homeowner the opportunity to post a SIGN on the front lawn to indicate to neighbors that approval from the ARC has been given.

Contact Information: Margit's e-mail is [CSCAarc@gmail.com](mailto:CSCAarc@gmail.com). It is best way to communicate with her via e-mail. Her address is 8323 Still Spring Ct. You can drop off written proposals there, but please e-mail her that you will be doing so. This will give her a "heads up" to watch for any proposals. If you do not have e-mail, her telephone is 301-469-6740. Please use this only if e-mail is not possible or for limited reasons.

The Board hopes this process will improve communication between the ARC and homeowners. Any suggestions/feedback will be welcomed.

*CSCA Board*

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### **New Committee on Environmental Issues in Carderock**

The CSCA Board has formed a committee to address concerns and needs regarding the environment in Carderock. These include, but are not limited to, recycling/reusing/freecycling, composting, beautification projects, various green initiatives, speakers/workshops on such topics as native plants and gardens, fertilizers and pesticides, invasive plants, and more. Suggestions for topics would be greatly appreciated. The intent of this committee is to provide another way the CSCA can be responsive to its members.

Please contact Diane Karlik ([dianekarlik@verizon.net](mailto:dianekarlik@verizon.net)) to express your interest and/or to get involved. The first meeting will be scheduled in February. The first agenda item is to craft a name to energize support for Carderock's environment.

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### **Tree Removal in Carderock**

Carderock Springs was developed in the 1960s by Edmund Bennett. In developing Carderock, his vision for the neighborhood was

that houses would fit into the surrounding woods and conform to the geographic lay of the land rather than contouring the land to fit the houses. Forty years later, Carderock Springs contains many mature trees that are in need of pruning and care.

It is natural that homeowners may wish to thin their wooded lots when trees have become unhealthy or have grown too close to their homes. However, cutting down trees affects the look and feel of the entire neighborhood for all homeowners, not just the individual homeowner. Many residents feel very strongly about tree preservation. Please consult with your neighbors when intending to remove a tree(s), particularly those neighbors who have a view of the tree(s).

In most cases, tree removal is acceptable in Carderock; however, in conformance with the covenants, permission is required for the removal of any sound hardwood tree over 8" in diameter. Please consult with Lisa Wilcox Deyo at [CSCAtree@gmail.com](mailto:CSCAtree@gmail.com) to obtain permission for any tree removal. Lisa has practiced landscape architecture in the area for over 20 years, including many projects in Carderock Springs. Lisa will discuss your concerns about tree removal, maintenance, and care.

A 'sound' tree is a healthy tree. Signs of a healthy tree include: having no obvious damage to its trunk, few dead branches, and a healthy crown of leaves. Please consult with a licensed arborist to evaluate the health of any hardwood tree you are considering removing. Generally, hardwood (or deciduous) trees have broad leaves and lose their leaves in autumn.

Permission is not required for softwoods. Softwood trees are any evergreens with needle-shaped leaves, such as cedars and spruces. However, if you intend to remove a softwood, as a courtesy, please contact your neighbors before removing it.

No permission is required to remove a tree damaged by a storm, particularly if the damaged tree is likely to cause imminent

damage to your or your neighbor's house, garage, or vehicles. However, if the injured tree remains well-rooted, only the damaged branch(es) may need to be removed.

No permission is required for the removal of a dead or diseased tree when a licensed arborist determines that the tree cannot be saved. A diseased tree is one in which 50 percent or more of the tree exhibits obvious signs such as large areas of visible fungus, wood rot, or many barren branches. However, dead trees located in areas of your yard far removed from structures can provide valuable nesting habitat for birds. In addition, when they biodegrade they help enrich the soil. Therefore, if there is a dead tree in the back of your woods that is not in danger of falling and/or damaging any structure, consider leaving it alone.

Tree maintenance tips: Lisa will be happy to consult with you about pruning, as will any licensed arborist. Just as old houses can need renovations, so do aging trees. Pruning can prevent trees from becoming imbalanced with heavy branches growing only on one side. This can occur when: the tree has been crowded by another tree, it has been planted too close to a structure, or long branches have developed as the tree reaches for sunlight. One-sided, heavy branches on pine trees are susceptible to breaking during snow or wind storms. Occasionally, this imbalance can bring the whole tree down.

Pruning is also very important. Thinning the dense branches and leaves improves the health of a tree by increasing the air circulation among its leaves and between adjacent trees. Since trees are competing with grass and groundcover for water and nutrients, thinning the branches means its roots do not need to feed as many leaves. Pruning also reduces the likelihood of fungus and diseases caused by over-crowding or over-dense crowns. Furthermore, large trees with dense "canopies" of branches and leaves restrict sunlight and water needed by plants and grass below. Thinning the tree canopy can improve the ecosystem health of your garden by

increasing the sunlight and rainwater available to your shrubs and groundcovers.

Another detriment to the health of both hardwoods and evergreens is crawling ivy. Ivy should be removed from all tree trunks. Aggressive ivy growing up the tree trunk can compromise a trees photosynthesis or structural strength leading to death directly or by opportunistic disease and insect attacks caused by weakness.

For further information, please contact Lisa Wilcox Deyo at [CSCAtree@gmail.com](mailto:CSCAtree@gmail.com)

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## **Alternative Electricity Providers in Carderock Springs**

Over the past several months, many have raised questions about who provides electricity to our homes. Some of this stems from a frustration and criticism of Pepco's poor performance during last year's storms. Others have been interested in possibly buying into a more "green" energy production or finding a less expensive provider than Pepco. The CSCA Board has researched this issue and would like to share its findings/ suggestions with the community.

When we turn a light on in our homes, most of us do not think much about how/where that electricity was produced and how it actually gets to our homes. The following is a brief and general summary of that process:

1. Electricity is produced mainly by privately owned companies. Some are huge (international) and others are small (regional). Not only do they produce the electricity, they are also the ones who buy and sell it. These companies (power plants) produce electricity by burning coal, gas, or oil (coal still being the major means of production in our country and our state). Electricity is also produced through nuclear power plants, wind, and water (hydroelectric).

Those who speak of "green electricity" generally refer to the means of production that do not harm the environment. There are major controversies on all sides of this debate. For

example, some claim nuclear power is "green" when the waste is disposed of in an environmentally safe way; others claim that hydroelectricity is not "green" if warm water is released, negatively impacting the environment.

2. All electricity produced by all methods (coal, hydro, nuclear, etc.) goes into one regional "pool." For us, this is generally the Mid-atlantic and Northeast pool. It is then the job of the PJM (PJM is the regional grid operator for a significant parts of the Midwest and mid-Atlantic) to decide who gets what. In other words, PJM's only role is to regulate the direction of the electricity to ensure each community gets what it needs. So, the electricity that comes to our homes does not come from one power plant (producer); it comes from a variety of producers.

3. The local utility companies buy what is available and sends it to the various neighborhoods on the local electric grids. For Carderock Springs, there is only one utility company (Pepco) and two grids, which is why part of our community can be without lights while another part will have lights. This means that one grid can experience a power outage while the other grid continues to have power.

4. Maryland is one of a few states that has mandated that electricity can be supplied to homeowners by providers other than Pepco (in our case). At present, there are 10 different providers available to Carderock. To find information about the 10 providers, visit the Maryland Public Service Commission website ([www.psc.state.md.us](http://www.psc.state.md.us)). Once on their home page, go to "Consumer Information"; select "Supplier Search"; select "Residential" and "Pepco" and "List Suppliers Actively Seeking New Customers ONLY"; hit search. The 10 providers will be listed. This website offers a lot of important information about gas/electricity – a great resource.

Since Pepco owns and maintains the grids in our area, alternative providers have to buy/sell through Pepco. The process is really all about rates and contracts. The alternative

provider tries to offer the consumer a lower rate than Pepco (based on what it paid for the electricity and a maintenance fee it pays to Pepco for maintaining the grids). The only change for the consumer is that they are contracting with an alternative provider instead of Pepco, and hopefully getting a cheaper rate (usually in cents per kw hour). What does not change is the fact the electricity still comes from the area "pool" and comes to us through Pepco's two existing grids.

Choosing an alternative provider can only be the decision of the individual homeowner; i.e., the CSCA board is not involved with offering other providers for the community.

Some things to consider if choosing another provider:

a. A yearly, fixed annual rate is the safest route to go and offers a way to compare apples to apples since Pepco offers a fixed rate each year to consumers.

b. If you do not go with a fixed rate, it will usually be because you want to "play the market" – getting electricity cheaper when the rate is lower and biting the bullet when it increases (or getting out of the contract and going somewhere else, e.g., going back to Pepco's fixed rate).

If you would like to get out of the contract, you will most likely have to pay a cancellation fee.

c. As noted above, if you go with an alternative provider (even one who claims to provide "green" energy), nothing will change in terms of where and how the electricity will come to your home. It will come from various power plants and through Pepco's grids. If you are currently paying higher prices for "green" energy, it is suggested that you contact your provider and find out in detail how/why they are claiming to be sending you only "green" energy (and why the rates are higher). The reasons differ from company to company, but are determined by what business dealings the company undertakes to buy energy that they cannot produce themselves, thus must purchase from businesses claiming to be "green."

d. Most people contracting with an alternative provider do save money on electricity during the year. This is especially the case when the contract is for a fixed rate.

We hope this information will be helpful to those considering an alternate provider. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Phil Rider, CSCApres@gmail.com.

### Carderock Springs Citizens' Association Contact Information

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