

# THE CHARLESTON CORNERS CHRONICLE

DECEMBER 2024 • JANUARY 2025

## Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

We hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends. With the weather events this summer I think we all have a lot to be thankful for. I am amazed at all the decorations for Thanksgiving and then seeing them come down and replaced with Christmas lights, wreaths and displays. Riding through our community is like going to the Fairgrounds to see the holiday lights.

Our last newsletter was a little sparse on HOA information as our contributing editor was on vacation out of the country and others were also on vacation when the deadline came up for the newsletter. Everyone is back in town now and we have some important information in this newsletter. Helene and Milton have kept us busy so please see the articles and Thank You note on this.

Don't forget that our HOA dues have gone up a very modest \$8.00 a quarter to \$208. For the year this amounts to \$836.00. Our CAM who manages numerous properties in the area noted that we have the lowest fee in the area, and we do very well in managing our resources. Some communities are paying a month what we pay in a year. The increase was driven primarily by increases in utility and insurance bills. There have been some vendor increases as well. Please be sure to carefully read the sections on HOA fees. Lots of good information.

There are several interesting and timely articles to read through like clubhouse rentals, development plans and others.

Wherever your travels take you this holiday season remember, be kind and stay safe.



## 2025 HOA Assessments IMPORTANT!

**The assessments for 2025 will be \$208.00 per quarter.**

**The first quarter payment is due January 1, 2025.**

**Payments are due on the first of the month for each Quarter. January 1st, April 1st, July 1st, and October 1st.**

**Payments are considered LATE if they are not received by the 15th of the month, they are due.**

For whatever reason Condominium Associates and our lawyer have been dealing with a number of delinquent accounts. Like everyone, we have bills to pay and when we have delinquent accounts it takes away from being able to meet our budget requirements. We all have from time to time faced financial challenges. The HOA like any other business has rules, and procedures to handle delinquent accounts. Ours are spelled out in our documents. Along with these are numerous fees that get charged to your account that can accrue to a significant amount and come as a surprise or shock when you get a letter reminding you of your past due amounts.

Let me recap some information that might get missed in understanding your obligations to pay on time. Payments are due on the first day of each quarter. They are considered Late if not received by the 15th. On the 16th of the month CA sends out a friendly reminder letter that you are late in your payment. A \$10 fee is added by them to your account for this letter to be mailed. In addition, per our documents, a \$25.00 late fee is added. If payment is not received within 15 days a second LATE NOTICE letter is sent out. This letter adds another \$25.00 from CA. Interest starts to accrue monthly. Each month an additional \$25 late fee is added. Beyond this, a Demand letter is sent out and \$75 is

*Continued on page 3*



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## 2025 HOA Assessments IMPORTANT!

Continued from page 1,

charged to your account. If the account has to be turned over to the attorney for collection a \$150 charge is added and the fees escalate and interest and late fees continue to be added, So, the bottom line is make your payments on time and do not ignore the reminder letters.

If you have a problem setting up your account payment, or have other issues please reach out to CA and for all means double check that bank payments are going out and to the right place. It is your obligation to keep the account payment information up to date and correct.

Besides all the financial woes of being delinquent, you Amenity Access will be cut off as well as your voting rights.

### Development Plans - Again

We have just gotten word through one of our residents that development plans are circulation for the property on the corner of W. Waters Ave and Montague St. If you recall there were plans for a small number of housing units with access to both W. Waters Ave and Montague St. George, a Director then, made an in depth review of the plans and prepared detailed comments to the County on behalf of the Board pointing out a number of disturbing design and traffic aspects. After all comments were in the developer pulled the plans.

They are now back with a possible plan for a small day care facility. Access would still be to both roads. Since this type of development meets zoning requirements, it may be difficult to mount any argument that would prevent this development. However, George is trying to get a copy of the plans and learn the status of the submittal in the County permit review process. Hopefully we can make a review and present meaningful comments again to the County for consideration. Most likely there was no Traffic Impact Study required due to the small size of the project, but we all know what a traffic mess we have now at the intersection. This will only add to the problem at all the intersections of Montague St and Bella Way, Montague St and W. Waters Ave as well as Manassas and W. Waters. Stay tuned.

## Clubhouse Rental Issues

We are encouraged that more people are taking advantage of the clubhouse for parties. It is a great and inexpensive resource for the community. Along with renting the clubhouse comes a number of important obligations and restrictions. All are spelled out in detail in the rental application that must be acknowledged and signed for that you agree to the terms of use. Failure to comply with the requirements can result in a loss of all or portion of the rental deposit as noted in the contract.

Here are a few that have recently given us a problem.

- The use of **glitter** of any kind is discouraged. If used, you are responsible to thoroughly clean it from everything. If not, there is a \$25.00 minimum fee taken from the deposit. Additional cost of deep cleaning the floors and furniture could exceed the deposit amount and be billed accordingly.
- The use of the **pool and pool area is not part of the clubhouse rental**. Use of the pool or spa is a serious matter. If something were to happen to someone using the pool we could lose our pool license and the entire community would lose out. Putting things into the pool or spa is also not permitted. Besides losing your deposit, being banned from further rental you could lose Amenity privileges.
- Helium filled balloons are not permitted. If they gel loose the string can get wrapped in the fans or rise to the upper part of the ceiling and are almost impossible to get down unless they deflate and drop down.
- Be sure to turn off all lights and fans. With our new card system, you do not lock the deadbolt. All the doors lock automatically. Make sure that the doors are closed completely.

A Board member reviews the clubhouse and camera system after every rental to make sure things are put back in order and the pool has not been used so we can return your full deposit in a timely manner. Something else to keep in mind is that there is often a rental of the clubhouse the next day, so it is important that you leave the facility clean for the next renter. Thank you for your cooperation and enjoy the facilities.

## Hurricane Damage and Clean Up

Hurricanes Helene and Milton this past October could have been much more devastating to our community than they were. We were very fortunate.

While a few homes received some structural damage, roof damage and fence damage we were spared any flooding. The clubhouse and common property came through with very minor damage. The Beautification Committee, our landscaper and pool company did a fantastic job of cleaning up debris. From a damage standpoint we lost both canopies at the pool that will need to be replaced and are under contract to do so. We lost many fence sections and a gate that will need to be reinstalled or replaced. This is also under contract. We, as well as many others, are on a wait list for repairs that may take a month or more to complete just due to the immense amount of work across the region. The wind netting at the tennis courts is also slated for repair and or replacement.

The clubhouse received minor damage to the soffit and some wood trim that has now been repaired. We had no shingle damage or water leaks since the roof was new last year.

We also incurred a major irrigation pipe failure at the well head on W. Waters Ave near Manassas Road. This 6" line feeds the entire irrigation system. We are not sure if the wind moved an unsecured vinyl fence post against the plastic pipe or if it was just an age failure. That is happening to a lot of our buried pipes lately.

While the fencing may look a mess, please be patient as the work is scheduled to be done.

# HO HO HO



**December**  
There is no Board Meeting in  
December. Have a Merry  
Christmas!

**January 2025**  
1<sup>st</sup> – Happy New Year!  
16<sup>th</sup> – Board Meeting



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The cookie exchange or cookie swap tradition has been around for many years. The Christmas holiday season is a favorite time to have these parties. These parties are a lot of fun, and as a bonus you'll have lots of different cookies on hand for the holidays. Just think - bake one batch of your favorite cookie and you'll go home with many different kinds. Invite your friends, family, neighbors, church

members, or community group.

- Decide how many guests you want to invite to the cookie exchange. Lots of people will ensure your guests have a variety of cookies to choose from, but too many people means too much baking. Ideally, you should plan the cookie swap for 10 to 12 people.
- During the holidays, it is wise to pick a non-weekend day or evening for your party, so it won't interfere with family weekends or office parties. Send the invitations out a month before the party. Everyone's calendar fills up fast in December!
- Confirm how many of your invited guests will be able to attend. Let everyone (each guest) know how many cookies they need to make. Each guest will need to bring **one (1) dozen cookies** to share and sample at the cookie exchange party and **another one (1) dozen cookies** for each person (guest) attending. For example, if eight (8) people will be attending, each person will need to bring 9 dozen cookies from the same recipe.
- Avoid duplication of cookies by asking guests to RSVP and tell you about the cookies they will bring. Make sure each guest brings copies of their recipe to pass around. Since many people have food allergies, it's important they know the ingredients in the cookies at your party. And if there are family stories and especially ethnic traditions for a cookie, ask the guest to write that information on the recipe.
- Remind guests to bring a large container to take their cookie assortment home. Have extra containers and packing materials like foil, plastic wrap, and tape on hand for guests who may forget.
- Cookies to be exchanged should be wrapped well. They should be placed either on plastic plates with plastic wrap or in disposable containers that are airtight.
- During the cookie exchange, serve warm beverages such as coffee, hot chocolate, hot apple cider, or herbal tea. Don't forget to eat and sample all the delicious cookies!



## Shave and a Haircut Two Bits

### Shave and a Haircut Please

The other day as I sat down in the barber's chair for a

haircut the phrase "Shave and a Haircut" came to mind. Very rarely do you get a shave anymore, but it used to be the finishing touch to a good haircut to trim up the cut lines and clean up what the barber did not cut. Some people with beards cleaned up and sharpened the edges So, you might ask how does this relate to owning and maintaining a home in Charleston Corners?

Well, one of our requirements is to maintain your lawn in an acceptable manner. Grass kept cut to an acceptable height, no bare spots, weeds under control (sometimes I think the only green in my lawn is weeds) and sidewalks neatly edged. Shaved! As our community is reviewed by staff from Condominium Associates for compliance with our regulations, one of the things they look for is a neatly trimmed lawn with no grass growing over the concrete areas. It might seem like a petty thing not worth the time to write a violation on, but it does go to the heart of keeping a neat appearance to our community. No different than having a new haircut and a clean shave.

So when you are cutting your lawn keep in mind that the small details mean a lot.



### Battling the Holiday Blues

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS?** Not for everyone. Suffering from depression or loneliness can feel isolating any time of the year, but it is especially difficult during the season of celebrations.

Whether you are experiencing loneliness or depression yourself or are trying to help a friend or family member with their struggles, here are ways to cope.

#### Helping others

If you have friends or family member who are prone to depression around the holiday or have suffered a recent loss, being proactive can be one of the best ways to help them.

- Raise your concerns with another trusted friend or family member. Working together may make it easier to offer guidance.
- Talk to the person struggling and ask how he or she is doing.
- Recommend resources for getting help.
- Follow up after the initial conversation and stay connected to help ward off further feelings of isolation.

Taking a small step could make a big difference. If you notice changes in a loved one's behavior or any signs of depression or withdrawal, offering support is always a good place to start.

#### Helping Yourself

Feeling down yourself this of year? Here are some tips:

- ⇒ Maintain a normal schedule.
- ⇒ Get the right amount of sleep, 7-9 hours for adults.
- ⇒ Exercise regularly.
- ⇒ Eat and drink in moderation and avoid alcohol.
- ⇒ Take time to be by yourself but avoid veering into isolation.

#### When to Seek Professional Help

While simple techniques may be enough to deal with minor holiday blues, it is important to know when you or a loved one might have a diagnosable mental health condition, such as clinical depression, anxiety or season affective disorder. If you or someone you care about experiences intense feelings of despair, loneliness or depression, do not wait to connect to a professional who can help

If you are having thoughts of hurting yourself or suicide, seek immediate care. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

### A WELL DESERVED THANK YOU!

The Board is offering our thanks and gratitude to the following residents who graciously gave of their time to help neighbors recover after hurricanes Helene and Milton: Bob McElroy, Chad & Debbie Spikes, Ed Peritz, Charlie & Caro, Jason, Lourdes Guerrero & Sandra, Tess Young, Abby, Xen Shala and Tina, Danielle & son Eric and Mom Cheryl, Mike Hall, Coach & Tanya, Ed Lizarraga, Imir Miron & son Isaac Jr., George Small, Corie Harris, Neal, Dan, and Carrie.

And we don't want to leave out the spouses and families who sacrificed their loved ones for long days and hard work. This was a long-term effort that began right after Hurricane Helene went through at the end of September. 7 trips were made to the landfill before things were put on hold due to the approach of Hurricane Milton on the 9th of October. That weekend when the power was still out and folks had their own issues at home to clean up the group regather and started again to help neighbors out and clear debris. The group laughingly organized into haulers, rakers, baggers and loaders. In all, more than 50 trips were made to the landfill in about a 20-day period with a large trailer rented by Bob and hauled around with his pickup truck.

While this was going on our Board members were individually working with Condominium Associates and our CAM, Betty Matheus, on issues affecting our facilities. Power outages that affected our pool equipment, cleaning the pool, pool deck and tennis courts and resetting furniture. Meeting with contractors to assess and begin repair of damaged fences, electrical problems with the tennis court lights, pond fountains, security and access system and minor damage to the clubhouse. Nydia, Melanie (working from Rhode Island) Thelma, Chip and George each took on separate issue to see that everything was on a path to recovery. All this along with normal Board business with increased ARC submissions for roof repairs, fence repairs and other things to expedite approvals.

This was truly a community effort of neighbor helping neighbor.





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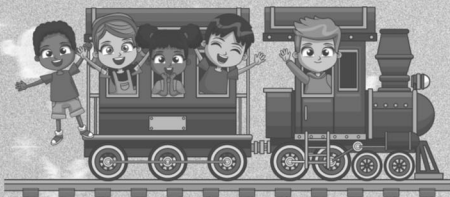
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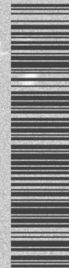
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