

# ***The Dominion News***

*A Dominion HOA Publication*

**September 2009**

All of us are thankful that this long, hot, dry summer finally ended. It certainly took its toll on our gardens and common spaces, but now our landscapes can recover. More about that below.

Children are back in school. Please protect them and observe the traffic rules around school buses. You must stop when a school bus displays the red signal and kids are getting in or out.

**Here are the headlines for your monthly update from the Board:**

- San Antonio Codes & Regulations Apply
- Alert: Trim Private Trees over Streets
- Plants in Common Areas
- New Policies:
  - \$20.- Collection Fee
  - Fine & Enforcement
- Street Signs & Lights
- Reserve Study
- HOA Employee Handbook
- Classified Community Ads
  - Pet Sitting Available*
  - Golf Cart for Sale*

In addition to the newsletter you can always get information at our regularly updated website: [www.dominionhoa.com](http://www.dominionhoa.com)

## **San Antonio Codes & Regulations Apply**

Our real estate taxes make it very clear that The Dominion is located within the City of San Antonio. That means that all city codes and regulations apply, without exception. Of direct relevancy to all residents are codes such as the regulation of tree branches overhanging streets, the new “dark sky” zoning, and the animal code. We are currently reviewing those codes, but it is the responsibility of every resident to comply with city codes. Ignorance is no excuse for violating them. If you have any questions feel free to call your HOA Office.

### **Alert: Trim Private Trees over Streets**

If some of your beautiful oaks overhang the street, please pay attention to this. In order for fire engines to be able to reach your house, branches must be trimmed so as to not obstruct their progress. This is an important city code which requires:

- unobstructed width of at least 20 feet
- unobstructed vertical clearance of at least 13 feet 6 inches

running right along the center of every street, without exception. Please, for your own safety, look at your trees if they overhang the street. If the clearance is not enough, the fire engine may not get to you. Surely you want to avoid that. So take a photo and then say good-bye to those beautiful thick oak branches that reach into the street. It's the law!

Please note that the HOA will enforce this rule for the safety of all. By law we are entitled to trim the trees and recover costs from the owners.

### **Plants in Common Areas**

All landscapes suffered in the extreme heat and drought of this summer. Our common spaces are no exception. The damage to our shrubs and trees is a big concern for the entire community; it affects quality of life and property values. We have to wait a few weeks before we can ascertain the full extent of the damage, since some plants may recover. We will implement a re-planting program to refresh the look of our common areas with materials more suitable to this climate. Major areas will be completed before Thanksgiving. All expenses will be covered out of regular budget.

Here is some background on the summer situation, for your information, gathered in meetings with our landscape maintenance contractor and other nurserymen in the area. There were several reasons for the death of our plants, to name just a few:

- Many dying or dead plants were from the original plantings in the 1980's. Some of them were close to reaching their natural 20-year life and had already started dying in the last 5 years. We had been replacing them as needed, but the change was not that noticeable.

- 1980's landscape design came before xeriscapes were used; these plants are neither heat nor drought resistant and require frequent and lengthy watering in summer.
- Record heat and drought this summer accelerated the demise of plants in the above two categories.
- Some common areas with plantings have neither sprinklers nor faucet for a hose. SAWS expressly prohibited the use of water trucks, except for filling the "gator bags" around trees.
- SAWS severely limited the hours available for watering and closely monitored compliance in time and manner.

### **New Policies: \$20.- Collection Fee; Fine & Enforcement Policy**

In accordance with our covenants and bylaws, and pursuant to Texas law, the HOA Board adopts new policies from time to time to enforce applicable rules and regulations. For example, as some of you have found out, if you are caught speeding, you will lose the use of your transmitter for a while. Here are two new policies:

- \$20.- Collection Fee: Monthly HOA dues are payable on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month they are late and a \$20.- collection fee will be assessed.
- Fine & Enforcement Policy: This will only apply to a few cases, but we are putting some teeth into the enforcement of our rules for the benefit of all. Fines will now be assessed for repeat violations.

The complete text of the new policies will be emailed to everybody and put on the HOA website, so you can check them for yourself.

### **Street Signs & Lights**

Legible street signs are needed for every intersection. As you know, we have been testing new street signs. The tests made it clear that even the best sign can only be read with difficulty if they are attached to the pole right below a street light, because the light will blind you. So we are delaying the purchase of the new street signs till we have a solution for the light issue. A sample new light and sign combination will be installed and sight-tested. Please call the HOA Office if you want to see the sample for yourself.

### **Reserve Study**

In order to plan and budget properly for the replacement and major repair of capital assets, your HOA conducts a "Reserve Study" from time to time. We have just received the new 2009 Reserve Study which includes:

- a complete list of all capital assets, such as streets, retaining walls, buildings, etc.
- an assessment for each item how much of its useful life remains

- an estimated repair/replacement cost
- an escalation figure for future costs
- an estimate about how much reserves we will likely need to cover those costs.

The Reserve Study concludes that we need to put additional money aside for reserves. Your Finance Committee will analyze the findings and recommend a series of actions to deal with the issue. We will keep you posted.

## **HOA Employee Handbook**

As part of our general overhaul of HOA operation we have developed a brand new HOA Employee Handbook. The handbook was compiled with input from the TX Department of Labor, national and regional HOA association files, and local HR specialists. It was reviewed by local CEO's and HR people and by the HR specialist in our law firm. The handbook defines and clearly states all policies applicable to HOA employees, including office rules, use policies, payroll deductions, benefits, leave policies, and non-disclosure rules. It will assure that all employees get fair and equitable treatment and that they know their rights and obligations. We are very grateful to all neighbors who gave so much of their time and specific know-how to this effort.

### **Classified Community Ads**

*Your HOA Newsletter accepts free classified ads from residents to residents.*

*Just email the text to the HOA Office.*

#### **Pet Sitting Available**

Dominion Resident *Stacee Mero* is looking for pet sitting jobs in the neighborhood. She is available to feed, entertain, walk, clean up after your cat or dog while you are away. Ms. Mero is a responsible adult with 5+ years experience volunteering at SNAP (Spay Neuter Assistance Program). --- Daily and weekly rates. --- For more information please call *Stacee Mero*; cell: (210) 872-6170 or home: (210) 698-6980.

#### **Golf Cart for Sale**

2001 Club Car in excellent condition: \$2000. --- For more information please call *Homer Olsen* at (210) 698-0090.

Sincerely,  
Brigitte B. Saidi, Chairman  
Dominion Homeowners Association