

Rustic Ridge Association, Inc.
President's Letter
July 2014

Greetings!

Summer is in full swing in Northfield - on the Ridge, at the pool, on the golf course and over at the Moore tennis court (singular not plural – see details below). Our Annual Meeting and picnic takes place in less than two weeks on Saturday, August 2nd.

Search for New Owner for Northfield Campus. In a recent conversation with National Christian Foundation (NCF) executive, Aimee Minnich, who is leading the search for a new owner for the Northfield Campus, I learned that while there is still optimism on identifying a suitable and worthy institution to take over the campus sometime in the next 15 to 18 months, there is no substantive progress to report at this time - and the search is on-going! Ms. Minnich knows we stand ready to assist and promises to call upon us if and when there is anything we can do to help.

Willows Property Taxes Reduced. There is good news to report. Our tax appraisal appeal was successful and the taxes have been reduced! We even received a refund for taxes paid last year! Much appreciation for this good result goes to Joanna Walker, whose persistent efforts throughout the many twists and turns of this process were crucial! Lucy Livingston and Carol Ziegenhagen also provided significant help along the way!

Annual Meeting and Picnic. The meeting will be held at the Trinitarian Congregational Church from 9:30 to 11:00am. The picnic will be held at the pool with the church being held in reserve in case of rain.

Trinitarian Congregational Church Service. This special Sunday after our meeting service will include spirited singing by a choir led by choirmaster, Janet Abel. In addition, Kevin Belmonte, author of the highly acclaimed *D.L. Moody – A Life* will speak.

New Rustic Ridge Logo. As announced earlier, there was a clear winner between the final Rustic Ridge logo choices. Catherin Broadhead has offered is Rustic Ridge logo embossed polo shirts, T-shirts and stickers. Those who were lucky enough to be at our very successful Lobster Fest at the pool a couple of weeks ago had the opportunity to order T-shirts. For those who haven't yet placed and order or who want to order more will have the opportunity to do so at our Annual Meeting and picnic!

This Year's Annual Dues. A big thank you to everyone who has paid their annual dues for the year ending July 31, 2014!

Annual Dues Going Forward. This past year the Executive Board created a Ridge Finances Committee to review the best way to achieve a balance between regular annual revenue and routine annual expenses. Currently, member and associate member dues pay only part of our regular and routine annual expenses. The way our books are kept in balance is through contributions to the Emergency (or Reserve) Fund. These additional payments, which not everyone makes, would be unnecessary (except in true emergencies) once dues are set at a level sufficient to pay annual expenses. It seems only fair for all of us to share evenly in the upkeep of our community. At least that's the thinking of the Executive Board and the rationale behind **the recommendation to be put to a vote by Active members at the Annual Meeting.**

The specifics of this recommendation are as follows:

1. Annual per cottage dues will change from the current \$100 to \$150.
2. Annual Associate member dues will change from the current \$20 to \$40.

The proposal to be presented at this year's Annual Meeting is for **this increase to take effect NEXT year**, i.e., for the fiscal year beginning August 1, 2015.

There is one other aspect to the recommendation being made which has to do with when annual dues are to be paid. Our Treasurer, Carol Ziegenhagen, reports that it would be a big help for our cash flow, if dues were paid at the beginning of the fiscal year and not during the 2nd half of the year.

3. This means paying dues for the fiscal year that begins each August 1st within the first 2 or 3 months of the year.

Specific due dates will be presented at our Annual Meeting. These **earlier payment dates would apply for the fiscal year beginning THIS August.**

Election of New Associate Members. As called for in our bylaws, we have an opportunity to elect new Associate members at our upcoming Annual Meeting. A prospective Associate member is someone who is being sponsored by an Active Member for Associate membership. Active members who are sponsoring someone for Associate membership are **asked to provide their names to a member of the Executive Board by Wednesday, July 30th.** The Executive Board will meet on July 31st to approve those being sponsored. Those approved will be put forward for election at the meeting. We are bringing more attention to this process as part of our plan to increase the number of young people (broadly defined) with official standing in the Association. We think it's a good idea to expand our ranks with people who want to be a part of our community - now and in the years ahead. (Please note that Associate members are required to pay annual dues.)

Guatemalan Program at Dickinson Library July 31st. Dottie and Stan Foster invite us to 'Guat's Up in Guatemala' starting at 5:00pm on Thursday, July 31st. Included are Guatemalan refreshments, a talk and discussion led by Stan on community strengthening, sale of weavings and crafts to benefit the Mam people. Christian Women's Association for Development. Contact Cindie Moore or Dottie Foster. (See attached flyer for more details.)

Youth Activities / Rustic Ridge Ranger Program. Organized opportunities for our children are taking place this summer, thanks to the efforts of Catherine Broadhead and Julie Hawken. Adult volunteers are very welcome and parents need to ensure proper supervision of their own children. Those who complete five of the listed activities can become a Rustic Ridge Ranger! The flyer describing this is attached.

Moore Tennis Courts – Fixed in Time for July 2nd Storm - One Playable, One Being Repaired. The courts were repaired and in excellent shape from Sunday, June 29th to Wednesday, July 2nd when a strong micro burst felled a tree across both courts; damaging one and taking down some fencing on the side nearest that tree. Steps to make repairs began the next day and are on-going. Fundraising efforts by 'Friends of Northfield Tennis' were successful. Luckily, the initial cost of repairing the courts was less than what was raised. This was fortunate as remaining funds are now going toward the cost of fixing the storm damage. Once repair costs are known, there will likely be an appeal for additional contributions!

Much appreciation goes to Steve Wiggin for his prompt removal of the tree from the courts! The same goes for NCF and their campus property management chief, Larry Edge, for his support and cooperation. The unlucky neighbor, Chip Ainsworth, promptly made a donation as a new 'Friend of Northfield Tennis'; this in addition to attending to the other storm damage on his property! Thank you Chip!

Northfield Golf Course and Pool. The golf course and pool are in great shape. Ed Snow and family are doing a marvelous job of caring for these properties and for all who are using them! This is very good news for all of us – weekend athletes and non-weekend athletes alike! Golf memberships are available. Membership information is available on their Facebook page and they can be contacted at northfieldgolfcourse@gmail.com or at [413-498-2432](tel:413-498-2432).

Schell Bridge. No additional news since December when it was reported that the Town Selectboard had approved the bridge replacement project (to enable bicycles and pedestrians to cross the Connecticut River at the location of the present closed bridge) and that Friends of Schell Bridge had supported their request to Mass DOT to seek approval of this project and to seek funding. Recent developments, if any, will be shared at the Annual Meeting.

If you have questions or want additional information about anything, please let me know. I look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting and picnic, if not before.

Respectfully,

Doug Denise,
President