

Raintree Village

Homeowners Association

2019 Annual Newsletter

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Raintree Village Homeowners Association (RVHA) is a Michigan non-profit corporation (ID 800832655) empowered by deed restrictions to collect assessments for the operation, maintenance, management and improvement of the common areas. The common areas include four private parks totaling 15 acres (Lakeside Commons, Abbey Commons, Village Commons and Forest Commons) and a 5-acre storm water detention pond. RVHA also maintains two entrance medians and seven cul-de-sac islands.

Board Changes and Openings

The RVHA Board of Directors is formed by elected homeowners in the subdivision (your neighbors) serving as unpaid volunteers. Each board member contributes time and receives no compensation in the form of money, services, or reduced annual assessment.

For 2019, Craig Chamberlain, David Eisenbacher and Bill Jenuwine continue as president, vice president and treasurer. The Board expresses its thanks to Steve Hatfield for three years of service as board member and secretary, and wishes him well as he tends to his growing family and continues as robotics mentor at several local schools. The Board welcomes new member Carrie Dodoro.

There are openings for five more board members and the position of secretary. The Board is actively soliciting for new members. This is an opportunity for you to help your neighbors and our subdivision by participating in discussions and making decisions that affect the welfare of our community. Please consider participating and attend an RVHA monthly meeting.

Annual Assessment

The association needs to build reserve funds to address detention pond bank erosion and a new invasive species in the pond. The RVHA board voted to increase the assessment by \$1.00. An increase greater than 5% would require a vote of all 810 homeowners.

The assessment for 2019 is \$28.00, covers January 1 to December 31, 2019, and is due February 28, 2019. The annual assessment is mandatory for all Raintree Village homeowners as recorded in the "Subdivision Open Space Agreement" and "Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions," Liber 6445, pages 298-320. These documents can be viewed at the Oakland County Register of Deeds at 1200 N. Telegraph Road in Pontiac. Copies are also available at www.rvha.org.

Review Report and Financial Statements

The 2018 Financial Statements and Review Report prepared by a CPA should be completed and posted at www.rvha.org before April 15, 2019. See the back of your assessment statement for financial results for 2015 through 2018 and for the 2019 budget.

Monthly Meetings

A monthly meeting is held the second Monday of every month, except July and August, at Baker Middle School, room 108, starting at 7:00pm. All Raintree Village homeowners are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meeting on December 9, 2019 is the annual meeting and includes the election of officers. Minutes of past meetings are available at www.rvha.org.

Nextdoor

Nextdoor (www.nextdoor.com) is an advertising-supported commercial website that provides a restricted-access forum for homeowners in the Raintree Village and nearby subdivisions. This can be a constructive place to get recommendations for service providers and to discuss neighborhood concerns. Keep in mind that Nextdoor is completely independent of and does not represent RVHA, that it includes members outside of Raintree Village, and that social media cautions apply. Besides meeting in person at the RVHA monthly meetings, RVHA board members can be contacted at any time by any of the methods listed at the top of this newsletter. RVHA announcements are posted at www.rvha.org.

Subdivision Garage Sale – Friday May 17 and Saturday May 18

Homeowners are welcome to hold a yard or garage sale at any time, but can benefit from participating in the annual subdivision-wide garage sale which is traditionally held the Friday and Saturday of the weekend before Memorial Day weekend. RVHA will place signs at subdivision entrances the night of Monday May 13.

Coyotes

Yes, there are coyotes in the area. Coyotes can jump a six-foot fence. Do not leave pets or small children unattended, or take any action that will make coyotes less afraid of humans. Do not leave food for animals outdoors. Unfortunately this even includes bird

feeders, because rodents eat the seeds on the ground, and coyotes eat the rodents. Capturing and relocating coyotes is expensive and ineffective because other coyotes will just move into the territory. As long as there is a food source, there will be coyotes.

Pond Bank Restoration

The detention pond at Lakeside Commons serves all 810 homes in the Raintree Village subdivision, as well as other subdivisions and properties, for a drainage district totaling 525 acres. RVHA is responsible for maintaining the pond according to an agreement between the City of Troy and the original developer of the Raintree Village subdivision.

The pond bank used to slope gradually to the water's edge, but after more than 40 years, the bank has eroded by approximately six feet. The pond edge is now a cliff of about two to three feet. The erosion may be accelerating and can't be allowed to continue indefinitely.

The new Raintree Village in the Park subdivision will use the pond at Lakeside Commons for its storm water detention. The subdivision developer, Mondrian Properties, agreed to contribute \$40,000.00 toward pond bank restoration. In 2018, a contractor for Mondrian Properties restored the bank around the pond inlet and outlet structures using rocks and riprap material at a cost of \$30,390.00. Mondrian Properties gave the balance, \$9,610.00, to RVHA.

RVHA used that balance, and its own reserve funds, to engage Erosion Masters LLC to restore the western bank of the pond at a cost of \$20,000.00. Erosion Masters will be on site for several days in the Spring of 2019 to dredge soil from the pond and fill in and stabilize the bank using their Dredgesox technology. See the pictures and videos at www.erosionmasters.com.

RVHA will need to increase the annual assessment in future years in order to build sufficient reserve funds to restore the bank around the rest of the pond. Once completed, the assessment could be reduced to match regular operating needs.

Phragmites

Another invasive species, phragmites, has started growing in wet areas throughout Michigan. They are similar to cattails but have a feathery seed head at the top. Phragmites are growing along the I-75 entrance ramps from Rochester Rd and on the Baker Middle School property. Once you start looking for them, you'll see them everywhere. Phragmites look graceful when blowing in the wind, but are another undesirable species that grows tall and dense and crowds out native species.

Phragmites have started growing at the eastern end of the detention pond at Lakeside Commons. If not treated, they will fill in the entire pond in five to ten years, which would reduce the detention capacity of the pond. The Oakland County Water Resources Office and the City of Troy hold RVHA responsible for pond maintenance including management of phragmites.

Treatment by herbicide in a pond requires a MDEQ Part 33 Aquatic Nuisance Control Permit and probably can't be achieved through volunteer efforts. The first quote that RVHA received for professional treatment was \$800.00, which would basically consume the funds raised by the \$1.00 increase in the annual assessment. The RVHA board is continuing to explore how to respond to this new challenge in a responsible and cost-effective manner.

Storm Water Drains and Hazardous Waste Disposal

Rainwater that enters the storm drains on the streets flows to the Shanahan Drain, which flows through the Raintree Village detention pond, and eventually flows to Lake St. Clair. Lake St. Clair is one of the sources of our drinking water.

Do not dump motor oil, paint, chemicals, pet waste, or anything else down the storm drain. Household hazardous waste can be dropped off at SOCRRA six days a week at no charge. SOCRRA is at 995 Coolidge Hwy between Maple Rd and 14 Mile Rd (across from Meijer's). See www.socrra.org for details. Prescription pills can be dropped off at the Troy Police Department lobby. Visit www.troy.mi.gov | Departments | Public Works | Refuse & Recycling | Household Hazardous Waste for more information.

Herbicide Spraying of Buckthorn Seedlings at Village Commons in the Spring

After the invasive emerald ash borer beetle killed most of the ash trees about 15 years ago, and RVHA removed the dead ash trees from Forest Commons and Village Commons, the increased sunlight allowed another invasive species, the buckthorn tree, to start growing faster. The buckthorn is a non-native tree that greens up earlier in the Spring and holds its leaves later in the Fall than native species. Buckthorns out-compete desirable native tree species by multiplying aggressively and denying water to native trees. Left unchecked, in time they will completely take over a forest, as has happened at other locations in Troy.

Through volunteer efforts during numerous Spring and Fall cleanup events, RVHA has removed most of the buckthorn trees at Forest Commons and Lakeside Commons. About two thirds of the buckthorn trees have been removed at Village Commons. There are still some larger buckthorn trees which will be removed during future Spring and Fall cleanup events. There are also hundreds

of buckthorn seedlings, and the only practical way to remove them is through herbicide spraying. RVHA has contracted with Niswander Environmental, which manages all of the green spaces for the City of Rochester, to spray the buckthorn seedlings in Village Commons in the Spring. The date of spraying will be announced at www.rvha.org when it is known.

Halloween Parade

For many years, RVHA organized a Halloween parade, where children in costumes march behind a fire engine while residents observe. After a hiatus of several years, a parade was held in 2018. The weather was rainy and the turnout was small, but the participants were enthusiastic. RVHA also provided cider and donuts to warming houses on Halloween evening.

Parade expenses included \$25.00 for a City permit and \$51.00 for additional liability insurance required by the City. A homeowner questioned why RVHA spent money on a parade when funds are needed to restore the pond banks. Some RVHA board members believe that there is value in spending a small percentage of the budget on social events to foster a greater sense of community. If there is homeowner and volunteer support, RVHA may organize an ice cream social in August and a Halloween parade on October 19 or 20.

Entrance Signs

RVHA has allocated funds in the 2019 budget to replace entrance signs. This was originally planned for 2018, but the City of Troy imposed a sign moratorium for most of the year in reaction to the controversy over large electronic signs.

Bishop/Millay Cul-de-sac Island

The cul-de-sac island at Bishop and Millay used to be grass-covered and included in RVHA's lawn cutting contract. After an 18-wheeler drove over the island a few years ago, the City collected insurance money from the trucking company and re-landscaped the island. The new landscape is more expensive to maintain because it periodically requires new mulch, and weed control applications must avoid the plantings. RVHA increased the budget for maintaining the island in 2019 and will seek quotes from professional landscape maintenance vendors.

Do not remove plantings, bushes or trees from any cul-de-sac island or private park in the Raintree Village subdivision. RVHA is responsible for maintaining these properties, per agreement with the City of Troy.

New Subdivision – Raintree Village on the Park

The Troy School District owned three parcels adjacent to Raintree Park (a City of Troy public park, not owned or maintained by RVHA) and sold them to Mondrian Properties in 2017. Mondrian is building 59 lots in the new subdivision named Raintree Village on the Park. Mondrian has scheduled the first closings in January, expects to complete 40 to 45 closings by August, and hopes to have all 59 lots sold by the end of 2019.

Some Raintree Village homeowners have expressed concern about the impact on their property values. City Assessor Nino Licari has stated that there is no data that shows any negative impact from a new residential development going in or adjacent to an existing residential development.

Future Development North of the Troy Sports Center Complex

Dennis Bostick, owner of the Troy Sports Center, also owns the undeveloped property to the north, adjacent to Raintree Village. Mr. Bostick is seeking to build very high-end apartments with very high-end amenities including a clubhouse, pool, and exercise facility. The rent would be about \$2.00 per square foot, so an 800 square foot apartment would rent for \$1,600.00 a month.

The parcel under consideration has been zoned MF (Multi Family) for 20 years and would need to be rezoned to UR (Urban Residential) in order to have enough units to support the intended amenities. The existing dry detention basin near John R Rd would become a pond with a fountain. The development would not use the Raintree Village detention pond. There is no plan to connect to Crimson Dr via the existing stub street (Floyd), but that would be a City decision.

The next step is for the proposal to be presented to the City of Troy Planning Commission, which meets the second and fourth Tuesday of every month at City Hall. The meeting agenda is published at www.troymi.gov the Friday prior to the meeting. Anyone may speak during the public hearing portion of the meeting. Live meeting webcasts can also be viewed on YouTube.

Mr. Bostick has offered that persons with questions about the development may call him on his cell number, 248 709 4001.

Eagle Scout Projects

If there is a Scout in your family in need of an Eagle Scout project, consider a project to improve one of RVHA's parks. There are several potential projects that are ready to start.

Frequently Asked Questions

I don't use the parks. Why do I have to pay the assessment? The assessment is because as a Raintree Village homeowner, you co-own the four parks and share responsibility for their maintenance. Even if you don't visit a park, storm water from all 810 Raintree Village homes drains to the detention pond at Lakeside Commons, so in a sense every homeowner uses one of the parks.

In the 1970's the City of Troy allowed the developer of the Raintree Village subdivision to exercise the "cluster option" and build homes more densely in exchange for leaving some land undeveloped. As development continues in Troy, people lament the disappearance of green space, but we have permanent green space in our subdivision, in the form of two private parks with open grass areas and two private parks with woods. This green space can never be sold or developed.

Unfortunately, green space is not maintenance-free. The grass in the parks needs to be cut and requires fertilizer and weed control, and invasive species such as the emerald ash borer, buckthorn trees and phragmites mean money must be spent on forest and pond maintenance. By agreement with the City of Troy, all 810 Raintree Village homeowners co-own these private parks and are responsible for their maintenance and any liability claims. Having a homeowners association that collects assessments, purchases liability insurance, and performs or contracts for maintenance is a practical way to fulfill this responsibility.

Can I pay electronically? Unfortunately, no. Accepting online payments is too costly and too complicated for our volunteer-run organization. Services like PayPal would deduct a fee greater than \$1.00 from each payment. RVHA can't write off lost income due to fees, and RVHA does not have the volunteer resources to invoice different amounts based on payment method. Handling credit and debit card numbers requires complying with PCI (Payment Card Industry) regulations. If RVHA had a management company, they would handle invoicing and accept electronic payments, but the annual assessment would have to be much higher to pay for the services of a management company.

If you use an online banking service that can't send checks, you can purchase a money order at one of these locations: Kroger (\$0.98, or \$0.88 with card), Rite Aid (\$0.99), US Post Office (\$1.20), CVS (\$1.25)

Why don't you email the statement and newsletter instead of spending money on postage? The Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions, Article IV "Covenant for Maintenance Assessments", Section 7 states "Written notice of the annual assessment shall be sent to every Owner subject thereto." RVHA doesn't know your email address unless you provide it. RVHA doesn't have the volunteer resources to collect and maintain 810 email addresses. The street addresses don't change, so mailing the statement to each Raintree Village address is a practical way to meet the obligation of sending written notice.

If you want your statement mailed to an alternate address, or you need an electronic copy, please email treasurer@rvha.org.

Why pay for a meeting room? RVHA has been unable to identify a suitable free meeting location that can be scheduled months in advance. The cost of renting a room at Baker Middle School is \$20 per hour plus a \$20 annual application fee. This has been the meeting location for at least 20 years and is conveniently located. The Troy Public Library has one meeting room large enough for RVHA and it is free but it is in high demand and cannot be reserved more than 30 days in advance. A meeting room at the Troy Community Center costs \$35 per hour for a non-profit like RVHA. Meeting space at Big Beaver United Methodist Church costs \$25 per event. Meeting at a restaurant has several drawbacks.

RVHA considers Baker Middle School to be the best choice due to its low cost, capacity, convenience, ability to schedule months in advance, availability of audio/visual equipment, and familiarity to homeowners. The RVHA board welcomes suggestions for meeting locations that meet RVHA needs better than Baker Middle School.

The grass and weeds are growing too tall at a home in the subdivision but I don't want to be on record as reporting it. Turf grass or weeds taller than 8 inches is a violation of City of Troy ordinance. One way to report an ordinance violation is to go to www.troymi.gov and click "Report a Violation" on the Departments menu under Code Enforcement to display the "Submit a Citizen Request" form. The City will receive the request even if you leave the Name, Phone and Email fields blank.

I have a dispute with my neighbor. RVHA has no authority, jurisdiction or enforcement powers to deal with matters between private parties. Recourses include the Troy Police Department and the judicial system. For police emergency matters, call 911, and for non-emergency matters, call 248 524 3477.

Why haven't you plowed the street yet? Snow plowing is a service provided by the City of Troy and paid for by property taxes.