

Pond Meadows Condominium Association, Inc.

Mahwah, NJ 07430

Newsletter September 2014

## Scapegoats and Trees

The *scapegoat* was historically a defenseless goat who was invested with all of the sins of a community and driven out of town to relieve the residents of guilt for their own transgressions.

The modern form of the *scapegoat* at Pond Meadows is the *Gleditsia triacanthos*, the honey locust tree. Just about everything wrong in the community, as the prevailing argument goes, originates in their presence on the campus. It has been very strongly and repeatedly urged that we

sever every one of these sin bearing trees from its roots and drive all of their carcasses, along with all of the troubles they have brought, out of town.



How about another view, with a nod to Joyce Kilmer:

### ODE TO THE HONEY LOCUST TREE

*I think that I shall never see  
A poem as lovely as a honey locust tree*

*A natural monument whose hungry leaves suppress  
The clogged down spouts flowing quest*

*A tree which in summer does indeed bear  
Pods aplenty and tendril hair*

*Upon whose bosom boughs snow has lain  
But who suffers in silence from human disdain*

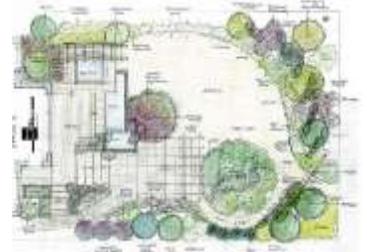
*Odes are made by hopeful fools like me  
While tree haters persist in loathing  
the honey locust tree.*

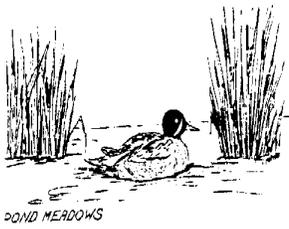
## Landscape Architecture Plan

Speaking of trees, and as you all know, we have retained a premier national firm, MKW & Associates, LLC, with offices in Rutherford, NJ, and New York, NY, as our landscape architect. It has already proceeded with site analyses and will soon provide planning proposals and alternatives for consideration of future actions. Its initial proposal (4/23/14) is posted on the Pond Meadows website.

This project was made imperative by the growing obsolescence of the trees, shrubs, and other flora on the grounds. They were installed almost thirty years ago and have generally run their biological and aesthetic courses, and now present a host of problems. It is accordingly essential that we plan a scheduled transformation of the site to anticipate the next thirty years of the community. This might involve reconfiguring the topology to improve drainage, removing all berms for better use of interior areas, replacing the trees with more suitable species for shade and durability, and so forth. In short, the fifteen acres which Pond Meadows occupies has to be spatially, aesthetically, environmentally, and biologically redesigned for the future.

Such redesign is within the scope of the expertise and experience of a landscape architect, one who will have to apply a broad multidisciplinary approach to long range alternatives and plans. The issues in this approach do not focus on this tree, or that shrub, or this particular drainage problem, or on encroaching roots, but have to consider the integrated whole of the grounds over a long period of time, possibly decades.





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*Newsletter September 2014*

Preliminary surveys already provided by MKW have designated some thirty trees among the over one hundred on the grounds as possibly requiring attention in the first phases of a much longer, multi-staged, project of rehabilitation. A site report already has been provided us which identifies all of the conditions and the loci of trees and shrubs on the grounds. John P. Williams, ASLA, a principal of MKW, made a presentation to the Board on August 19th to explain that report, and is poised to complete design plan alternatives and recommendations by the first week of October, 2014.

We have scheduled a public presentation of his findings to interested members of the Association at 6:30 P.M., Monday, October 13th, at the Clubhouse. Mr. Williams will be available for questions. Please mark your calendars..

## **Annual Meeting and Election**

The annual meeting and elections are also scheduled at 7:00 P.M., **Monday, October 13th**, at the Clubhouse, or as soon as practicable after the landscape architect's presentation is completed. Notices of the election, nomination forms, and other documents will be mailed to the membership shortly.



Two seats (for terms from October, 2014 to October 2017) will become vacant. After their long and devoted service, both Marge Davis and John Dalenberg have decided not to seek additional three year terms. They both have served with grace and measure and have always put the best interests of the community first. Sincere thanks and appreciation for the good they brought to the community with their diligent and faithful service.

## **Maintenance and Improvement Projects**

Three major initiatives were undertaken in the last four months to improve the states of both the buildings and the grounds: 1) the painting of all the buildings in all of the courtyards (along with the benches and mailboxes), 2) the repair and replacement of all of the decks and the utility doors and frames, 3) the removal of excessive and redundant shrubs and juniper bushes, and 4) the relocation of the recycling shed.



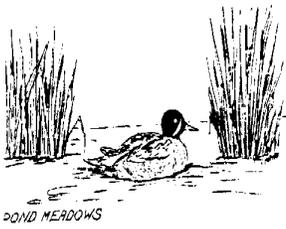
### **1. Painting**

We contracted with REK Services, Inc., a licensed general contractor from Westwood, NJ, to carry out the project. We spent a number of planning sessions with Roy Stern, the owner of the company, to schedule the work, to identify the paint colors, and to point out where repairs were also needed. Many of you met Roy in the course of work, and many of you commented on how thorough his crew was in the preparation of the buildings for prime coats and their final paintings. The work of REK can only be characterized as completely reliable and exceptional. If any of you want to recommend his company to others (or for yourselves), contact information is: (201) 503-6611, or email at [roy@rek-services.com](mailto:roy@rek-services.com).

The buildings have improved in appearance tenfold from both near and far. Long-time residents have been particularly appreciative of how well the project turned out.

### **2. Decks**

The initiative to repair and to upgrade all of the decks (64 of them) and the utility doors and frames was begun in the beginning of May and effectively



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### Newsletter September 2014



completed by the first week of June. Every deck determined to be in need of repair was, in fact, repaired. That project was owner funded and carried out by Nelson Gurrero and his team. It was a job well and efficiently done. Nelson is the

licensed general contractor Pond Meadows has used for years to provide a wide range of “handyman” services for the Association and for individual owners. He has always been available for hire by owners for particular projects. His contact information is: (201) 388-0598, or email at [nelsonhandyman@aol.com](mailto:nelsonhandyman@aol.com).

### 3. Shrub Removal

The accumulation of overgrown shrubs, dying juniper bushes, and already dead perennials near and around the residences created the appearance of an untended and neglected garden. It was unattractive, busy, and crying out for care. It was decided that the appearance of the landscape shrubs on the grounds needed simplicity, not more complexity. It needed order, not disorder. Classic Landscaping, our servicing contractor, was asked in July to survey the grounds thoroughly and to mark for removal ALL dead or depleted shrubs and bushes. It subsequently undertook to remove those shrubs later in the month. Classic was again asked in the end of August to continue to remove those shrubs and bushes which served no aesthetic purpose, or which posed safety issues by encumbering the walkways, or which prevented ventilation around the structures. That stage of the project was completed just recently.



Although the grounds are not yet in the state we wish them to be, the landscape looks much better, simpler, attended, and progressing according to a plan. Trees have not been addressed in this project. Trees shall be addressed in the longer range proposals to be made by the landscape architect. And, the plan is not to expend the sizeable cost to replace the extracted shrubs without knowing if they, too, will have to be removed as part of the landscape redesign.

### 4. Shed relocation

You have no doubt noted the assembly of the new Pond Meadows recycling and storage shed on Pond Meadows Drive. The old sheds on Northerly Drive will be razed and the area restored to turf. This project is the result of an agreement made with the Township of Mahwah Planning Board which resolved (May 5, 2014) to grant permission to construct a new shed in the area where it is now situated. Access should be easier and more convenient. The plan is to transfer the lock from the old shed to the new so that keys already distributed can still be used.

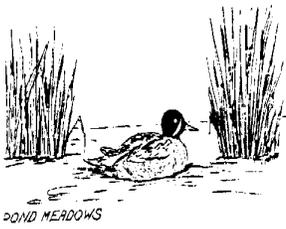
### Winter Upcoming

In anticipation of the colder months we'll enjoy soon, you should be put on notice of two critical preparations:

**The first is to “winterize” your unit by turning off the internal valve to the outside faucet**

**associated with your unit.** Upstairs units have outside faucets in the front of the building. Downstairs units have outside faucets in the back of the building. The outside faucets of end units are easily located.





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Newsletter September 2014

**IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE OWNER TO TURN OFF THE INTERNAL VALVE AND TO DRAIN THE OUTSIDE FAUCET PIPE.** No one else has access to the unit's utility room where the internal valve is located. This would be no different than a home owner preparing external pipes for cold weather to prevent their freezing. The Board has asked Nelson Gurrero to be available for those owners who may wish to hire him for a nominal fee to locate and shut off the internal valve and to drain the outside faucet.



For those **snowbirds** who plan to reside elsewhere during the winter, **the second preparation is to make provisions to store your vehicles off of the grounds (they CANNOT be stored here) AND to provide the property manager, Arthur Edwards, with contact information should some emergency or need arise related to your unit.**

## Vehicle Registration



Vehicle registration "hang tags" were first distributed the last week of August, 2014, according to the information provided in the certified census conducted earlier in the year. If you listed two vehicles as being affiliated with your unit in that census, you received two "hang tags," one for each properly registered

vehicle. These tags **MUST** be displayed to continue to park in the lots. **Please install them to avoid penalties or towing.**

The regulation provides that **ALL** lawful residents of Pond Meadows **MUST** register their vehicles with Arthur Edwards. If you have not done so in the certified census, you must do so without delay by providing a copy of your vehicle's State registration and the unit number with which the vehicle is associated. If you are a tenant, you must also provide a copy of your lease.

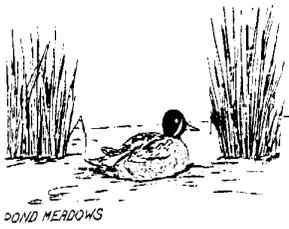


The posted signs, the parking regulations and policies published on the Pond Meadows website, and distributed notices make it clear that if your vehicle is not properly registered with the Association or your tag is not displayed, you will eventually get towed. No exceptions will be made. Enforcement will begin in force by the end of the month.

The vehicles of overnight visitors who plan to remain for a few days or longer have to be identified (by telephone) by those visited to Arthur Edwards, so such unknown vehicles are not towed. Registration hang tags for visitors shall not be necessary under this policy.

It should be understood that all unregistered, unidentified, vehicles, irrespective of where they are parked – in numbered or unnumbered stalls – are subject to towing. Please be attentive to this initiative before enforcement begins in earnest.





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Newsletter September 2014

### The Pond Meadows website

The value of the Pond Meadows Condominium website cannot be overstated. It is there that all governing documents, newsletters, minutes, reports, notices, and financial information are published. The use of distributed hard copy notices has become more costly and inefficient. Every motion is published in the minutes, so, if you wonder why maintenance fees were increased or an assessment was made, read the minutes where those actions were authorized.

The website was created for the convenience and access of members. It is critical to your interests to become familiar with it:



<http://www.arthuredwardsinc.com/PondMeadows/main.asp>.

The Pond Meadows Condominium Board of Trustees thanks you for your continuing support and cooperation.

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*HEAVEN*, n. A place where the wicked cease from troubling you with talk of their personal affairs, and the good listen with attention while you expound your own.

Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* (1906)