



Walden Homeowners Association

208 Walden Glen Road, Madison, AL. 35758

www.waldenhoa.org

Facebook: Walden Friends & Neighbors

HOA Email: Contact@waldenhoa.org

Q-4, 2020 Newsletter

2020 Dates to Remember:

Dec 5– Annual Board Meeting/Elections
(2020 Holiday party is CANCELED)

Walden Neighborhood hosted a number of Covid-safe family events this year! Thank you to our volunteers and participants! We love your creativity in the face of the pandemic.



Spring Cleanup 2020



Congrats 2020 Grads!



Happy 4th!

Halloween



HOA Board Notes

FINANCIAL REVIEW NOV 2019 - NOV 2020:

Income: \$58,150
Expenses: \$53,642
Checking balance: \$30,878
Money Market: \$37,464
Paypal: \$4,904
Total: \$73,246

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| Walden HOA Board President: Tim Holcombe 1 st VP: Tom Arnold 2 nd VP: Stephen Walls Treasurer: Andrea Green Secretary: Melanie O'Neill |
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Grounds Report – Stephen Walls:

Many noteworthy improvements were made to Walden's entrances and common areas this year thanks to the HOA Board and an amazing group of volunteers. Sprinkler systems were repaired at all entrances and common areas, a new aeration system was added to the pond, a new lawn fertilization company was hired, all the white neighborhood fencing was cleaned, and common area signs were replaced. Volunteers contributed to adding benches to our pond area, repairing the pond walk-bridge, cleaning the creek area of debris, heavy pruning of the Emerson entrance, painting entrance signs, and many more maintenance projects. All of these improvements and volunteer efforts continue to make Walden one of the most beautiful and desirable neighborhoods in the community. Thank you to all involved!

Swimming Pool – Tom Arnold:

Thank you to all for your help with the pool this year! During our opening and closing we had substantial help from our residents and homeowners. We appreciate everyone's help in maintaining the cleanliness of the pool as this is a common area for everyone to enjoy. We continue to have minor issues with our gate and have made additional improvements. As a reminder, if you see any issues with the pool, please email contact@waldenhoa.org immediately and someone will get back to you. The pool committee is always looking for members to help maintain the pool area. If interested, please email contact@waldenhoa.org.

Covenants – Tom Arnold:

Homeowners and residents continue to try their utmost to stay in line with our covenants. We are pleased that our community is not one requiring a constant presence to have someone monitor and enforce our covenants. Most issues have been resolved through neighbor-to-neighbor contact, reminding everyone to do their part to maintain the standards of our community. However, we do have some minor issues that need occasional tending such as trailers and boats as well as outdoor animals. When not in use, trailers and boats should be stored in your garage or off-site. Dogs should be kept on a leash when not fenced; be considerate of your neighbors with barking dogs, especially since many are working from home due to COVID-19 restrictions. It is best to keep animals inside as we do have a pack of coyotes that reside nearby. As a direct result of our holding to our covenants, our neighborhood is one of the most sought after in Madison. Our home values continue to increase because we maintain our community and have such high standards. Please do not rest on your laurels and keep our community as great as it is. The covenants committee is always looking for more representatives to help update our covenants as well as help resolve issues. If interested, please email contact@waldenhoa.org.

Clubhouse – Heather Csontos:

We have freshly painted outdoor bathrooms with new ADA doorknobs. The inside of the clubhouse is up to code with a new fire extinguisher. Reminder to neighbors that you get one free clubhouse rental every year. The contract and clubhouse calendar are on our website: <https://waldenhoa.org>. A limited number of free clubhouse usages are available to nonprofit groups, like the recent food drive for the Downtown Rescue Mission. If you have questions, contact Heather at WaldenHOAclubhouse@gmail.com.

Reminder! Nominations for the 2021 Walden HOA board will be conducted at the December Annual Meeting. The meeting is Saturday, 5 December at 1pm, (a weather day of Sunday at same time). For health safety it will be outdoors at the Clubhouse. We always need help, with board positions and with our committees: grounds, pool, social, and clubhouse.

DATE: 23 November 2020

FROM: Tim Holcombe, Walden Homeowners Association

SUBJECT: Path Forward

This communication is being mailed to all 164 homeowners in the Walden subdivision in Madison, AL. As many of you know, I have been involved with the WHOA since the corporation's transition from the developer (Joe Murphy) to a fully controlled homeowner Board of Directors in late 2004. In January, 2005, an elected WHOA Board of Directors officially took control of all aspects of managing our HOA, and I was the first President of the Board, and have held that position for 9 of the 16 years this HOA has existed under homeowner control. In 2005, Phases 1, 2 and 3 were actively being built; Phase 4 was not initially planned/included in the subdivision, but that parcel was annexed into the Walden subdivision in 2005 and homesites began being built in 2006. Our HOA also inherited a \$7,000 debt from the developer in 2005, since there were not enough dues paying homes to fully fund the expenses of a pool, clubhouse and pond at the time. Of course, the developer had been charging us monthly "management fees"; that ceased when the homeowners took control, as **we are an all-volunteer Board**. The HOA Board paid that amount back to the developer in two years, **and has never been in debt since**. Many thanks to all who have served on our Board, on committees and as volunteers over the years; we are your neighbors that are performing our duties as a service to the community for no compensation. We have a fabulous subdivision that offers our residents a variety of amenities at a very affordable annual dues rate. Important to note the WHOA owns 26 acres of common area, much of the property wooded wetlands or "conservancy" area. It is also important to note that the developer did not burden us with debt from construction of the clubhouse, pool, pond, entrances and other improvements within the subdivision (many HOA's have mortgages on amenities, and the developers continue to run the HOA for many years).

The 2020 WHOA Board has done an excellent job managing expenses while addressing a number of needed maintenance issues, including replacement of the pond aerator, major sprinkler system work at all 3 entrances and the clubhouse/pool area, new signage, and a lot of "resident supplied labor" on the common areas. Our annual dues assessments at \$350 per lot brings in \$57,750 annually from our 164 homesites and 1 undeveloped lot, which has been enough to cover expenses in the past. Most years the HOA has been able to save a small portion of the annual dues and we have dipped into the escrow savings account for major repairs over the years like a new roof on the clubhouse and re-lining the pool previously, and will likely need to do the same for a new A/C unit at the clubhouse soon.

So, where do we go from here?

A number of concerns and ideas have surfaced recently, and I wanted to reach out to all homeowners to recap:

Immediate Needs

- Clubhouse A/C unit
- Clubhouse repairs
- Common/conservancy area clearing/tree and drainage work

Proposed/considered new capital projects

- On site storage (we pay monthly fee now of an off-site storage)
- Playground and/or courts
- Walking paths

Here are the scenarios related to the above key proposals, opportunities and concerns:

- **IMMEDIATE NEEDS** – Clubhouse almost 20 years old; new A/C units needed soon; windows need repair. Common/conservancy areas need drainage addressed, and a number of trees cut and/or removed.
- **PROPOSED PROJECTS** – An on-site storage unit would negate paying for off-site storage, and make needed materials more easily accessible; suggested/considered locations include enclosing the clubhouse patio or a

separate pad/building behind the pool area. A children's playground or other "court" amenity has also been suggested and considered; locations include clubhouse lot or pond area. A walking path has also been suggested; location is around the pond; an alternative is completing the sidewalk from Merrimack to the pool area.

- **COVENANTS ENFORCEMENT AND / OR REVISIONS** – The Walden covenants were composed by attorney Sam Givhan and recorded in August of year 2000. I have proposed a review and revision of the 45 page "Declaration of Protective Covenants", since some sections of our covenants document are outdated (the Declarants rights and obligations, for instance, which no longer are applicable). Even the developer DID NOT follow all provisions of our protective covenants. Further, there are provisions that the all-volunteer HOA Board has never enforced, such as maintaining a "weed free lot" and screening of heat/AC units. Article VI, entitled "Use restrictions and Rules" lists many specific areas: Section 7 "Animals and Pets" could easily be deleted, since a Madison City Ordinance covers these areas of concern and provides a remedy via MPD's Animal Control Unit; really no need for an HOA to be involved, since city law will trump any provision of our covenants. Section 17, "Guns" prohibits the "use" of firearms within the community (the word "use" is not defined, but includes "B-B guns, pellet guns and firearms of all types"). Section 31, Landscaping (3 pages in length), "promotes landscape development" and details requirements for each lot; since we are fully built out, this section is no longer applicable. Parking "within the community" should be clarified, since city ordinance specifically allows parking on the street and the HOA has no control over street parking (which is legal on both sides of a subdivision city street); however, parking in a front yard is prohibited by the ordinance. I would also support amending the covenants to allow boats and trailers to be kept at residences.
- **FUTURE DUES STRUCTURE** – Even without any of the above, an increase in the annual dues in the near future is inevitable, since the costs of goods and services have increased substantially since the early 2000's, and our amenities and common areas are in need of repairs. The HOA Board can increase the dues, up to a maximum of +20% per year, by a simple majority vote. "Special Assessments" (in addition to annual dues) may also be assessed by the HOA Board.

I would be supportive of covenants revisions for **clarity and more easily understood** and, most importantly, enforcement. The WHOA Board adopted a resolution in April, 2016 which details courses of action to be taken "when a complaint is received" (no action unless another resident files a complaint with the HOA). Our "neighbor to neighbor" approach has not worked well through my years with the Walden HOA, and I would support providing covenants enforcement through a third party (as most other HOA's do) after revision of the covenants. The annual cost for such an arrangement would be about \$10K, and an increase in annual dues to \$400 per household could cover this increased cost. The alternative is no action and continue to only enforce specific covenants when a given resident makes a complaint a neighbor to the HOA Board.

Your input to our current HOA Board is important as we prepare for our **Annual HOA Meeting to be held Saturday, Dec. 5th, 2020, 1:00 P.M., at the clubhouse**, outdoors for safety and spacing due to Coronavirus, with a "rain date" of the following Sunday. The Walden HOA has not conducted an election for Board members since 2008, since we have only had 5 people willing to serve on the Board any given year, who were nominated at the annual meeting, and accepted by acclimation by the outgoing Board. If you are interested in serving on our HOA Board, you are encouraged to attend the upcoming annual meeting (masks and social distancing requested, please). You can also e-mail contact@waldenHOA.org or mail your comments in writing to 208 Walden Glen Road, 35758. We look forward to hearing from you.

Tim Holcombe, President

Walden Homeowners Association