

Dear Neighbors

To those who attended the HOA Special Meeting on June 6, 2016, we thank you. There were 27 neighbors plus four Board members in attendance. Augie Freda did an excellent job arranging to have Andy Kostielney, St. Joseph County Board of Commissioners, and County Councilman, Jamie O'Brien, speak to us about leaf pick up, road conditions, snow removal and other county services.

The county is aware that Old Lantern at Baywood storm sewer needs repair. They are waiting on a replacement grate to complete the work. The County has put up construction cones to warn people of the hole, but they keep being removed without the County's knowledge.

### **Leaf Pickup**

Per Andy, the County Commissioner, leaf pick-up is a flawed process and not an exact science due to weather conditions. Leaf pick-up costs the county almost \$1M annually. Although bids for leaf removal were publically posted and sent to several potential providers, the County only received a bid from GreenWorld. With no other bidders, the County has little leverage over GreenWorld. The Leaf Pickup service was instituted as an option for residence to remove leaves after the County enacted its ban on leaf burning. The County's service was intended to supplement private or otherwise contracted leaf pickup services, not to replace them. There is a very real chance that when the "circuit breaker" property tax relief begins, this service may need to be stopped to make room for more necessary and critical County services to remain with reduced revenues available to fund them. With regard to scheduling and announcements, the service begins in a specific announced township then proceeds either clockwise or counter clockwise through the County's townships. Unfortunately, depending on weather and leaf fall, the speed at which GreenWorld works through the schedule will vary greatly, making it impossible to provide "real time" updates on location and progress. The County will continue to use the website to track progress and press releases in the local media to announce starts, stops and changes. The leaf pickup trucks have video cameras and GPS, so the work being done can be reviewed to confirm if, in fact, the leaves are being picked up. In most cases around the county, when a resident reports that their leaves were skipped, the cameras indicate that the leaves were never put out. The County is working with GreenWorld to see if there is a more timely way to track progress and what specific neighborhoods are coming up on their routes.

### **Road Repairs and Maintenance**

In order to keep up with all the road repair and maintenance in the County, it would require a budget of \$25M to \$30M. The County has only a road repair budget of \$7M. The funding for this budget item does not come from our property taxes but rather from the County's share of the gasoline tax and from other State grants and funding. The County is also actively applying for additional grants to supplement this. They try to do the best job they can within their budget. The budget basically allows the County, on an annual basis, to totally repave 23 miles of road, chip and seal 45 miles of road and microseal around 10 miles. They set priorities based on traffic volume and state of deterioration. Unfortunately, that means that some of our neighborhood roads, especially cul-de-sacs, do not have the traffic volume necessary to replace or supersede roads that are more heavily used. Currently, nothing within our

neighborhood is on the active schedule for repair or replacement. They will be doing road work from Douglas to Ash Road, Hazel to Gumwood and parts of Adams Road away from our entrances. They are also looking to pave Woodland Hills, Terri Brooke, Quail Ridge and possibly other area subdivisions. With regard to chip and seal, while it is certainly not a permanent solution and creates a host of issues and complaints, it is a very economical option as a stop-gap on some roads, allowing the County to address more miles for less cost. Neighborhoods have, in other areas, used a portion of their association dues to help compensate the County and make it more likely that their roads can be addressed quicker. Our HOA could certainly do the same thing by increasing our annual dues, but it is unlikely we could raise enough money to provide for any major work.

### **Water Drainage and Standing Water at Greenway Drive (Knollwood Country Club Entrance at Adams Road)**

Our representatives addressed the concerns about the standing water at the neighborhood entrance at the Knollwood Country Club Clubhouse. At times there can be as much as a foot of standing water at the main entrance of the subdivision. The Club applied for the appropriate permission from the County to make the pavement changes but the County, based on the design submitted by the Club, did not approve the changes as the County Engineers recognized that the standing water would be a result of the design. The Club, without the County's approval, made the changes anyway. While the County remains responsible to maintain that roadway, because the maintenance required is the result of intentional actions by the Club, the County finds it difficult to utilize the scarce budget resources in lieu of other areas where natural deterioration needs repair. The County can take two different courses of action in an attempt to force the Club to make the necessary repairs to the problem that they caused. First, the County can sue the Club, taking legal action to force the repair. The second option would be for the County to close that road (in essence shutting off the main entrance to the Club and our neighborhood) until the Club repairs the issues. In the first case, the cost of such litigation would take away from County funds necessary to provide other services. In the second case, shutting down that road would greatly inconvenience many residents. They are considering the possibility of shutting down the road. They suggested that our individual neighbors, especially those impacted by the standing water, should write or call the Club to encourage them to correct the design issue.

### **Snow Removal**

There were some questions around snow removal. It was voiced that, generally speaking, the snow removal provided by the County has been good. There are some cases where cul-de-sacs and low traffic sections are not address as often or as quick as other roads. However, like with the leaf pickup, this is simply a case of prioritization based on road usage and number of drivers impacted. One specific comment was that the plow drivers were swerving towards the center of the road to avoid plowing through piles of leaves left over from the leaf pickup process. The drivers are supposed to plow curb-to-curb, but do have some discretion to protect their equipment (frozen leave piles can be damaging to the plow trucks).

Thank you again for your participation. Although we may not have received the answers we wanted to hear, what we DID receive was honest and direct.

There are also some things that we can do as “good neighbors” – both individually and the HOA board on our collective behalf:

1. The Board will pursue supplemental leaf collection as we have in past years. Quite candidly, we never realized that the County’s program was intended as a supplement. However, like with the County, the only viable service provider seems to be GreenWorld as Junoll is not interested in the business.
2. The Board can consider increasing the annual dues schedule to provide some of our own funding for road repair and/or expanding services we provide to supplement other areas like snow removal.
3. As individual neighbors, we can do our best to discourage the damage and removal of temporary road hazard markers provide by the County when they are repairing our streets. In most cases, it is likely our teens doing what they consider as simple mischief and do not realize the potential consequences to a driver or passengers should they encounter the hazards that are no longer marked.
4. As individual neighbors, with regard to leaf pickup and snow removal, we can take the advice given by the County and GreenWorld to use tarps to cover the leaf piles and prevent blowing while they await pickup. Also, do not rake and pile leaves in the actual roadway as this impedes proper drainage, creates traffic congestion and poses risk to the snow removal equipment.
5. As individual neighbors, particularly those most impacted by the standing water at the main entrance, contact the Club management to encourage them to correct the issue that their inadequate design caused.
6. Most importantly, we can, individually, call, email or write to our County representatives, Andy and Jamie, to express our concerns, ask our questions and thank them for the work that they do on our behalf.

We look forward to continuing to serve our neighborhood as well as to maintain a dialog with Andy and Jamie (and others who may become our representatives).

Your HOA Board