

Tree Tops - *President's Message*

Fall/Winter 2022-23

by Vin Kotraiah, HOA Board President
Greetings!

I hope you are enjoying the Fall weather. The Board has been engaged in the upkeep of the pond area, as you may have noticed. The play area and benches have been refreshed and maintenance on the bridge railings has been completed. Some of this work was done by volunteers from the Board and ARC who donated their time over several weekends during the summer. The Board awarded several contracts after careful evaluation of vendors and quotes to select the best companies to carry out work on the playset and construct or replace bridge railings.

This is a good point in my message to remind you that the entire Board and the ARC consist of community members who are volunteering their time. Also, note that applications are reviewed at the ARC's monthly meetings when the entire committee convenes and deliberates on the application. Please bear this in mind as you plan your projects.

It was a difficult decision to cancel our community picnic. The decision to cancel was made with the wet ground conditions and the cool-weather forecast in mind. A couple of Board members had worked hard to plan and put vendor contracts in place for the caterers, moon bounce and band. Rest assured that the early Board decision to cancel meant we did not lose any money over the cancellation. We are considering the suggestion to hold the picnic in late Spring or earlier in the Fall.

We also received a couple of messages related to the picnic cancellation from homeowners who wanted to understand the HOA finances. You are welcome to review the Treasurer's reports, which are prepared every month and presented at the monthly Board meetings and then posted on the members-only section of our website. You are also encouraged to participate in the Board meetings, or, even better, volunteer to serve on community improvement project committees, the ARC, or become an elected Board member.

Thank you, and please continue to send ideas on how to improve the community. Remember, we are in this together.

Vin

The monthly HOA meeting will be held on the second Monday of every month at 7:30 pm. For the time being, the meetings are conducted via Zoom. Please use this link to join:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3561039839>

The ARC Committee meets on the first Sunday of every month at 6:30 pm, also using the above Zoom link

DUFIEF HOMES ASSOCIATION

Readwood

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- *Dancing in DuFief*
- *Newcomer Meet and Greet*
- *Controlling Mosquitoes without Pesticides*
- *New Community Software System AppFolio*

Dancing in DuFief

by Lori Levine

I started ballroom dancing after taking a short course at Casey Community Center in Gaithersburg. Then a little over three years ago, I met my partner Steve Wright, who is a scientist and a ballroom dance teacher. We met at a dance at Hollywood Ballroom in Silver Spring where he teaches. As I got deeper into dancing, with his enthusiasm and patient teaching, I wanted to have a



Living Room Studio

studio practice space at home to complement the practice sessions at the ballroom. I've lived in DuFief for over 30 years, and I love how adaptable the modern houses can be. Steve helped me rearrange the furniture in my living room and put up two large mirrors to facilitate practicing at home. Now all we have to do is roll up the carpet when we want to dance!

This turned out to be extremely good timing when the pandemic brought about lockdowns and shutdowns in 2020. For months we couldn't go to any ballrooms or socialize with other people, and we were fortunate to be able to keep practicing at home during the lockdown and beyond.



Cha-Cha Dance Competition

About a year ago, I wanted to try a dance competition. Since then I have done three **Pro-Am** dance competitions in both Latin and Standard ballroom events. **Latin** dance events include Cha-cha, Samba, and Rumba—which I compete in—and Jive and Paso Doble. The **Standard** events are Waltz, Tango, Quickstep, Foxtrot, and Viennese Waltz. **Pro-Ams** are for amateurs like me, dancing with pros like my partner, and **Am-Ams** are for amateur couples. I've won a few multi-dance championships for my age and level (in Latin and Standard), and a third-place scholarship prize at my last competition in Latin style.

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Tango Dance Competition

There are many health benefits of dancing, including better cardiovascular fitness, increased muscle tone and strength, and even improved memory and cognition, but I dance primarily for the enjoyment of it. Dance competitions are fun — and glamorous. I think the focused practice leading up to them makes you a better dancer, win or lose. If you have fun and do your best, the results don't matter. Watching a competition in person is more spectacular than seeing one on TV (check out DC Dance Inferno at the University of Maryland College Park in early November). And even if you are interested only in social dancing, you get all the health benefits. Plus, the community is friendly, so it's a great way to make new friends.

Lori Levine

Welcoming Committee—Update

by **Elizabeth Shakespeare, Ph.D.**, Chair

*We have a new member, **Alicia Clausen**, who recently joined the Welcoming Committee. On Saturday, December 3rd, Alicia hosted a Meet and Greet brunch at her home on Talking Rock Court for all 2022 DuFief newcomers, providing an opportunity to ask questions and meet new neighbors. **Thank you, Alicia!***

While the event is specifically oriented toward newcomers, we invite all residents to attend and would be more than happy to have you. The more the merrier! Come, meet your new neighbors!

We look forward to hosting another Meet and Greet in the Spring.

If you are interested in meeting new neighbors or in joining the Welcome Committee, please contact the Board at board@dufief.org

Controlling Mosquitoes without Pesticides

by **Moira Davenport**

Mosquitoes are unwelcome guests in our backyards, especially when we want to spend time relaxing with family and friends outdoors in the hot summer months. Increasingly, people are turning to mosquito-control companies to treat their yards with pesticides on a regular basis. But there are several other ways to control the mosquito population in your backyard without damaging our environment and without a significant financial outlay.

Despite the claims made by mosquito-control companies to the contrary, their sprays are broad-spectrum, meaning that they are highly toxic to a wide variety of insects, including butterflies, bees, dragonflies, lightning bugs, caterpillars and even fish, birds, pets and humans! Fish are affected when the run-off from the spray enters our streams, and birds can become ill from eating sprayed insects. If your yard is being sprayed each month, then every insect touched by the spray is either being killed or sickened.

The birds coming to our backyard feeders eat seed as adults for a good portion of their diet, but their babies need softer fare, such as caterpillars and other small insects. When yards are sprayed, their food source is greatly reduced and bird reproduction will fail. Almost 30 percent of the North American bird population has disappeared in just the last 50 years! This dramatic loss is also due to habitat loss and other factors, but pesticide use is playing a very significant role.

Here are some alternative methods to reduce your chances of getting bitten in your backyard, in addition to eliminating standing water in outdoor objects and containers:

- Make a simple mosquito trap by filling a 5-gallon bucket half full of water, throwing in a bunch of vegetation such as weeds, or hay if you have it, and adding a quarter of a mosquito dunk (available at hardware stores, Amazon, etc.). Place in an out-of-the-way part of your yard. Dump out a little of the water after heavy rains and add a new piece of dunk each month. The mosquito dunk will kill the mosquito larvae, thus reducing the number of adult mosquitoes. I have two of these traps in my yard and had fewer mosquito bites this season.
- Turtles, frogs, dragonflies, as well as birds are natural predators of mosquitoes. Welcome these animals into your yard by gardening for wildlife with native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. A backyard pond is a sure-fire way of attracting them, and a small fountain to keep the water moving will prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs.
- Repellants using eucalyptus are very effective if you prefer not to use DEET-based products.
- Wear light-weight long sleeves and pants.
- Keep a fan going when sitting on your deck.

Resources:

The National Wildlife Federation article, "When pest comes to shove" at [When Pest Comes to Shove](#).

Douglas Tallamy, Professor, Department of Entomology and Wildlife Resources, University of Delaware [Here's the BEST WAY TO KILL MOSQUITOS - INSTEAD OF FOGGING!](#)

UNC Charlotte Urban Institute article, [Try the 'bucket of doom' to eliminate mosquitoes without harmful pesticides | UNC Charlotte Urban Institute](#).

New Community Software System: AppFolio

DUFIEF HOA IS EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE OUR NEW SOFTWARE SYSTEM!

Your HOA is working to continually improve community support and communications by implementing a new electronic records management system. In the past, we have used Quickbooks for all invoicing and billing of annual HOA dues. Unfortunately, Quickbooks is strictly an accounting software that does not provide associations the capabilities to maintain documents and communicate with our Homeowners. Our new system, AppFolio, provides all accounting requirements, enables community-wide communications, scheduling, document storage, document access, and much more.

On Friday December 23, 2022 you should have received an email from “DuFief Homes Association, Inc. support@onlineportal.appfolio.com” inviting you to establish your personal DuFief HOA Portal. As of January 6th we have 40% of our 306 homeowners registered and are working to transition the rest of our community. Once established, your personal portal will be available at <https://dufief.appfolio.com/>

Our new software system will help store and maintain all HOA and ARC communications, community rules and covenants, resale documents, and financial transactions, all in one easily accessible location online.

Using our new system, we electronically sent out your DuFief HOA annual dues statement on January 3rd, and many Homeowners have already paid their annual dues online. AppFolio will accept ACH bank transfers with no fee or, if you prefer, credit card or debit card payments are accepted with a small transaction fee. AppFolio will display your payment history. For those who wish to continue making their payment by mailing a check, that option is still available. We are already using our new system as the preferred method for notifying and collecting our HOA annual dues, processing ARC applications as well as community news and calendar events.

“I was hesitant and thought setting up this portal would be time-consuming and difficult, but it was surprisingly easy, and I like the new system.”

Linde Fuller, Readwood Editor, and DuFief resident for 50 years.

We will discuss and demonstrate this new software Portal and its functionality at our upcoming Monthly Board meetings and the Annual HOA Board meeting on February 16, 2023. You can also find access to software guides, tutorials and YouTube videos once you activate and set up your account.

- 1. Please look for this email and set up your personal, secure Online Portal/Account. Note, only one account is established for each address but multiple people/emails are allowed.**
- 2. Click the link in the email and follow the steps to set up your password. Review and update your contact information, as appropriate, before setting up your password.**
- 3. Log in and gain access to the easiest, fastest, and most secure way to pay dues, submit ARC applications and view community news and events.**
- 4. Download the Mobile app to conveniently stay logged in to your Online Portal.**

To learn more about our new software system you may review AppFolio’s website at www.appfolio.com. If you have any questions or problems getting started, please email us at board@dufief.org or leave a voice mail message at 240-242-9678.

Treasurer's Report on Annual Assessments

by **Brian Frank, DuFief HOA Treasurer**

The Board has voted to limit the future annual increase of the dues to a maximum of 3%. However, for 2023, the dues will not be increased at all but will remain the same as last year's dues at \$233.68. Dues notices for 2023 were sent out by e-mail or first-class mail in early January, and payment of \$233.68 will be due on February 1, 2023.

As of December 12, 2022, the Board has collected annual dues for 2022 from 286 of the 306 homes in our neighborhood (roughly 93.5%). The annual assessments that we use to maintain our common areas in order to keep the DuFief neighborhood a popular area for homebuyers **ARE NOT OPTIONAL**. Every household must pay the annual dues. The original notice for 2022 dues was sent to all homeowners at the beginning of January 2022.

Any homeowners that have not paid their dues are subject to potential lawsuit, which will include a request for interest and attorney's fees and may result in a lien on the property.

**We have collected
93.5 % of 2022 dues.**

We have been very successful in collecting dues. All assessments have been collected for 2010 and all years prior. There is one homeowner that has not paid dues since 2011; two homeowners have not paid for 2013, 2014, 2015, 2019; four homeowners have not paid for 2020; seven homeowners have not paid for 2021, and ten homeowners have not paid for 2022. The Board does not enjoy having to take neighbors to court. However, the homeowner assessments are not any different from having to pay real estate taxes on your property. If you owe more than one year of dues, a lawsuit is likely to be filed.

In the past, billing for the Association was done using Quickbooks. The Quickbooks software was not designed for associations like ours and has become increasingly difficult to use. As such, we will now be using AppFolio, which is a platform that is specifically designed for the management of a homeowners association. We are planning to begin using AppFolio in 2023 with the invoicing for the 2023 Annual Assessment.

Payments will be able to be made by credit or debit card, ACH transfer. For those of you who wish to make payment by check, that option will also be available.

To those of you who have paid your annual assessments in a timely manner, "THANK YOU." For those of you who have not yet paid the 2022 dues in the amount of \$233.68, please do so as soon as possible in order to avoid additional costs, and a potential lawsuit. Should you have any questions, please contact me via email—treasurer@dufief.org or by telephone at **240-606-5100**.

Brian Frank

Thank-you to Oksana Klebs

Oksana Klebs, Member of the DuFief Board of Directors, who was serving as our Secretary, recently resigned from the Board because of a change in her work schedule that makes it difficult or impossible to attend our monthly meetings. She was an especially efficient note-taker and always presented us with detailed and accurate Minutes of our Board Meetings. We miss her and hope that sometime in the future she will be able to return as a member of our Board.

Meeting Dates

The **Board of Directors** holds monthly meetings at **7:30 p.m.** on the **2nd Monday** of each month. The Annual Meeting is scheduled for the third Thursday in February at **7:30 pm.**

The dates for the monthly board meetings and the Annual Meeting are as follows:

January 9, 2023	July 10, 2023
February 13, 2023	August 14, 2023
February 16, 2023— ANNUAL MEETING	September 11, 2023
March 13, 2023	October 9, 2023
April 10, 2023	November 13, 2023
May 8, 2023	December 11, 2023
June 12, 2023	

The **Architectural Review Committee** holds monthly meetings at **6:30 pm** on the **first Sunday** of each month.

The dates for the monthly ARC meetings are as follows:

January 1, 2023	July 2, 2023
February 5, 2023	August 6, 2023
March 5, 2023	September 3, 2023
April 2, 2023	October 1, 2023
May 7, 2023	November 5, 2023
June 4, 2023	December 3, 2023

Our Annual Picnic, which was planned to be held at the DuFief pond on October 01, 2022 had to be canceled, this time because of an unfavorable weather forecast. However, we are hoping that we will be able to get together this year, perhaps earlier in the fall, not only to enjoy a picnic but also to celebrate the 50th anniversary of DuFief. Maybe we can persuade some of all those original owners who still live here to tell us their stories.

More information will be made available in the Summer/Fall 2023 issue of the Readwood and on the DuFief website at www.dufief.org.



The Annual Picnic at the pond before the pandemic

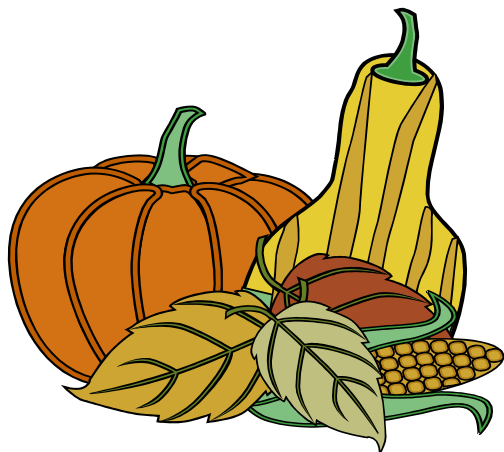


Neighbors of Pebble Hill Lane having an "Annual Picnic" in their cul de sac during the pandemic in 2020

**DuFief
Homes
Association**

**Mailing Address:
PO Box 3034
Gaithersburg, MD 20885**

[www.dufief.org]



**DuFief Homes Association Board
board@dufief.org 240-242-9678**

Board of Directors:

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Vice President: Fred Mingo—fmingo12@gmail.com

Treasurer: Brian Frank—schmedbrf@yahoo.com

Secretary: open

Board Members:

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Ron Ely—ronelyhoa@gmail.com

Linde Fuller— (*Readwood Editor*) fullersk@verizon.net

Bill Golumbfskie—bill.golumbfskie@gmail.com

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Nominating Committee for Election of New Board Members:

Fred Mingo—fmingo12@yahoo.com

Webmaster:

Barbara Brenkworth— brenkworth@gmail.com

Election Announcement

The election of board and committee members is scheduled to take place at the
Annual Homeowners' Meeting on February 16, 2023, 7:30 pm.

The 2023 Annual Meeting will again take place via Zoom because there are still concerns about Covid-19 and because the attempted hybrid version of in-person and Zoom was made impossible by technical difficulties at the DuFief Elementary School. More details will be sent to DuFief homeowners in the weeks before February 16, 2023.

Please consider serving on the **Nominating Committee**; we could use your help.

To sign up as a candidate, go to

<https://forms.gle/PkY1A666Tp5ZpJhz9>

Note: For the homeowners who do not have email, the *Readwood* will be printed at cost as a community service by **Alpha Graphics Shady Grove** in Gaithersburg (agshadygrove.com).

We Want You to Know About

The MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION ON COMMON-OWNERSHIP COMMUNITIES

Montgomery County recognizes that a substantial proportion of all its citizens now live in condominium and homeowner associations, and in housing cooperatives, generally called "common-ownership communities." In order to serve better the special needs of these communities, to act as their advocate, and to maintain and improve the quality of life in these communities, the County created the Commission on Common-Ownership Communities. The Commission operates under the authority of Chapter 10B of the County Code.

The Commission has three basic duties:

Education: The Commission provides free information to both members and to governing bodies about their rights and duties under Maryland law, as well as advice on how to properly operate the association and to avoid complaints. Among other tools, it offers a "Manual and Resource Guide" for boards of directors, and detailed information on architectural control, assessments, and meetings. It publishes a newsletter summarizing recent developments affecting common-ownership communities. Commissioners will also speak to communities and their boards on request and welcome invitations to do so.

Legislation: The Commission advocates for common-ownership communities concerning proposed laws and regulations at the local and State level.

Dispute Resolution: The Commission can hear and resolve certain disputes between members of the communities and their governing bodies, and its decisions are legally binding on the parties. Copies and easy-to-read summaries of its decisions are posted on its website and reviewed in its newsletter.

The Commission is composed of 15 volunteers who are appointed for three-year terms. Eight members must be residents of common-ownership communities, and the other seven must be professionals who work with the communities, such as property managers, lawyers, developers, and realtors. Every Fall, the County publishes a request for applicants to the Commission to replace those whose terms are due to expire.

For more information on the Commission and its services, visit its website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccoc. If you have questions, CCOC prefers to be contacted by email at: CCOC@montgomerycountymd.gov. To receive information by email about CCOC news and events, sign up for them by going to www.montgomerycountymd.gov and following these links: 1. "I Want To;" 2. "Register, reserve, enroll;" 3. "eSubscription;" 4. "Create an Account;" 5. "Consumer Protection;" 6. "CCOC."