



READWOOD

DuFief Homes Association Newsletter Spring 2026

President's Message:

Dear DuFief Community:

Brrrr!!! What a cold winter it has been these last few months!! After a joyous holiday season, Jack Frost has stretched his cold fingers down from the arctic to encase us in his icy grasp for these last two long, frigid months. And according to my favorite weatherman back home, Punxsutawney Phil (the groundhog), this winter could linger well into March. So, cozy up neighbors, get warm by the fire, and let's catch up on the happenings around DuFief since we last checked in.

Staying with our weather theme to start, we had a doozy of a storm at the end of January that brought quite a bit of snow, but debilitating ice on top of it, creating what I heard it is called "snow-crete". This unique precipitation coupled with single-digit temperatures led to a meteorological mess that had the kids of school for 6 days: a whole week and the following Monday to boot! MCPS sent an email out as the first week off stretched into week two, explaining that the lack of cleared sidewalks and poor roadway clearance was keeping them from opening the schools. Fred Mingo and I both walked up to the school to survey the issue at our own DuFief Elementary and found it to be indeed impassable. After a community email, we received feedback that due to the "snow-crete", folks were having a difficult time clearing their sidewalks, and the HOA Board decided to act. We contacted our landscaping crew and they were able to come out immediately and got all the sidewalks and roadways cleared out, working in the cold well after the sun went down to ensure safe walkways for our kids. The next day, after a 2-hour delay, MCPS schools were back to normal. A great example of how your HOA dues are put to use, making the neighborhood safe and livable.

The other major recent event was our in-person HOA Board meeting up at the school, where we had a decent turnout of residents who brought some delicious home-made food for a potluck. We reviewed the events of the last year, including last year's spending, approved the 2026 budget, and held our Board elections. Leaving the Board are Shawn McClosky and Cassie Moran. We thank them for their service to the community. Joining the Board are Sam Silverman and Neil Hecht. Many thanks to both of them for their willingness to serve. Re-joining the Board is Pam Weld and we are grateful to have her wisdom, experience and volunteerism back leading the neighborhood. Lastly, I have signed on for another 3-year term. My largest goal is to find more members of the community willing to join so that I can retire knowing the Board is well staffed and in good hands at the end of this term. To that end, I am hoping we can find some volunteers for the Nominating Committee to help me in this endeavor. If you're interested, please reach out to board@dufief.org to get more information. That's all from me for now folks. Stay warm and hope to see you around the neighborhood.

Warmest regards,

Jared B. Smith

DuFief HOA President

Treasurer Report –by Fred Mingo

Treasurer Report – for Feb 10, 2026, Board Meeting

Reserve BOA Account balance as of 2/6/26:	\$28,835.35
<u>Reserve EagleBank 12-month 3.95% CD (Maturity 1-5-2027)</u>	<u>\$120,395.56</u>
Total Reserve Accounts:	\$149,230.91
Reserve Account balance Jan 2026 report	(\$148,834.37)
Operating BOA Account balance as of 2/6/26:	\$161,588.50
<u>Operating EagleBank 12-month 3.95% CD (Maturity 1-5-2027)</u>	<u>\$130,428.52</u>
Total Operating Accounts:	\$292,017.02
Operating Account balance Jan 2026 report	(\$268,468.25)
Total Reserve and Operating Accounts as of 2/6/2026	(\$417,302.62)
304 homes / 306 have paid – 99.3% for 2020 Dues: \$220.27	
303 homes / 306 have paid – 99.0% for 2021 Dues: \$226.88	
303 homes / 306 have paid – 99.0% for 2022 Dues: \$233.68	
301 homes / 306 have paid – 98.4% for 2023 Dues: \$233.68	
300 homes / 306 have paid – 98.0% for 2024 Dues: \$240.00 (+5)	
292 homes / 306 have paid – 95.4% for 2025 Dues: \$245.00 (+9)	
203 homes / 306 have paid – 66.3% for 2026 Dues: \$245.00	
Three homes owe: (\$3,193.47 + \$1,644.51 + \$1,197.36) Total:	\$6,035.34
Total All Years (not including 2026 / including 2026 dues):	\$11,162.70 / \$28,252.06

Expenses from Jan 1 to Jan 31, 2026

1. Solitude Lake	\$ 228.69	
2. Zoom	\$ 17.50	
3. AppFolio	\$ 302.82	
4. PPR	\$ 1,104.17	
5. USPS – Annual Meeting Mailing	\$ 483.60	
6. Staples – Annual Meeting Mailing	\$ 37.20	
7. Maryland State Income Taxes (2024 penalty)	\$ 171.11	
8. Parcel Plus– Annual Meeting Mailing	\$ 77.59	
9. Amazon – “Deposit only” stamp	\$ 14.79	
10. Staples – Annual Meeting Mailing	<u>\$ 37.09</u>	
Total		\$ 2,474.56

Deposits made from Jan 1 to Jan 31, 2026

1. Annual Dues received	<u>\$ 50,615.00</u>
Total	\$ 50,615.00

Topics for Discussion:

2026 Proposed Annual HOA Budget change: add \$2,000 for snow sidewalk clearing
2024 Income Tax penalty, confusing IRS request

DuFief HOA 2026 Budget - APPROVED

Operating Account Budget

2026 Annual Assessment (306 homes)	245.00	74,970.00
Less Allowance for doubtful accounts (10)	245.00	2,450.00
Resale Package Fees - 10 estimated	100.00	1,000.00
2026 anticipated homeowner dues income		73,520.00

Operating Expenses

Administrative (software, printing, office supplies, signage)	2,000.00
Appfolio Software & services	3,700.00
ARC	1,000.00
Capital Reserve Fund Contribution (2025 & 2026) See Note 1	18,222.00
CCOC membership	1,990.00
Common Area emergent projects - (tree removal, labor, etc)	5,000.00
Common Area Maintenance (mowing common area, snow removal etc)	15,250.00
Environmental Committee (Green Team)	3,000.00
Front Entrance Beautification	2,000.00
Insurance	3,300.00
Legal & CPA Fees	2,000.00
Meeting Room Rental - Zoom/school	300.00
Park / Pond Beautification & Playground Maintenance	6,000.00
Pond Management	2,700.00
Printing USPS Box and Postage	900.00
Social Committee (incl. Annual Mtg, 2 Picnics)	12,000.00
Reserve Study (next due 2030, every 5 years)	0.00
Welcome Committee	500.00
Total Expenses	79,862.00

Projected Operating Overage -6,342.00

Operating Account Budget - continued

Operating account balance 1/1/2026	109,145.24
Plus Anticipated income for 2026	73,520.00
Less Anticipated expenses for 2026	79,862.00
Anticipated Operating balance on 12/31/2026	102,803.24

Operating 12-month 3.95% CD (1-5-27 Maturity)	130,000.00
Projected CD interest less estimated taxes	3,900.00
Anticipated Balance in Operating Account on 12/31/2026	236,703.24

Reserve Account Budget

Balance as of 1/1/2026	28,834.37
Reserve 12-month 3.95% CD (1-5-27 Maturity)	120,000.00
Total Reserve Funds	148,834.37
Contribution for 2025 & 2026: See Note 1	18,222.00
Estimated Repairs per Reserve Study*	-
Asphalt path sealing, pathway crushed stone	-
tot lot surfacing/wood fiber	-
Anticipated CD interest less estimated taxes	3,600.00
Anticipated Balance in Reserve Account on 12/31/26	170,656.37

Estimated Total Operating and Reserve Accounts on 12/31/2026 **407,359.61**

Note 1: Transfer to Reserve account for 2025 was postponed to 2026 so two transfers of \$9,111.00 will occur in 2026.

Reminder:

The DuFief HOA covenants permit the maximum dues assessment to increase by up to 3% per year. The Board has decided to increase the Maximum Annual Assessment by 3% from \$255.35 for 2025 to \$263.00 for 2026. However, the board also decided to keep the annual dues assessed for 2026 the same as the 2025 dues of \$245.00, rather than the maximum amount allowable. 2026 dues will be \$245.00 per lot.

For those of you who wish to make payment by check, please mail your check to DuFief Homes Association, Inc., PO Box 3034, Gaithersburg, MD 20885. Please feel free to contact our HOA Treasurer, Fred Mingo at treasurer@dufief.org if you have any questions and or need assistance.

Fred Mingo, Treasurer



DuFief Green Team

Shrub and Tree Giveaway:

Your HOA is once again sponsoring the Green Team's giveaway of 50 Maryland native trees and shrubs. Our goal is to strengthen our local ecosystem here in Dufief by supporting biodiversity and providing essential food and habitat for birds and pollinators.

We will have 25 witch-hazel trees ([hamamelis virginiana](#)) and 25 nannyberries ([viburnum lentago](#)) to offer free to DuFief residents, one plant per household. These will be very small plants, 6 - 12 inches, and require some tender loving care for their first few years in your yard. Both offer great wildlife value. Witch-hazels are one of the very few trees to flower in the fall, providing pollen and nectar when few plants are blooming. This is a small tree, growing to about 15 ft that does well in sun or part shade. The nannyberry

viburnum is a tall shrub, between 15-25 ft at maturity, that takes well to pruning. It has white flowers in spring, berries in the fall along with reddish purple foliage. It also grows well in part shade or sun.

Let us know at dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com if you're interested. Delivery will be in April. We will notify you of exact pickup arrangements, likely on a Saturday morning at the pond entrance on Coles Chance Rd.

Nature Walks:

Join us on Wednesday, March 25 at 9:00 a.m. for a ramble along the Muddy Branch Greenway. We will walk about 2 miles round trip looking for birds and emerging plants. Meet at the Pollinator Gardens at the entrance on Dufief Drive and Rte 28. Let us know if you can join us by sending an email to dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com. **Bring binoculars** or mention in your email if you don't have any. We'll try to bring extras.

Invasive Weed Removal, April 18 at 9 -11 a.m.

Last year, Green Team members spent two Saturday mornings removing invasive plants from around the pond. On Saturday morning, April 18, 9-11 a.m., we will tackle this year's crop of garlic mustard and other invasives. Let us know at dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com if you can join us. Bring garden gloves, loppers and hand clippers if you have them. We usually have extras.

Yard Visits:

Would you like to add native plants to your yard but don't know where to start? Green Team members Roger Rasnake and Moira Davenport will make a 'yard visit' to give you pointers on plants that will do well in your landscape. Contact us at dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com.



Keeping Cats Indoors

We have been asked by a Dufief homeowner, distressed by a cat preying on the birds at her backyard feeder, to remind everyone to please keep your cat indoors. While we all love our cats and want them to be happy, allowing them to roam free in the neighborhood is not the answer.

Free-roaming cats are a major threat to wildlife, [killing billions of birds and small mammals every year](#). Life outside is dangerous for cats too. Outdoor cats suffer significantly shorter lifespans than indoor cats. Most of us are already keeping our cats safe inside, but there are regular sightings of pet cats strolling around our yards. Please keep your cat indoors, where it can neither prey on our wildlife nor be preyed on by other animals, contract diseases or be run over by cars. The birds, and your cat, will thank you!

Meet our neighbor, Rolin Sidwell. Rolin is a long time resident and host of frequent "Roadshow" gatherings, humorously displaying findings from his journeys. He has many interesting hobbies after a long career as an educational leader.



Rolin Sidwell

After 10 wonderful years of having the privilege of teaching literature at Howard University and feasting on the stories of students—many from African countries and many who were sons and daughters of prominent country leaders—Marion Barry appointed me as his assistant for education. (I had brought in the founder and leader of an organization called “Legal Elections in All Districts” in Chicago that succeeded in mitigating the election fraud that characterized the mayoral elections.) He accomplished the same for the mayoral election in DC.)

When there was a challenging situation with the Educational Institution Licensure Commission (which is the state regulatory entity overseeing DC colleges and universities) I was asked to Chair the Commission. That position equipped me with the knowledge and skills to later be selected by the leadership of the United Arab Emirates as Commissioner of Higher Education with responsibility for regulating 85 UAE colleges and universities. After 9 years in that position, the UAE branch campus of Sorbonne University recruited me as a special assistant to the President to oversee Sorbonne’s licensing and accreditation activities. In sum, I feel truly blessed to have had such challenging and fulfilling opportunities.

Do you know a neighbor that deserves to be highlighted in the next Readwood? Please let us know.



PQP (Praise, Question, and Polish)

Praise the board or your neighbors for a job well done. Ask a Question about Dufief that a neighbor or the board may be able to answer for you. There’s always room for improvement- how do you think we can Polish our community? Please feel free to submit thoughts and comments to share with our neighbors. Submit to Readwoodeditor@gmail.com. Comments can be published with or without your

To All DuFief Homeowners, Residents, Renters and or Guests,

We hate to be a buzzkill, but your safety is our absolute priority. Please ensure all family members and guests are aware of these dangers.

It is strictly prohibited and extremely dangerous to walk, skate, or play on the **DuFief HOA pond**.

We have recently observed individuals skating on the frozen surface, and for your safety and the safety of our neighbors, we must ask that this activity stop immediately.

While we understand the temptation to "pursue Winter Olympic goals" when local waters appear frozen, please be aware of the following critical safety risks:

- **Deceptive Ice Thickness:** Despite freezing temperatures, the ice on Maryland ponds is often dangerously thin and unstable.
- **Sediment and Suction Risks:** Our pond is a **Montgomery County stormwater management pond** designed to collect sediment. If a person falls through the ice, they encounter thick, mushy sediment that creates a suction effect, making it nearly impossible to get back out.
- **Hypothermia:** Falling into freezing water can lead to hypothermia and physical incapacitation in just a few minutes.
- **Prohibited Activities:** Per **Montgomery County Code Chapter 36**, swimming, skating, and boating are strictly prohibited in stormwater management ponds for public safety.

Our existing signage clearly states to **stay out of the pond**, and this remains in effect during the winter—meaning stay off the ice at all times.

This safety guidance is consistent with the latest warnings from the [Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection](#) and the [Maryland Department of Natural Resources](#).

Stay safe and stay on solid ground,

DuFief HOA Board

FOR YOUR AWARENESS:

ACTION REQUIRED

COMMUNITY ACTION NEEDED!

SUPPORT THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION!

What's Happening

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is conducting a boundary study for the opening of a new high school at the Crown Farm site

On February 5, 2026, Superintendent Dr. Taylor recommended:

- Relocating Thomas S. Wootton High School to the new Crown Farm location for 2027-2028
- **DuFief Elementary School's articulation remains unchanged**, continuing with Robert Frost Middle School and Thomas S. Wootton High School (at its new Crown Farm location)
- This preserves the 50-year pathway our community has maintained

Adding your name to our Letter of Community Support for Superintendent Taylor's Recommended Option.
DEADLINE: February 22, 5:00 p.m. ET

Emailing the Board of Education at
BOE@mcpsmd.org
before March 26
(template on site)

Neighbors Helping Neighbors



****This is your space to offer or ask for services from DuFief neighbors. Do you babysit, petsit, tutor, do yard maintenance, troubleshoot technology issues, or need recommendations or assistance? If you would like to list a service or a request in our next Readwood, please send an email to Readwoodeditor@gmail.com.

Hello neighbors! My name is Tracy Weatherford and I own an at-home baking business called Tracy's Treats. I make custom-order cakes, cupcakes, cookies, and more! All fresh ingredients and no preservatives. I have pictures on Facebook and Instagram and can be reached via email or text to place orders or answer questions. I love baking and making people happy with delicious treats! 240-994-0783, tracystreatsmaryland@gmail.com

Are you interested in adding plants native to Maryland to your garden to attract pollinators and beneficial insects? The Dufief Green Team is available to help you get started. We can discuss the selection of plants for sun or shade, dry area or wet, and which are more deer resistant than others. Or if you would just like to exchange ideas about ecological gardening practices, get in touch with us at Dufiefgreenteam@gmail.com

Sandi Shapiro (Readwood Editor)

readwoodeditor@gmail.com

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 better serve 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 3 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 3-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."