

# THE MANOR MONITOR

A Monthly Publication of The Vint Hill Manor Homeowners Association  
MARCH 2008

## Annual Membership Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be held at the Vint Hill Inn on Tuesday, March 4, 2008, at 7PM.

The Inn is located at 4200 Aiken Drive. The doors will open at 6:30PM for registration. Light refreshments will be served. Attendance is extremely important. A quorum, i.e., representatives of a minimum of fifteen (15) households (in good standing with fully paid assessments) is necessary in order to conduct business at the meeting. This quorum can be realized by a combination of attendance and proxies. As clarified by Mr Fred Austin, of Austin Realty (ARMI), at the February BOD meeting, NO  
*See Membership on page 2*

## Board of Directors' Monthly Meetings

\*The February meeting of the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Homeowners Association (HOA) was held on Tuesday, the 5th, at 7PM, in the Conservancy Conference Room at 4263 Aiken Drive. The regular, monthly BOD meetings are open and all members are invited to attend. At the beginning of each monthly meeting, there is an opportunity for members to make comments and/or present questions for the BOD's consideration, as well as advise concerns, or offer ideas. Minutes of the previous meeting, as well as current financial statements, are made available to all attendees. Significant items addressed at the meeting are covered in the

*See Board on page 2*

## Candidate Qualifications

To date we have received only two submissions from candidates seeking office at the upcoming election:

### John DePerro

3641 Osborne Dr., 341-8383,  
osborne2000@comcast.net

John is seeking re-election to the BOD of the HOA. He served two years as Vice-President of the HOA. In that period, he also created and chaired both the Programs and Community Relations Committees.

### Dedicated to Helping Members Save Money

John implemented projects to reduce energy costs (and reduce the green house gases) and to increase the safety of our homes. He negotiated discount prices for the following projects: *See DePerro on page 2*

### Frank Fuerst

3588 Osborne Dr., 341-1473,  
fafuerst@earthlink.net

### Previous HOA Experience

Frank has had forty years of experience in three previous HOAs, two of which are in Virginia: Great North Mountain – Treasurer for several years (followed by one year off the Board), President for several years (followed by one year off the Board) and President for several more years. Frank led the effort to rewrite the bylaws, negotiate contracts, and improve the roads that the HOA owned.

**McLean Hunt Estates** – As President, Frank led the effort to

*See Fuerst on page 5*

## Agenda for the Annual Membership Meeting

1. Call to Order
  2. The year in review – Don Brettle  
5 minutes
  3. Acceptance of 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting minutes  
5 minutes
  4. Treasurers report - Bob McConahy  
5 minutes
  5. Communications Report - Bob McConahy  
5 minutes
  6. Architectural Review Committee Report – George Mendez  
5 minutes
  7. Programs Report – John DePerro  
5 minutes
  8. Community Relations Report – John DePerro  
5 minutes
  9. Election of Board of Directors Member
    - a. Explanation of process  
5 minutes
    - b. Acceptance of nominees
    - c. Candidates speak  
5 minutes each
    - d. Q and A between membership and candidates  
5 minutes
    - e. Members vote  
5 minutes
  10. Proposals to change VHMHOA Bylaws
    - a. Explanation of Process
    - b. Each proposal will be considered separately and require the following
      - Motion (including the reading of the proposal)  
Second of the motion  
Discussion (limited due to the number of motions expected and time restrictions)  
One speaker (TBD)
- to present reasons in support of the proposal and

*See Agenda on page 6*

## Architectural Review Committee (ARC)

George Mendez, outgoing Chair of the ARC, advised that there was only one application submitted and approved in the month of January. There are still 50 modifications to homes for which there are no requests or approvals on record. Some of these include such major modifications as decks and patios. The ARC would be happy to meet with any homeowner to provide guidance and assistance with the necessary application(s) which are required for exterior modifications to our homes.

At the February BOD meeting, George announced that he is stepping down as the Chair of the ARC. On behalf of the entire community, the BOD wishes to express its sincere appreciation for his excellent leadership and dedication. Indeed, 'A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW', as the saying goes. For his part, George proclaimed that he felt it had been an honor to serve the community for the past two years, and wished to express his thanks for everyone with whom he had dealings. He hopes that no one was ever offended because of a different viewpoint in interpreting the rules the ARC is required to uphold. During his tenure, the ARC approved 325 applications and denied only a few.

In March, a new Chair will be in place for the ARC and George expressed his hope that the community will give him/her, and the other ARC members, the respect and cooperation they deserve in doing a difficult job.

## Vint Hill History

John DePerro has come into possession of two official US Army histories of Vint Hill Station. There even is information about John Mosby's biggest battle which took place about 100 yards away at Grapewood Farm. Anyone interested in a photo copy of these items, for a cost of \$10, can place an order with John on the night of the Annual Meeting.

## Membership *(from page 1)*

votes are cast in meetings by ARMI. Blank proxies returned to ARMI are accumulated only for the purpose of counting toward the required number of attendees for a quorum. To reiterate a clarification regarding the processing of the proxy form, as contained in last month's Newsletter, the only requirement for having an independent witness sign the proxy form is if you are assigning a proxy to vote for you. If so, his/her name must be entered on the first blank line on the form. If you are not assigning a proxy by name, there is no reason to have a witness to your signature on the form. If you only want your name counted to establish quorum requirements, you do not need to designate a proxy by name. Simply return the form, signed at the bottom, as described.

There will be an election to fill one seat on the BOD. The term of office is for three (3) years. Nominees were requested to provide a bio sketch and a statement of intent, as to their contribution to the BOD and the HOA, to any BOD member or to ARMI. In order for the membership to have an opportunity to review the material prior to the meeting, it was stated in the February Newsletter that the deadline for guaranteed inclusion of that info in the March Newsletter was February 14<sup>th</sup>. In keeping with accepted protocols for organizational meetings, nominations also will be accepted from the floor the night of the meeting. A homeowner may submit his/her own name. To submit another's name, it is strongly suggested to have the nominee's approval before submission.

## ARMI

As part of its service under contract to the Vint Hill Manor HOA, the Austin Realty Management and Investment Company (ARMI) is positioned to serve as a liaison between the community and the BOD and/or the ARC members. Fred Austin, owner of ARMI, advises that direct contact with his company results in all BOD and ARC members, as the case may dictate, being advised. ARMI's address, where our monthly HOA assessments are sent, is: PO Box 3413, Warrenton, VA 20188. Phone: 540-347-1901/ Fax: 540-347-1900/Website: www.ARMIVA.com.

## Board *(from page 1)*

Newsletter.

There will be a very short BOD meeting following the upcoming Annual Membership Meeting. It will have an abbreviated agenda. The main purpose will be for the BOD members to elect the officer positions for the HOA for the next year, beginning that night.

## KUDOS To Great Neighbors

On behalf of all the homeowners, a big THANK YOU to the:kindhearted snowblower owners/operators that go the extra distance and clear more than their own properties; pet owners who pick up after their pets, and a reminder to others to please do so; and to those who regularly observe the rules regarding trash containers, i.e., that they are to be stored out of view except on scheduled pickup days, and that, on those days, they should be placed curbside early in the morning, or after dark the evening before.

## Gas Line Hazard

The February Newsletter contained an article on this subject. And last week each mailbox in the community was delivered a flyer that John DePerro developed with complete details. All of the Vint Hill Manor homes use 'Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing' (CSST) to distribute natural gas. The installation met the building code at the time of construction. You can see the tubing in your furnace room. It is easy to recognize by its yellow colored covering.

As a reminder we are going to abstract here, the salient points that John detailed.

**The Problem: Indirect Lightning Strikes** – If lightning strikes a nearby tree, fence, or light pole, or comes through underground power cables, telephone lines, or metallic piping, it can enter your home. The lightning can enter the CSST and then jump off to some other grounded metal system. When it does so, it burns a hole in the CSST and introduces enough heat to cause a gas fueled fire or potentially worse.

## THE LISTENING POST



*As always, your thoughts are welcome for this column.*

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Research Center in Upper Marlboro, MD, has studied the problem and verified its existence. **The Solution: Grounding the Tubing.** Typically, an electric wire is run from the manifold (where the lines come together in your furnace room) to the electric box in your garage, and high flow shut off valves are put on the ends of tube runs

The contractor who installed the electrical systems in our homes is

installing bonding (grounding) systems on the gas lines in new construction.

If done in large numbers, the cost should be below \$250. The cost will vary from home to home depending on the model and how much of the basement is finished.

While the workman has the electric box open, installing a whole house surge protector would be very cost effective, as well. The device itself costs less than \$50.

**Project Timing** – The goal is to start serious negotiations in early April with retrofit actions to take place in April and May before the thunderstorm season.

**Next Steps** – There will be some further discussion at the Annual Meeting. At the April BOD meeting, John DePerro plans to propose the HOA contribute \$25,000, from its reserves, to pay a significant amount of the cost for a retrofit for all 100 homes in the community. If all in the community are agreeable, and if the retrofit job is bid out for all homes, it is anticipated it will result in a price that is affordable.

## Owner Rights Proposals

A flyer was circulated throughout the community advising a series of informational meetings regarding seven proposed changes to the HOA By-Laws, recommended by a work group led by Frank Fuerst. As a result of a petition signed by 49 households, the changes are expected to be introduced at the upcoming Annual Meeting.

At the February BOD meeting, it was decided to submit the proposed changes for a legal review and to have the lawyer present at the Annual Meeting to explain and discuss the results. There also will be an opportunity for both sides of the issue to be heard, and for all members to ask questions

## How To Contact Your HOA

Call ARMI, our management company at 540-347-1901; identify yourself as a resident at Vint Hill Manor, and state your question.

## Vision Statement and Survey of Needs and Talents

A copy of the Vision Statement for the community, that initially was developed last year at this time, was recently provided to each homeowner, along with a "A Survey of Needs and Talents". Please take the time to read both of these documents and provide any comments by March 1, 2008, to John DePerro, 3641 Osborne Dr, 540-341-8383; e-mail: osborne2000@comcast.net . It would be especially helpful for John to have feedback on the Survey in order to report on it at the Annual Meeting.

## Web Master Position

Another reminder that nobody has come forward to lend their talents. We are about to make the decision to hire a replacement for John.

## Community Directory

At last year's Annual Meeting, the members were given an opportunity to have their pictures taken for a proposed directory for the whole community. It is a purely voluntary initiative. If you did not take advantage of this opportunity last year and wish to do so this year, arrangements are being made to have a photographer on hand.

## Confirm Meeting Attendance

Since refreshments will be served at the annual meeting, it is important to have an idea of how many are planning to attend so that proper accommodations can be made regarding the amount of food to order. Please advise Anava Grabowski if you are planning to attend the annual membership meeting. Anava's number is 540-341-8203, or you can send her an e-mail at – grabo.anno@comcast.net .

**DePerro** (from page 1)

- \* Natural gas discount purchase (saves about \$300 per year per house)
- \* Attic insulation upgrade (saves about \$200 per year per house)
- \* Window film

He voted to reduce the monthly HOA assessments, and is working with the Sierra Club to arrange for free home energy audits.

**Dedicated to Helping Make Members and Their Homes Safer**

- \* Arranged for AARP driver training (potential \$100 per driver car insurance savings)
- \* Arranged for whole house surge protection at discounted prices
- \* Negotiated discounted prices (save \$200 per house) for installation of equipment to deal with excess radon
- \* Working toward a nature oriented (bird and bat) approach to the mosquito problem with the insect control work group
- \* Did initial research on the CSST gas tubing potential hazard and is working to arrange for discounted prices for optional fixes.
- \* Spoke with the county supervisor in an effort to build the new New Baltimore Volunteer Fire station nearer to our community.

**Dedicated to Making Members' Concerns Known to Decision Makers**

John represented the community at meetings with many governmental bodies. He created and chaired the "Concerned Citizens of Cedar Run District". He networked with Ray Graham, our county supervisor, who occasionally calls him to ask how the Vint Hill community feels about a county program. He met with Bill Downey, at his Vint Hill office, to discuss Vint Hill issues. In representing community interests,

John:

- \* Supported Fauquier hospital project to buy Overlook Nursing Home and increase beds.
- \* Met often with supervisors Ray Graham and Bill Downey about community concerns
- \* Attended and spoke at Vint Hill Economic Development Authority Meetings and at the Vint Hill Conservancy annual meeting.
- \* Gained consideration by Governor Kaine for appointment to the Vint Hill Economic Development Authority.
- \* Attended the first (no quorum) and second annual meeting of the other Vint Hill HOA.
- \* Attended and spoke at the county supervisors annual tax retreat at the Vint Hill Inn. (Taxes are going up!)

**Dedicated to Keeping Members Informed**

- \* Contributed significantly to the content of the Vint Hill Manor Web Site and is presently assisting in obtaining a new Webmaster to help enhance and extend the features of the web site.
- \* Initiated the FYIFriday luncheon speakers programs held at the Vint Hill Inn, with topics such as:
  - \* Wild Bird Care and Feeding
  - \* Using Gifts to Teach Kids Financial Skills (Northern Piedmont Credit Union)
  - \* Alzheimer's Care with Dignity (Frank Fuerst)
  - \* FAA Center Tour (being scheduled)
  - \* Bird Flu Preparations (County Health Officials) (scheduled)
  - \* Landscaping to Encourage Birds (scheduled)

**Dedicated to Saving Buckland Farm and Keeping Property Values Up**

- \* Composed and submitted a grant request for \$30,000 for the preparation of a preservation plan

for the Buckland Farm and Buckland Mills. The grant was awarded.

- \* Served as the contract administrator answerable to the National Park Service.
- \* Met with Congressman Frank Wolf about the project. Preparing a letter to Senator Web asking him to become the honorary chairman.
- \* Attended Congressman Frank Wolf's seminar on Federal grant programs.
- \* Met with staff of the American Battlefield Protection Program who agreed to budget \$2 million dollars for preservation easements at Buckland Village and Buckland Farm.
- \* Provided a written statement and verbal testament at a hearing of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources in Richmond in favor of creation of an "Historic District" of Buckland.
- \* Attended a seminar for professional archeologists hosted by the National Park Service in Fredericksburg on how to develop historic preservation programs.
- \* Attended and provided input at Fauquier county and Prince William County land use committees.
- \* Organized action to put 75 voters into the county supervisors meeting to testify against the draft New Baltimore comprehensive plan that would have called for the widening of Vint Hill Road as close to the current tract as possible

Our property values are partially attributable to the horses that buyers see on Vint Hill Road.

**Understands the Law and Covenants**

- John has had professional training:
  - \* Along with Don Brettle, he attended two Community Association (professional association for homeowners associations)

## **Fuerst** (from page 1)

their bylaws and prevent the destruction of the headwaters of an abutting watershed. This expanded into a countrywide effort that significantly increased how much of each watershed came under the protection of the Chesapeake Bay Act.

### **Other Organizational**

**Involvement** After election to the McLean (VA) Citizens Association (town council), Frank helped revise their bylaws and made successful proposals to the County Board of Supervisors. In one proposal, he convinced the Planning Commission to override the recommendations of its own staff (a very rare occurrence).

### **Vint Hill Manor HOA**

\* Frank served on the committee for the 2007 budget, and voted to reduce the annual assessment to its current level.

\* More recently, he has led an effort to recommend additions of owner rights to our existing bylaws. His 'inclusive' style made sure that the ideas of all participating households were incorporated into the final recommendations.

\* As a member of the BOD, he would work to incorporate the best features of previous HOA experiences and avoid the worst. If the recommended changes to our bylaws are made at our annual meeting, he will volunteer to start the process of revising our Covenants accordingly. Because of the proposed county real estate tax increases, he will volunteer to see that the assessments on our properties are equitable. He also will volunteer to negotiate all major contracts and work with the Conservancy to see if we can offload or eliminate our current common land assessments.

\* The greatest contribution that Frank can make, however, is the contribution of his people skills. These include listening to others' concerns, responsiveness to solving those concerns, including other homeowners in the decision-making process, testing ideas and proposals on the membership before he makes a proposal, exercising compassion toward those in our association who are less fortunate financially, tolerance toward individual expression, showing respect to all, and honoring the dignity of all homeowners.

### **Personal Notes**

\* Frank met his future wife, June, during their first-year in college. They married shortly after graduation and had three children.

\* Frank served in the Air Force as an Electronic Countermeasures Officer and spent one month out of every three overseas on assignments in his specialty.

\* Following his military tour, Frank then spent his career in IBM in various assignments. The President of his Division appointed him to his last assignment, which was to build a world-class telecommunications organization of 140 persons from 'scratch.' Frank chose to build that organization in the Washington Metropolitan area, and chose to live in Virginia. IBM conducted anonymous opinion surveys of all employees. Normally, it is very difficult for a third level manager to score well on these surveys; however, Frank was the top ranked manager within his division, and his employees had the highest morale

\* Shortly after doctors diagnosed his wife as having early-onset Alzheimer's, Frank took an early retirement to care for her at home for the remainder of her seventeen-

year illness. After she died in 2000, he wrote a successful book that 'blazes' a trail for others who might want to do the same.

\* When Frank learned that one of his grandsons needed to be home-schooled, he bought his lot here in Vint Hill Manor the next day so he could be close to him. Frank finished two successful years of home schooling, and his grandson just returned to high school.

## **DePerro** (from page 4)

conferences in Washington D.C., where they heard a day of panels of lawyers discuss the Virginia "Property Owners' Association Act" and the extensive case law that has been decided by the Virginia courts.

\* He also attended a seminar on the "Property Owners' Association Act" by Vint Hill Manor's HOA's legal council, Chadwick, Washington, Moriarty, Elmore & Bunn P.C.

### **Prior to Service at Vint Hill**

John retired from the U.S Army after 22 years service. During his military career, he:

\* Flew helicopter gun ships and was an aircraft test pilot for 12 years.

\* Served as an Associate Professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point N.Y. for 5 years. He was the course director of the advanced writing course and holds a Masters Degree in English.

\* Served as a logistics expert for 5 years. He holds a Masters Degree in Business with a specialty in contract development and administration. He also holds a Masters Degree in Management.

In his second career, John worked 13 years for the Commonwealth of Virginia in the Office of Architectural and Engineering Services. During this period, he:

\* Identified and wrote justifications to the legislature for about 25 million dollars of construction and renovations per long session of the legislature.

\* Trained as a building code official and is on the technical advisory committee of the Virginia Building Code.

\* Served as a procurement officer (as he had done when in the Army)

\* Purchased \$125 million per year of utilities for the state agencies at 22% savings.

\* Purchased \$1.5 billion dollars per year of electricity for street lighting.

\* Served as a certified safety professional.

### Other Pursuits and Interests

\* Active in *Boy Scouts of America* since 1958. John is an Eagle Scout. He was a Cub Scout Master and served on many camp staffs. He was on the staff of the National Jamboree three times.

\* John, as an active member of the *Health Department Reserve Corps* of the county referenced above, he is involved in the planning for a potential bird flu outbreak.

\* *Adjunct Faculty* at the following colleges: John Carroll University, City College of Los Angeles, and Embry-Riddle University. John is certified as a university level instructor in the State of California.

\* *Board of Directors* of the U.S. Army Transportation Museum at Ft. Eustis, VA. He has taped 45 oral histories for veterans of WWII, Korea and Vietnam for the museum research collection.

If you have something important to get done – give it to a busy person.

## Agenda (from page 1)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| One speaker (TBD) to present reasons in opposition of the proposal     | motion   |
| Questions for speakers will be entertained and each speaker may answer | 11. Members Comment Period while votes are tallied |
| Members vote on motion   | 12. Announcement of Voting results                 |
| Go to 10.b to consider next  | 13. Motion for Adjournment                         |

**DATE:** February 15, 2008  
**TO:** All Members of the Vint Hill Manor HOA  
**FROM:** Don Brettle, a Homeowner at Vint Hill Manor  
**SUBJECT:** Our Community

In the past several years the Vint Hill Manor neighborhood has been a friendly and welcoming place to live. We, 100 families, have succeeded in establishing a community which is truly unique in its cordiality.

In the last few weeks, a situation has arisen that I find extremely troubling because it has the potential of a long-lasting negative impact upon our community. The impact I refer to is not that of the proposed by-law changes but by the negativity, untruths, rumors, and innuendos aimed at those on both sides of the issue. I am saddened.

A Workgroup, tasked by our Board of Directors to review our governing documents, has drafted some proposed changes to the by-laws of the Homeowners Association. These residents believe that the Board has been less than welcoming to their proposals and have decided to exercise their right to force the issue at the March 4, 2008 annual meeting.

All the individuals working on both sides of this issue are bright, intelligent people. They are volunteers who have devoted significant amounts of time and psychic energy with a common goal to make this a better community.

If we, as a community, leave the Vint Hill Inn angry and divided, regardless of the outcome of the vote, we will all have lost. If neighbors will no longer talk with each other and feel good about their neighborhood, it will be tragic for everyone. If homeowners attribute motivations to board members or to those making the proposals, without having discussed this issue in a calm reasoned manner, the outcome of the process can only be disaster.

The meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup> will be a defining event for this neighborhood. The process that plays out at this annual meeting must occur with utmost respect and professionalism. All parties must truly listen to the position of the other parties. Let us resolve now not to spend that evening unaccountably doing and saying things we will all regret long after the meeting.

I respect the views of all concerned and thank them for being actively participating members of the community.

As always I am available to discuss the business of the Association with you.