



Stephens Grove
where city life meets country living

August 10, 2008

A Letter From The President

Hello fellow Stephens Grove neighbors -

I hope that this letter finds you enjoying your summer. I am submitting this letter for publication both on the website and also for the newsletter that I anticipate will be distributed in a week or two.

As always, the most important thing for me to do is to acknowledge the people who are giving their time and efforts to the neighborhood to make this such a great place to live. Most notably, we have **visible and positive enhancements at the pool** thanks to Vicki Roach - who functions both as the chairman and pretty much as the only member of the pool committee. The pool furniture has been completely replaced as part of a two year project that Vicki oversaw and has been an overwhelming success. Additionally, our social committee continues to coordinate and put on unique and fun events for the entire neighborhood.

Predictably however - there are some things we deal with that are not as pleasant and I've been asked to address them by several homeowners - who quite frankly are entirely justified in asking me to do so. Therefore - here we go! **I continue to hear a lot about people's driving habits, parking, dogs and all the things that they do (the biggest complaints by far), and incidents of vandalism.** I guess after 6+ years of involvement in this board I have sort of run out of clever things to say about any of these issues but I'll try once again at the behest of many who would like me to address them again.

So - on the issues of **driving and parking** - there are a lot of small children and families in this neighborhood and people who choose to drive carelessly, ignore the speed limit and stop signs, allow their children to drive golf carts and minibikes irresponsibly, and park in the street or block the sidewalks are not only violating the CCR's but also putting people - and children in particular - in danger while violating the law in many cases. We pursue violators as vehemently as possible via the HOA processes but at the end of the day people need to do the right thing for their neighbors. I strongly encourage neighbors to talk to one another about this issue and to confront violators or even to call the police if warranted. Your HOA is here to help but our processes are admittedly less effective than just talking to your neighbor (nicely or not) - or even calling the police.

Regarding dogs and cats, I have a dog. I love my dog. I love my neighbor's dogs (not sure my neighbors love my dog but my dog loves them). However, what I don't like are my neighbors who allow their dogs to crap in the common areas or in other yards and then walk away from it like they've gotten away with something. I cannot tell you how many times I've had people "demand" we (the HOA) do something about dog droppings but short of DNA analysis of the material to pin down the

offender, there just isn't much to be done if I don't have a witness or at least a good idea of who is actually doing what. Additionally, barking dogs are a problem that I hear about more often than I would like but rarely is anyone willing to tell me who the violator is. I once again encourage people to be responsible dog owners and to respect their neighbors and use law enforcement if necessary to deal with issues if it makes sense - especially relative to barking dogs and unleashed dogs and cats. For the record, if I catch your cat on my deck - he/she will be going to the local animal shelter - and I will not feel bad because I'm tired of having him/her poop in my fantastically manicured yard (my dog's poop is welcome in my yard but your cat and his/her business is not).

Regarding vandalism - I am going to defer on this topic for a second and include here an open letter submitted to all homeowners from a homeowner who was recently victimized by vandalism. Mr. Sousa had the courage to write this letter and request its publication and I am going to respect his wishes because it speaks for itself and can be broadly applied to many situations. I'm sure this note will not be received well by all but it comes from a homeowner who had his house egged and I believe that it warrants inclusion here:

"An Open letter to SG Parents -

Sometime after midnight, August 2nd, our front door and surrounding area were pelted by eggs. This occurred just two weeks after I spent 3 days painting the door and surrounds, and replacing the brass kick plate and house numbers. I chose not to call the Police in recognition that I, too, had done some inconsiderate things as a youth. And in the spirit of neighborliness, unlike the kind I had just received, I simply cleaned the mess before permanent damage could result.

I suspect the perpetrators were neighborhood boys between ages 11-13 who were startled by our barking Jack Russell while biking past our house earlier that day. Were I they, I, too, would have screamed at the dog in reaction. It's unfortunate they did not simply tell their parents about the pesky dog down the street so that the parent could discuss the problem with me. Instead, they got their revenge in a very destructive and thoughtless manner. This may speak for their upbringing. Nevertheless, these children have issues that should concern their parents.

Should a miracle occur and the parents learn their child did this cowardly act, I would certainly consider an apology...and learning what actual grievance the child has against us so that it can be discussed and ameliorated. But, should this happen again, the Police will be called, and if I can identify the child with some certainty, an apology will not be accepted. Instead, I will insist on filing a charge of vandalism, plus I will file a civil suit against the parents for damages.

My name, address, and telephone number follow should anyone wish to discuss this further.

*[Click here to see a photo of the damage](#)
(the photo is large and may take a little while to download).*

*Paul Sousa
14922 Dunbeth Dr
704-875-2925"*

Finally - there are many other things I could ramble on about relative to vandalism. **Did you know that each time a homeowner breaks into the trash bin near the pool or heaves a bunch of "stuff" over the fence into it because they are too lazy to dispose of the items the right way by taking them to the local recycling center or dump that we pay 100+ bucks to clean up the mess each time?** This

happens at least 6-8 times per year so if you are reading this and you have done that in the past then I'd like to thank you for wasting your fellow homeowners' (mine and 300+ other families) money. Vandalism to the playground costs us a lot to have cleanup up as well and is almost certainly the result of kids who live here. Again, thanks for wasting the money of your neighbors.

However, this job has been and continues to be rewarding for the most part because I do believe this to be a fantastic neighborhood that I am proud to be a part of. I encourage each of you to consider running for the board in January of 2009 when there will be 3 board openings and to get involved in any way that you can. Like I said - I have been asked to write a letter by many people about the issues above but this is a great place to live and look forward to our future.

Best wishes for the remainder of 2008,
Todd M Harwood