



Winter 2009

SOMERSET NEWS

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Somerset Property Owners Association

Ames, Iowa Est. 1997 www.somersetames.com

Meet Your Board Members

Our current SPOA Board was elected July 29. The members meet the third Tuesday of every month at 7:00 at the Clubhouse and all Somerset Property Owner members are invited to attend. Board members: President, **Bruce Bonestroo**; Vice-President, **Mark Knuth**; Secretary, **Louise O'Donnell**; Treasurer, **Marc Peterson**; Nick Lauter; **John Stafford**; **Bill Dreyer**; Townhouse/Row House Liaison, **Don Lambert**; Northwest Resident Liaison, **Mike McCoy**.

If you would like to serve on the Board, contact us. It's a great investment in Somerset's future.

Visit Us On The Internet

www.somersetames.com is the place to go for information about Somerset. For the last year the SPOA has been working on the site to enhance communication and bring Somerset citizens together. The website has been designed to allow for groups and associations to be able to add data and information. If you have a group, business, or club that would be interested in using the website, please contact us...go to the website and its contact list.

www.somersetames.com includes: Maps, Covenants, Meeting Dates, Member Directory, Newsletters, Volunteer Opportunities, Meeting Minutes, Social Events, Fence Guidelines, Grounds Care, and more.

**Our next SPOA Board meeting
will be 7 p.m. January 12, 2010,
at the Clubhouse.**

Thoughts from the President

Who we are and where we are going....This is what comes to mind when I think about our Somerset Property Owners Association (SPOA). Even though Somerset has been here for more than ten years, our acting property owners' association is fairly new. It seems many of our discussions in our Board meetings are the result of this newness, determining just what Somerset wants to become and what are the responsibilities of the SPOA.

Some of my thoughts regarding Somerset:

...I believe we are one of the most unique developments in Iowa with a very bright future. As this development matures and the trees grow, this uniqueness will become more desirable and our village will shine.

...I have enjoyed my experience living in Somerset and look forward to my first Somerset burrito (a new Mexican restaurant on Stange!) and many more new experiences living here.

Highlights of the last year:

...We started up our website (www.somersetames.com) and added content, including an online directory.

...We planted more trees. SPOA cares for over 800 trees.

...Our first elected board took office.

...Our budget has been refined and outlined.

...We've taken on and streamlined the process for snow removal and mowing.

...We've pursued a refinement of the annual dues process.

...We've started a process for the maintenance of the trails and the 24th street wetlands.

I appreciate the opportunity to serve you on this board and encourage all to look at the website and get involved with our special community.

Bruce.

Annual Homeowners' Meeting Scheduled for January 26, 2010

Save the date...January 26, 2010, the date for the annual meeting of all the homeowners. At this meeting we will elect officers for the coming year, review the budget, and discuss items of general importance. You will be receiving notice in the mail of this meeting since we require your vote to elect our Board. If you can't attend be sure to vote the proxy you'll receive in the mail!



Thanks to members of the ISU Agriculture Education and Studies 315 Class who helped in transplanting bushes at the Pavilion.

*Most of the tree pruning, tree removal, and tree planting is conducted by VOLUNTEERS. Over 140 trees were planted this year. Our Board member, **Nick Lauter**, organizes the efforts of this small group of people. If you would like to volunteer to keep Somerset beautiful, please contact a Board member. If you and your friends or family are interested in adopting one of our many public areas and caring for it throughout the growing season, please let us know!*

New Collection Policy Implemented

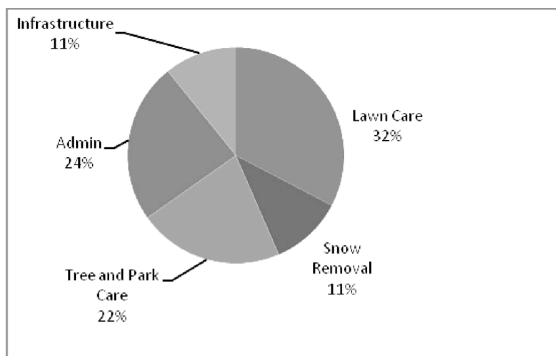
The SPOA's sole source of funding is annual dues paid by six constituent groups: single family homeowners, row house owners, townhouse owners, commercial property owners, developers, and village apartment owners. Over the past 5 years there has been a steady increase in delinquency in paying these dues from all groups except our village apartment owners. Unpaid dues now total \$13,000.

To address the issue, the SPOA Board has implemented a new schedule of fees and actions effective with the 2010 dues assessment. This new process includes the assessment of late fees, reporting late payers to one or more credit bureaus, and eventually placement of liens on property. The cutoff dates and penalties schedule are shown on the invoice each property owner is receiving this month.

Questions about the new policy may be directed to any SPOA Board member.

How's the Budget?

Have you ever wondered where your annual dues for Somerset go? Although our board members are rarely asked how dues are spent, we wanted to take this opportunity to share with you what your property dues cover. Our 2010 estimated budget is \$46,000. We'll let you do the math.



Much of our budget goes strictly for lawn care and snow removal. Administrative costs include utilities, website, taxes, legal fees and office support. Our neighborhood has many physical assets, including a lake with a fountain, lots of trails, a pavilion, playground equipment, and many trees. It's the responsibility of our association to ensure these public areas are well maintained and safe. Our board members encourage resident participation in the upkeep and maintenance of our green areas. Each time you volunteer help it allows us to reinvest dues into the long term sustainability of our neighborhood.

Sculpture Installation

The Ames Public Art Commission Neighborhood Sculpture Program has installed the sculpture *Slight of Hand* by Robert Thorpe here in Somerset. The approximately 5 foot tall metal sculpture is located on the crescent lawn off of Northridge Parkway. This installation happened through the efforts of Somerset residents. Drive by and view your neighborhood art.

Life in Somerset

Along The Tracks....John Stafford

The railroad tracks along the northeast edge of Somerset provide a fabulous habitat for woodland critters – even those that like to nibble on my flowers and shrubs. In our 5 years in Somerset we've had a resident woodchuck who would sun himself while I ate lunch nearby, a mother fox and her 6 kits, countless bunnies and birds, and deer, sometimes traveling in small herds. The maple trees in my back yard can attest to the presence of the deer with their scars from the deer rubbing antlers against their trunks. Living by the tracks is a love-hate kind of thing. Occasionally, a whistle-happy engineer will pass by in the early morn and awaken me from a good sleep. Most times, I don't notice the trains, though, and the benefit of a wild area just behind the house has its appeals which outweigh any minor irritations. Watching the equipment used to replace the railroad ties in the spring was a treat as well. Several years ago, the railroad came in and burned the underbrush on the Somerset side of the tracks. Perhaps that should have been a forewarning of things to come, but I'd become quite complacent about the wild foliage that made up the view from my breakfast table. I would oftentimes enjoy the sounds and sights of the wildlife as I ate breakfast on summer mornings. Then disaster struck! Somebody at the railroad decided that the area needed to be cleaned up. One rainy day in July, in came the bulldozers and down went the trees, shrubs, grasses, wildflowers, and presumably lots of little critters.

Staring in disbelief at the scarred earth, I could not imagine why anyone would think this was a good idea. During the next few months, things greened up some, and we are now seeing the return of some birds and bunnies. Just before Thanksgiving we even saw a group of deer go through for the first time since summer. As hope springs eternal, my hope is that spring will bring back a new population of woodland friends to take advantage of the newly forming habitat.

Newsletter Editor: Louise O'Donnell louiseodo@isunet.net