



# NETWORK

## ORIGINAL NORTHWOOD ASSOCIATION

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*Eric Lapointe*

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Dear Neighbors,

Congratulations thus far to those of you who have been praying for a mild winter. As a California boy who moved out East for "real seasons", the last few years have been a little disappointing. I'm sure that at some point, I'm going to eat those words! In reflecting over the past few months, the thing that has hit me the most has been the interest and initiative demonstrated by our neighbors.

Attendance at ONA events has been great, we have a full board, and residents continue to show interest in supporting the Board through different projects (for example, one neighbor who is replacing some windows in his home is working with the Covenant Committee to research less expensive "covenant-friendly" window options). Additionally, we have had many neighbors take initiative by working directly with the City on issues such as vacant properties and neighborhood maintenance challenges.

However, I do need to caution against neighbors personally dealing with maintenance or covenant violations

against other neighbors. Whether it be 311 or the ONA Covenant Committee, there are systems in place to deal with neighborhood issues professionally and respectfully. Under no circumstances should anyone go onto a neighbor's property and take it upon him/herself to address an issue regardless of the circumstances. This is trespassing and is punishable by law. The ONA Board is very open to any feedback regarding our approach to these matters but at the end of the day, we must treat one another (and our property) with mutual respect.

We look forward to a full slate of events and activities as the weather warms up and rest assured that there are always important roles on the Board for any neighbor who would still like to get involved.

Regards,

Eric Lapointe  
ONA Board President



# Briefly

## New board members

We welcome new board members *John Paul Rigilano* and *Scott Carberry*, who are serving as safety co-chairs. Joh moved to Original Northwood in November of 2011 after living in Patterson Park for four years. He and his wife, Christie, live on Southview Road and are expecting their first child in April.

## Housing assessments

The board is completing the final steps of the housing assessment that we announced last summer. You will receive a report in the near future detailing your property's status with respect to general maintenance issues and the covenant.

## Email list

There is a mailing list for digital delivery of the NETWORK and other neighborhood news. You can subscribe from the link on the website or by navigating to [bit.ly/ona-newsletter](http://bit.ly/ona-newsletter).

**Be the first to pay!**

## Please Pay Your Dues!

The Original Northwood Association (ONA) has a small budget (see next page) that is funded entirely through donations of residents of Original Northwood who choose to become members. Your dues benefit the neighborhood in a variety of ways and are part of what keeps our neighborhood beautiful.

You can pay your dues in two ways: (1) via credit card, using the Google checkout button on our web page or (2) sending a check to our Treasurer at: Original Northwood Association / 1211 Southview Rd / Baltimore, MD 21218.

## Web site redesign

The current Original Northwood web site ([originalnorthwood.org](http://originalnorthwood.org)) has served us well but is beginning to show its

age. The ONA board is working on a redesign that will go live in the next quarter. New features will include a cleaner overall look, recent photos, and an updated "clearing house" (a place to recommend contractors). If you have any suggestions or would like to contribute in any way, please email the Communications chair. Speak now or forever hold your peace!

## Homeowner's tax credit extension

Our last newsletter contained strongly worded advisements to file for your homeowner's tax credit by December 31, 2012, and public records show that almost fifty of our neighborhood's households have new applications in, which is great news. If you missed the deadline, you may still be in luck: Both the state House and Senate are working on bills to extend the deadline into the new year, and were discussed earlier this month. At press time there is no further information about whether the bills are likely to pass.

## Newsletter ideas

We're soliciting ideas for the newsletter. It would be nice to maintain an 8 page newsletter, but we have not always been able to find the content to fill it. Some ideas could be to discuss neighborhood news and clubs, restoration or household renovation advice, ON history, tours of houses of interest, featured contractors, and so on. Please contact the communications chair if you're interested in helping out with this area.

## Garden Walk

The annual garden walk will take place on May 5 from 2 to 5 PM. Hosts are needed. Greg Rex and Ron Coleman are organizing the event this year and are looking for ON residents who are willing to showcase their gardens. They can be reached via phone (410-467-4488) or email ([greg1024@yahoo.com](mailto:greg1024@yahoo.com)).

## CALENDAR

### MARCH 14

ONA board meeting @ 8 PM

*If you wish to attend a board meeting, please email Eric Lapointe ([president@originalnorthwood.org](mailto:president@originalnorthwood.org)). Board meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 8 PM.*

### MARCH 23

**Wine & Cheese Party**

1111 Argonne Dr @ 7 PM

\$15 in advance, \$20 at the door

*For more information, please contact Scott or Judy Oakley at (410) 467-5530 or by e-mail at [scottandjudyoakley@verizon.net](mailto:scottandjudyoakley@verizon.net)*

### APRIL 11

ONA board meeting @ 8 PM

### APRIL 17, 7-9 PM

**CBD Informational meeting**

*Please read the important information about this meeting on page 3.*

### MAY 5

**Garden walk**

2 - 5 PM

*Contact [greg1024@yahoo.com](mailto:greg1024@yahoo.com) if you are interested in hosting.*

### MAY 9

ONA board meeting @ 8 PM

## Treasurer's Report

In 2012, 101 households paid their voluntary dues, for a total revenue of \$3,535. The ONA spent \$1,656.04 in December, including printing of ballots (\$6.73), newsletters, flyers, and the domain name (\$339.78), and social and holiday functions (\$1,309.53). Our balance at the end of 2012 was \$17,771.43.

# More taxes for you?

## The GNCA aims to become a “Community Benefits District”

The date of **April 17th** could have far-reaching consequences for Original Northwood members! On that date, an informational meeting will be held regarding the GNCA's wish to become a Community Benefits District (CBD), empowering it with the ability to levy and automatically collect a new tax tied to the value of your home. While some benefits would accrue, the ONA board has a number of reservations that residents should be aware of.

As background, you are hopefully aware that we are a Covenant community governed by the original 1931 deed. That deed binds us to other neighborhoods in the area (New Northwood, Stonewood-Pentwood, Ednor Gardens, Hillen Road Improvement Association, and Perring Loch Covenant) through the Greater Northwood Covenant Association (GNCA), which is responsible for collecting household dues and maintaining the covenants. Its track record over the past decade in executing these duties has been far from stellar, although recently they have undertaken some efforts to correct this, including the hiring of an accountant.

The Maryland Legislature created the CBD as an alternative for community entities such as the GNCA to administer their covenants. The adoption of a CBD is democratic, requiring both approval of the Legislature and the majority vote of homeowners within the district. The most immediate consequence of adopting a CBD would be a dramatic change in funding the GNCA. The currently functioning 1931 deed mandates that all homeowners in the GNCA be billed annually at \$.30/100 square feet of your property lot. No reasonable provision was provided for increasing this amount, so the intervening decades of inflation have meant that modern homeowners paying relatively small amounts: ON household fees are based on plot size and range from \$6–100 a year. Also, as you may know, you are billed and pay separately from other city property taxes. Record maintenance and bill collection are cumbersome and expensive; just the mailing cost of this year's billing exceeded \$1,500.

Under the CBD, billing would be based on the assessed value of a homeowner's property, not lot size. Furthermore, your bill would be charged and collected by the city along with your property

taxes, and from their remitted to the GNCA the amounts paid by homeowners of the GNCA. As the GNCA neighborhood with the highest property values, ON residents would see the highest adjustments in their fees.



An existing local CBD is Charles Village, which levies a tax of 12.5 cents on every \$100 of assessed home value. That works out to \$125/year for a property assessed at \$100,000. These fees are paid by owners of both commercial and residential properties. These fees are used to provide a variety of services; Charles Village uses them to fund a walking security foot patrol and community leaf pickup.

What are the pros and cons of a CBD for the GNCA and Original Northwood?

As positives, the GNCA would have a reliable base of funding. Any improvement projects that GNCA, Original Northwood, or other neighborhoods wished to pursue would theoretically be much more feasible than currently, but that feasibility would depend upon the rate that GNCA would set as the annual tax. The GNCA would also no longer have the difficulty of manually collecting the dues themselves.

The negatives? Our property values are already high relative to the rest of the GNCA, and we would pay proportionally more of the revenue raised. Additionally, some of us are concerned that the GNCA is not underfunded now. The gross GNCA budget balance is almost \$50,000, and Original Northwood's share of that figure is almost \$15,000.

The informational meeting about what a CBD is will be on April 17 from 7-9 pm at the League for People with Disabilities building at 1111 East Cold Spring Lane, in the Meyerhoff Multipurpose Room. The Presi-

dent of the Charles Village CBD will be there along with other knowledgeable folks to answer your questions.

The Original Northwood Association Board urges you to attend this important informational event so that you can make an informed opinion about a crucial issue regarding the future of Original Northwood. We are also interested in collecting thoughts of ON residents and feedback on the meeting, which can be sent via email to [vicepresident@originalnorthwood.org](mailto:vicepresident@originalnorthwood.org).

### **CBD Informational meeting**

*League for People with Disabilities  
1111 E. Cold Spring Ln  
Meyerhoff Multipurpose Room*

*April 17, 7–9 PM*





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### *From your Maintenance Chair* **Walking the Line**

My front yard goes to the sidewalk. The city owns the sidewalk, but if someone stole my sidewalk, I'd have pay to replace it. If a root from a large tree broke the sidewalk, the city would pay to repair it. If the sidewalk deteriorates over time and needs to be repaired, I have to pay for that. However, if someone steals the curb, or smashes the curb, or if the curb just starts to disintegrate, the city pays to fix the curb. Different rules apply to the sidewalk and the curb. Before I became maintenance chair, I had no idea that curbs and sidewalks could be so interesting. I thought the city just took care of that stuff with all the money they take from me as a homeowner. Well, I was wrong. Now I massage, caress, and say sweet things to my sidewalk. I don't want it to fall apart on my watch. I want it to be happy and live a long life. The curb's feelings, on the other hand, aren't as important to me. That's the city's concern.

I'm certain we can all agree that curbs and sidewalks are fascinating. But, some of us are deeper thinkers, and we contemplate the earth between the curb and the sidewalk. This land, which is technically owned by the city, is referred to as a "common area". Common areas are plentiful throughout Original Northwood. There are big ones on Westview,

*"Common areas are always directly in front of a home in our neighborhood. And, perhaps most importantly, the city does absolutely nothing to maintain them."*

Northview, and Roundtop, to name a few. As curbs and sidewalks have rules that apply to them (see paragraph 1), so do common areas.

Common areas are intriguing. They sit between the sidewalk and curb. They provide greenery and a buffer from the street. They are home to trees, shrubs, ivy, bugs, and the occasional Baltimore Sun newspaper (does anyone get these voluntarily anymore?). Common areas are always directly in front of a home in our neighborhood. And, perhaps most importantly, the city does absolutely nothing to maintain them. If you, as a resident of Original Northwood, have space

between your sidewalk and curb, which is known as a "common area" (see paragraph 2), you might not own it, but it is yours to take care of. Maintaining this piece of earth falls on the shoulders of the homeowner that lives on it. I weed, trim and mow the common area in front of my house. I want it to look nice for my neighbors that go by pushing strollers, walking their dogs, running, etc.. If you've got a common area in front of your home, please keep it tidy. If you don't have a common area in front of your home, please help out someone that does. Let's keep our common areas looking good, and don't forget how important it is to whisper sweet nothings to your sidewalk as you do it.

**Advertise in the NETWORK ~370 homes.** The NETWORK newsletter is published four times a year. If you'd like to advertise, please contact the Communications chair. We offer excellent prices and your newsletter will be hand delivered to hundreds of homes.

**YOUR  
AD  
HERE**

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2012 – 2013

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