



February/March 2007

Bulletin

YOUR PRIMARY VOICE ON LAKE ISSUES

With a mission to identify issues affecting our members and pursue resolution with the responsible organizations

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

On Saturday, January 6, 2007, your association held a Real Estate Tax Forum at the Littleton Community Center. An estimated 250 people attended. Representatives from all five county tax assessment offices were invited, and all but Brunswick County Virginia were present. The purpose of the forum was for each county to explain the process of their property revaluations, their time frames and the appeals process if a homeowner disagrees with the revaluation figure. (This was highlighted in public service announcements shared with the local press.)

For those counties present, the revaluation process seemed to be fairly consistent. However, each county is a little different as to when the revaluation will occur. For example, Northampton has just completed the revaluation and Warren will be completed in 2009. The Northampton representative reported the assessed value of Lake Gaston property was expected to increase about 250 percent and that notices would go out to property owners sometime in January 2007. Those notices were received the week of January 15. In addition, it is not likely that tax bills in Northampton will go up the same percentage as the assessed value increase.

Introductions at the tax forum included the purpose of the forum which was to discuss the process for revaluation and that it was not to discuss individual property issues. Many in the audience still wrote questions concerning what county services they would receive based on their increased taxes and what would be the actual or anticipated tax rate. Also, some had questions as to how this would affect the funding for the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council and why we don't incorporate the lake as one township and keep the monies at the lake. (As we understand it, one township is not possible because we have two states involved with our lake.) These were all good questions but the tax assessment officers are not empowered to decide these issues or in a position to answer related questions. Anyone with these types of questions should direct them to their respective supervisors/commissioners at one of their monthly meetings or in a letter.

With the large turnout for the forum, it is obvious that lake area residents have a very high interest in our taxing issues. Please stay connected with your elected officials, let them hear your voices and understand your concern.

Over the coming months we will be inviting representatives from each of the five counties to our monthly meetings to explain budget procedures and setting of tax rates. Wayne Jenkins, county manager for Northampton, made a comprehensive presentation on the budget process and tax setting parameters during our February 7 meeting. Halifax County is currently scheduled for our March 7 meeting.

Thanks again for your support of the LGA.

Larry

LEM Activity

The last Bulletin contained a statement that regulations exist to keep people from dumping leaves, pine straw and other yard debris into the lake. Unfortunately, that is inaccurate. The only law pertaining to dumping refuse and debris into the lake is the Federal Clean Water Act which does not actually address homeowners/property owners pushing their leaves and yard debris into rivers, streams and lakes unless such action could be classified as adding fill or if the action results in a navigation hazard. The law was written to end practices such as dumping industrial, construction or farming waste into waterways, water sources or watersheds. The authors probably did not consider that property owners located on a beautiful lake would willingly degrade their own quality of life. The few that are willing to dump their yard debris into the lake were the reasons the research was done to find the specific law or ordinance which addressed the practice. These few wanted to see the proof they were doing something wrong before they stop.

It can be said, however, that the practice of dumping yard debris including grass clippings is discouraged because the additional decaying matter, beyond what nature puts into the water, adds more nutrients and has some affect on dissolved oxygen. Almost everyone has voiced some concern over the spread and density of hydrilla. These nutrients add to the growth of the noxious, non-native weeds. Dumping yard debris is a lot like throwing garbage from your car. The problem is transferred from one place to another. The local laws allow for the burning of leaves and other yard debris under proper weather and safety conditions. So, for the better quality of the environment, please refrain from dumping yard debris into the lake.

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Warren

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Brunswick

Executive Director
Moira Underwood
(252) 586-6577

From the desk of the Executive Director

We are always looking for ways to keep our members and ourselves informed of what is going on around Lake Gaston.

Our latest endeavor is to get agendas for each of the monthly commissioner/supervisor meetings for Brunswick, Halifax, Mecklenburg, Northampton and Warren Counties out to our members via e-mail. We also requested from each of the counties their monthly planning committee agendas to share with you. Although we are on the sunshine list for these agendas with all five counties, we have not been getting all of them. I put in the request to each of the counties last November, and we started receiving the first agendas for the December meetings.

We are consistently getting agendas from Warren County for their monthly commissioner meetings, planning committee, and 2007-2008 budget work sessions. Our vision is to receive similar information from all five counties every month and to e-mail them to you. I will continue to liaise with their offices to get this information coming to us.

When I have the information to get out to you, we have to use e-mail. These agendas come in only days before the meeting, so e-mail is a must, especially if they contain notices of public hearings, re-zoning requests – that type of information. The county agendas are sent only to members in that county.

While we have LGA directors attending these meetings, there is nothing more valuable than the commissioners/ supervisors seeing the presence of their voting constituents in the room. They are spending your tax dollars.

Please remember to keep us informed when you change your e-mail address. And, if you have a list of e-mail addresses you accept mail from, please check that both execdir@lakegastonassoc.com and admin@lakegastonassoc.com are included, so you receive LGA e-mails.

Recently I received a telephone call at the office from a member who had to submit her vacation plans for the year where she worked. Her question: when are this year's fireworks so she could include them in her vacation plans. I ascertained from the organizers (Longbridge VFD) that they always plan for the Saturday before the 4th, and await confirmation from the pyrotechnic company (late February) when they set up their schedule. We should have the date of the 2007 Lake Gaston Annual Fireworks Display in our April/May bulletin.

Moira

Dates for your 2007 Calendar

Mar 7 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.	July 4 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.
Apr. 4 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.	July 21 Boating Safety Course, CG Auxiliary Headquarters, River Road, 9 a.m.
Apr. 21 Boating Safety Course, CG Auxiliary Headquarters, River Road, 9 a.m.	Aug. 1 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.
May 2 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.	Aug. 18 Boating Safety Course, CG Auxiliary Headquarters, River Road, 9 a.m.
May 12 CG Auxiliary Open House, CG Auxiliary Headquarters, River Road, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Sept. 5 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.
May 19 Boating Safety Course, CG Auxiliary Headquarters, River Road, 9 a.m.	Oct. 3 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.
June 6 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.	Nov. 7 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.
June 9 LGA Annual Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 10 a.m.	Dec. 5 LGA Monthly Meeting, Lake Gaston Baptist Church, 9:30 a.m.
June 23 Boating Safety Course, CG Auxiliary Headquarters, River Road, 9 a.m.	

How public weed treatment areas are selected

The LGA constantly receives inquiries concerning how areas are selected to receive public noxious weed treatment. Following is an excerpt from the 2006 weed treatment contract signed by the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council and the owner of Professional Lake Management.

“Criteria for choosing treatment areas shall include the following: (a) areas of previous successful treatment; (b) areas of high population that have severe weed infestation; (c) treatment within each of the five (5) surrounding counties as fairly apportioned as possible; and (d) areas of public use and public access, including public boat ramps, public swim areas and dry hydrants, which will be given priority.”

Although the weed treatment contract for 2007 has yet to be signed, it is expected the criteria will remain principally the same as last year.

Home owner associations are encouraged to provide evidence of severe noxious weed infestation in their subdivisions to the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council for consideration of treatment with public funds. Photos, along with a complete and accurate description of the location, are recommended. Send information to Elton Brown at eyessh@meckcom.net.

Members respond to earlier renewal package

Renewal packages for 2007 dues were sent out at the beginning of November, a month earlier than previous years, and you certainly responded to the opportunity to send in your renewal checks early for the January start to our membership calendar year.

A great big THANKS to all who joined or renewed their membership for 2007. And, a special thanks to our Bronze (\$50), Silver (\$100) and Gold (\$250) members for their extra generosity. See "A Special Thanks" on page 4.

We would also like to thank our General Membership (\$25) who have renewed for 2007. We don't thank you enough. And, we would like to thank our members who chose to commit to a Lifetime membership (\$250).

Membership numbers are critical, and dollars make the wheels of progress roll, so we would like to take this opportunity to ask those of you who have not yet sent in your dues for 2007, to do so as soon as you can. Renewals are still coming in daily, so yours may have already arrived. If you have mislaid the renewal information we sent out in November, may we suggest that you jot down any changes to your mailing address, telephone number, e-mail address etc. and send it with your check to LGA, P.O. Box 656, Littleton, NC 27850.

It would be helpful if any of your membership information changes throughout the year, like your mailing address or your e-mail address, that you let us know so we always have your latest contact information in your membership record. It is surprising how many envelopes were returned to sender from the November mailing, but with some research we were able to find a later address and resend them.

We will continue to let the State and County governments know that each LGA membership is a household membership and generally means TWO voters in their constituencies.

Please remind your friends and neighbors to add Their Voice to Your's by joining the Lake Gaston Association.

Many thanks to all of you from your Membership Team.

Quick emergency response requires accurate information

The Public Safety Committee conducted interviews in all five counties around the lake, and the principle findings were published in the last Bulletin. A more complete compilation of results have been posted to the LGA Web site under the Safety Committee page. The Safety Committee page reporting Coast Guard Auxiliary training dates has also been updated. A key dates calendar is included in this Bulletin.

The survey revealed a number of unusual situations in Warren County due to its geographical spread and the different emergency responders that are involved. Sheriff Johnny Williams invited us to visit his offices for an in-depth discussion of how the 911 communications center handles the challenge.

The Safety Committee visited the Warren County Law Enforcement Center on January 12 and received a very informative overview from Mr. Pete Stevensen and Ms. Venicia Harris. They had several very worthwhile recommendations for 911 callers that are applicable to all areas, not just Warren, and a few that are unique.

When calling 911, the caller should identify themselves very clearly and their location (such as I am John Smith at 123 Doe Lane in Happyville, Big Tree Subdivision and there is a fire or injury or whatever). In Warren County, the 911 operator dispatches responders dependent on the location of the caller, so it is very important that one clearly identifies the address and subdivision. The caller then should stay on the line-DO NOT HANG UP. The operator may need information repeated or perhaps local crossroads identified or other landmarks. The operator will repeat the address back to the caller along with the stated problem. The addresses used in the emergency communications databank come from the known address information from phone records. Residents should check the listing in the phone book for accuracy. If it is incorrect, contact the non emergency number for the emergency services office in the appropriate county. If residents note that road or street signs are missing, incorrectly situated or wrong, they should contact the local sheriff's office and or public works for a correction. One call may not be enough. Validate that something is being done to correct the situation.

The lack of clear, well placed enhanced 911 markings is still an issue. The enhanced addresses are those used to locate callers by map and in the database. If the enhanced addresses are not posted or not clearly visible, response is delayed. Keeping the old addresses (street or lot numbers) posted causes confusion and delays. Also if the only place an address is shown is on a mailbox, where the mailboxes are bunched, the first responders do not have a clear indication as to the residence they are responding to. A small amount of effort to ensure the enhanced 911 address is clearly posted helps both the responders and the citizen who is in need of help.

The Warren County 911 system is in Phase 1 currently, and they intend to move into phase 2. In Phase 1, cell phones can be located to the nearest relay tower. In Phase 2, it is possible to get a more accurate GPS location of the caller. In either case, persons calling by cell phone must accurately provide the location of the emergency and how to be contacted. It is important to clearly give the phone number and address of the emergency as cell phones do not have a name and location associated with them as land lines do.

A Special Thanks

to our SUPPORTING Members who will be contributing a higher level of financial support in 2007 so the LGA can approach its mission and goals with greater scope and influence

Please join with us in recognizing these special members for their generosity

Platinum (\$500):

Gold (\$250):

Dominion North Carolina Power

Silver (\$100): Bob and Barbara Ashe, John (Pete) and Sherry Bryant, Fred Buffaloe, Ann and John Campbell, Theoseus and Eva Clayton, Eleanor Johnson, Larry and Julie Jolly, Towney and Gayle Kennard, Sherman and Susan Merchant, Peter and Heidi Moore, Mitch and Chris Mumma, Lee Nicholson, Patrick and Ginny Raley, Greg and Julie Richardson, Jack and Anna Saunders, Mitch and Sheri Slattery, S. Bruce Smith, Jack and Moira Underwood

Bronze (\$50): Harris and Paula Bacon, W. David Bell, Ben and Sherry Broussard, Barbara and Jerry Burgdoerfer, Shirley and Herman Burgess, Jeff and Paula Burton III, John and Patricia Cataldo, Keith and Linda Kay Coggins, Scott and Kristen Covey, Edwin and Sally Davis III, Patrick Dempsey, Peter and Susan Deschenes, Frank Detterbeck, David Duxbury, Bob and Lou Etheridge, Catherine and Robert Evans, Brian and Penny Fontaine, Wilton and Christy Ford, Gary Francis, Dr. John G. Giragos, David and Mary Griffin, Serafim and Constance Guerra, Bruce and Sue Gulley, Larry and Jackie Halls, Paul and Rita Hamilton, Thomas and Ann Marie Hancock III, Pam and Clyde Hargrave, Harold and Beverly Hatherly, Ronald Helms, Brad and Pam Hemminger, *Pea Hill, LLC*, Eric and Leslie Hodeen, Joe Hoxter, Francine Kendrick, Tim and Lona Korman, Warren D. Leach, *E. Carroll Mann Custom Builders, Inc.*, Bill and Margaret McCulloch, David and Natalie Miller, Ron and Dot Moore, *Outdoor World Lake Gaston Campground*, John and Wendy Parker, Alberto Protzel, Hazel Ross, John and Vicky H. Sands, Clifton J. Sanford, Bill and Linda Sheridan, Raymond W. Stiles, *Synthetic Turf and Maintenance Inc.*, Kenneth Taylor, Jr., Charles and Mary Thompson, Adele Topham, Donald and Anne Vandegrift, Dick and Betty Ward, Malcolm and Marion Warfield, Bruce and Rebecca Williams, Chris and Nora Williford, *Virtually Yours...at the Lake*.

2007 General Membership (\$25): 853 Lifetime (\$250): 26

Note: Above information is for those members who have renewed for 2007 and new members as of press time.

Newcomers to Lake Gaston or those with questions about their membership are invited to call David Duxbury, Membership Chair @ (757) 719-4754, or send an e-mail to Members@LakeGastonAssoc.com.

LGA NEEDS YOU

Your Lake Gaston Association is in need of directors. To insure that the LGA's work continues to preserve the quality of life that brought us to beautiful Lake Gaston, we need your expertise. Directors are currently needed in Halifax, Warren, Mecklenburg and Brunswick counties. Contact Nominating Chairman Ron George at (434) 636-5471 or e-mail, georgebr@buggs.net for details.

CHECK: If the information on the label below is incorrect, please advise. By Web: www.LakeGastonAssoc.com, By Email: MemRec@LakeGastonAssoc.com or By Mail: LGA Member Records at the address below. Thanks!



P.O. Box 656 ~ Littleton, NC 27850

Non Profit Org. BULK RATE Permit No. 2 Henrico, NC
