



Highlands Family,

“Never start a letter with a quote; it’s an overused crutch masquerading as intellectual depth.”
– John Theobald.

I once again wanted to have a chance to reach every household to review the wonderful accomplishments of 2024 and go over future plans for our beautiful neighborhood. Often I am reminded that only a portion of our residents are active on social media, and many have no idea what discussions are ongoing (or “dishing the tea” as the cool kids say). Therefore, I wanted to send a very broad overview of everything going on to reach all our residents. I would have sent this FedEx, but I didn’t want them to drive thorough everyone’s lawns.

I genuinely appreciate you trusting me as your President. It’s not a job I take lightly, and all the stress and time the Board puts in is all worth it when you guys come up and introduce yourselves to say thank you or talk about new ideas. Like a roundabout made up purely of cones (ugh), navigating the intricacies of the neighborhood can be tough. It takes a village, and I couldn’t be prouder of each individual member of this board. And not only the board, but all the volunteers across committees. People donate their own time to help, and we can’t do it without them. I want to highlight a few of our accomplishments below, but please note there are so many more that can’t fit in this short letter.

Our Landscape Committee is basically a secret weapon around here. I can even see the remarkable landscaping while driving 65 down Eastfair. Lacy and his crew are out here turning dirt into magic, all while being total wizards with the budget. They're not just planting pretty things—they're also out here pulling rabbits out of hats, finding ways to cut costs without sacrificing quality. We are actively seeking new members here so please reach out.

Our social committee has been putting on events with fantastic turnouts. My personal favorite was this years holiday party. The turnout was amazing. We’re looking to increase the amount of events in 2025, so if you have any ideas, contact us!

Our Pool Committee worked more volunteer hours than most of us worked in our real jobs this year. We give this team a budget that was way too small (to ensure a fiscally conservative approach until loans are paid), and they only complained slightly! The pool again turned a profit this year, stemming mostly from “stop running” fines on kids (“he’s kidding right?”). We got 50% of our new furniture this year, with the rest coming soon. The pool bathrooms flush now, which is great news considering the increased food options like the revamped snack bar and the food trucks we have coming in regularly. While I’d love to make all the pool upgrades at once, we need to be smart and stay within budget.

Ahoy! After 500 years we finally got the new boat ramp! Thanks to the hard work of Rick, Fred, Mark, and others , we finally have safe reliable access to the lake.



Last year we also began installing security cameras to prevent crime and recoup losses stemming from vandalism. While we grapple with the line between “protecting our assets” and “big brother dystopian nightmare” – these improvements have allowed us to recoup nearly all our potential losses from vandalism that we’ve caught. I want to be clear that despite rumors spread online about vandalism and perceived lack of consequences, we don’t share the outcomes of investigations or police involvement. The Chesterfield police are likely tired of us by now – but trust me they’re always involved.

The Architectural Review Committee has reduced approval time for new projects by 85%! A few years ago the average time was 12 weeks for approval. Today that time is down to under 14 days. Please remember to always email arc@highlandsca.com to inquire about projects and use the portal found on our website to submit new plans. We’re also seeking new members for this committee, so please email us!

We are still looking into uses and plans for the 8400 building. The delay is not due to lack of effort. We have structural engineers debating the integrity of that giant pole in the middle. Ideally, you’d want close up the open center staircase to separate the floors to make useable space upstairs. As always, we’d love to hear your ideas for use of the space going forward. Notable suggestions thus far include remote working spaces for residents, an extra rentable entertainment space like Lake Margaret, or a donut shop (ok not really but a boy can dream).

We also made significant improvements to the pickleball courts, including wind screens. Many have rightfully noticed the cracks on the courts, despite the fresh resurfacing. After countless hours consulting with professionals, we’ve learned the foundation underneath the courts was not suitable in the first place. Our guess is they took the fill dirt from the pool and piled it there. Who knows. We have to have serious discussions about long term fixes or moving the courts one day, to avoid repetitive frequent resurfacing costs.

Several people have asked why the dues go up a few percentage points every year. I can get on my soapbox all day and preach how our dues, for a community of similar scope and amenities, are 50% lower than competition – but alas, here we are. We spend a lot of time thinking about the dues, and raises are never considered automatic or a given. We debated this one a lot. However, I’d ask you to note that over the decade our dues have NOT kept up with inflation. But our costs and vendors have. Effectively your dues have gone down over the years. I’m proud of any organization that can take flat inflows and manage anything with rising costs effectively.

"John, you promised this would be short and I’m about to start dozing off here—just get to the point already." Fine, fine. Let’s hit the highlights, fast and furious. ~~Chesterfield County is paying for a bridge to connect the walking trails at Lake Margaret.~~ I stole that line from last years letter and sadly must update that the County notified us this project is on hold. We’ve identified new walking trails (thanks to Mark and Fred) within the neighborhood and are working to decide on maintenance and accessibility. We’ve collected funds from the new capital contributions amendment passed last year, offsetting current and future lost revenue from the fee from the



sale of diminishing new homes. We expanded the paved parking lot at Lake Margaret. We also installed new soccer goals at the playground that haven't been stolen yet!

I know I forgot some things, and missed thanking some people. But I promise every contribution you guys make is so deeply appreciated. People come out of nowhere to email me with not only suggestions, but "I'll start the project for you." Our email is always open, so please don't hesitate to email us with your suggestions or ideas. Thank you all again for allowing us to serve this neighborhood and here's to a great 2025!

And finally – someone please just buy that rotting truck with the for sale sign outside Cypress Glen. Can we all agree to use HOA money to buy it just so it goes away?

John Theobald



“Who Do I Email” Quick Guide:

ACS West

- Martha – martha@acswest.org
- Sam – samk@acswest.org

Entire Board – board@highlandsca.com

- John Theobald – president@highlandsca.com
- Tim Burkett – vicepresident@highlandsca.com
- Jim Hale – secretary@highlandsca.com
- Ed Dentel – director@highlandsca.com
- Toni Lee Andrews – treasurer@highlandsca.com

ARC – arc@highlandsca.com

Pool Committee – pool@highlandsca.com

Lake Margaret Reservations – reservations@highlandsca.com

Happy Emails – board@highlandsca.com

Angry Emails – see page 12