

Spring Lake Estates  
P.O. Box 5701  
Rockford, IL 61125



President’s Letter

I normally try to keep these letters short, but with the upcoming annual meeting, I am hoping to share more information in writing, so that we can breeze through the annual meeting a little faster.

Annual Meeting – February, 25th @ RVC Bell School Campus - 3350 N. Bell School Rd – 2 PM

As usual, the annual meeting is the last Saturday of February (25<sup>th</sup>) at 2 PM as outlined in our association covenants. We are returning to the Bell School Rock Valley Campus (3350 N Bell School Rd).

Boards/Officers/Quorum

In order to have an official vote on the Board of Directors, we need to have a quorum (60% turnout or about 230 households represented). Historically, we don’t get close to that, so the Board will roll over unless someone would like to push for a vote (which still requires a quorum, so please connect with me so we can get that process going).

If you are looking to be more involved, the Board is supposed to appoint the officers each year and the two groups work together for planning and execution of all the neighborhood items. Outside of the required positions, the officers have been vacant recently. The required positions are filled by people on the board. Please let us know if you would like to take an officer role (President/Vice/Treasurer/Secretary). In an ideal world, we could return to a place where being an officer is prep for joining the board, but we can only do that if we have 7+ motivated individuals.

Dues

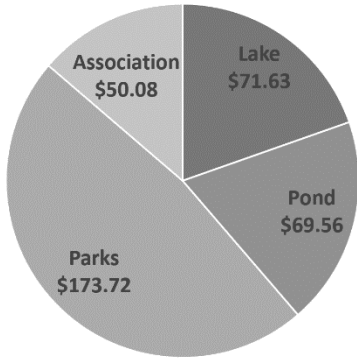
We get the most turnout at meetings when dues are being discussed. For those of you that have been around, you may recall that there are two ways to adjust the dues:

- 1. After meeting the quorum requirement, an adjustment of any amount can be voted on
- 2. Annually, the board can adjust the dues based on inflation per the covenants

Since inflation was extremely high the past couple years, I met with the board to discuss these options. The board is not pursuing a quorum (which means we do not want to adjust the maximum assessment outside of inflation). The final discussion will happen at the annual meeting with input from those present, but the board is only looking for a **small increase** to keep our budget moving in the right direction (we are not looking to max the allowed increase).

Budget

In 2022, we stayed within budget and maintained a similar split amongst the major amenities (as we have in the past). You may have noticed the sediment removal from the lake, the grading in Haddon Park, or increased filtration at the pond (using the upgraded electrical we installed). The dollar amounts represent a guide on how the \$365 household dues were spent last year.



2023 Plan

In 2018, we made a 3 year plan to support the increase of dues from \$227 per year to \$325. The only item not completed from that list is updates to the playground equipment. We currently have \$50,000 saved for this and a plan to move forward in 2024 with a \$100,000 project. This will be discussed at the meeting.



# Spring Lake Estates Homes Association

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Winter  
2023

We continue to maintain our emergency fund. With the increase in interest rates, we are finally earning money on our savings again. Our neighborhood is in good financial standing and our past due account balance continues to move in the right direction. Thank you to those that have started a payment plan.

In 2023, we will continue to work on improving the pond (water quality and storage), algae prevention and general health of the lake, and address the smaller maintenance items in other areas (the raised sidewalk edges in Haddon Park is one of them).

## Donations (OPTIONAL)

We continue to have people offer to pay more (or push for higher dues), especially if they have an interest in any of the larger projects. This year, you will find an option to contribute additional funds to the lake or playground when invoices are sent for dues. This is completely voluntary. We did this for the lake a few years ago and it really helped us kickstart our lake restoration. If you're too busy to help, this is just another way you might choose to contribute. If you are able to contribute more, we are transparent on these funds (and if you have other areas in mind, please tell us.)

Donations to the lake will be spent on phosphorous binding or other water quality enhancements (prevention, not reaction). We did a trial two years ago and found some measurable success with binding phosphorous. After another trial with a small business in Wisconsin, which led to better water quality in the swimming pond, we moved forward with a larger commitment to this process for the lake. Our goal is to continue to reduce phosphate levels which should also allow us to reduce our chemical usage. We are considering cleaning out the other half of the Weymouth park lagoon area. We just completed the first half in late 2022, but we expect the increased depth in that area will help in many different ways.

Donations to the playground will be put towards additional equipment (the smaller items that go with a larger structure). The idea of these donations is that they let us accomplish more – we already have the budget and plan to move forward with better items than we currently have in place.

## Volunteers and Events

In 2022, we saw the return of the Garage Sale, Easter Egg Hunt, and Luminaries. For 2023, the event schedule will be set shortly after the Annual Meeting. Events will be organized by a lead and volunteers will be sourced from our list to help as needed. Everybody enjoys the neighborhood events, but without volunteer leads, it is too much for the leadership group maintaining the other areas of the neighborhood to take on. Please reach out in advance if you want to revive an event that we stopped doing or suggest a new one (but only if you are willing to be the lead).

## Berm/Dam Maintenance

First, a reminder: The lake dam that runs along the creek (Spring Brook Rd) is private property. Only occasionally do we hear complaints of trespassing, but please remember that if you are on that section of land, you are in someone's backyard.

The annual inspection did not occur in 2022, so it will happen very early in 2023. There is still brush, shrubs, and trees present on both sides of the berm. As we have stated previously, any items marked as a concern by the engineer should have a plan to be addressed. If the engineer flags these as high risk, the neighborhood may have to complete the repair at the homeowner's expense (we don't want to do this, so please communicate your plan to address if you have any flags on your property). I'm concerned that the sink holes may be flagged as higher priority this year, so please consider that in your project planning for Spring.



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Winter  
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In the past, to encourage clearing of the land, we have offered to plant the grass seed after a clearing. Most of the dam is grass at this point, so that doesn't seem like much of an incentive. For 2023, we are shifting that budget to encourage/reward compliance. Homeowners that keep their shrubs and brush along the lake cut back (1 foot in height or less), will have those weeds treated/sprayed at no charge to stop them from growing deeper roots and returning bigger/faster. Maintaining the berm in this manner should be less maintenance in the long run, but it does take a few years to break the cycle of the existing shrubs. This needs to be done for the backside as well. Once the grass fills in, the growth of new shrubbery should be easier to maintain. We are hoping this becomes obvious and encourages people to seek out the same for the larger section on the creek side.

If you live along the berm, expect to get an updated report in 2023 (and it will be posted online as well).

## "The President of the neighborhood should..."

This is my fifth year in this position and my patience for other people telling me what I volunteered to do has really fallen to all-time lows. My family can tell you that these comments sting much more than they should and they always seem to arrive during dinners, events, or other inconvenient times.

I moved into Spring Lake because of the value of the HOA. I'm open and honest about my intentions and the lake was a large part of why I got involved, but I don't believe that as a neighborhood, it is our only priority. That is why you have seen so many other changes – our board has a commitment to common areas that it has the authority to manage. The comment above is normally made when I decline to engage in a matter amongst neighbors. My top priority is focused on the broader neighborhood amenities.

I'll continue to do my best to handle these items professionally. Most of the other items brought to my attention should be conversations with your neighbors or discussions with the city (who have ordinances that they can enforce). Inserting a third party is not going to smooth over the confrontation, it will likely result in additional negative emotions around the situation (although, if anyone would like to volunteer for this, I would gladly make sure they received these requests).

## Finally...

This year I'd like to understand more of what our neighborhood wants. Once the playground is complete, we will begin having to re-visit many of the items we've recently addressed (tennis court, basketball court, etc). We also need to consider things like the lake overflow and drainage system under the parks as we plan for the future. In addition to the donation slip mentioned previously, there will be a brief survey included – I'd like to understand **your** priorities for **our** neighborhood. Fancy new amenities are not free, so part of the survey will be related to how much you think the neighborhood is worth. **This will NOT be used as part of the dues discussion for this year (can't stress that enough, so I made it bold).** The survey won't come out until after the meeting.

**Please let me know if you are interested in a leadership position.** I'd be happy to work with a motivated individual/individuals to determine a new plan for the future that started to spread some of these duties to more people. At one time, there was a Board of Directors, Group of Officers, and numerous committees that kept things in Spring Lake running. Maintaining the neighborhood, communications, meeting, and complaint lines is a lot with two kids under 5 and a full time job.

**Thanks to those event leads, committee volunteers, litter collectors, secret santas, debt monitors, friends, family, realtors, movie night peeps, participants, and anybody else that finds things they can do to help the neighborhood! You make Spring Lake a great place to live!**

Josh Spencer – President  
Spencer.JRS@gmail.com