

Echo Hill South Association News

Echoes Around the Hill:

NOTICE: The annual brush pickup is scheduled to begin on May 5th. Only branches and other natural wood debris are allowed, and nothing over 4 inches in diameter. The branches should be lined up along the curb, pointing perpendicular to the street.

ECHO HILL SOUTH ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES Fort River School, Thursday, March 29, 2007

Present: About 35 people including all the officers and members of the Board

President Einhorn called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM
Minutes from the previous Annual Meeting of March 28, 2006 were read and approved.

President's Welcome (Eric Einhorn)

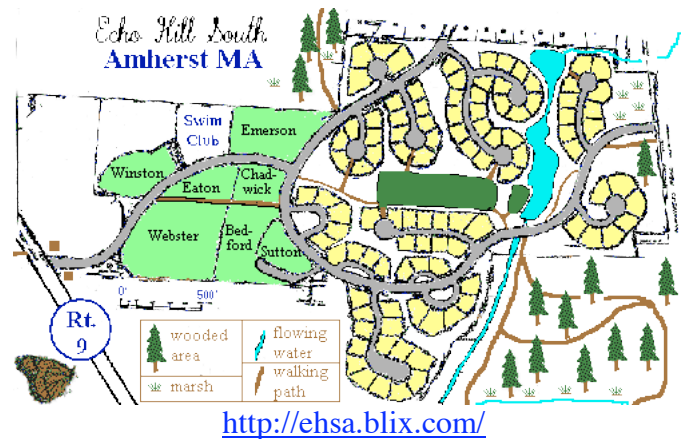
Eric thanked the members of the Board, committee members, and volunteers for their service during the past year. He described the function of the Board and reiterated our need for additional volunteers in the future. He noted that he was stepping down as president after serving a one-year term.

Sally Malsch was asked to provide a summary of the status of the reconstruction of the six condominiums destroyed by the explosion last year. She briefly discussed the lengthy process that was necessary before demolition and rebuilding could occur. Demolition should begin within the next week, or two, with new construction finished before the end of the year.

Treasurer's Report (Hub Smith)

Hub circulated a summary of the income and expenditures from the last fiscal year and presented a projected budget for the new fiscal year, which begins on April 1st. In 2006-2007 our income was \$10,853 and expenses \$8,932. Our bank balance is \$4,025 with an additional \$7,547, reserved for the pond restoration fund, deposited in a CD at the Florence Savings Bank.

The proposed budget for 2007-2008 totals \$11,380, based on the projected income from the members and uncollected past dues. The Board recommended that the Association members living in the destroyed units of Emerson Court have this year's dues waived, and this was built into the projected income for this fiscal year.



<http://ehsa.blix.com/>

Architectural Committee Report (John Donahoe)

The Architectural Committee received a total of 39 inquiries during the past year. The vast majority of these inquiries—29—were proposals to remove trees from their properties. All of these proposals were approved by ad hoc Review Committees, often in part and with restrictions. It was pointed out that virtually all the requests to cut trees were approved, although in some cases the owners were requested to spare some trees and/or replace cut trees with shrubs or other vegetation. The Board has a liberal attitude for tree removal requests, realizing that our forest has grown substantially and that problems such as mold, mildew, and lack of adequate light are valid reasons for requests. The Board's main concern is that homeowners do not clear-cut their properties, thus spoiling the nature of the neighborhood as well as reducing abutters' property values.

The subjects of the remaining inquiries were most often requests to remodel or modify the exterior of the homes. These requests included such matters as replacing windows and siding, modifying roof lines, building screened porches and stairs, restoring retaining walls and fences, and erecting solar panels on roofs. Directions and forms for architectural changes can be found on the Association's web site: <http://ehsa.blix.com>

Grounds Committee (Joe Kunkel)

The role of the Grounds Committee was explained. Its responsibility includes contracting a landscaper to mow the field and verges, make periodic "walk-arounds" to inspect for dangerous conditions (dead trees, potholes), and initiate and supervise the planting of flowers and shrubs at street entrances, circles, and the verges. This committee is in need of volunteers. Anyone willing to serve should contact the President.

We have been told that the **Town is expected to repave parts of Stony Hill Road** this summer.

Pond Restoration Committee (Harry Brooks, Eric Einhorn, Joe Kunkel)

President Einhorn presented the history of our efforts to save the pond. The following account is partly based on his remarks as well as the secretary's additions. Harry Brooks and Joe Kunkel also provided background material.

Our ponds (there is an upper and lower pond connected by a stream) can be seen on maps going back at least 100 years. The source of the water is the Pelham hills to the east. Forty years ago, when Echo Hill South was developed, the natural pond was modified by building a low earthen dam at one end, and an overflow pipe placed under the newly constructed Stony Hill Road. The storm drains on Laurel, Hickory, Cranberry and Red Fox Lanes were attached to pipes that emptied into the ponds. The pond has two functions: (1) a natural habitat for wildlife as well as a recreational asset for the members, and (2) a catch basin for water runoff—much like those required of all current subdivisions.

Over the years, the pond has been silting up, mainly from sediments washed down from Pelham but also from the storm drains. The silt has effectively lowered the water level, killed off some aquatic species and promoted the overgrowth of water vegetation. During certain years, the pond has completely dried up. If the trend continues, our pond will turn into a marsh in the near future.

To prevent this from happening, the Board hired a consulting agency several years ago to provide advice on a remedy and to help with the paperwork required by local and state agencies. We planned to dredge the center of each pond to remove much of the silt and to raise the water level—basically to restore them to their original condition. The pond was tested for mercury, lead and other contaminants, and given a clean bill of health. The plan was approved by the Town Conservation Commission and was also approved by the State's Department of Environmental Protection.

It was at this critical juncture that one homeowner in the Association sent a letter to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species division of the Office of Environmental Affairs claiming that our ponds were in reality a vernal pool and requested that it be classified as such. The main criteria for classifying a body of water as a vernal pool is the absence of breeding fish. Without visiting the site, the agency went ahead and changed the classification. There are many restrictions attached to a vernal pool including a prohibition to modify the body of water, the vegetation around it, and the human use of the area. The NHES did not realize that the pond was

originally modified to serve our Planned Unit Residential Development (PURD) and that the Town of Amherst relies on that basin to control runoff water from the streets.

The Board is now attempting to have the classification reversed. With help from our state representatives, we were directed to an individual who provided useful information and contacts. We hope to arrange a visitation by NHES personnel along with the Town Manager, our local state representatives, a member from the Town Conservation Commission and EHSAs officials. The need for legal advice has been discussed, but the costs would be high. We hope to make more progress in the near future.

In the meantime, we need volunteers to serve on our Pond Restoration Committee. Please contact Harry Brooks or our new President to offer your help. Homeowners who abut the ponds are especially encouraged to help.

Old Business

Melissa Katz (Webster Court) briefed the meeting regarding the high level of disruptive behavior by a small number of individuals at the Echo Village Apartments. In December of 2005 alone, there were 21 calls to the police regarding illegal and unruly behavior at this complex. Last year she organized a meeting between the residents of Echo Hill South and Richard Johnson, one of the owners of the complex. He promised to help control the problems assisted by the resident manager and a second part-time helper. Since that meeting, there has been improvement. The number of police calls has shrunk to 4 per month. Association members are encouraged to call the police for any infractions they see, not only at Echo Village but in the neighborhoods as well. The more complaints that the police receive, the more attention they will give to our neighborhoods.

Election of Officers

Officers of the Association are elected for one-year terms. The following individuals were elected for the 2007-2008 term.

President Don Proulx	Proulx@anthro.umass.edu 256-6751
Vice-President JohnDonahoe	jwdmjs@comcast.net
Treasurer Hub Smith	hmsmith@amherst.edu
Secretary Eric Einhorn(Fall)	einhorn@polsci.umass.edu
Joe Kunkel (Spring)	joe@bio.umass.edu

There were two vacancies on the Board of Directors. The following people were elected for three-year terms: Joe Ayres and Melissa Katz. Continuing members of the Board are: Dena Dincauze, Sally Malsch, Dave Triozzi, and Harry Brooks.

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