



COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

By **SIBYL WILMONT**

Hello neighbors!

I'm just getting my feet wet as the recently appointed secretary of the Countryhouse board and the chairperson of the communications committee. So far, I've made a major and unexpected discovery: There's a small group of volunteers doing an immense amount of work behind the scenes. In the week or so that I've been on board, I've seen at least a million emails go around about a myriad issues, from trees to sewers to insurance. There were a head-spinning number of meetings and phone calls and texts with our dedicated team at Mill house Properties, and with each other, too. I was happy to spend some time with our newsletter editor Helen Thompson and am looking forward to meeting the rest of our committee soon.

I've lived in Fearrington Village for nearly eight years but my work and associated travel has kept me from truly engaging in the many opportunities for

service and socialization that our community has to offer. I'm grateful that I've been given the chance to do so now and I hope you'll join me in working toward the achievement of a few goals for the communications committee.

Chief among these goals is hearing from all of you

Chief among these goals is hearing from all of you, gathering your ideas for enhancing socialization, increasing engagement, expanding topics for the newsletter, facilitating information sharing, and more. As we prepare to revise the Homeowner's Guide and By Laws, it would be helpful to know what keeps you up at night: What needs updating? What needs more explanation? What's most important, etc.? I'm all ears and looking forward to hearing your thoughts.

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UPCOMING EVENT

February 18th
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Countryhouse Community and HOA Board Meeting at the Gathering Place

ROOFING COMMITTEE REPORT

By **DELL FORD**

The Roofing Committee met on Friday, January 31st, to discuss two items:

1. Reroofing inspection reports have identified issues that might be most effectively addressed with our roofing contractor by inclusion in the upcoming scope of work for the remaining 18 units in Phase I. Recommendations for items to be included in the scope of work have been submitted to the Committee and the Board chairperson for review and comment.
2. In the past two months, several discussions have focused on the condition of Countryhouse garage roofs, particularly those last reroofed in 2000 and associated with the units that have been reroofed and those scheduled for reroofing this year. A cost estimate for reroofing all 82 units in Phase 1, based upon a response to the original RFP submitted to the Board in 2023, was shared with the Committee and Board chairperson at the meeting. The Committee is awaiting Board direction on what steps should be taken to move forward quickly on this matter.



Photo by Elaine Tinsley

TREE COMMITTEE REPORT

By **NEVILLE DANIELS**

Countryhouse sits on fifty acres in Fearington Village and is one of the most densely wooded communities in the village. Our trees are one of our most important assets and must be carefully managed. Mill House signed off on the final bid version received from Davey Tree Company on January 31st after resolving a few last issues.

Davey Tree Company has worked with Mill House before at Weathersfield and Southern Village.

Our final scope of work involves tree removal or pruning of over 240 different trees and is within our budget. The scheduled work began February 10th and should take a few weeks. In addition, Tree Committee members have removed over 500 seedlings and 100 saplings while they were small and before they developed into larger, costlier problems. We will share with you Davey's schedule as it progresses.

NOMINATING & WELCOMING COMMITTEE REPORT

By **TOM O'CONNELL**

Annette Kilby and I visited David Ramirez (479 Beechmast). He is a new neighbor and seems pleased with his choice of housing. Many of our newest folks are currently in the process of moving in (7 in all) so we are biding our time until they are ready for visitors.

We recently added Sibyl Wilmont to our HOA Board of Directors. She will serve as the Secretary and chair of the Communications Committee. Looking to the future, the Board of Directors would like to find a volunteer for the Finance Committee with an eye to that person ultimately becoming the Treasurer. Martha would be happy to "show you the ropes" for this important and challenging job.

MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

By **JOHN KING**

Walkway Repairs – Walkways will be inspected in March for Spring repairs. Please let Mill House know if your walkway has a problem so we can make sure it is carefully inspected. If you have a serious problem that needs attention now, please let Mill House know so we can take care of it quickly.

Garage Doors – We continue to find original openers that are near failure. If you have an opener that does not have the sensors at the bottom of the door, please let Mill House know so we can determine if it needs to be replaced. (Sensors are found on both sides of the track at the bottom.) Just a reminder — if the power goes out and you do not have a key to the emergency lock on your garage door, you cannot open the door. You should have our garage door company, Open Door, (919-525-4803), install a new lock. This will be at your expense.

Garage Lights – If your exterior garage light burns out, report it to Mill House. Because the old fixtures usually cannot be opened to replace the bulb, a new fixture will be installed by a member of the Maintenance Committee.

Porch Lights – Porch lights, both front and back, are the responsibility of homeowners. If your porch light is an original light fixture and the bulb burns out, rusty screws may prevent the fixture from opening. In that case, you should consider replacing the light fixture.

Maintenance Committee Projects – There are several projects that the Maintenance Committee will be responsible for in 2025. These include

inspection of remaining original garage windows, windows by chimneys, octagonal windows, and metal porch railings.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE REPORT

By **GLENN ALEXANDER**

Applications were approved to:

- Install a ramp for disabled access to 463 Beechmast.
- Convert an existing porch at 356 Weymouth to a sunroom.
- After other exterior work was completed, refurbish an existing deck at 318.

Homeowners should carefully review the Countryhouse Homeowners' Guide prior to initiating any exterior work to insure they are in compliance with guidelines. It is also recommended that they not take a contractor's word with regard to the necessity of obtaining required county permits. It would be advisable to check directly with the county prior to commencing any work (after first gaining approval from the Countryhouse Board).



Photo by Neville Daniels

LANDSCAPING COMMITTEE REPORT

By **BONNIE O'CONNELL**

This month Ruppert, our new landscaping company, will continue with their off-season services—blowing walkways and driveways and picking up debris and residents' bagged items. Remember to always use paper bags, not plastic, and tie debris bundles with twine or any natural fiber rope. No plastic or polypropylene should be used. In the next few weeks, you can expect to see the rest of the fall clean-up finished—backs and sides of homes will be mulched, mowed, or blown.

As we have been walking around inspecting the various closes, we have noticed many areas showing active signs of mole or vole (field mice) presence.

What is the difference? Moles eat insects and worms and leave volcano-like mounds. Voles eat plant roots, bulbs, and bark. They leave paths, not mounds. Both are attracted to moisture and are most active dawn and dusk.

What can be done about them? There are several ways to attempt to remove them from your yard, but most give temporary results.

- **Repellants**, such as a mix of castor oil and Dawn dish soap – they can't stand castor oil or anything with a strong odor, such as garlic
- **Bait traps** – mouse traps baited with fresh vegetables, nuts, apples or peanut butter
- **Noise** – there are solar powered devices available that send out signals to discourage them



- **Vibrations** – small wind spinning devices can be placed near their holes
- **Commercial products**, which may be hazardous to other creatures

Is the HOA responsible for dealing with them? Unfortunately, even if they're disturbing your yard, the HOA is not responsible, nor is rodent control included in our landscaping contract. However, if mole/vole activity affects the brick walkways, the HOA is responsible and will take care of having them repaired. If you notice an issue with your walkways, please notify Mill House.

DRAINAGE & EROSION COMMITTEE REPORT

By **PATRICIA HURLEY**

Plans are underway to jet (open by using forced water to remove debris) yard drains around Countryhouse. We are waiting for the temperatures to be consistently warmer to schedule this so that jetting of the drains can be more easily accomplished. Once we have a start date, we will share more information about how jetting will proceed and what you can expect.

GARAGE FOUNDATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

By **DIANA SINISI**

Garage foundation repair work began in late January. Unfortunately, digging of the soil around one of the garage foundations being repaired led to the rupture of a water pipe. A large root was wrapped around the waterline, and the attempt to remove it led to the break. Water service in a few of our closes was shut down for several hours. A couple of homeowners continued to have reduced water flow as their supply lines had been obstructed. Chatham County Utility and Water were on site immediately to resolve and monitor the problem. Thank you to Annetta and Michelle from Mill House and to John King for their oversight and quick response.

EDITOR'S CORNER

By **HELEN THOMPSON**

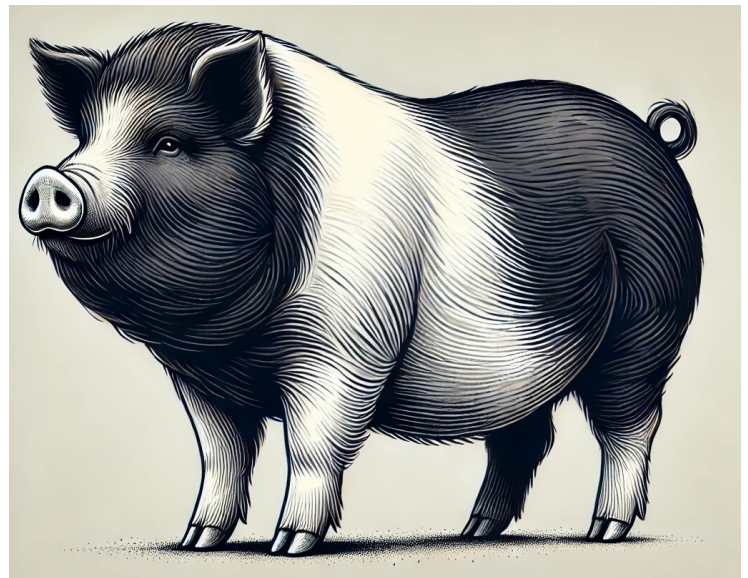
Why is there a picture of a pig in our newsletter? Technically this is an image of a Hampshire Hog, AI generated by our newsletter designer, Low Fat Designs. The black and white coats of these swine look much like those of our "belted" cows and goats, so I thought it would be fun to use this hog as the "logo" for the upcoming review of our HOG, short for Homeowners' Guide.

We want to name this handsome hog since s/he may often appear in future newsletters as we review our HOG. Members of the Board have approved giving a \$25 gift card for a meal at our nearest barbeque joint to the resident who suggests the best name. If you have an idea for a catchy name, please send it to me at hdt8609@gmail.com by February 28th. Board members and I will select the winner.

The HOG is arguably the most important document that Countryhouse owners have. It spells out who is responsible for **repairs/maintenance** on our

homes. (This may be a different ball of wax from what is covered by your insurance carrier and the HOA carrier.) A copy was given to you when you bought your home. If you can't find it, the current version is available on AppFolio and on the Countryhouse website. Familiarizing yourself with it now could save you time and money in the future. (Hint: Be sure you have the January 2025 version.)

I chose to begin our review of the HOG with windows, because repair/replacement of windows has always been a bit confusing to me. With help from John King, our Maintenance Committee chair and walking encyclopedia of information about the construction of our homes, I hope to demystify window repair/maintenance in this edition of the newsletter. (See below.) Upcoming newsletters will have similar looks at complex areas of the HOG.



Help us name this handsome hog

PHOTOS WANTED

On to other information: We are happy to receive photos taken here in Countryhouse. Send them to me at hdt8609@gmail.com in jpeg or png format as attachments. If space is available, we will include some of them. Also, remember our lovely Woodland Garden and visit it often as the spring ephemerals begin to poke their heads out of the warming soil.

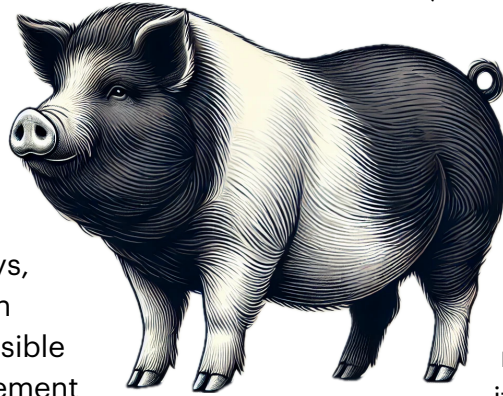
CARE & FEEDING OF OUR WINDOWS

A Close Look at a Section of the HOG

I recently met with John King, chair of the Maintenance Committee to take a deep dive into windows and the HOG. He first directed me to page 16 of the January 2025 version of the HOG. In Section VII Building Maintenance, subsection g., it says, "Windows, and window and porch screens: Homeowners are responsible for their maintenance and replacement if necessary." This seemed fairly straightforward.

Then he directed me to the chart found in the HOG, pages 7 – 9, and pointed out several more specific areas which seem less straightforward, possibly because I am not familiar with window terminology.

- Window jambs, stops, and sills are the responsibility of the homeowner.
- Additionally, Window sashes and supporting slide mechanisms are the responsibility of the homeowner.



- Furthermore, Window glass and screens are the responsibility of the homeowner.
- However, Window casing and apron are the responsibility of the HOA.

I asked for clarification on the last item. According to John, window casings are the "trim" around the outside of a window. An apron is the sloping outside area behind the inside sill. (See picture). Your apron may be vinyl or, in a few cases, wood. All homeowners should check the aprons (and other parts of their windows) routinely to make sure that they are functional and not rotting if wooden. And there you have it. In a nutshell, homeowners are responsible for all parts of a window but the outside trim and the apron.

One final point, if you live in the upper closes and have Renewal by Andersen windows, the plastic muntins/mullions (grids) are no longer available through Andersen. So, treat the mullions with kid gloves as they are becoming brittle with age. Try to maintain them so that fronts of units have a similar, unified look. If mullions on front windows break, consider swapping out one of same size from the back or side of your house.



Window casings are the "trim" around the outside of a window



An apron is the sloping outside area behind the inside sill