

# Sever Words

FALL 2017

Any information you would like to share with your neighbors in Sever Woods can be submitted for publication in the next issue of Sever Words. Information can be dropped in the HOA box or emailed to [secretary@severwoods.com](mailto:secretary@severwoods.com).

## Welcome New Neighbors

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new neighbors who have recently moved into Sever Woods. We hope you will enjoy living here.

Architectural Review Committee, this year's Yard of the Month recipients, and more.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to a board member. Their contact information can be found in the left sidebar and on our website.

If you have not done so already, please check out our neighborhood website: [www.severwoods.com](http://www.severwoods.com). You will find useful information such as a copy of our covenants and bylaws, the request form to request permission to make exterior changes from the



### 2017 Board of Directors

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You can reach all the Board members at [board@severwoods.com](mailto:board@severwoods.com).

## Leaves and Storm Debris

It's that time of year again when the trees lose their leaves and homeowners are faced with the task of raking or blowing. Many of us may also still have small limbs or other debris from the storms over the recent months that need to be removed.

Leaves may be mulched, composted if you have a suitable location, or bagged for curbside pickup if you have yard waste pick up. If you would like to add curbside yard waste pick up, contact our trash hauler Advanced Disposal at (678) 684-1493. If you have a large amount of yard waste or storm debris, you may need to hire a company to haul it away for you.

Leaves and yard waste cannot be burned! Our covenants expressly prohibit the burning of debris. Also, every year homeowners and landscaping companies are observed blowing leaves into the street or even directly into the storm drains. Do not blow the leaves into the street, storm drain, or into the creek as that will clog the retention pond area and potentially cause flooding or incur costs by the neighborhood for its removal. If you use a lawn service, make sure they are correctly disposing of your yard waste. Thank you!

### Check us out.



[www.severwoods.com](http://www.severwoods.com)

### Drive Slowly



Watch for Children

# How Well Do You Know Our Neighborhood Covenants?

What are covenants anyway? In the case of real estate covenants, they are rules governing the use of your property that you agree to abide by when you purchase the property. It is the role of the homeowner's association board of directors to make sure that these rules are being followed. Our neighborhood's governing document is called [The Declaration of Protective Covenants for Sever Woods](#) ("Declaration") - click the link to view the document. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with the covenants so you know what is and is not allowed and whether your planned improvements require permission. No one likes to get a letter from the homeowner's association that they have a violation and the board members don't like sending the notices either. You can read the full Declaration for all the covenants. Here we are highlighting a few covenant violations that the homeowner's owners association has to address the most often.

## Exterior Changes to Your Home

You need approval to make changes to the exterior of your home. New Roof? New garage doors? New paint colors? New fence? New deck? Yes, all require approval BEFORE work commences.

Declaration, Article VI, Section 3 - "No exterior construction, addition, erection, or alteration shall be made unless and until plans and specifications showing at least the nature, kind, shape, height, materials, and location shall have been submitted in writing to and approved by an Architectural Review Committee ("ARC")."

If you need to submit a request, the form can be found on our website: [ARC Request Form](#). The Declaration allows the ARC 60 days to review and approve or disapprove requests. If you aren't sure whether you need approval, please inquire by contacting the board.

## Street Parking

Perhaps the most frequent complaint is about street parking. Parking on the street causes a hazardous situation for cars traveling in the neighborhood who must go into the oncoming lane of traffic to navigate around them. Please park all your cars in your garage and driveway. When you have visitors, park as many cars as possible in your driveway. If you have many guests and some need to park on the street, please ask them to park all on the same side of the street facing the direction of traffic and as close to the curb as possible. Streets must always be passable for emergency vehicles.

Declaration, Article VI, Section 5 - "Unless and except to the extent that the Occupants of a Lot shall have more vehicles than the number of parking areas serving their Lot, all vehicles shall be parking within such parking areas."

Section 6 - "Vehicles shall be parked only in appropriate parking spaces or designated areas."

## Garbage Cans, Trash, and Waste

Garbage cans need to be stored so that they are not visible from the street. Ideally they should be stored inside your garage. If you store them outside, they must be in an area where they are screened from view. Please bring all bins in from the curb as soon as possible after they have been picked up.

Declaration, Article VI, Section 16 - "All garbage cans, ...shall be located or screened so as to be concealed from view of neighboring streets and property."

This covenant also expressly prohibit burning of any waste.

Declaration, Article IV, Section 16 - "Trash, garbage, debris, or other waste matter of any kind may not be burned within the Community."

Guidelines for trash pick up can be found on the Gwinnett County website: [Set Out Guidelines](#). Large items will not be picked up unless you schedule a bulk pick up. If you have questions about trash service or need a bulk pick up, please contact Advanced Disposal (678) 684-1493.

A few quick tasks can keep our neighborhood trash free. Place lightweight items in the bottom of your recycling bin with heavier items on top. If you have more recycling than will fit in your bin, you can use a cardboard box or any other container as long as you mark it as recycling. Make sure all the trash in the garbage bin is bagged so that it does not fly out when being dumped by the mechanical arm into the truck. (The guidelines state that recycling should not be placed in bags because plastic bags cannot be recycled at the curb.)

## Tree Removal

Declaration, Article VI, Section 13 - "No trees that are more than four (4) inches in diameter at a point two (2) feet above the ground shall be removed without the prior written consent of the ARC. Notwithstanding all of the above, no consent or approval is required for the removal of any trees...that are located within a drainage area, a septic field, a sidewalk, a residence, or a driveway."

Continued from page 2.

## Residential Use

The board has recently received some complaints about homeowners operating businesses from their homes that are causing a nuisance to other homeowners or have resulted in an increase in neighborhood traffic. This is not allowed by our covenants

Declaration, Article VI, Section 2 - "All Lots shall be used for residential purposes exclusively. No business or business activity shall be carried on, in or upon any Lot at any time except with the written approval of the Board...the Board may permit a Lot to be used for business purposes so long as such business, in the sole discretion of the Board, does not otherwise violate the provisions of the Declaration or Bylaws, does not create a disturbance, and does not unduly increase traffic flow or parking congestion.."

## New Mailboxes

New mailboxes must be approved by the ARC and must be as similar as possible to the original mailboxes, which means a natural wood post with a standard size black metal mailbox.

Declaration, Article VI, Section 27 - "All mailboxes located on Lots shall be of a similar style approved by the ARC and shall be installed initially by the original home builder. Replacement mailboxes may be installed after the type has been approved in writing by the ARC."

## Neighborhood Safety

The board has received a few reports of children playing in the street who are not are not moving out of the street for cars and in some cases seem to be deliberately standing in the path of vehicles. This is a hazard for both children and drivers. No one wants a child in our neighborhood to get hurt. Please ask your children to play in your yard and driveway. Drivers please drive slowly and be on the lookout for kids.

As the holidays approach, its again time to remind everyone that crimes increase this time of year. There have already been a large number of vehicle break-in/thefts reported in neighborhoods off McKendree Church Rd. Please remember to keep your vehicles in your garage with the doors closed. If you need to leave a vehicle in your driveway, make sure it is locked and nothing of value is left inside. If you will be out of town during the holidays, take measures to make sure your house does not look vacant. You can stop your mail and newspapers and put lights on timers– or hire a house sitter to pick up your mail and rotate lights. Also, please let your block captain and immediate neighbors know you will be gone. If you see any suspicious vehicles or activity, please call the police.

**Need a sitter for your child,  
pet, or house?**

**Call your Sever Woods neighbor!**

**Marissa Tedone**

**404-434-3298**

**Please call for availability and pricing.**

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## Board Members Needed

Do you have what it takes to be a good board member? Chances are you do.

If you have a mix of some of the following traits and skills, consider running for a seat on the board. We'd love to have you.

**Respect.** If you can give others respect and expect it in return, you can help keep board discussions civil, productive and on point. We're looking for people who can lead by consensus, not by command.

**Good listening.** People want to be heard. Can you listen to board members and residents with sincere interest? You may have a few ideas of your own, but everyone benefits by sharing and discussing.

**Thick skin.** Sometimes, residents—even other board members—can be mean and insulting. Are you good at turning a conversation around and finding out what's really bothering people?

**Egos aside.** If you can give others credit, the board will operate better as a team.

**Agenda aside.** Members who come to the board looking to help only themselves are a problem. A board is more productive when members don't have a personal punch list. Are you able to look after the community, not just your own interests? Are you willing to compromise?

**Skill.** An association is a business. So having board members with accounting, organizational behavior and teambuilding backgrounds can help. Someone with a financial background, for example, might make for a good treasurer.

The ideal board comprises a mix of management styles, professional skills and temperaments. If you know people with some of these traits or relevant skills, ask them if they'd be interested in joining the board. Some people don't think about running for a seat unless asked.

You don't have to know everything when you join, but you should be familiar with the governing documents and the responsibilities of the job. Fellow board members and managers can help you with the transition and train you on board responsibilities, current work, projects and hot issues.

Leaders can come from different places and backgrounds. There's no one mode that fits all. Share your knowledge and passion with the community.

New board members will be elected at our annual meeting of all members in early 2018. If you would like to serve on next year's board or have questions about the job responsibilities, please email [board@severwoods.com](mailto:board@severwoods.com).



## Are You Ready for Cold Weather

Fall is the time to prepare for winter—cold and wet conditions not only make you miserable, but they can damage your home. Some winterizing can wait, some can't. Make a list of what needs to be done, and tackle the time-sensitive tasks first. Here's a simple checklist to help you get a jump on winter.

### Indoor Winterizing

- Examine doors and replace weather-stripping as needed.
- Examine window caulking and reseal where needed.
- Examine and repair vents where needed.
- Clean chimneys and flues.
- Remove items near heat vents.

### Outdoor Winterizing

- Cut back tree branches and shrubs that block light.
- Examine outdoor handrails and tighten if needed.
- Close and cover hose bibs.
- Clean out gutters and downspouts.
- Clear yard drains.
- Spray outdoor locks and hinges with lubricant.

### Assemble, stockpile or refresh winter supplies:

- Batteries and flashlights
- Candles and matches
- Antifreeze
- Firewood



## Reminders from our previous COPS meetings with Gwinnett PD

From Ellie Torstrick, COPS liaison

- 1) Most entering autos have been **unlocked** vehicles with wallets, laptops, phones, cash, navigation devices, etc. in them. Please be extra careful to take anything you don't want people to have, out of the car and then lock the car. **This is the #1 tip that officers have asked us to stress to our residents.**
- 2) Holiday shopping tip--spread out your shopping. In other words don't take a load of things to the car and then return to the store for more. It only takes seconds for someone to see you and break into your vehicle. Instead take several shopping days only going to your car when you are done and ready to leave to go home. Have your keys in hand, get into the car, lock your doors and leave immediately--don't sit there and be a target.
- 3) Since it's getting darker earlier, make sure you have safe access to and from your car. Mall parking lots are well lit and have more of a police presence during the holiday season as a deterrent. Ask mall security to escort you to your car if you are concerned. Shop with a friend so that you're not alone. There's safety in numbers.
- 4) Decorations look wonderful but be mindful that there are people who will vandalize the decorations because they happen to be there and most of them are kids this time of year. If you see kids out walking around the neighborhood after dark, even kids who are residents, they may be up to no good. There is a curfew law in Gwinnett and we need to keep our property safe. We have to be more vigilant when we put out decorations of any kind on our property.
- 5) Concerned citizens--if you see something that concerns you, doesn't look right--call the police. It can be either 911 or the non-emergency number 770-5113-5100--just call. Many times through those calls, police are able to arrest criminals for unrelated crimes. Concerned citizens provide information to the police that may help in a different crime.
- 6) Christmas gifts--do not put them where they can be seen from the any doors or windows. It's fine to display the tree in front of a window but not the presents under it--that's an invitation to steal. After opening boxes or buying that new tv, take the extra time to break down the boxes and put them in a black garbage bag so you don't say to thieves look what I have that you may want. Don't advertise to them.
- 7) Holiday lights--if you have them on extension cords be sure they do not compromise doors or windows by preventing them from closing properly and securely.
- 8) Holiday parties--be sure to have a designated driver if you plan to have any alcohol. There will be more spot vehicle checks, road blocks, more police out on the roads to keep DUIs to a minimum.
- 9) If you are doing your shopping online, you may want to have a neighbor check for deliveries or opt for the signature only delivery so packages are not left at the door to be taken by anyone passing by.
- 10) If you plan to travel during the holidays, be sure to put your decorations on timers so that they are not all on all the time. If your outdoor lights are on during the day for several days, that's a clue that you're not home. Stop papers and mail before leaving town. Alert your block captain that you'll be out of town so we may all watch out for each other during the holidays. If you have a neighbor traveling for the holidays, please be a good neighbor and check periodically on their home's security.
- 11) Motion detectors are great deterrents to crime and can be put in place of one of the spotlights where you have multiple lights.
- 12) Solicitors must be registered with Gwinnett County and wear their registration at all times. If they have none, call the police as they may be casing the neighborhood or your house. The exception to this is religious groups. The hours that solicitation is allowed are 8 am until sundown.
- 13) There has been an increase of people casing subdivisions by looking in mailboxes and taking out of them any checks, gift cards, etc. If you do not do your bill paying online, the police department suggests that you take those check payments to the post office to be sent. By putting up your red flag on the mailbox, it's a flag to thieves that there's something in the mailbox. This time of year, they are watching for things like that. Don't ever put cash in the mail.
- 14) If there is something suspicious happening in the neighborhood, don't take it upon yourself to confront the person as you never know what state of mind that person may be in. Play it safe by calling 911. They will handle it and if it's legit, the parties involved have no reason for concern.
- 15) If you want to report a possible crime but do not want to be identified for fear of retribution, you can do so anonymously. When the dispatcher asks your information you may either choose to tell them you want to remain anonymous and for them to please bypass reporting to you first and go directly to the crime; or tell them your personal information but tell them not to report to you first and go directly to the crime. This allows you to still be involved but remain in the background.