

# OLDE RALEIGH COMMONS

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## FALL 2021 - NEWSLETTER

### President's Message

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The year of 2021 has presented a huge learning curve for me. Things I never noticed or had to be concerned about before have suddenly appeared on my radar. New words like bollard, flashing, french drain, CMU wall, mesh radio network, moisture meters (great gadget!), to name a few, have found their way into my daily vocabulary.

Dealing with repairs takes patience, perseverance and commitment from members of our 2021 Board and Maintenance Committee. I'd like to start by taking a moment to say "thank you!" to these neighbors for their hard work in resolving challenges that have come before the Board this year.

In recent months there have been many problems, some straightforward and others involving multiple visits and contractors. The good news is that we have had affirming reports from Atlas Engineering, whom we contracted to evaluate the ongoing moisture problems present in both buildings. They found no evidence of any structural issues. Our buildings are on good, solid footing. Also, our elevators are in good working order and have passed their quarterly inspections with no issues found.

We are now concentrating on fixing those issues that have either developed recently or been previously deferred. Your Board has made the decision to address each of these in a systematic way in order to maintain and preserve the integrity of our buildings and property for the general benefit of all unit owners.

There have been extensive repairs this year and we have had to use money from our Reserves set aside for this purpose. What is different this year is the unanticipated number of incidents requiring immediate attention. In a period of four weeks this summer, there was at least one contractor on site almost every day and 13 projects were completed. Why so many? The simple fact is that our buildings are aging. The 3701 building was certified for occupancy in 2000 and the 3700 building three years later. That things are starting to show signs of wear should come as no surprise. Major projects, including refinishing of the garage columns in 3701 and remediation of water intrusion into storage units in both buildings, have been costly. Other projects will be discussed in the Maintenance article below.

I believe that everyone in 3701 is eagerly anticipating the new roof scheduled for replacement next year. It is time. A committee of residents is now forming to oversee the process. What we don't know today is how much it will cost. This will not be known until we seek bids 3-4 months before actual replacement occurs. Supply chain issues during the pandemic have driven up construction costs almost universally so we believe that it will become necessary to shore up funds in the Reserve, not this year but next, for two reasons. First, it's not just about the roof—there are other ancillary expenses, including new gutters, attic insulation replacement and hiring of an engineering firm with expertise in roofing, to guide us through the process (a necessary investment). Second, our Reserves have been tapped this year for repeated incidents of expensive exterior siding and roof repairs and fixing water intrusion problems in our buildings.

Please bear with us as we address these issues. I hope you can see that we have made great progress and hope for more of the same in the months ahead!

- Barbara Nickel



## Annual Meeting Reminder

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By now you should have received your Announcement Packet from Grandchester Meadows (GM) for our Olde Raleigh Commons Annual Meeting, to be held as a virtual gathering on Thursday, October 21, at 7:00pm.

### Residents will have three ways of participating:

- 1) join the Zoom session led by GM
- 2) call in from your phone
- 3) share with a neighbor who has internet access.

### Please note the following:

- Nomination ballots should have been received by September 8, in accordance with the bylaws. Important: Providing that there are a sufficient number of candidates to fill all Board vacancies, NO additional nominations may be made from the floor at the Annual Meeting. (per bylaws: see Wake County Register of Deeds, <http://services.wakegov.com/booksweb/> Grantor: Olde Raleigh Villas Condo, Book: 012573 p 02349)
- Proxies for Annual Meeting attendance must be received by GM no later than Wednesday, October 20. Your proxy will count toward satisfying the quorum requirement. GM has also included in your Packet a copy of the minutes from the 2020 Annual Meeting and the proposed 2022 budget.
- One new Board member will be elected for a three-year term beginning in 2022, replacing outgoing Board member, Nancy Stamey, who has served for five years. Diann Kearney has agreed to run for election to the Board, after already having completed nearly one year as a Board appointee. We appreciate her willingness to serve! Her bio will be posted on the garage bulletin boards by October 7. Because no other candidates are running, she may be elected by acclamation at the Annual meeting. Minutes from last year's Annual meeting may also be accepted by acclamation.
- Ratification of the 2022 budget will require written votes. A voting packet will be mailed to you the day after the Annual meeting for this purpose. Instructions will be included in the packet. The results of your votes will be made available to you via email and the GM web site by Friday, November 12. This delay will allow owners who may not be in the area to have enough time to return their votes via postal mail if necessary.

Any questions about the election process may be directed to David Robbins at Grandchester Meadows, [manager@grandchestermeadows.com](mailto:manager@grandchestermeadows.com) or 919-757-1718.

## A Job Well Done!

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We extend a special ***“thank you” to our ORC Social Committee*** for planning our Commons patio event on August 15! It had been many months since we were all able to gather due to coronavirus concerns. Warm greetings were exchanged and everyone appreciated being together, reconnecting as neighbors, and enjoying food and fellowship. Our party planners were Betty Barber, Ginny Dropkin, Karen Johnson and Nancy Martin. Nancy has recently rotated off this committee—many thanks to you, Nancy, for all you have done for many years on this Committee. Carmen Geis has graciously agreed to join the Social Committee team.

It may be a while before we are comfortable planning another social event. Like most people, we are taking a “wait and see” stance, hoping for a downward trend in the coming months. When the time seems right, we will look forward to planning another social event.

### **FROM ALL OF US, THANK YOU, NANCY!**

Nancy Stamey has served as an ORC Board member since 2017. This will be her final year on our Board and she will rotate off at the end of 2021. We extend our sincere thanks for her commitment and dedication to our community in this capacity. Most recently she has served as Treasurer, taking the lead in our transition to new property management company, Grandchester Meadows. She has spent many long hours coordinating this effort and keeping track of how your COA dues are being spent. Thank you, Nancy, for all you have done and for your willingness to serve!

## Maintenance Matters

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Something is always getting fixed, it seems! I hope you have observed and appreciated some of the things we have accomplished in recent months. Our goal as a responsible Board is to maintain the quality of your investment in ORC by keeping everything in good repair.

Many of the projects completed in 2021 are related to water intrusion in both buildings, but especially in 3701. Some of these have been longstanding issues that the Board has made every effort to resolve, the thought being that further postponement could result in even more costly repairs. Others have occurred suddenly, such as roof leaks and corresponding interior repairs.

As a follow up from our Spring newsletter, here is a recap on the actions your Board has taken on the Atlas Engineering study made last year for water entry investigation.

**Garage columns in 3701:** It was determined that peeling and bubbling of paint coatings on the 14 columns in the parking area were due to the application of a layer of gypsum wallboard patching compound previously applied to the concrete surface before painting. This material was incompatible with the concrete, causing cracking and delaminating. The problem was resolved by removing existing coatings by mechanical means. Columns were then pressure washed to remove any remaining gypsum compound, followed by repainting the surface with a vapor-permeable elastomeric coating, and then re-striping. Cost: \$16,598. [Note: the columns in 3700 do not have these issues.]

**Storage Units:** Excess water vapor transmission through the concrete block retaining walls was likely occurring due to defects in the original waterproofing coating applied to the exterior of the retaining wall. Since it is not financially feasible to recoat the outside of these walls below grade, the decision was made to mitigate water entry by installing french drains to redirect the water away from the building and then scrape and refinish the affected storage room walls.

Cost of three French drains: \$1,450 + \$4,350 + \$5,955

Cost of refinishing six storage units (\$6,100, *estimate—still in progress*)

**Elevator Room 3701:** One year ago today research was still ongoing as to the cause of water leaking from the elevator room floor across to the drain in the garage. Various theories were considered over a period of many years, including groundwater seepage from underneath the building and rain water stored in the concrete blocks since the building construction. Attempts were made at repainting but the water staining and deterioration of coatings on the walls continued. Thanks to the persistent sleuthing of our resident maintenance guru, Paul Braun, the longstanding problem has finally been identified! Hidden inside the elevator room wall was a previously unknown 4" drainage pipe, not on any of the blueprints, which carried water from five washing machines above it down and out to the main septic drain in the garage floor. We had no idea the pipe was even there but became suspicious when you could randomly hear water rushing from above in short bursts (if you happened to be in the elevator room at that exact moment), as would happen when washing machines wash and rinse. The only way to confirm this was to open up the wall to see what was there. CTI was contracted to investigate. The wall was removed, pipes were inspected and determined to have areas of leakage where holes had been drilled to support electrical cables (see photos). Repairs are in progress. An additional step has been added to vent water from the elevator room dehumidifier into that 4" pipe, thereby saving the added expense of directing it outside to the front of the building. If there's one thing we definitely want to do, it is to keep our elevator room clean and dry for the costly equipment there. Thank you, Paul, for saving us the invasive fix of a trench drain in the garage, which would have only addressed drainage and not the real problem.

## Maintenance Matters (continued...)

Following is a list of other repairs and upgrades completed so far this year. These are financed through your monthly assessments, which are essential to help maintain the appearance and integrity of our building and grounds.

- ◇ New HVAC unit installed on first floor 3701
- ◇ Attic duct work repair over residents' units (3)
- ◇ Power washing of exterior siding and window cleaning
- ◇ Power washing of 3701 garage and sidewalks in front of both buildings
- ◇ Center gable flashing/building wrap improvements 3701
- ◇ Multiple roof repairs and resulting interior repainting
- ◇ Pest control contract for common areas initiated
- ◇ Five-year gauges and valve replacements by Pye Barker (required fire code)
- ◇ Telephone conversion (major cost saving initiative)
- ◇ Landscape sidewalk lighting

***You might ask: how can we cut costs?*** The answer to that question really depends on our willingness to serve our residents' comfort and general welfare through consistent property maintenance. As you view the list above, can you identify anything you would be prepared to ignore? As our buildings age, new problems will likely arise. We must be attentive to problems as they occur and be diligent in addressing them with our best effort for cost effective solutions.

What can you do to help? When you see an area that needs repair, identify the trouble area clearly and contact a Board Member by telephone or in person (preferred) or by email with a description of the problem. Some examples could include: water leaks, lights burned out, call boxes not working, elevator malfunction, smoke detector indicators, warning beeps from fire panels in front lobbies, hallway air conditioners out, etc. Board members are charged with follow up on making the necessary repairs. Thank you for being part of the solution!



## French Drain: What is it and why do we need one?

You may have noticed in recent months three separate areas on Commons property where our contractor, CTI, removed or cut back bushes, did some excavation by hand with shovels up against our buildings (one in 3701, two in 3700), and installed drainage pipes. The pipes were then covered with a layer of small stones, followed by dirt to reach ground level.

These are called french drains. Their purpose is to capture rainwater during periods of heavy rain and direct it *AWAY* from the building rather than let it seep downward and then inside, through the concrete block walls, right into our below grade storage units. This seepage has resulted over time in areas of black mold and yellow mildew on these walls. One unit (in the back of the 3700 building) had become virtually unusable.

In the interest of fairness to all residents, this must be corrected. In the four photos here, you can observe (1) initial digging of a trench, (2) inserted drainage pipe with extra waterproofing layer installed against the building, (3) layer of small gravel and (4) final step of dirt fill. Installation of this drain was a demanding job in the summer heat, required great care not to disturb adjacent wires and connectors, and took three employees from CTI three full days to complete.

The good news is that we have finished the last one and feel that we can now proceed with removal of mold and mildew in affected storage units. We should then see an end to this long and persistent problem. Thanks goes to our Maintenance Committee for their diligence and involvement in the process!



## Grandchester Meadows: Important Contact Information

**Web Site Address:** [www.grandchestermeadows.com](http://www.grandchestermeadows.com)

> Current Homeowners Menu, select: Olde Raleigh Commons <

**Office Hours:**

Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

**Phone / Text:** (919) 757-1718

**Fax:** (919) 882-8739

Account & Real Estate Questions:

[accounts@grandchestermeadows.com](mailto:accounts@grandchestermeadows.com)

**Management Questions:**

[manager@grandchestermeadows.com](mailto:manager@grandchestermeadows.com)

**Postal Address:**

Olde Raleigh Commons PO Box 1149, Apex, NC 27502



## Safety Information Review

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**Fire alarms:** Occasionally, a circumstance in one of our buildings will trigger the fire alarm, which is intentionally loud so that everyone will be able to hear it and evacuate in the event of a fire. The proper procedure everyone should follow when the alarm goes off is to leave your unit immediately and proceed to the nearest exit. Fire alarms are critical safety features and you must assume they indicate a fire until determined otherwise. The alarm will immediately summon the fire department to our property; they will know which building is involved. The **ONLY** way the fire alarm can be deactivated is for the fire department to come to our building(s) and turn it off.

**Elevator Emergency Response:** Should you become stuck in the elevator, the elevator emergency phone box is clearly marked with yellow tape. Open the box from the top. Press the CALL button. That's all you need to do. The phone line will automatically connect with a real person 24 hours a day. They will know your location, confirm it with you and dispatch a service technician or the fire department immediately.

**Emergency Calls:** When you place an emergency call to 911, the 911 Operator will make a determination as to the critical nature of the call and dispatch either or both the Fire Department and EMS. When talking to the 911 Operator, inform them that a special entry code is in their system and that code should be passed to the EMS response team. On critical calls the Fire Department will usually arrive first, and they have access to keys that will open all the doors in the building.

If EMS did not get the entry code and they call you on a cell phone and you cannot go to the lobby, tell them to go to the call box, give them your last name and unit number. Have them search for the name, and depress the "CALL BUTTON". You can answer the phone and buzz them in. Due to HIPPA restrictions, EMS cannot give anyone the name or unit number that they are entering. EMS's protocol if you do not answer their phone call is to notify the 911 operator to dispatch the fire department and start calling units until they get a response to let them in.

### ORC 2021

#### Board of Directors

*Barbara Nickel @ 3700-202*

*Diann Kearney @ 3701-103*

*Nancy Stamey @ 3700-104*

*Bob Cortez @ 3701-204*

*Sharon Thomas @ 3701-108*

#### MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

*Paul Braun @ 3701-105*

*Wayne Liesegang @ 3701-101*

*David Dropkin @ 3700-204*

### **MASKS IN COMMON AREAS**

Thank you for protecting yourselves and protecting others by wearing masks in our common areas. We will continue to observe present masking guidelines due to the contagious nature of the COVID-19 delta variant.

## Welcome New Residents

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Jim and Emilia Padian moved to unit 3700-302 in early June, 2021, after living for 17 years in Cary—the last ten as retirees. Previously they lived a good number of years overseas, including Venezuela (Emilia's country of origin), Brazil, and Dubai. They have three married children—a son in Houston, a son in Las Vegas, and a daughter nearby in Cary. They also have five grandchildren—three in Houston and two in Cary.

## Landscape Overview

This season we have been able to maintain our precious trees with professional arborist services of pruning and a special fertilization and pest treatment program. Removal of overgrown shrubs at 3700 will be followed by new plantings this fall. Plans continue for a seating area at 3700. (Barbara Nickel is receiving contributions.)

Slightly cooler nights and some dry leaves scattered from trees signal that autumn and relief from scorching weather is on the way. Periodic rain and our improved irrigation system have promoted a good growing season for our plantings which are more established in this, their third season. The ORC Landscape Committee established goals for the 2019 renovation, one of which was to include plants that attract pollinators (bees, butterflies, other insects, and birds, etc.) so critical to a healthy ecosystem.

Henri Braun has made care of the garden behind 3701 her special pandemic project and what a success it has been! While creating/maintaining this area, she has closely observed increased numbers of "visitors" to flowers. Hummingbirds are loving the lush areas of scarlet sage. Bees have covered Pentas, Bee Balm, and Cardinal Flowers while many types of butterflies visit Pentas, Coneflowers, Phlox, and others. Just coming into bloom is Goldenrod (not allergenic). Disappointments include unwanted diners (deer and rabbits) and only one Monarch butterfly caterpillar. Goldfinches are enjoying the Black-Eyed Susan seed heads. You are invited to enjoy some time in this garden.

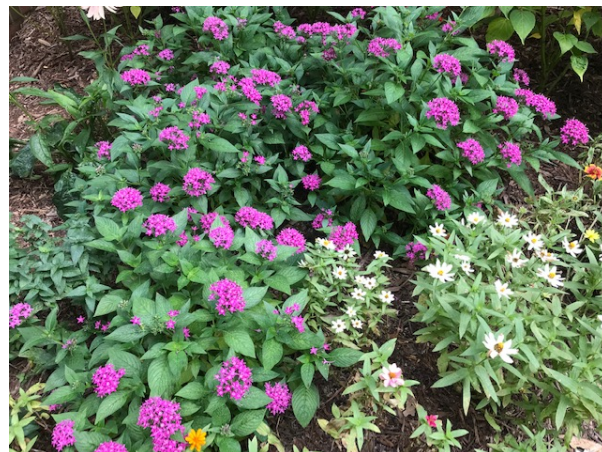
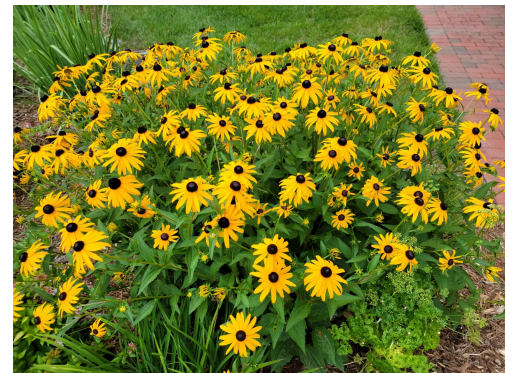
Planning for next year is beginning. Stay tuned! (Henri is accepting donations for new plants.)

With appreciation for your support,

ORC Landscape Committee:

*Charlotte Campbell, Chair*

Henri Braun, Rebecca Brownlee, Linda Cortez, Ginny Dropkin, John Gaitenby, Nancy Stamey



## Can You Help?

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In the past two newsletters there have been requests for new volunteers on the Maintenance Committee. While it was noted that this could involve as little or as much time as one was willing to give, no one has responded. This leaves a significant burden of routine maintenance/oversight on the Board and Maintenance Committee to complete basic tasks.

You may ask: Isn't that what we have a property management company for? Well, yes. However, some routine tasks may come at a high price if we had to pay for them (e.g. having a licensed electrician replace a light bulb in the raised ceiling of a common area can cost \$100.00 or more), thereby contributing to a dues increase if we had to pay someone to do it. Some of these tasks could include escorting service contractors in the building where entrance codes are required (elevator lobbies, riser room, storage room, etc.), replacing chirping smoke detector batteries (esp. between 5 pm on Fridays and 9 am on Mondays when these events are likely to happen), minor building repairs that a resident could easily do, etc.

In an effort to keep our COA dues as low as possible and keep undue burden away from a small set of residents, won't you please consider lending a hand, if you are able? Perhaps listing some specific areas where help is needed would give you some valuable insight. If you would like more information for any of these tasks that the Board felt might be appropriate for residents to do, please contact Barbara Nickel.

1. Escort Kil-Mor pest control through common areas on the garage level and open doors which require key access (both buildings, once per quarter; one week's advance notice is given).
2. Escort our Fire Alarm Maintenance Company during their annual fire extinguisher check to open special key access doors in garage.
3. Do routine outdoor walk-throughs (approximately twice a year) during active periods of rain to inspect gutters of both buildings and look for overflows or clogged downspouts (need sure footing, sturdy shoes and umbrella).
4. Fertilize or plant annuals or small shrubs, dead-heading, weeding, trimming with clippers, watering if needed (sprinkler system is turned off in the winter months), consulting on appropriate plant selections.
5. Remove sticks and other debris from entrances to garages and on sidewalks following heavy rains or strong winds.
6. Perform monthly Elevator Test (if your Board President can do this, then anyone can do it!)
7. Replace chirping smoke detector batteries (we have a new and sturdy six-foot ladder for each building).
8. And above all, BE OBSERVANT of any potential problem area (water entry the most common issue) and report it immediately to a Board member. Everyone can and should do this. Don't say: "Oh, that's leaking—someone should fix it." First, someone must report it, and that would be YOU!

### Another Job Well Done!

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You may have not noticed that the gray electrical and other utility boxes affixed to our two buildings have all been repainted. That was the whole idea—to make them less noticeable after the removal of some of our large landscape plantings so as to blend in more with the brick facade. This project was tedious and took nearly two years to complete—there are a lot of boxes! It was hard work and significantly improved the exterior appearance of our buildings. We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to **Wayne Liesegang and David Dropkin** for the time and energy they have devoted to completion of this project. We all reap the benefits of their efforts!



## New Addition to Commons Recycling

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In our Spring 2021 Newsletter, detailed guidelines were presented for recycling procedures for ORC residents (please contact Barbara Nickel if you would like a copy). It was noted that many items can be properly recycled in a multi-material facility even though they should NOT be placed in any of the bins in our garages (see list below).

In a perfect world, it would be best if every household would drive to a multi-material recycling facility to properly dispose of these household items. However, this is simply not possible for all residents. With this in mind, two new trash receptacles have been placed in the garages (near cardboard recycling) as a courtesy for you to please recycle the items listed on top of the bin. These rectangular bins are part of a new program initiated by residents for various items that need proper disposal but should not be discarded in our bins. For example, batteries contain corrosive materials and should not be tossed into the landfill untreated.

This is a trial period. If participation is good, volunteers will be sought to make occasional trips to the landfill to empty these two bins.

### Help keep our city clean. Thank you for doing your part!

As a reminder, below is a list of common household items that should be dropped off at a multi-material recycling facility. Alternately, you may choose to place some of the smaller items, such as batteries, into the new containers in our garages for proper disposal.

- scrap metal
- electronics
- computers
- televisions
- rigid plastics
- old phones
- corded household items (anything with a cord)
- oil textiles (clothes, purses, shoes)
- antifreeze

In a separate area where you are not permitted to get out of your car, these items will be unloaded for you by employees:

- aerosol cans
- batteries
- light bulbs
- paint
- household cleaners
- hazardous waste/chemicals.

#### **Please note:**

Only cardboard goes in the corrugated cardboard container in the garage (no other packaging materials please).

Plastic grocery bags do not belong in our bins and should be returned to grocery stores that recycle them.

Please bag all food waste for our bins. Loose, used food containers tossed into bins will only encourage entry of uninvited and undesired pests into our garages.

## Commons Art

I am a retired US Army Lt. Col. Hospital Comptroller, and I have enjoyed working with stained glass for over 40 years. My wife, Karen, gave me stained glass lessons at Stained Glass Center of Raleigh as a Christmas present in 1981. I have been learning ever since.

Our church had a sanctuary renovation a few years ago and I rescued the blue and pink stained glass from the window demolition. I made ornaments for church members to keep as a memento and donated the proceeds to the church building fund.

I have made lamp shades for our home and am currently working on wind chimes and three dimensional stars, which I sell in many sizes and colors. These are enjoyed as ornaments, window suncatchers or table display.

—Ted Prather



We have so many interesting and talented people in our community! As a relative newcomer, I'm learning something new about my neighbors all the time.

It was during our COVID-19 "lockdown" that I learned that Barbara Walker is a wonderful porcelain and watercolor painter and, wonder of wonders, teaches in her home. Of course, she was not having students come during that time but, at my request, she did call me when she started teaching again and I started watercolor lessons with her in the spring. Years ago, I worked briefly with acrylics but had never done watercolor. I love it! I'm still very new and not very accomplished but, with Barbara's help and encouragement, I am beginning to see some progress. More importantly, I'm having fun with it. Here are two of my latest paintings.

—Karen Johnson

