



# BURNING ISSUES

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January 2014

## Like Us on Facebook!

Check out [www.facebook.com/BHLCommunity](http://www.facebook.com/BHLCommunity) to find out about upcoming social events!

Whether you want to know how to rent the Clubhouse, read the Board Meeting Minutes, or download an ACC Modification Request form, please check our website [www.burnthickorylakes.com](http://www.burnthickorylakes.com).



## City Champions!

Congratulations to the **Burnt Hickory Lakes Men's B4 Tennis Team**. They won their Division, three rounds of playoffs, and then the City Finals. The championship came down to the final match with a couple of key points won by BHL. Team members are: Rolando Aguilar, Matt Anderton, Kevin Bell, Scott Byrd, Stuart Gohd, Ross Hogan, Bryan Locklier (Captain), Robby McGill, Jason Muhlbauer, Matthew Spoon, Streve Trahan, Al Tutson, Michael Wasson, Scott West, and Tommy Williamson. Good job team. You made us proud!

## BHL Real Estate Update

As I walk through BHL, someone will always ask me "How is the Market?", "Are homes selling in BHL and for how much?" So, I asked the Board if I could do an article in the BHL Newsletter that would offer valuable real estate information regarding our neighborhood. The Board agreed and so, here is my first article!

In 2013, 8 homes were sold in BHL. The highest sold price was \$364,500 and the lowest sold price was \$241,900. This gives BHL an average sold price of \$325,963. The average days on the market was 136. The home that sold for \$241,900 was a foreclosure. Sometimes these sales can have an effect on appraisals, but not always.

The good news is that in 2012 the average sold price was \$322,974 and the average days on the market was 199. So, 2013 our average days on the market decreased by 63 days or just about two months and our average sold price increased by \$2989.00.

This leads me to our next article which will address how we can improve the prices of homes in BHL. As I drive buyers through our neighborhood, I hear their concerns and the reasons why they may decide not to purchase in our neighborhood. But we all know as BHL homeowners we have a wonderful subdivision that offers great lot sizes, amenities, active social committee and the best thing we offer is great neighbors!

Nancy Muhlbauer, BHL

(Note: Nancy has offered to provide us current real estate information for each newsletter. If you have a question you would like her to answer, please send it to her di-

rectly: [knancy@comcast.net](mailto:knancy@comcast.net), or to one of your BOD members. She will endeavor to answer it in the next issue of Burning Issues.)

## President's Corner

Seems like a long time ago that you elected us to the current board. (Actually, we have been on the job for a little over a month.) Can't figure out where the old board went after the election, but they disappeared rather quickly. (Seriously, they were a great help getting us oriented to our present tasks.)



One of the best features of our neighborhood is simply the character of the neighborhood itself. Drive thru any other one, and then, drive thru ours - compare the feeling you get - space - houses that are not stacked one upon another, abundant greenery, walking paths and creeks. BHL has a rural feeling yet our houses are spacious. We have elbow room.

Managing this neighborhood does provide some challenges. First and foremost is the limitation of the budget. Based on a quick survey of surrounding neighborhoods, our homeowner dues are on the higher side; however, the folks I've talked to say that most of the others underpay the true cost of maintaining their programs and that their day of reckoning will be upon them thru assessments, dues increases, etc.

You have to balance our current fee structure against the amenities that exist within BHL. Our pool and clubhouse, although they are approaching 25 years old, are among the best available. However, they are becoming dated. In some cases, we can't fix a problem because the parts are no longer available. The only option is to replace it with newer, more modern stuff.

We recently commissioned a formal Clubhouse inspection by a licensed building inspector to see where we are and allow us to plan for the future. We are developing a maintenance history with the pool towards the same objective. While these aren't all good news stories, they aren't bad either. Deferred maintenance costs will be an issue in our future, but we will put together a plan to manage this as best we can.

Our ability to fund deferred maintenance consists primarily of retained earnings. Fortunately, previous boards have kept an eye on our future and left us in decent shape with a fairly healthy reserve. This board will continue the practice of generating healthy reserves and do everything within its power to make sure that we are **self-sufficient** at current **assessment rates**. We have some work to do and are engaged currently in reducing current costs as much as we can.

In future issues, I will talk about how you as a neighbor

can help us accomplish the mission of keeping BHL a premier place to live. As a volunteer-based organization, we depend upon the good-will of all residents to help us accomplish this.

We will be holding a BHL Town Hall during the second or third week of April (after spring school break.) We are exploring a revision of the ACC standards and other issues. The current guidelines are 25-years old and were written to guide the initial development of our neighborhood.

While there is plenty of merit in some of them, my personal feeling is a little more common sense can be brought to bear. Everything doesn't have to be made difficult; for example, putting pine straw down prior to the fall leaf season ending just doesn't make sense. A little common sense - trusting neighbors to do the right thing and communicating can go a good distance to keeping us moving forward.

We will put a flyer in your mailbox announcing the specific date and time of the meeting, and each of you will have the opportunity to provide input into any proposed changes. Looking forward to your attendance and an active dialogue.

Terry Spoon, President, BOD

## Cobb EMC Settlement Reminder

Look, here's the deal. Your decision is whether to take the settlement now or over the course of time, 24.6 years. The discount rate is 12% per year. That's stinks, OK. As a board, we will take the settlement over time; as an individual, my personal preference is to show me the money. If you do nothing, why?

Background: A \$98 million settlement fund for Cobb EMC customers was established by Court Order on October 10, 2013 by Judge J. Stephen Schuster of the Cobb County Superior Court in the case *In re Cobb EMC Class Action*, Civil Action No. 10:100353-48.

If you have not already filed a claim, the deadline for claim submission is **February 10th 2014**.

Claim Forms may also be completed online at [www.cobbemcsettlement.com](http://www.cobbemcsettlement.com) (in most cases in less than 10 minutes) and a confirmation received immediately. If you prefer to complete your claim online but lost your postcard notice with your Claim Id. and Control No., you may call the Claims Administrator to obtain the information or another copy.

You may contact the Claims Administrator at 1-888-292-8850 to speak with a claims assistant (press option 5) to find out how much money you are entitled to receive and for assistance with completing your claim.

You may also email questions to the Claims Administrator at: [questions@cobbemcsettlement.com](mailto:questions@cobbemcsettlement.com)



## BHL Wants You for the 2014 Directory!

We've had so many families move in and out over the years, the directory needs a complete overhaul!

Please look over the last version, March 2012. If you are happy with your family's entry, do nothing. If you need to update something, please fill out flyer delivered with this newsletter.

If you have already provided me with your changes, you are done! New Special Services section will only be based on new information, not from 2012 edition.

I'll make it easy for you! Just put updated info in your mailbox by **Thurs. night, Jan. 30**. I will collect them **Friday morning, Jan. 31**. Now that was easy!

Remember to provide one email address per family. We won't publish it, only use it for communication purposes within our subdivision. Let's make this directory the most complete!

Nancy O'Reilly, BHL

## Swim Team News

The team did really well last year as we do every summer because of great coaching, philosophy and families from our community! The season was very wet and this we had a draw because we couldn't get through the meet, another meet was a draw because of the chemicals at the Brookstone Country Club pool were off. We WON three out of 5!

One of our Wins was against a Gold team. The county dropped us to the silver division based on the pool we swam out of, another disadvantage that we overcame for the season! We had 138 swimmers. We do not like to go above 120, but with merging with BCC we had higher numbers. The reasoning for that is obvious, the kids will learn more and families are better served with a lower ratio of coaches to swimmers! We operate with two head coaches and up to four junior coaches that assist. The hope is that the junior coaches may one day mature into head coaches.

BHL Hurricanes have been in either the Silver or Gold division for the 12 years that we have been a part of this team. For the 12 years that our family has been a part of the BHL Hurricanes, each year has been very successful! We operate with full integrity, character and discipline!

This team is a great asset to our neighborhood, and the board is very excited about how we operate, with professionalism and success!

Mary Kalafut, BHL Hurricanes



## Pajama Movie Night!

Come to the Clubhouse **Saturday February 1st** from **6:00 - 8:30pm** for a neighborhood movie night! Wear your jammies and bring your favorite blanket, pillow and stuffed animal and watch **Despicable Me 2** with your friends. Pizza, popcorn, and drinks will be provided by the neighborhood. Feel free to bring extra snacks to share.

The Social Committee is planning a lot of fun events for the coming year including a high school party, a middle school party, a BHL Olympiad and others. Email Patty Payton at [ppayton@bellsouth.net](mailto:ppayton@bellsouth.net) if you would like to be involved in the planning or if you have ideas for fun neighborhood events.

## Help Wanted

Burnt Hickory Lakes depends upon numerous volunteers to staff committees that support the neighborhood. We are looking to revitalize some of these including the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) and someone to fill the role as the Adult Social Director. The Social Committee budget was under-executed by 70% last year with the only limit someone with desire and imagination.

Also, numerous folks have expressed a desire to form a Flower/Garden Club which could include a Community Garden, plant exchanges, participation in local gardening organizations, general knowledge sharing and an active role in landscaping BHL.

Please contact any board representative to express your interest in serving your community

## Sinkhole in the BHL Common Area (Volleyball Court)

You may have seen the warning tape and other light barrier material down near the south end of the volleyball courts. This marks the area where approximately one month ago, we developed a five foot deep sinkhole. Thanks to some initial quick work by Laura Armstrong Monica who lives next to this area, it was partially filled in, covered up with plywood, and the area was marked off. The county came out and inspected it placing additional marking material around it.

This is not a Florida-type sinkhole. It is a point repair where a 42" metal-pipe water runoff line ruptured at the point where it tied into a junction box with another runoff line. Dirt and sand from the top fall thru the top of the hole in the pipe, and runoff water from the street up near the playground carry some of the debris down the remaining pipe to the creek at the far end of the field on the other side of the tennis courts.

Additional material can fall into the rupture, but so far not much has. We check on it periodically, stomp around on the top, etc. The frozen ground actually helps.

While there is always danger, there is little additional danger unless people want to start playing in the hole. Please

monitor your children and pets behavior and stay away from this area until it is repaired. The repair work is scheduled for next week. The contractor will work in the cold weather.

## BHL Tool Time

A wiser neighbor than me said one day, "Well, you know the houses in our neighborhood are high-maintenance homes." Realizing this, I thought what better way to attack some of my tasks than leveraging the knowledge and experience of my neighbors. The topic this time is **Sinkholes**.

Our covenants specifically stated that contractors were supposed to haul all construction debris off the job site. Unfortunately, this was generally not followed until the late 80s-early 90s when it was mandated that no more debris would be buried on-site.

Contractors adopted this practice to save money, and it was a standard industry practice. It was not uncommon for them to take a backhoe or front-end loader to dig a pit up to 12-14 feet deep, fill it with debris, and then place dirt on top of it. Unfortunately, when oxygen penetrates the site, this material decomposes and settles with the soil on top of it settling too. Hence, depressions or sinkholes. For you and I in BHL, this means that our front lawns and other areas have these blights dotting the landscape.

The right solution can be expensive (up to \$8-10k) – dig out the old material, replace it with dirt and re-sod the lawn. Most folks adopt a less costly approach - keep filling it in with dirt and/or gravel, re-sod it, fill it in again, and re-sod again. This is the one I used with a combination of gravel, dirt, and whatever else was available. And, it's so far, so good. However, there is another option, limited excavation, compacting, sealing, and soil backfill that can cost less – around \$3k or so.

There is no easy solution. I have talked to numerous neighbors about this, and it is always the same story. Wish I had some magic to make this easier, but the problem just doesn't go away easily. Caveat Emptor.

Sealing Driveway Cracks Redux. (Thanks to Bill T. for the following comments. He worked in the concrete flooring industry and offered these suggestions for dealing with wider driveway cracks. His have stayed sealed for 15 -18 years.)

1. Use string or weather stripping depending on the width of the crack and stuff it down into the crack using an old knife so it is about 1/4 to 1/2 inch below the surface. This will prevent having to continue refilling it with additional calk.

2. Some cracks are too narrow the accept caulk. Use a circular saw with a concrete blade (\$10.00 or less) to cut the crack to a depth of 1/4 to 1/2 inch. Again use, string or weather stripping to stuff the crack at the bottom of the cut.

I solicit your input for future topics. Email me at **MA-Bear11@msn.com** with your suggestions or topics that you would like to see addressed in future issues.

Stop and chat if you see me outside.

Terry

## Login for Meeting Minutes

In order to keep our neighborhood business private, the board has adopted a login window for meeting minutes posted on **www.burnthickorylakes.com**

In order to access them, please use "**BHL**" as username and "**thornapple**" as the password. Please do not pass this information to anyone outside of the neighborhood.

## The BHL Book Club

BHL Book Club meets every third Thursday of the month, 7pm at the Clubhouse. We are a very informal group, and would like anyone interested to come join us.

Everyone is welcome to bring their favorite book selections! Please email Debbie Ebers at **ebersd@bellsouth.net** for any other questions or info.

## Men's Poker Night

Men's Poker Night every first Thursday of the month at Clubhouse. Come at **7 pm** for drinks, setup, and conversation and the game begins at **8**.

Football on the big screen! Bring some food and drink to share and meet your neighbors!

## Men of Mars Hill

### Fellowship – Bible Study – Community Outreach

Please come and check out the Men of Mars Hill that meets every Saturday morning at the Clubhouse at 7:30 am for prayer, Bible study and fellowship. We wrap up by 9am. All men are welcome.

John Zupancic --- **johnzupancic.atl@gmail.com** –  
Phone 678-333-4086

Chris Elmore ----**celmore@mdataurbines.com** -  
Phone 678 290 5005

**Don't think too much.**  
You'll create a problem that wasn't  
even there in the first place.

- Anonymous