

**Rules and Regulations**  
**Soapstone Cluster Homeowners Association**

## FOREWORD

The first Soapstone Cluster Association Handbook was distributed in 1983 by the Board of Directors. When possible, an updated version is produced. The last revision prior to this one was completed in 1996.

Residents will find answers to many of their questions about Soapstone Cluster Association in this Handbook. Hopefully it provides an understanding of how the organization and activities of the Cluster work.

Thank you to Cluster artist Chris Barrie for her original, lovely drawing for the cover!

Board of Directors  
Soapstone Cluster Association

President: Dr. Gary C. Powell  
Vice President: Caleb Smith  
Secretary: Doug Sprei  
Treasurer: George Magowan  
Member-at Large: David Greenacre

### Handy References (Last Updated July 2008)

Cluster E-mail:	<a href="mailto:soapstonehoa@gmail.com">soapstonehoa@gmail.com</a>	
President E-mail:	<a href="mailto:soapstoneclusterpresident@gmail.com">soapstoneclusterpresident@gmail.com</a>	
Annual Meeting:	February	page 5
Cluster Dues:	Billed Quarterly Gates Hudson & Associates 703-752-8300	page 7
Newsletter:	Soapstone News Editor: Bernice Mayfield	page 5
Towed Vehicles:	To recover a vehicle, call: Fairfax County Police (703) 691-2131	page 11
Trash Collection:	American Disposal Services (703) 368-0500 Trash is picked up Tuesdays and Fridays Recycling is picked up on Fridays	page 8

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Soapstone Cluster Association**

The Soapstone Cluster Association is a non-profit Corporation, managed by an elected Board of Directors. Soapstone Cluster is incorporated as a non-stock Corporation under the provisions of Chapter 2 of Title 13.1 of the Code of Virginia. All land common to a Cluster of townhomes was deeded by the developer to Soapstone Cluster Association. This includes streets, sidewalks, tot lots, playgrounds, wooded areas and perimeter areas.

### **Soapstone Cluster History**

The Soapstone Cluster property is bordered on the west by Soapstone Drive, to the south of Soft Wind Court by Glade Drive, to the east by 30 acres of prime open space known as the Walker Nature Center, and on the north, by common land for utility easements.

The original model homes were located in Soft Wind Court and opened in the fall of 1972. The first Woodhollow Court residents moved into their homes in March 1973, followed by Hearthstone Court residents the following year. The last of the 80 Soapstone Cluster homes was sold by Gulf Reston in late 1977. In 1974 Gulf Reston turned over management of Soapstone Cluster to our elected Board of Directors.

Until 2005, Soapstone Cluster was managed by Members elected to the Board of Directors. In 2005, a property management company was hired to manage the Cluster's financial interests. The Board of Directors is responsible for monitoring the management company's work, conducting all other business of the Cluster and maintaining the common grounds. Soapstone Cluster has a tradition of relying on volunteer help to get projects completed for the benefit of all of the Members. The Board of Directors encourages everyone to help when asked and to serve on the Board of Directors when there are vacancies.

## **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors consists of up to five elected directors (minimum of three required by Association Bylaws). These directors serve as officers of the corporation in the following positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Member-at-Large. (If only three positions are filled, those shall be President, Treasurer and Secretary.) Length of terms and election procedures are described in the Bylaws. The Board's responsibilities include but are not limited to:

1. Maintaining sound financial policy for the Cluster.
  - a) Preparing the annual budget.
  - b) Procuring liability insurance for the common land and for the officers of the Association
  - c) Assessing and collecting Association dues.
2. Management of all contracts entered into on behalf of the Soapstone Cluster Association.
3. Maintaining the common grounds and encouraging community participation in the upkeep of the Cluster.
4. Holding open meetings at least six times per year to conduct Cluster business.
5. Holding an annual cluster meeting in February.

### **President**

As the chief executive officer, the President presides over all meetings of the Board of Directors, Members and Associate Members. The President is the chief recipient of all Cluster mail. The President maintains liaisons when necessary with outside agencies and individuals. The President delegates duties and tasks as needed for the operation of the Cluster among Board Members and other Members; submits an agenda to Board Members prior to each monthly meeting; receives and mediates individual Member concerns and questions; and represents the Cluster in Reston activities.

### **Vice President**

The Vice President assumes the duties of the President in his/her absence, including presiding over Board and Member meetings and delegating duties, as needed. The Vice President oversees contractual arrangements with companies providing Cluster services, such as, trash removal, snow removal and landscape maintenance. The Vice President is the liaison with community organizations such as the Reston Association and the Fairfax County government and participates on committees and projects as deemed necessary by the President and/or the Board.

### **Secretary**

The Secretary transcribes, types and distributes approved minutes of all Board and general meetings. The Secretary maintains the official minutes book, files of resolution, contracts and correspondence; reserves meeting room for general meetings; and, via the Cluster newsletter, informs all necessary persons of time and location of meetings.

## **Treasurer**

The Treasurer is responsible for collection of the quarterly Cluster assessments; maintains the Cluster checkbook and financial records, and prepares an annual Cluster Financial Statement and annual tax returns to the Internal Revenue Service and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The treasurer pays valid Cluster bills and obligations as directed by the Board. Under the supervision of the Treasurer, a third party service provider may be used to perform certain of these duties. The Treasurer corresponds with the Members, per the Cluster Bylaws, regarding delinquent assessments. The Treasurer advises the Board on financial matters, makes regular reports on the Cluster financial condition and informs the board of delinquent Member accounts.

## **Member-At-Large**

The Member-At-Large is responsible for overseeing various Cluster projects as directed by the President of the Board. The Member-At-Large assists in coordinating Board sponsored activities and works with individuals and groups as needed regarding Cluster problems and issues.

## **Other Volunteer Positions**

### **Block Representatives**

Block Representatives are volunteers from the three courts who help coordinate Cluster activities. They assist the Board in organizing Cluster Improvement Days; they present views and concerns of their courts residents at Board meetings and they help facilitate activities within their court and the Cluster as a whole.

### **Editor - *Soapstone News***

A volunteer editor position is part of the continuing effort to keep all residents informed of Cluster activities and news. A monthly newsletter, *Soapstone News*, is published and distributed to each household. The editor is in charge of organization and distribution of each issue.

Information for this newsletter is selected from Board meetings, the annual Cluster Association meeting, committee reports, and Block Representatives' verbal reports. It includes announcements of Cluster activities and Reston area news important to Soapstone Cluster residents. The newsletter is designed for the benefit and use of all Soapstone Cluster residents, and all homeowners are encouraged to contact the editor with any news or general comments.

## **Committees**

The Soapstone Cluster Association uses committees to advise and assist the Board of Directors in researching problems and making recommendations. These committees are a Member's best way to participate in the community. The standing committees are listed in the Bylaws; other committees are formed as needed.

## **Annual Meeting**

The Annual Meeting of the Cluster occurs every year in February, and is usually held in the Soapstone Cluster Association Homeowner's Handbook 2008

Glade Room on Glade Drive above the Glade Pool. Each Member (owner(s) of an individual townhouse unit) has one vote. Associate Members (non-owner resident) are eligible to vote on issues not involving budgetary matters. If Members are unable to attend the Annual Meeting, it is possible to vote by proxy. The proxy form is included with a mailed meeting announcement and is also available from any Board Member.

## **Budget**

Each year at the Annual Business Meeting, the Board of Directors submits an Annual Budget for approval of the Members (Associate Members cannot vote on this issue). The Budget authorizes the Board of Directors to collect assessments and pay for the maintenance and management of Soapstone Cluster. At the same meeting, the Members (but not Associate Members) approve the quarterly assessment per unit.

### **A. Budget Categories**

General description and purpose of each category used in the current Budget, and the Annual Financial Report is as follows:

#### **Administration**

This provides for Board operating expenses such as printing, postage and bank fees.

#### **Contracts**

This provides for all contractual obligations / costs relative to the maintenance and upkeep of Cluster common property, including grounds maintenance, trash / recycling pick-up and snow removal (as necessary).

#### **Professional Fees**

This provides for legal, audit and tax preparation fees in addition to management fees paid to a property management company for assistance with Board responsibilities (e.g. billing and collection of quarterly Cluster assessments).

#### **Repairs and Maintenance**

This provides for general repairs and maintenance costs such as trimming and removal of trees and bushes, and limited repair of curbs, sidewalks and footpaths.

#### **Parking Lot Reserve**

The Soapstone Cluster Association owns and maintains all the common property within the Cluster boundaries. This property was transferred from the builder to the Cluster at the time the Association was established. The Cluster ownership includes the woods, parks, playground, sidewalks, car entrances and parking lots.

In 1993, the Cluster spent \$70,000 to repave all our parking lots and car entrances. This included some repairs to our concrete sidewalks. Our engineering consultants advised us that the life

expectancy of the asphalt paving is about 20 years. We also estimate the repaving of the parking lots in 2013 will cost about \$100,000. The Cluster has a Reserve Fund for this future expense. Each year, the Board estimates both the remaining life and replacement costs for our parking lots and recommends an amount to be added in the coming year. Currently \$9000 is set aside each year.

### **Taxes and Insurance**

The Cluster pays taxes on interest income of Cluster bank accounts to the Internal Revenue Service and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Assessment income expended for necessary Cluster functions is exempt from taxes.

The Cluster has a General Liability insurance policy covering risks involving our common property. A liability policy for the Officers and Directors covers the actions of our Directors in carrying out Cluster responsibilities.

### **Utilities**

Pays for the electricity of the Virginia Power watch lights along footpaths and parking lots and water usage for common grounds.

## **B. Operating Surplus**

In the past the Cluster's income from assessments has been slightly in excess of the funds disbursed for Cluster expenses. Each year the Membership has voted to carry these funds over into the following fiscal year in an operating surplus category. The money is a financial cushion for emergency or extraordinary requirements, and balances the uneven flow of assessment income versus monthly expenses. The annual Membership approval is necessary under Internal Revenue Service regulations so the money involved will not be taxed.

## **C. Assessments/Income**

Each house is assessed 1/80th of the approved budget. The assessments are billed quarterly at the beginning of each quarter and are payable within 30 days. The Treasurer monitors the billing and collection of the assessment fees by the management company. The Board of Directors considers delinquent assessments to be a serious problem and strictly enforces collection procedures described in the Bylaws.

An assessment is delinquent if not received within the first 30 days of the quarter. A late charge of \$15.00 (current as of June 2007) is added to the account when it becomes delinquent. If the assessment remains unpaid after 60 days past the due date, the balance of the annual assessment may become due and payable at the discretion of the Board of Directors. If the account is still delinquent after another 30 days, it will be turned over to a lawyer for collection. A lien may be recorded against the property. The delinquent homeowner is responsible for the attorney's fees. The Membership rights of the delinquent owner may be suspended at the option of the Board of Directors until payment is received.

## **Within The Cluster**

### **Pets**

Dogs should not be allowed to run free in the common property areas. Fairfax County has leash laws and these laws are enforced. All dogs require licenses by Fairfax County. See the county Web site for detailed information: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/animals/>.

Please make sure to walk your dog(s) away from walkways, play areas and your neighbor's property. If by accident your dog deposits any droppings in any of these areas, be sure to scoop the droppings up and dispose of them properly. Cooperation, tolerance and thoughtfulness are essential to Cluster living.

To report dog(s) running loose, problems with barking dog(s) or other noise problems that have not been resolved, call the Fairfax County Police non-emergency number, 703-691-2131.

### **Outside Lights**

Residents are responsible for keeping the pole lights outside their property in working order and should replace burnt out bulbs without delay. Keeping the Cluster well lighted benefits all residents by preventing accidents and improving security throughout the Cluster.

### **Snow Removal**

The Board of Directors calls the snow removal contractor to clear the parking lots and apply sand to hilly areas. Parking is not allowed along the yellow painted curbs. This blocks traffic and presents hazards for snow removal equipment and emergency vehicles. Residents are responsible for clearing the reserved parking spaces and walkways in front of their own homes. Deposit snow on the front lawns or common areas. Do NOT pile snow in the open parking lot or unreserved spaces. If a neighbor removes snow from an unreserved parking space, give them consideration for their efforts by NOT parking in that space.

### **Trash Collection (current as of June 2007)**

Soapstone Cluster has a contract to provide trash removal for residents at an amount less than possible on an individual basis. Trash is collected twice a week on Tuesday and Friday. Trash should be bagged or in reusable containers and placed on the curb of the parking lot the night before each pick up day. Please do not put your trash out for collection earlier. Trash left at the curb attracts animals and causes unsanitary and unsightly conditions.

In addition to regular service, the current trash company, American Disposal Services, will pick up special large items on Fridays; residents must call ADS at least 24 hours in advance. (There will be an extra charge for large/bulk items such as washing machines.) The telephone number for large items and customer service is 703-368-0500. They also provide pick up of Christmas trees after the holidays.

## **Recycling (current as of June 2007)**

In addition to the twice-weekly trash collection, on Friday, there is collection of recycled items. Place all recycling on the curb on Thursday night. The recycling includes aluminum and tin cans, clear, brown, green glass, plastic bottles (#1 and #2), mixed paper and cardboard, and newspapers. Place recycled materials either in paper bags or in the reusable containers provided by the trash company. DO NOT use plastic bags for recycling products. Plastic bags may be recycled at the local grocery stores. For further information on materials that are appropriate for recycling in Fairfax County, see the Web site, <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/living/recycling/>.

## **Common Walls**

Soapstone dwellings are built in small rows of townhouses so that every house has at least one common wall with a neighbor, and most having two. When a wall projects away from the neighboring house, it then becomes an exterior wall that is the property and responsibility of the house it encloses. If a homeowner contemplates performing repairs or improvements (painting, plastering, siding, etc.), it is appropriate and neighborly to tell your neighbor of your plans. Notice is required if the exterior wall can only be reached easily through the property, yard or roof, of the house next door. Prior approval could prevent embarrassment or problems, such as trespass.

## **Good Neighbors**

Neighborliness extends through walls. Unfortunately, sound can travel through common walls. Carefully choose locations, volume and use of musical instruments and entertainment systems. Some noise penetration is unavoidable. Under special circumstances such as infants, illness, or unusual work and rest schedules, give additional consideration and respect for your neighbor. In the spring and fall, when windows are open, excess noise from parties inside and outside can be disturbing. Try to be a good neighbor.

## **Occupancy Limits**

Fairfax County regulates the number of people who can live in one house. Please see <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/hdpdf/healthyhomes.pdf> for further information.

## **Cluster Telephone Directory**

The Soapstone Cluster Telephone is updated periodically. Please inform a Board Member if your telephone number changes. Landlords are required in the Bylaws to notify the Board of Directors when new tenants move into a rented property. If you are new to our neighborhood, please contact a current Board Member to provide your information. New residents are added as soon as possible.

## **Parking Policy**

Parking spaces in Soapstone Cluster are very limited, with slightly more than two spaces per household. This presents a serious problem when households park more than two cars in the lot. In addition to contributing to parking problems, unused, broken down cars are an eyesore.

In the past, there have been various efforts to address parking problems. These include policies established in 1984 and 1996. These earlier policies are superseded by the policies in this manual.

## **Section 1. Parking Rights**

Each Household in Soapstone Cluster is entitled to use at least one parking space for an approved motor vehicle, and to the right of ingress and egress in and upon the parking area. An approved motor vehicle includes any conventional passenger vehicle, truck or commercial vehicle of less than 2 1/2 tons gross weight. Other types of vehicles, including, but not limited to house trailers, motor homes, boats on trailers, utility trailers or vehicles occupying more than one parking space, are not permitted to park in the Cluster parking lot. Space for these vehicles can be rented from the Reston Association at a special lot off Sunset Hills Rd. Call 703 437-7658.

## **Section 2. Vehicle Requirements**

All motor vehicles shall display current license plates and inspection stickers. The vehicle must be maintained in proper operating condition so as not to be a safety hazard or nuisance by noise, emissions or appearance. Any vehicle which is in disrepair such that it cannot be operated in its existing condition because the parts necessary, such as, but not limited to tires, windshield, engine, drive train, driver's seat, steering wheel or column, gas or brake pedals, are removed, deteriorating, damaged or destroyed, may not be parked on Cluster property.

## **Section 3. Parking Areas**

Vehicles may be parked only in designated parking spaces within the Cluster, bordered by either a curb and white line, or two white lines. Vehicles are not allowed to park parallel to any other curbs, including, but not limited to the large island on Hearthstone Court. These areas are designated fire lanes and are posted with no parking signs. Residents may not park within 10 feet of a fire hydrant, except in a designated parking spot.

Residents are asked to consider their neighbors' needs and cooperate with each other in parking vehicles within the Cluster. If a legally registered and maintained car is out of use for an extended period of time, the owner is requested to park away from the fronts of the townhouses. Park instead in spaces that are further from the house. Additionally, if a neighbor has unusual needs, such as an infant or disability, consider choosing a non-reserved space further away.

If you have a number of guests, please ask them to park on Soapstone Drive during their visit.

## **Section 4. Parking Disputes**

Where possible, residents are asked to talk with neighbors to resolve parking disputes, including the use of reserved and non-reserved spaces. When a car is parked in one's reserved space, it is recommended that initially a simple request be placed on the windshield to inform the driver that they have parked in a reserved space. Members and residents who cannot resolve parking disputes may contact a Board Member for assistance.

## **Section 5. Notice of Violation**

When exceptions to this parking policy are identified, a Board Member shall serve a notice on the owner of the vehicle, if known, and upon the vehicle itself. Notice will be given at least ten (10) days before the vehicle is towed and shall be deemed as given when notification is posted on the door of the owner, if known, and upon the vehicle. Vehicle owners may contact a Board Member to negotiate an extension to this notice period, where appropriate.

If a vehicle is found parked along a fire lane or blocking access to or egress from the parking areas, a warning will be posted on the vehicle at least 24 hours before towing. However, if an emergency vehicle is unable to negotiate around a violating vehicle, a Board Member may have the vehicle towed immediately. Likewise, if a vehicle is blocking ingress or egress from the parking areas, a Board Member may have the vehicle towed immediately. If notice has been posted on a vehicle at least three times, it may, at the board's discretion, be towed without notice the next time it is found to be in violation.

## **Section 6. Towing Vehicles in Violation of Parking Policy**

Any vehicle not brought into compliance with the parking policy following notification of violation shall be towed. A Board Member shall notify the Fairfax County Police by the non-emergency number to report the towing. A resident that finds their car has been towed should call 703 691-2131 to make arrangements to have their car released.

## **Section 7. Enforcement of the Parking Policy**

Only a Member of the Association Board of Directors shall enforce the parking policy as stated herein, including, but not limited to posting notices on cars and providing for towing of a vehicle.

### **Reston Association (RA)**

As residents of Soapstone Cluster, we have two local levels of governance, Reston Association and Soapstone Cluster Association. While Reston is not a town, Reston Association provides a level of government-type services. It provides recreational facilities such as the pools and tennis courts, maintenance of public property within the limits of Reston and stewardship of Reston's environmental and natural resources. Reston is a planned community. When you purchased your property, you agreed to comply with the property covenants and so help to maintain the design standard that was established for Reston properties.

RA activities are funded primarily by assessments, established by its Board of Directors each year, against all residential property. (RA annual assessments are billed separately from Soapstone Cluster Association's quarterly assessments.)

If you have access to the Internet, much information is available at <http://www.reston.org/>.

The RA offices are located at 1930 Isaac Newton Square, Reston, Virginia 20190-5093. The telephone number for information is (703) 435-6530.

## **Design Review Board (DRB)**

The DRB controls all exterior renovations and additions to homes in Reston. The DRB was established by the protective covenants that are a part of every deed of home ownership in Reston. The DRB is charged with reviewing all applications for exterior alterations to make sure they are in keeping with the standards set forth in the covenants.

The DRB approval is not only limited to major changes - the Design Review Board considers everything from additions such as decks and fences to changes in house or door colors. Any external modifications or changes must have prior approval of the DRB. Information about approved colors, materials and plans are on file with both the DRB and RA.

## **Common Grounds**

Soapstone Cluster consists of 13 acres. Cluster property extends into the wooded area that surrounds the cluster. Beyond Cluster property is the Walker Nature Center. All rules that apply to Cluster common grounds apply to all wooded areas including the Walker Nature Center. Following are some guidelines for the use and maintenance of the Cluster common grounds:

- Fairfax County laws regarding leash laws and pet waste apply to Cluster common grounds. All dogs must be on leashes. "The owner or custodian of any dog shall be responsible for the removal of excreta deposited by such dogs on the property of another including public areas." (Fairfax County Code) Also, dog urine kills grass. Please take your dogs onto areas other than grass.
- Property owners will confine their landscaping, animal runs, storage and structural play areas to the land within their property lines. Easements – common ground immediately adjacent to private property – must be kept clear of shrubbery and items so that home owners and emergency crews can easily gain access to the rear entrance of every residence.
- No trash or yard waste is to be discarded onto common grounds, such as, Christmas trees, limbs from cut trees, large amounts of leaves and anything else that will take years to decompose. These items should be taken to the Fairfax County land fill or bagged and put out for trash pickup.
- The storm sewers located in each parking lot empty directly into the Nature Center, streams and local lakes. Chemicals, such as antifreeze, oil, detergent and paint should be handled very carefully so as not to spill in the parking lot. Debris like litter, leaves and trash should be kept away from storm drains and ditches so that they do not end up in the woods and then the local streams and lakes. Cars that leak oil must be repaired promptly. The oil destroys the asphalt and also pollutes local streams and lakes.
- The common grounds will be retained in as natural a state as possible. Any development or change must be approved by Reston Association through the DRB application process.
- Removal of plants or soil is prohibited.
- No hunting or trapping of wildlife. No firearms, air guns, BB guns or archery equipment are to be discharged or carried onto common ground.
- County ordinance prohibits the use of motor vehicles on the walkways or common lands of Reston, including Soapstone common ground, with the exception of maintenance vehicles and law enforcement vehicles.