

July 19, 2016

A Letter to All Residents & Owners at Evans Mill Pond, McLean, Virginia

From: Ann Robertson, Chair, EMPOA Architectural Review Committee/ARC

Subject: Evans Mill Pond Architectural Review Committee & Guidelines



I. NEW CHAIR OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEE/ARC

Dear Neighbors,

I write to share with you the news that I have recently “been volunteered” to serve as Chair of the *EMPOA Architectural Review Committee (ARC)*, the committee charged with the responsibility of reviewing and making recommendations for approval—or not—to the Board of Directors, for any changes you wish to make to your house and/or landscaping.

It is an honor to succeed Betsy Rice, who has graciously, and tirelessly, served in this capacity for the past several years. As I assume the position of Chair, I take this opportunity to write to bring to your attention some important information about which you should be aware, including concerns that have been voiced by some residents regarding recent architectural changes made without permission; a bit of EMP history; and some thoughts to share that hopefully will evoke a dialogue. I encourage everyone please to take the time to read this message and let me know of any questions or concerns you may have.

II. LIST OF NEW ARC MEMBERS

I also take the opportunity to introduce you to the recently-appointed members of the *Architectural Review Committee/ARC*—long-time resident **Paul Dyson; Rick Myrland; Kathryn DeVito**, and a “**soon-to-be-confirmed**” **fifth member**.* Please do not hesitate to call an ARC member if you have questions, concerns, or need assistance completing an ARC application. Our hope, and job (albeit volunteer) is to encourage all residents to maintain and make improvements to their property and to make the process as easy as possible. EMP experience confirms that maintenance and improvements not only increase the resident’s property value but also that of the neighbors. ARC contact information is included in the on-line *Resident List*, usually updated twice a year. For your convenience, our contact information is also included herewith.

- ❖ Ann Robertson, Chair (7209) abrjar@aol.com; 703.448.9187
- ❖ Kathryn DeVito (7276) kd9025@aol.com; 703.893.0281
- ❖ Paul Dyson (7218) paul.dyson@verizon.net; 703.448.7339
- ❖ Rick Myrland (7213) rlmcf@yahoo.com; 608.234.0537
- ❖ *Donna Redd (7242) donna@analog.org; 703-298-7397

III. ...WITH THANKS TO BETSY RICE!

On behalf of my fellow ARC members, it is my pleasure to express the collective thanks of EMP residents to Betsy and her former and past committee members for her/their dedication to the often-complicated, sometimes contentious, and usually thankless task of shepherding EMPOA residents’ through the ARC application process.

Betsy has fielded a myriad of requests for architectural and landscape changes and improvements during her tenure, advising and assisting the applicants to make certain all the information has been provided, all the while trying to make the process as efficient and painless as possible—for everyone involved; hand-delivering last-minute applications to the Board; and sending e-messages to out-of-town Committee Members, whose vote was needed to make a deadline; in addition to expediting applications due to weather-damage emergencies. Thank you, Betsy, for your service to EMP (*and for letting me keep your private phone number at the ready*)!

IV. “WHO IS ANN ROBERTSON?”

For those of you who do not know me, I have served on the Board of Directors, including a year as President during which time I was instrumental in the installation of the address-signage near the Gazebo to help emergency responders, FedEx, and, yes, the local pizza-guy, find “your house”; championed the installation of the “wet garden” near the tennis courts to resolve a huge problem area of standing water; and orchestrated the infamous EMP 2005 *Duck-Weed Sweep of the Pond*—there is a video if interested—in addition to dealing with other “issues” that occurred during that period of time.

I have been a resident of EMP since April 1988 when I married Jim Robertson who, in his 31 years as a resident, has served in every Board position, including President six times, and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the McLean Citizen’s Association, is Co-chair of its Transportation Committee, and is a member of the Planning and Zoning Committee. Jim, along with Paul Dyson and Bob Shipman, managed the first Road-Repaving Project in 2000 and the design and construction of the island at the entrance to EMP, including the planting of the *crape myrtle* which not only beautified the entrance but mitigated a dangerous traffic situation in that area. Jim also worked with Verizon during the design and installation of the cable system that provided access to FIOS and, in the early years, with the late Milton Silveira (formerly of 7213) in getting new lighting installed throughout the neighborhood.

As a result of my involvement in EMP, and living with Jim, I am rather familiar with many of the issues that have arisen in our community over the years and am looking forward, yet once again, to having the opportunity to do my part to help maintain the high standards of the community all EMP residents and owners have enjoyed, and have come to expect, for so many years.

V. IMPORTANCE OF COMMITTEES TO EMP RESIDENTS/OWNERS

As you know, members of ARC, and all EMPOA Committees, including the Board, serve as volunteers, continuing the long-standing tradition of a self-managed community, not only saving residents from having to hire professionals themselves, but adding a sense of personal involvement of the owners, all to the benefit of the entire community. While it is neither extra work we seek, nor need, EMPOA volunteer committees provide a measure of personal satisfaction in being in a position to help assure the continued value of all of our homes in addition to preserving the quality of life in this unique community. ***I have always said that Evans Mill Pond is the best kept secret in McLean.*** I think I am not alone in hoping that EMP will continue to be the envy of most other neighborhoods in our area. This takes the cooperation and dedication of all residents and owners; not just Committee members working, often, behind the scenes.

VI. RECENT VIOLATIONS OF CONSEQUENCE TO ALL EMPOA RESIDENTS

In preparing for my new adventure as ARC Chair, it has come to my attention that, recently, there have been, and still remain on-going, some contentious issues that I suspect may have resulted from:

- New residents’ misunderstandings of—and/or long-time residents failure to recall—the rules governing all architectural changes, i.e. those which are permitted and those which are not;
- Frustration with, or lack of interest in, filing a detailed application to initiate the process;
- A lack of appreciation for the reason or need for strict architectural standards being maintained in a small community such as ours at EMP.

Unfortunately, the result of what appears to some residents to be a blatant disregard of the rules, which apply to all and which everyone was obligated to read and sign at closing, is resulting in changes which are not always in-keeping with the “look” of EMP and, in some cases the changes being quite obvious, is fracturing our community, unnecessarily. The ARC does not wish to be the “architectural police” but it does have an obligation to apply the rules as written and to apply such rules fairly “all around.”

As a number of residents have observed—some expressing their frustrations vocally—**there has recently been an increasing number of changes made to homes without the required applications being submitted, or approvals acquired.** Some of these have resulted in difficult correspondence between the ARC Committee, the Board, and others amongst homeowners. The latter has resulted in some very hard feelings and understandable resentment throughout the community on the part of those who have carefully abided by the rules, even having to abandon their own plans for changes because they were not approved by the ARC/Board, only to witness changes being made by others with no consequence or apparent respect for other residents. The bottom line is that violations, especially architectural changes and paint colors, which are so very visible, can adversely affect your property value as well as that of your neighbors.

VII. FRIENDLY REMINDER TO ALL RESIDENTS

And so, with apologies for what some may perceive as the bureaucratic nature of it, I send a friendly reminder to all residents and owners and ask for your cooperation as we move forward. Please take a moment to read the following and reacquaint yourself with the rules you agreed to abide by when you bought/moved into Evans Mill Pond.

The EMPOA **Rules and Regulations**, which everyone was expected to read, and sign, at the time of closing on your home/property require that **anyone wishing to make changes to the outside of their home, (i.e., anything that can be seen from the Common Ground, including chimneys, decks, siding, landscaping, lighting) must first get the approval of the Architectural Committee and the Board of Directors, before proceeding.** Procedures and the application form can be found on the EMP website at www.evansmillpond.org . Much of this has been updated from time to time over the past thirty+ years, so it is important to check the website for the latest version. To quote the rules and Regulations:

Rule 3: IMPROVEMENTS AND EXTERIOR CHANGES - Any change or addition to the exterior of the home, or to the landscaping in the area visible to the public, must be approved, in advance, by the EMPOA Board (see Guidelines under Attachment C). This includes, but is not limited to, paint colors, doors, windows, fences, satellite dishes and/or external antennae (see Attachment C and/or E depending on the change), walls, trees, shrubs, grass, flower beds, walks, decks, patios, light fixtures, etc.

This means that no owner can cause modifications to the outside of their property without first getting permission of the Board of Directors, via the ARC. This is a common feature of townhome communities throughout the country and is considered necessary to maintain the look, feel, and property value for all concerned residents/property-owners.

VIII. WHY THE RECENT PROBLEM?

It seems that some of those moving into a HOA-managed community for the first time, including EMP, perhaps have not focused on this requirement, or do not think the rules apply to themselves, even though they are included in the paperwork every new owner is provided and is obligated to sign at the time of Closing.

Consequently, the approach taken by some residents—yes, even some who have lived in EMP for several years--seems to be “*I can’t be bothered with the bureaucracy.*” “*I’ll do whatever I want, without any consideration for the neighbors; what can they do to me anyway?*” The reality is that the Rules and Regulations are not “suggestions” meaning that one cannot do as one pleases. When “you” bought into EMP, “you” agreed to abide by the Rules.

IX. WHAT CAN ARC DO TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

As a result of my research since taking on the role as Chair, and knowing well the history of some of the more problematic changes that have been made, it is my hope that the appointment of a new ARC will provide an opportunity for the members to reach-out and review these issues, in a conversation with residents, with the result being better communications and reestablishment of the special relationships and atmosphere EMP has enjoyed during its long history and which has made it such a special place for the past several decades. EMP is an established community and yes, times change, people move-in and move-out, and there are new ideas and ways of doing things. But, EMP is a Community and we all need to work together, and follow the rules, to keep it special for everyone, including those who move in after us.

X. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

Please keep in mind that ARC is comprised of volunteers who have the same objectives in mind—the maintenance of Evans Mill Pond as a desirable place to live; the maintenance of the value of all our homes; and fostering and encouraging a friendly, neighborly, respectful, and pleasant neighborhood for all residents. Therefore, if you wish to make a change, any change to your house/property, please take a moment to consider your neighbors and “Complete and submit the ARC application form!”

XI. ARC IS HERE TO SERVE YOU... ARC IS NOT THE ENEMY!

The *Architectural Review Committee (ARC)* has been a principle committee of EMPOA since the establishment of the Association in the early eighties, so there is a long history of changes and upgrades made to properties and there is a wealth of knowledge relating to these changes held by some of our longer-term residents. While some of the earlier ARC records are no longer as complete as one would hope, the records have been carefully organized and kept by house number. With a few notable exceptions, the current files are complete and very useful as a reference in terms of citing precedence.

ARC members serve EMP and want to help make the approval process easier for everyone. Our hope is to encourage residents to make improvements to their property, thus bettering their property value and, in turn, that of their neighbors. To this end, ARC is committed to making the application process more user-friendly and to making certain the instructions and deadlines for applications are clear.

Rick Myrland is currently designing a fillable electronic application form, together with a printable version for those who still prefer to print a copy and “complete it by-hand.” We expect this should make it a bit more efficient for everyone. In a pinch, pick-up the phone and call one of us. To help avoid confusion regarding the status of an application, ARC will communicate the Board decision directly to the applicant.

XII. HOW DO I GET IN TOUCH WITH AN ARC MEMBER?

As has been the practice in the past, to the extent possible, current ARC members are scattered within the community, representing the different areas historically referred to as “Front,” “Pond,” “Gazebo,” and “Back.” Contact information for all Committee Members is included in the *Resident List* that is updated a couple of times a year: www.evansmillpond.org. Please remember to inform the Secretary of the Board, currently Susan Arthur (arthurs1@cox.net; 703-288-9495) of any changes to your contact information so important information will continue to reach you.

IN CONCLUSION, it is thanks to the dedication of numerous past members of ARC, Standing-Committees, and the Board of Directors, together with the enthusiasm and cooperation of EMPOA residents, that “*Evans Mill Pond is the best kept secret in McLean.*” Let’s work together to keep it that way!

With thanks, regards, and all best wishes,

Ann Robertson/Chair, ARC