

**AVENEL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL HOMEOWNERS MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 13, 2024**

DRAFT

The counting of proxies commenced at 5:10 p.m. at the TPC Potomac at Avenel Farm.

The regular segment of the 2024 Annual Homeowners Meeting of the Avenel Community Association (ACA) was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Janelle Wright, President of the Board of Directors. Other directors in attendance were: Tim Bender, Cliff Ehrlich, Paul Litvak, and Maureen Scott. Also, in attendance representing the ACA staff were Lucy Wilson, General Manager, Rob Brown, Site Operations Manager, Colby Schlekeway, Community/Compliance Manager, Jenna Hnath, Office Manager, and Fatima Khan, Office Administrator. Representing McFall & Berry were Nicole Henry, Brian Blake, Mark McFall, and Eglia Admete, and representing Comsource Management was Gary Simon.

PROOF OF NOTICE OF MEETING AND PROOF OF QUORUM

General Manager Lucy Wilson confirmed that notice of the meeting had been sent to all homeowners on September 6 and October 10, 2024, as required in the governing documents. A quorum (10% of membership or 90 households) was reached with 152 proxies received, in addition to the homeowners in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Wright announced that the 2023 annual meeting minutes had been posted on the community webpage and that all owners should have a copy of the draft 2023 Annual Meeting minutes. She requested a motion for approval. By motion made, seconded, and carried, the minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting were approved as written.

TREASURER'S ADDRESS

Vice President/Treasurer Maureen Scott presented the Treasurer's Report, which provided a financial overview, reporting from the most recent audited financial statements. She noted the impact of the county's upcoming ban on gas blowers and the continued annual increase in minimum wage on assessments, as reflected in the 2025 budget. She explained that the budget and audited financial reports are always available in the ACA office for homeowners to review.

ELECTIONS

Ms. Wright explained the role of the Board of Directors and reviewed the election process. She explained that two positions were currently open on the Board, and the two current Board members were running unopposed for these positions as listed on the ballot, previously mailed to all residents. It was explained that each Director serves a 2-year term. Ms. Wright called for and received no further nominations from the floor. Nominations were closed. Ms. Wright then introduced the two returning candidates listed on the ballot alphabetically, and each made a brief statement. A motion was made, seconded, and carried to accept the slate of Directors, Tim Bender and Mauren Scott, by acclamation.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Ms. Wright introduced the Board of Directors and thanked the many dedicated volunteers who contribute to the Avenel community, acknowledging those from the various committees. She encouraged residents to consider contributing their time and expertise by volunteering in some capacity. She particularly acknowledged the Modifications Committee for its significant workload in

processing 192 applications this year, urging residents to submit modification requests prior to making changes and noting the potential implementation of fees for those who apply after commencement or completion of an exterior modification.

Ms. Wright recognized the contributions of the Avenel staff, emphasizing their commitment to the community and introducing the new Site Operations Manager, Rob Brown, who brings extensive experience as the previous Branch Manager for McFall & Berry at Avenel. Also recognized was McFall & Berry staff and Gary Simon, who has replaced Tony Martella as the Association's financial manager.

Key accomplishments of the past year were highlighted, including the Avenel Alligators Swim Team's win of the Division C Championship and well-attended community events like the Fourth of July Bike Parade and Halloween Trunk or Treat, which have continued to grow thanks to the Social Committee, Avenel staff, and event sponsors. Ms. Wright encouraged residents to consider volunteering for future events.

Challenges were also outlined, notably WSSC's closure of the Equestrian Center, unsolved home break-ins, and inflationary pressure on the budget.

Ms. Wright then presented slides detailing the 2025 budget increase and the impact of the gas blower ban. She outlined the Association's and McFall & Berry's plans to comply with the new law while maintaining the high quality of landscape services. She also addressed the challenges involved in following the new ban before opening the floor to questions.

➤ **A resident asked if McFall & Berry would share in the costs of complying with the gas blower ban.**

Ms. Wilson explained that McFall & Berry will incur additional costs associated with transitioning to electric blowers and that the cost of new equipment to be utilized exclusively in Avenel will be purchased by McFall and Berry, with Avenel paying over an amortized period. She noted that the landscape contract includes a provision for adjustments if applicable laws change during the contract term.

➤ **A resident asked where the sea container to store batteries would be located.**

Ms. Wilson shared that the sea container is planned to be placed in the landscape yard, subject to county permitting approval.

➤ **A resident asked whether the Association plans to purchase or rent the sea container.**

Ms. Wilson stated that McFall and Berry will purchase the sea container and Avenel will pay/lease to amortize the cost over time. She noted that if the landscape contract ends, a portion of the amortized cost may be applied towards purchase, at the discretion of the Association.

➤ **A resident asked a follow-up question about cost sharing with McFall & Berry.**

Ms. Wilson explained that much of McFall & Berry's equipment is stored on-site and used exclusively for Avenel. She added that the labor resources operating the equipment are also dedicated to Avenel.

➤ **Mark McFall commented that DC currently has a gas blower ban in place, so McFall & Berry has experience adapting to such regulations, although not at the scale of a community the size of Avenel.**

- **A resident asked if electric leaf blowers are quieter than gas powered ones.**

Ms. Wilson explained that even though part of the law's intent was to reduce noise, in her opinion, electric blowers are not significantly quieter than gas blowers. They emit a different type sound, and the level of noise is also conditioned on the power of the electric blower. Additionally, because electric blowers are less powerful, they take longer to clear leaves compared to gas-powered ones.

- **A resident asked if the guidelines for tree removals would change.**

Ms. Wilson answered that guidelines addressing tree removals already exist and the decision to allow tree removals is decided on a case-by-case basis.

- **A resident inquired about EV recharging stations for cars.**

Ms. Wilson noted that most homes in Avenel are single-family homes with garages capable of accommodating charging stations. She added that the Association has guidelines for electric vehicle recharging stations.

Shifting focus to public safety, Ms. Wright reviewed a few incidents that occurred earlier this year and steps the Association and residents can take to improve safety. She highlighted the Association's ongoing efforts to improve safety, including continued communication with the police, attendance at Secure Potomac meetings, successful campaigning for additional streetlights on Persimmon Tree Road, and advocacy for additional tools like license plate readers. She encouraged residents to reach out to their elected officials and express support for the police and increased staffing. She then opened the floor to questions.

- **A resident asked about the possibility of installing license plate readers.**

Ms. Wilson explained that the Association has requested permission from the Department of Transportation (DoT) to place the readers in public rights-of-way, as recommended by the police. However, the county indicated they could only be installed on private streets, which are all interior. She added that the County and Montgomery County Council President Friedson are still investigating this issue.

- **A resident inquired about hiring private security.**

Ms. Wright reminded residents that Avenel's surveillance patrol is intended to act as a deterrent and is not a replacement for the police. She noted that hiring private security would be expensive due to the size of the community, and it is unclear how much added security would be needed to make a significant impact.

- **Another resident suggested hiring off-duty police officers to patrol during random hours.**

Ms. Wright advised that the current rates are close to \$100 per hour. Ms. Wilson further noted that the Association's liability insurance carrier would cancel its policy if armed security or off-duty police were hired. Ms. Wright encouraged residents to contact their elected officials and advocate for increased police staffing.

- **A resident asked if exterior cameras are allowed.**

Ms. Wilson confirmed that exterior cameras are permitted with modification application and approval. She encouraged the resident to submit a Modification Application, which Association staff can approve in-house for a quick turnaround.

Regarding the Avenel Equestrian Center, Ms. Wright detailed ongoing efforts to address WSSC's decision to terminate the operator's lease and the broader implications for the community. She reviewed the history of agreements governing the property, actions taken by stakeholders, and the Association's efforts, along with the Potomac Region Preservation Committee, to advocate for the facility's preservation and restoration. Ms. Wright highlighted key initiatives, including an independent engineering study commissioned by the ACA; the launch of a dedicated website, potomacpreservation.com, to provide information and updates on the issue; the developer's call for the formation of the Coordinating Committee as contemplated in the 1984 Avenel Farm Master Agreement; and the resurrection of the Avenel Equestrian Center Council (AECC).

➤ **A resident asked what an RFI is.**

Ms. Wright explained that an RFI is a Request for Information and typically precedes a Request for Proposal (RFP).

➤ **A resident asked whether WSSC acknowledges the dispute resolution process in the 1984 Avenel Farm Master Agreement.**

Ms. Wright replied that WSSC has not yet, but a letter was sent to them just last week.

➤ **A resident inquired about the current status of Nancy Evans, the Equestrian Center operator.**

Ms. Wilson responded that to the best of her knowledge, WSSC's current extension of Ms. Evan's licensing agreement runs through June 1, 2025.

Ms. Wright closed her remarks by encouraging residents to remain informed and engaged with community matters, expressing confidence in Avenel's continued strength and its position as one of Montgomery County's most sought-after communities.

OLD BUSINESS / OPEN OWNER FORUM

➤ **A resident asked for an update on airplane noise.**

Ms. Wright informed residents that approach paths changed in July 2024, resulting in increased dispersal of flights. She suggested that residents use WebTrak to monitor flight paths and noise levels.

➤ **A resident asked if all aircraft could fly over the Potomac River.**

Ms. Wright responded that some do, but the current approach likely represents the best achievable outcome.

➤ **An owner thanked the association for installing new pickleball nets and clearing leaves from his garden but raised concerns about a denied modification application.**

Ms. Wilson advised the resident that he may appeal the committee's decision and provide supporting examples. She added that the Modifications Committee considers many factors in its decisions.

➤ **A resident noted increased flyovers in the past month that disappeared and then returned.**

Ms. Wright explained that these patterns are influenced by the weather, adding that the community is generally more affected by aircraft approaches than departures.

- **A resident inquired if data exists about potentially more flights at DCA.**
Ms. Wright stated that DCA is operating at capacity, with growth occurring at BWI and IAD.
- **A resident raised concerns about landscaping surrounding the TPC pond encroaching on private property.**
Rob explained that the pond and surrounding landscaping are the responsibility of the TPC. He has met with TPC management and is working with them to address the issue.
- **Ms. Woorman, resident and Maryland State Delegate, shared that she had texted County Executive Elrich during the meeting, who affirmed his commitment to continuing to make benefits for the county police a priority.**
- **A resident mentioned that the TPC pond aerator was cycling on and off.**
Lucy explained that this is due to the lack of rain, as the aerator requires a higher water table to function properly.
- **A resident referenced a community email reminding residents to water their lawns after aeration/seeding and asked how the Association is addressing common areas.**
Lucy responded that most common areas lack irrigation, with few exceptions. While the association is watering plant material, it is not watering grass and has contracted with McFall & Berry to supplement as needed.
- **A resident asked if there's a way to monitor weather conditions to reduce the need for additional watering.**
Lucy noted that the current conditions are unusually dry but affirmed that fall is the optimal time for aeration and seeding.
- **A resident asked if the Association oversees McFall and Berry's work, citing a few specific examples.**
Lucy thanked the resident and encouraged him to get Rob's contact information and reach out as needed.
- **A resident asked the Association's views on the TPC's planned restoration project.**
Lucy shared that ACA management attended the TPC's public meeting and at that time, it appeared that the project is unlikely to significantly impact the community.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

A social hour followed.