

# Walden Woods News

January 2005



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WALDEN WOODS NEWS is a monthly publication produced and distributed by homeowner volunteers for the edification and enjoyment of all Walden Woods homeowners. Questions, ideas and news contributions may be submitted to any member of the Communication Committee: Bob or Polly Ellis (688-5949), Ruth Johnson (688-5128), or Joe Sikora (219-0713).

## A LOOK BACK AT 2004

*In keeping with all the great periodicals at this time of the year, we offer a look back at those events of 2004 that affected our community:*

**February** - Meetings with Windsor police result in a promise of increased patrols and a Neighborhood Watch program being established in Walden Woods.

**March** - Windsor's Town Planning & Zoning Commission approves New Jersey developer Garden Homes' proposed plan to build 180 owner-occupied units in Walden Woods. The approval marks the end of a long three and a half year battle between POWW (People of Walden Woods), and Garden Homes over the density and type of homes to be constructed. The original plan called for 240 units, of which 160 were to be rental apartments.

**April** - The Board of Directors terminates our property management contract with Whitney Management and replaces them with Elite Property Management in Farmington.

**May** - A Superior Court judge rules in favor of POWW's suit against Culbro to have homeowners assume control of the association. The suit is filed after the developer fails to comply with the declaration's control requirement of building at least one additional unit every two years. The judge rules that the "garage unit" constructed near the pool parking area the previous July did not qualify as the type of unit defined in the declaration.

**July** - Homeowners hold a meeting to elect their first homeowner-controlled Board of Directors. The Board consists of five representatives, two from the Woodmoor Council and three from the Village Council.

### A THANK YOU FROM THE BOARD

To all you volunteers who stepped forward to serve on a committee in 2004, the Board would like to extend our deep appreciation not only for getting involved in your community but for doing such a superb job. Whatever progress was made this past year, it was because of your efforts. On behalf of the entire community, THANK YOU! We look forward to your continued help and support in 2005.

-continued on page 2

## A Look Back (cont'd)

**July (cont'd)** As their first act, The Board conducts a special meeting to establish a group of pro-active committees to help them manage the community: Standards (nee Covenant Control and the only autonomous committee), Communication, Landscape, Document Revision, Meeting House, Environment/Pond, Finance, and Recreation/Social. Twenty-six volunteers step forward to serve as members of the various committees.

**August** - Through the efforts and direction of Bette Harner and her committee members, the Meeting House is completely re-furbished with new paint, carpeting and upholstery. Plans are developed to offset ongoing maintenance expenses by making the facility available to rent for homeowner-sponsored events.

**September** - The first community newsletter is published by the Communication Committee.

**October** - Eight homeowners volunteer to serve on Walden Woods' first Welcome Committee. Members organize informative material about the community and the town and begin making visits to welcome new homeowners and present the material.

**December** - The Recreation/Social Committee hosts a holiday party (*see photo on page 4*) at the meeting house, marking the first ever strictly social gathering of Walden Woods homeowners. Approximately 70 residents attend.

The Board of Directors approves the 2005 budget, prepared by the Finance Committee and Property Manager. The approval follows two workshops in which homeowners provide input.

Tree cutting begins on Parcel C as the first preparatory step to the construction of 180 new homes in Walden Woods). ♦



*Walden Woods' Newest "Resident"*

### JOKE OF THE YEAR

A tour bus driver drives with a bus full of seniors down a highway, when a little old lady taps him on his shoulder.

She offers him a handful of almonds, and he gratefully munches down the nuts.

After approx. 15 minutes, she taps him on his shoulder again and she hands him another handful of almonds.

She repeats this gesture about eight times.

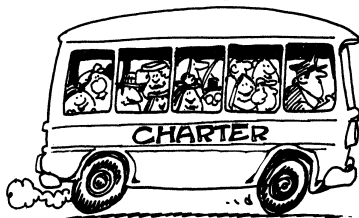
At the ninth time he asks the little old lady why they do not eat the almonds themselves, whereupon she replies that it is not possible because of their old teeth, they are not able to chew them.

"Why do you buy them then?" he asks puzzled.

Where upon the old lady answers,

"We just love the chocolate around them."

*(Editors note: yech!!!!!!)*



# WALDEN WOODS BUDGET

## Q and A

Based on questions raised at the Budget Workshops in December and in various e-mail correspondence, it's obvious many of us need a primer on the financial governing of Walden Woods. The following answers to frequently asked questions have been provided by Walden Woods homeowner and historian Warren Johnson.

**How is our budget organized?** Walden Woods has three separate budgets: (1) the Conservancy Budget, (2) the Village/Knoll Budget, and (3) the Ridge Budget. The separate budgets are necessary because the level of services to homeowners in Walden Woods is different.

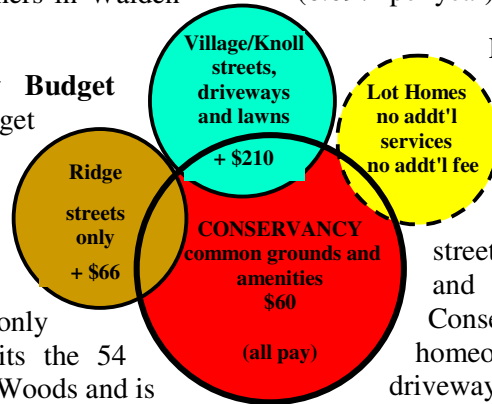
**What does the Conservancy Budget cover?** The Conservancy Budget covers the expenses of the common areas, such as the pool, the tennis court and the Walden Meadow Road entrance, which benefit all 156 existing homes. The Conservancy Budget is the only budget of the three that benefits the 54 owners of Lot Homes in Walden Woods and is the only budget in which Lot homeowners participate. Lot homeowners live on public streets and maintain their own lawns, driveways, walks and foundation plantings.

**How has the Conservancy Budget changed?** The Conservancy budget was first adopted in 1990 with each of the then 77 unit owners (including Culbro) paying \$23.25 per month. For the start of 2005, there will be 156 homes participating in the Conservancy Budget at \$60 per month each. The new rate means we have had an average annual increase of \$2.30 (9.89% per year) in the monthly charge since 1990. When the construction is complete in Walden Woods there will be 336 homes participating in the Conservancy Budget.

**What's different about the Village/Knoll?** The 72 homeowners living in the On the Green and Knoll areas receive additional services that Lot homeowners do not. These areas have private streets with private street lighting that receive maintenance and replacement service as do their lawns and driveways. These 72 homeowners participate in both the Conservancy Budget and the Village/Knoll Budget because they benefit from both.

**How has the Village/Knoll Budget changed?** The Village/Knoll Budget was also first adopted in 1990. Each homeowner paid \$113.50 per month in addition to the \$23.25 per month for the Conservancy Budget for a total monthly payment of \$136.75.

For the start of 2005, the combined Conservancy and Village/Knoll budgets require those homeowners to make monthly payments of \$270 each. That represents an average annual increase of \$8.33 (6.09% per year) in monthly payments since 1990



**How about The Ridge?** The 30 homeowners in the Ridge area receive a level of service greater than the Lot homeowners but less than the Village and Knoll homeowners. The streets and street lights in the Ridge area are private and must be maintained by the Conservancy. However, Ridge homeowners must maintain their driveways, walks and lawns on their own. Ridge homeowners participate in both the Conservancy Budget and the Ridge Budget because they benefit from both.

The Ridge Budget was first adopted in 1994 with each homeowner paying \$35 per month in addition to the \$30 per month of the Conservancy Budget in that year for a total monthly payment of \$65. For the start of 2005 the combined Conservancy Budget and Ridge Budget require Ridge homeowners to make monthly payments of \$126. That's an average annual increase of \$7.58 in monthly fees since 1994 or 11.67% per year.

**Why the recent accelerated increases?** Although the common charge history discloses a steep rate of increase, the increase can be attributable to the original charges that were artificially low and previously subsidized by Culbro and other developers.

**What now?** Looking forward, budgeting will be further complicated by the addition of the Town Homes and Duplex Homes planned for completion of the Walden Woods development. These new homes will receive another level of service unique from existing homes and therefore require their own budget. However, a wider spreading of the Conservancy Budget among all the 336 homes that will eventually comprise the Walden Woods community **has the potential for reducing the monthly Conservancy Budget charges to existing homeowners.** ♦

## MEET THE HOLBROOKS



It took a long, roundabout journey to get here and some intervention from mother fate, but Mette and Kent Holbrook finally arrived in Walden Woods this past October. Still unpacking boxes in

their Pond Bridge home after living in Salt Lake City, Houston, Bossier City (Louisiana), Salt Lake City (again), Pembroke (New Hampshire), Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Austin, Texas, the Holbrooks are hopeful they've found a place to settle.

Fate has played a curious role in their lives. Kent, whose ancestors migrated from Massachusetts to Salt Lake City soon after Brigham Young's historic trip in 1847, has been a Mormon all his life. In 1977, after volunteering for missionary service, he was assigned by his Church to serve the two years in Denmark. Mette, who was born and raised in Denmark, had migrated to California when she was 17. In 1977, she was visiting her parents in Denmark when she met Kent at a Mormon Church function. And the rest, as they say, is history.

While they appear to have been searching for Walden Woods for a long time, the truth is that much of their nomadic life has been due to some bad luck (fate?). Originally, a geophysicist, Kent pursued a Masters Degree in finance after the oil companies he worked for in Texas and Louisiana ran into some tough times and no longer needed his services. He ran into similar problems working as an actuary for various companies elsewhere before landing the same job with Mass Mutual Life Insurance in Hartford.

During their travels, Metta and Kent still managed to raise a family. Their son Niels, 21, is now pursuing a degree in engineering at the University of Missouri

while daughter Gerda, 18, is living and working in St. Louis (the Holbrooks home for five years) while she decides about college. The family had a reunion over the holidays and get together as often as possible.

If anyone in the community would like to know a little more about your "family tree", give Mette a call. She has been using genealogy both as a hobby and vocation for a long time and has many resources to help trace family histories. Her multi-lingual skills, developed out of necessity growing up in Denmark, are also an asset. Tell her you want the Walden Woods discount.

And if anyone wants a mountain climbing "buddy", call Kent. But not if you're thinking Mt. Washington is a mountain. Although respectful of its severe weather conditions, Kent considers that a hill. He has climbed a number of mountains out west, including Mt. Rainier in Washington.

Adventurous, educated, perseverant, and cheerful. Say hello to the Holbrooks. Welcome to Walden Woods Mette and Kent. ♦



*Neighbors gather at the first annual Walden Woods Holiday Party at the Meeting House on December 10th.*

**NEXT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**Wednesday, January 26th @7:30**