

DEEP CREEK DISPATCH

Winter 2007

Newsletter of the
Property Owners' Association
of Deep Creek Lake, Incorporated

Membership and POA Activities

POA membership at 2006 year-end totaled 1,385, which represented an increase of 136 members during 2006. To let lake area property owners who are not yet members of the POA know about our organization and encourage them to join, this edition of *The Dispatch* has been sent to our entire lake area property owner mailing list. However, the remainder of the 2007 issues will go only to dues paying members and to those potential new members who have purchased lake area properties since the prior edition of *The Dispatch*.

We are a not-for-profit corporation, with a board of directors who are property owners from all areas of the lake. Some of our members are seasonal residents, others live at the lake year-round, and some represent the lake business community. The POA has been in existence for almost 70 years and we have representatives on the Deep Creek Lake governing board (Policy & Review Board).

Most of the POA Board members are full time residents with the ability to devote significant time to attending the meetings of County government boards and regulatory agency hearings. Our objective is to represent the interests of Deep Creek property owners with these governmental and regulatory agencies and to assure clear communication and flow of information. We act as the voice of the property owners, many of who are not permanent residents of Garrett County and are unable to devote the required time to this task.

We hold two general membership meetings each summer with governmental officials in attendance (County Commissioners, State House and Senate

members, and State regulatory agency management including DNR and MDE). Our membership is strongly encouraged to attend these meetings and provide input and opinions to these government leaders and regulators. We also use these meetings (along with quarterly editions of *The Dispatch*) to inform and update our members on items of interest. We encourage the active involvement of all members who have the time and interest to serve on POA committees and as Board members; but for those members who are not able to be fully involved, our job is to represent you.

Your 2007 POA dues notice has been included in this issue along with a return envelope. Just complete the form and mail it with your check for \$30 to the POA, PO Box 816, McHenry, MD 21541 using the enclosed envelope.

Some members have already paid for 2007. To determine if you have paid for 2007, just check the mailing label on this issue of *The Dispatch*. The number after your name is the last year for which you paid POA dues.

2007 POA Meeting Schedule

The 2007 POA General Meetings will be held on Saturday June 23rd and Saturday August 25th. Both meetings are at 8:30 am at the Garrett 8 Cinema. Please mark your calendar and attend. It is a great opportunity to meet Garrett County and State of Maryland officials, DNR management, and your POA Board Members. Items of interest to Deep Creek property owners will be discussed and the floor is always open to questions or comments from our members.

2007 Garrett County United Way Campaign

The local United Way Campaign is underway and contribution materials and information are enclosed with this newsletter. The POA Board of Directors has endorsed this charity and encourages POA members to contribute. To obtain United Way funds, an agency must provide data showing specific benefit to Garrett County residents. The supported agencies and their program descriptions are listed in the enclosed information. The United Way and the POA Board appreciate your past support and urge you to continue your support. Please fill out the enclosed United Way form and send your contribution to the United Way in the enclosed postage paid envelope. The money given in Garrett County stays in Garrett County. Thank you.

Property Assessments

The year-end summary of the 2006 Garrett County property assessments resulted in a newspaper article in early January which proclaimed that "Reassessed Garrett Properties Lowest Average In State". While true, it must be understood that 2006 was the one year out of every three that does not include lake area properties. In 2007, the reassessment schedule will include lake area properties south of the US-219 bridge and in 2008 the lake area properties north of the US-219 bridge are included. Then again in 2009, areas such as Friendsville, Grantsville, Finzel, and Bloomington are reassessed as was done in 2006. Deep Creek Lake property values and therefore property assessments will undoubtedly continue to increase in the next reassessment although probably at a slightly lower rate than in the past because of a slower real estate market.

All properties in Garrett County (and the rest of Maryland) are reassessed every 3 years by the local branch of the State Assessors Office. Property owners are notified of the results of the reassessment in early January. The reassessments conducted during 2007 will become effective on January 1, 2008 and are the basis for the tax bill issued on July 1, 2008. If an assessment increases, the increase is phased in over 3 years at 1/3 of the increase per year.

Electricity Rate Increase Plan

In 1999, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation to deregulate the generation of electricity. This legislation required that Allegheny Power residential customers receive a generation rate reduction of about 7% and a cap was placed on the reduced generation rate (\$0.04065/kwh) from January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2008. When the cap is removed in January 2009, a large increase in the generation rate is expected based on significant increases in coal prices (+43%) and natural gas prices (+71%) which have occurred since the cap was imposed. Allegheny Power has begun an informational campaign to alert all customers to the probable increase in the generation rate which could be +100% or more.

In response to customer concerns, Allegheny Power has proposed that they increase rates 15% annually for the next four years beginning in April 2007. This would build a savings account from April 2007 to December 2008 and then the savings account would be used in 2009 and 2010 to help offset the increased rate. The over payments received before the January 2009 actual rate increase date would be placed in an account which would earn 5% interest but which would be maintained as a lump sum and not by customer. Therefore, the customer who pays ahead and then moves out of the area does not get any refund and the new customer who moves in gets the full benefit of other customers' contributions.

The Maryland Public Service Commission held a hearing at Garrett College on January 22nd to receive citizen input on the Allegheny Power proposal. If approved by the PSC, the increases would be mandatory for all customers and not optional by customer. Despite snow and bad roads and a light attendance, those present were very outspoken in their objections to the proposal. The biggest objection was that the funds accrual was not by customer but would be held as a lump. Others objected to the legality of forcing all customers to pay more than the approved rate with no certainty that each individual customer who paid into the fund would get their excess payments back. Most of the attendees said that while they understand the magnitude of the probable increase, they would prefer to manage their

own finances rather than having Allegheny Power “help” to manage them. The PSC members did not express any opinions or even speculate on a timetable for their decision. Undoubtedly if the PSC approves this plan, lawsuits from various citizen’s rights groups in Maryland will follow.

Garrett Hospital Foundation

The Garrett County Memorial Hospital Foundation has launched a funds drive for capital improvements at the hospital. Hospital records show that patient visits from the Lake area and part time residents exceed 8,000 visits to GCMH annually. Many of you received a mailing in early December from the GCMH Foundation asking for support and introducing the “Life Savers Club.” If you didn’t and want to help, please call (301) 533-4178 for information. Checks to the GCMH Foundation (which are tax deductible) can be sent to GCMH Foundation, 251 North Fourth Street, Oakland, MD 21550. While we all hope that we won’t need hospital care while at the lake, it is good to know that the GCMH facilities are available if we need to use them. The POA Board urges your support.

2007 Lake Area Cultural Events

The Spring issue of *The Dispatch* (mid-May) will contain the complete lake area cultural event schedule for 2007 but for your advanced planning listed below are some events currently scheduled through May.

GLAF (Call 301-387-3082 for Tickets and Information; Cost Adult/Student): **March 16th—The Ultimate Talent Show**, Garrett College Auditorium, 8:00 pm, \$7/\$7; **April 14th—Fiddlekicks**, Garrett College Auditorium, 7:30 pm, \$15/\$7; **May 12th—Preservation Hall Jazz Band**, Lodge at Wisp, 7:30 pm, \$25/\$7.

Our Town Theatre (Call 301-334-5640 for Tickets and Information): **March 8th to 10th** (8:00 pm) and **March 11th** (2:00 pm)—**Grace and Glory**; **May 5th** (8:00 pm) **OTT Celebrates El Cinco de Mayo** (fundraiser); **May 23rd to 26th** (8:00 pm) and **May 27th** (2:00 pm)—**Everybody Loves Opal** (a

family play). Tickets for Friday and Saturday are \$8; other days are \$5.

Garrett Choral Society (Tickets at Gregg’s Pharmacy or from Choral Society members; call 301-387-4624 for further information): **March 31st** (8 pm) and **April 1st** (2 pm)—**Mozart’s Requiem** (the musical score from the movie *Amadeus*) (St. Paul’s United Methodist Church)

Garrett Community Concert Band (Tickets from Band members or at the door; call 301-387-3127 or 301-387-6463 for further information): **May 5th or May 6th—Spring Concert At Wisp** (check in early April for final date and time).

Excessive Boat Noise

Each summer, excessive boat noise is a frequent subject of discussion but nothing seems to happen to quiet the noisy boats. The DNR has stated that they know that boat noise is a concern but that they do not receive any official complaints. To establish a record at the DNR so that we can get them to act, we need to have property owners call the DNR when the noise occurs to record their complaint. In the spring issue of *The Dispatch*, we will have complete instructions for reporting excessive boat noise and by building a record of complaints, we should be able to force action to improve the situation.

Thousand Acres Golf Clubhouse

Judge Jim Sherbin of the Garrett County Circuit Court has halted the proposed clubhouse at the lakeside 18-hole golf course at Thousand Acres (on the north shore of Green Glade Cove, opposite Hazelhurst). The clubhouse had been approved by a 5-0 vote of the Deep Creek Zoning Appeals Board but a civil lawsuit was brought by a group of residents in the area of the golf course. The primary complaint in the lawsuit was that the Zoning Board had not properly considered the noise levels of the clubhouse with its location near the lake and with outside seating. The Thousand Acres Development Inc. group must now reapply to the Zoning Board after considering other locations for the clubhouse and addressing the noise concerns.

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Dove Center Domestic Violence Programs

The Dove Center was founded 15 years ago to help victims of domestic violence in Garrett County. Through its work, many residents have learned that help is available and have taken shelter in the existing home. As a result of the Center's success, additional facilities are now needed and recently an op-

portunity to purchase a highly desirable facility has surfaced. To assist with this purchase, a Capital Funds Committee has been established and is planning a fundraising campaign. State and federal grants will leverage the money raised by the campaign. More information on this project may be obtained by calling the Dove Center at 301-334-6255. Campaign contributions may be sent to the Dove Center at PO Box 402, Oakland, MD 21550.