



# The Lakes Communicator

May 2023 Edition

## President's Message – Charlene Carson

### April 2023 Quarterly Membership Meeting - A Recap

I'd like to start this month's message by acknowledging the time and effort put forth by Debbie Wolcott, our Treasurer, and Jackie DiVincent, Finance Committee Co-chair, in preparing and presenting an in-depth analysis of the financial status of our association at the April quarterly membership meeting. These individuals spent countless hours gathering the information, preparing and refining the presentation for the membership. THANKS FOR A JOB WELL DONE to both Debbie & Jackie!!

While the allotted meeting time did not allow the various committee members to present their reports, THANKS to Bill Vesely and Michele Ferrante for their efforts on behalf of the community.

Bill chairs the Beautification Committee; he most recently coordinated and conducted a "Plant or Donate A Flower" event. The event was short on participants, special THANKS to the homeowners who come out for the event. Bill will have more in his article later in this publication.

Michele chairs the Social Committee and once again organized an Easter Egg Hunt for the children/grandchildren of The Lakes community residents. Her dedicated committee volunteers filled and hid eggs and prepared activities for the children to enjoy. Of course, the big hit of the afternoon was the appearance of the Easter Bunny!!

On to the other topics, Sadly, the hot topic is once again (or continues to be) speeding and running stop signs in the community. These instances have escalated to a new level, in both the frequency and aggressive behaviors being demonstrated by the offenders. PLEASE DO NOT confront speeders or vehicles failing to stop at the stop signs. Try to get a license plate number and a general description of the vehicle and report it to the Horry County Police Department at their non-emergency number 843-248-1520. We are working with the Horry County Tactical Traffic unit to get officers into the Lakes community and ticket the offenders, however their resources are very limited. This unit has 6 officers for the ENTIRE county!

POOLS – The Lakes community has 2 independently owned and operated pools. The LRC was started in the earliest days of the community by a group of Lakes homeowners. It continues to be owned,

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governed, and managed by its own Board and sets its own fees and membership rules.

The LAC is owned by the developer – RS Parker – and is currently managed by LITUS.

Once more – these are separate entities, not owned, not operated, not managed and most importantly, not funded by the Lakes Property Owners Association.

Questions concerning either of these pools should be directed to the LRC Board or to LITUS as the management company for RS Parker.

Information and documents related to the Lakes Property Owners Association can be found on the official Lakes website – Frontsteps (<https://thelakes.us/>). Currently, there is a project underway to reorganize the document section so that all frequently requested information will be more easily accessible to the homeowners. Keep reading this issue for more details.

The Board and committees continue to develop and document materials that will be handed over to future Boards. We continue to maintain our vigilance, especially where it impacts spending, and are committed to improving the overall operation of the association. As I said in my April message – we are traveling on a journey of change, one that is measured not in days or weeks, but months or perhaps years. Change happens slowly – I hope you will join me on this journey as we work to move The Lakes community forward.

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## Community News & Updates

### Trash, Trash and More Trash

The trash in the picture below is two weeks of litter picked up by one person who graciously stopped and picked up trash on Swan Lake Drive over the last two weeks. *First*, please don't litter! *Second*, please stop and pick up litter and debris along our roads and common areas. The Lakes does not have a sanitation department or committee who stops and picks up trash when people are littering. The responsibility lays with the community to prevent littering and where we see debris to pick it up.

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## The Lakes Website – Document Location Reorganized

We ARE listening!

If you've been challenged, maybe even frustrated, when looking for information on The Lakes website (<https://thelakes.us/>), relief is on its way! While there will continue to be multiple pages of information folders available on the website, a reorganization is underway that will have the most commonly reviewed topics presented on the first page.

Documents like the ACC forms, Annual and Board meeting minutes, Charters, and Financial Reports to name a few, are examples of what will be located on the first page. Each document "page" can display up to 12 folders.

This reorganization will be a two-step process - moving the folders is the easy part! Then, the contents of each folder will be reviewed, and a naming convention will be applied so that the information is logically sequenced for easier searching/viewing. Also, if anything was inadvertently misfiled, the document will be moved to its appropriate folder.

The reorganization of the folder placement on the website is expected to be completed by the end of the month (April), The review and implementation of a naming convention within each folder will take some additional time. All the information will continue to be available throughout the process.

Please continue to check ALL the pages of documents available if you do not find what you need on page one. Requests to have documents moved to "Page One" status can be sent to POALAKES@gmail.com and will be considered until such time as the page is FULL (maximum 12 folders).

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## ALLIGATORS

General Information: Alligator activity is highest between the months of April and June; this is their mating season. While alligators are not normally aggressive toward humans, unprovoked attacks do occur. Most attacks occur in water; however, they can just as easily take place on land.

It is against the law in South Carolina to feed or harass alligators. "Harassment" is legally considered to be any action(s) that interrupts the animal's "normal behavior pattern" – including feeding!! This causes them to lose their natural fear of humans. Anyone violating SC Code 50-11-750 is guilty of a misdemeanor and maybe fined and/or imprisoned.

The Board has a responsibility to the community to take necessary steps to keep the community safe. We follow the guidelines and directives of SCDNR on alligator removal. Tags must be procured from SCDNR (it can take between 3-7 days to receive tags and they come with expiration dates) and only authorized individuals may be engaged to remove the alligators. There is a minimum size (4 feet) for an alligator to be removed.

Please report any alligator sightings to Karen (ktucker@litustolet.com; 843-448-9000 ext.129) providing the location of the alligator (lake name and relative location (house address)).

Continue to be aware of your surroundings, especially when alligators are present. Be particularly vigilant when small children and pets are near the water.

**PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE ALLIGATORS!!**

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## Google Map Update

The POA has contacted Google to help update their services to direct non property owners who are attempting to navigate to a location in the newer sections of the development or the older section of Saluda River Road. To date, the outreach has not been successful. This does NOT impact emergency services, US Mail or Postal Services, but would impact everyday personal users who use Google Maps or Apple Maps. If you are experiencing issues where the directions are routing your guests to the portion of the road with jersey barriers the best way to help your visitors navigate to your home is to use the Murrells Inlet zip code of 29576.

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## Noise Complaints

The POA has been made aware of several noise complaints involving property owners, contractors, and builders. The Horry County Police are the only agency who has authority to issue noise citations or tickets. The POA cannot stop or intervene with any noise violations at the time they are occurring. They can speak to the builder if the issue is with them.

- If you feel comfortable, attempt to speak to the person making the noise and ask them to reduce the noise.
  - If the issue is with a builder, please send an email to Karen Tucker @ [ktucker@litustolet.com](mailto:ktucker@litustolet.com) and contact the Horry County Non-Emergency Police Number 843-248-1520 to report the issue.
  - If the issue is with a contractor or neighbor, please contact the Horry County Non-Emergency Police Number 843-248-1520 to report the issue.
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## Please Volunteer!

We are continually looking for volunteers. We have been asked to provide details on some specific skills for some open opportunities but please contact Karen @ LITUS if you have interest in volunteering in any way. We can partner you with a committee or volunteer who can help provide you with insight on what the roles or options might be and how you can help.

ACC Chairperson: Look for someone with the following skills...

- Good interpersonal skills – interact with residents/contractors.
- Good negotiation skills

- Strong leadership/organizational skills
- Ability to delegate tasks and do follow up.
- Schedule and conduct review meetings
- Provide updates (verbally and in writing) to the Board and the community
- Awareness of ACC form usage and guidelines
- Technical, have a computer (nice, not required), have multi-function printer for scanning (nice, not required)
- Good to intermediate knowledge of Word, Excel
- Good knowledge of email function (Gmail) and usage

We are currently looking for someone to become the chairperson of the ACC, feel free to contact us at the phone number below or at [thelakesacc@gmail.com](mailto:thelakesacc@gmail.com) or Robert White, 843-251-7625 ACC Chairperson



## Committee Updates

### **Beautification Committee,** by Bill Vesely

The Beautification Committee hosted the first annual Plant a Flower event on April 15<sup>th</sup>. There were 15 Residents who donated flowers and 8 residents who planted flowers. Thank you to all the volunteers who donated and planted plants!

If anyone forgot to drop plants off and or has some flowers, they would still like to donate contact Bill to drop them off.

HUGE Thank YOU to our Poop Station volunteers! Our neighbors are spending their free time emptying out the poop stands to help save the POA money.

If you are interested in being added to the list of Community Members who would be willing to be contacted to help during a cleanup event, please send an email to [lakesbeautification@gmail.com](mailto:lakesbeautification@gmail.com) .

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### **Communication Committee,** by Co-Chairs: Barbara Cardinal and Jeri Mathur

The Communication Committee has decided to pause the efforts for a Lakes Communication Survey. The Committee was unable to find a method, outside of an e-survey and paper mail survey, that would ensure all Property Owners would have access to the survey. The additional cost of mailing a survey was determined not to be an expense the would be well received at the time. The Committee will explore other opportunities like

in-person meetings, or surveys at in person quarterly meetings, office hours or similar to continue to find ways to improve or enhance community communication.

Please remember you can always submit ideas for review by the Communication Committee by sending an email to Karen @ [ktucker@litustolet.com](mailto:ktucker@litustolet.com) .

### **Finance Committee – By Debbie Wolcott**

The Power Point presentation from the Quarterly Information Meeting on April 17, 2023, at Inlet Square Mall is A LOT of Information for homeowners to digest. IF you were not there, you can view it on The Lakes website - Frontsteps.

In summary, for years our dues have been insufficient to cover the rising cost of The Lakes operating expenses.

Although all of this will now be in the hands of the Board to act on, I have recommended that we have a dues adjustment of at least \$250 to cover our operating expenses for the remainder of 2023 ASAP. That will also give us a 3-month contingency fund (for emergencies).

I then recommended that we increase our dues for 2024 by \$100 (to \$522), and another \$100 in 2025 (to \$622), then returning to our 5% increases annually in 2026 (pending regular cost of living reviews).

A \$100 increase in 2024 is a 24.5% increase but necessary to recover the shortfalls we have experienced since our community has existed.

What this all means for homeowners? In 2024 your dues commitment would be \$522 (equivalent of \$43.50 a month). In 2025, \$622 (equivalent of \$51.83 a month). In 2026, \$653 (\$54.42 a month). These numbers are still extremely low compared to any other Premier Community in the Grand Strand with or without a pool!

One of the other comments I heard stated, was that “LITUS allowed this to happen.” That is absolutely NOT the case. LITUS is employed for certain services by the POA. We are their employer, they do not physically manage the property, our volunteer BOD and Committees do. LITUS makes recommendations based on the work we employ them to do, but the BOD decides whether or not to act on it. I know that among other things, they have told Boards repeatedly (over the years) that our dues needed to increase. Despite this, Boards didn’t want to deal with homeowner complaints about it. So, they didn’t! This is proven by the homeowner on Nextdoor that wondered what MORE she was getting for our 2023 increase. The first increase in 7 years! All I can say to that, is REALLY? The cost of living has gone up 38.2% between 2012-2023, what did you expect?

LITUS has been our Management Company since Sept. 2011. Their contract auto renews on Dec. 31, 2023. They are supposed to get a 120-day notice for Termination or changeover. At the April 10th BOD meeting, Doug Millar verbally released us from that timeline, welcoming us to seek RFPs from other companies; and even offering to help us write the RFP.

The BOD will need to decide what they will do. It’s a dual edge sword. Some homeowners feel we pay them too much. Some of us know that because of our longstanding relationship and their knowledge of our history, we get more in services and expertise than we actually pay for. Only this year has any BOD ever requested them to do anything differently. We are finding they are more than willing to work to accommodate us. If the

Board chooses to seek other bids, the possibility is that we will end up paying more for less services. The bidding process forces us into 2023/24 rates (and nothing provided previously will stay at old pricing).

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### **Pond Committee – By Debbie Wolcott, Pond Committee/ Facilitator Chairman**

Spring has Sprung . . . along with the weeds that are starting to grow everywhere, including our ponds.

In April, Total Lake Care (TLC) staff (Justin & Brandon) resumed being back on property back twice a month, trying to get a handle on new growth.

At the April 10th Board meeting, the Board voted and approved a three (3) year fixed price contract with TLC. The contract is for \$2,600 a month for the existing 13 ponds (approx. 65 acres) we currently have. An addendum (another \$300 a month) was written to add the additional 5. 22 acres of Royal and Sunrise Lakes WHEN they are turned over to the POA. Once that happens the monthly bill will be \$2,900, or \$34,800 a year. This equates to approximately \$41.43 an acre.

A question was raised - If we're reviewing contracts, why wasn't this one put out for bid? Let me just say that our current vendor has only raised fees during the last two years for the addition of new ponds. Prior to TLC, my understanding is that two (2) different companies were terminated by the POA due to performance issues. In today's volatile economic environment, locking in a fixed price contract for 3 YEARS, where there has been demonstrated consistent responsiveness and performance, is a financially prudent decision.

Last year, one of those companies were called for an estimate for work needing to be done on Rainbow Lake. While there, they verbally commented about how great the ponds looked! How can you get a more glowing recommendation, then when another pond management company comments like that? Hopefully, that speaks for itself. There have been very few complaints since I took over as facilitator on 4-12-21 (Wow . . . it seems like it's been SO much longer than that)!

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### **Road Committee, by Jack Price**

The Road Committee has recently surveyed several roads (including Catawba River Rd and Catawba Court, Enoree Court, and Saluda River Rd) and determined there are various repairs that will need to be considered to assist with the drainages and road concerns.

The committee has contacted the original concrete contractor to review the issue of the caving in and cracked roadway area on Waccamaw Rd. near Swan Lake Road. This inspection will include a road committee member and should be done soon, by the end of next week, per the contractor. We will know better how to proceed and what to expect after this inspection.

Please contact Karen @ [ktucker@litustolet.com](mailto:ktucker@litustolet.com) to share specific concerns you would like reviewed by the committee.

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## Social Committee, by Michele Ferrante

In light of The Lakes POA financial situation, the Social Committee has made the difficult decision to cancel the June Community BBQ. The Committee did not feel it would be fiscally responsible to ask for or spend the money (approx. \$600) normally spent to provide the food for the event. We will continue other no cost events that can help bring our community together.

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## Safety Corner – Personal Safety

There have been several reports of safety concerns in or near The Lakes. We wanted to share some recent concerns and tips on how to stay safe.

*Traffic In The Lakes* – Many Property Owners are frustrated with motorists failing to stop at Stop Signs, speeding or driving erratically. This behavior is not safe and is very concerning but Property Owners should be careful about attempting to interact, scold, or yell with the motorist. There have been examples (in The Lakes) with really aggressive motorists yelling, screaming and physically threatening Property Owners. The best course of action is to contact the Horry County Non-Emergency Police Number 843-248-1520 to report the incident.

*Contractors and Builders in The Lakes* – There have been several reports of property owners who have made slurs, derogatory and physically threatening comments to/about employees of Horton (the Builder in the new section) and Contractors completing work in the community. Please remember that we are a respectful community, and we want to remain peaceful and respectful. Incidents with threats will be treated as serious threats and will be reported to the Horry County Police.

*Personal Robberies* – Several local news reports and social media sites have reported robberies at gas stations and in local hangouts. People (of all ages) have been robbed in both broad daylight and at night coming and going. Please remember to be aware of your surroundings when walking to/from your car and the store. Do not wear ear buds that can prevent you from hearing noise around you and try not to be distracted with your phone during the time it takes you to come/go.

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## Neighborly Reminders

- Remember School is still in session! Please be mindful of the buses dropping off children in the development and the children walking to/from the bus stop. We hope people are mindful of speeding and stop signs at all times but please be extra careful when our children are coming/going from the bus stops.

- Both Pools located within The Lakes Community are independently owned and operated outside of the Lakes POA. If you have questions about the LRC Pool (located in the older section of the community) please use the contact information posted on the door. If you have questions about the LAC (located in the newer section of the community) please contact Karen Tucker @ [ktucker@litustolet.com](mailto:ktucker@litustolet.com). She will contact RS Parker as needed to respond to concerns.
- Ever wonder how a secondary property owner can also receive the monthly *Communicator*? Yes??? There is a way... contact Karen @ [ktucker@litustolet.com](mailto:ktucker@litustolet.com) to ask her to manually add the secondary owner to the Litus website and email distribution.



## On the Funny Side of the Lake

Question: Who Cleans the Ocean?

Answer: Mer- Maids



# MAY 2023

| SUN                | MON                                                                      | TUE | WED                                       | THU                                       | FRI                                       | SAT |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----|
|                    | 01                                                                       | 02  | 03<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm | 04<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 9am -<br>12pm | 05<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm | 06  |
| 07                 | 08<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm                                | 09  | 10<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm | 11<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 9am -<br>12pm | 12<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm | 13  |
| 14<br>Mother's Day | 15<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm<br><br>Lakes Board<br>Workshop | 16  | 17<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm | 18<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 9am -<br>12pm | 19<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm | 20  |
| 21                 | 22<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm                                | 23  | 24<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm | 25<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 9am -<br>12pm | 26<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm | 27  |
| 28                 | 29<br>Memorial Day                                                       | 30  | 31<br>Lakes Office<br>Hours 12pm -<br>3pm |                                           |                                           |     |

Next Board of Directors Meeting: Monday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 7pm at the Lakes Office

Next Quarterly POA Meeting: Monday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 6pm-7:45pm, Location TBD

## Horry County Community Information

### LOCAL HOSPITALS

|                      |                                  |                |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Tidelands Waccamaw   | 4070 US 17 Bypass Murrells Inlet | (843) 652-1000 |
| Conway Medical Ctr   | Singleton Ridge Rd Conway        | (843) 347-7111 |
| South Strand Med Ctr | 5050 US 17 Bypass Myrtle Beach   | (843) 839-1000 |
| Grand Strand Med Ctr | 809 82nd Pkwy Myrtle Beach       | (843) 692-1000 |

|                                 |                               |                |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| MB VA Outpatient Clinic         | 1800 Airport Dr               | (843) 477-0177 |
| MB VA Outpatient & Primary Care | 1101 Johnson Ave Myrtle Beach | (843) 577-5011 |
| Market Commons VA Clinic        | 1101 Johnson Ave Suite R2A    | (843) 477-0177 |

### POLICE AND FIRE

|                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Horry County Police Non-emergency | (843) 915-5350 |
| Horry County Fire & Rescue        | (843) 915-5190 |

### REC CENTERS

|                                |                                         |                |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------|
| Horry County Parks & Rec       | 2830 Oak St Conway                      | (843) 915-5330 |
| Pepper Geddings Rec Ctr        | 3205 N Oak St Myrtle Beach              | (843) 918-2280 |
| Claire Chapin Epps Family YMCA | 5000 Claire Chapin EPPS Dr Myrtle Beach | (843) 449-9622 |
| South Strand Rec Ctr           | 9650 Scipio Ln Myrtle Beach             | (843) 915-5333 |
| Burgess Community Ctr          | 10299 SC 707 Myrtle Beach               | (843) 650-2796 |

### COUNTY OFFICES

|                             |                               |                |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Horry County Treasurer      | 9630 Scipio Ln Myrtle Beach   | (843) 915-5470 |
| Horry County Auditor        | 9630 Scipio Ln Myrtle Beach   | (843) 915-5052 |
| Horry County Clerk of Court | 9630 Scipio Ln Myrtle Beach   | (843) 915-5080 |
| Horry County Probate Court  | 1301 2nd Ave<br>Conway        | (843) 915-5370 |
| Myrtle Beach DMV            | 1330 Howard Pkwy Myrtle Beach | (843) 839-8003 |
| SC DMV                      | 1200 21st Ave N Myrtle Beach  | (843) 448-9957 |

### RECYCLE CENTERS

|  |                                            |                |
|--|--------------------------------------------|----------------|
|  | 9610 Scipio Ln Myrtle Beach (closed Thurs) | (843) 347-1651 |
|  | McDowell Shortcut (closed Tues)            | (843) 347-1651 |
|  | 4670 Jones Rd                              | (843) 347-1651 |