

Branford Village Home Owners Association, Inc

Member's Meeting Minutes

14 December 2023

Minutes of the membership meeting of the Branford Village Homeowners Association, Inc., East Fallowfield, Pennsylvania, held hybrid at the Chester County Council, Boy Scouts of America, in Exton, Pennsylvania, and Zoom at 7p.m. EST on 14 December 2023.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board member Mike Borrello called the meeting to order at 07:01pm EST.

II. ROLL CALL AND QUORUM

Officer roll call took place at 07:05 pm EST

Board members present are as follows:

Mike Borrello, President, 06:35pm EST

Bob Flinchbaugh, Treasurer, 06:56pm EST

Others present are as follows:

Samantha Chalfant, Social Committee, 06:35pm EST

Board members absent are as follows:

All other members of the Board are at present vacant.

III. PROOF OF NOTICE OF MEETING

Agenda and notification were hand-delivered to residents not online as requested.

Signs were displayed at the Community entrances starting on November 30, 2023.

Online disclosure was given via Facebook, email and text messaging. Reminders regarding the board meeting, election, and information on voting process were posted on November 22, November 26, November 28, December 7, and December 14, 2023.

The Village View newsletter was displayed and available at the Community entrances and online starting on Nov 30, 2023.

IV. PRESIDENT'S REPORT - INTRODUCTION

Mike Borrello calls the meeting to order. The agenda: Voting in new Executive Board members and Board, parking, potential revision of lawn care vs. meadows. Mike discusses the way the ballots were sent out and presented: by mail, email, and Facebook page. Background profiles of the candidates were also displayed. Board elections were set to be completed on 14 December. Samantha Chalfant commenced tabulating the votes. The results of the voting were tabled momentarily so Samantha could continue counting votes.

Mike Borello moved on to discuss landscaping.

I. Landscaping Review

Mike Borrello initiated the discussion by reiterating that this topic has not been voted on yet, and things are still in the talking stages. No final decision has been made. This all began as a way to cut back on mowing. Mike has no opinion on this topic yet, but pointed out that in the original plan for Branford Village there was a provision for designated meadows. It does not mean letting the grass grow wild but a controlled ecosystem environment. At some point in the past, before Mike became President it ended up with all the open spaces being mowed. There has been discussion both pro and con. The negative points brought up were increased bugs and critters, the positive points include a more balanced nature ecosystem. Mike expressed a desire to move forward and get some opinion from those present and those online. The floor was opened for comment.

Chris Burwell: Can you help us to understand what the final decision-making process will be? I know there was talk about doing a pilot plot. That would be helpful.

Mike Borello: Sure. The final decision will be made by the newly elected Board. I would hope that all points of view are considered. And that the final decision will be judged by financial considerations and, where it is going to be financial feasible, Yes, there has been discussion of a pilot program to show what it is about. Again, it is not about just not taking care of the land and letting it grow but about planting the right plants in the right spot to bring back the meadow feel. (Discussion paused for technical problems.)

It really depends on what is good for our budget and what is good for the neighbor hood.

Beverly Ernst (?) 152 Milbury: My concern for the meadow areas behind our house is that it either stays as they are or if it becomes meadowed that there is a fairly large path with small shrubbery. I don't want wild flower meadows. We have enough problems with treating for mouse, rats, moles, voles. And deer are eating all of our shrubs. So, either maintain them as they are, maybe roses or something attractive, but keep a wide path,

Marda (?) 94 Arden: I am very interested in a pilot program for the meadows. The original zoning for our neighborhood made provisions for a natural ecosystem.

(Slightly garbled due to technical difficulties)

As we are having a lot more neighborhoods being built in the area I think we need to do as much as possible to not decimate the insect population, especially the bugs that live in this area. We do have a lot of local programs with colleges and private companies in the area and I would be happy to donate my time to working with them. I don't want to continue spraying and I didn't know they were spraying when we purchased.

Mr. Ernst: My problem is not that they mow the lawns but how often they mow the lawns. They start mowing the lawns at the end of March and go all the way til November. Every Wednesday.

And as you see by the picture I sent, they are mowing it too short. The grass doesn't get a chance to grow. If you mowed it twice a month or even less, every three weeks during the summer when it is dry, if you don't cut the grass til it actually starts to grow you can see a big difference in the cost.

Mike Borello: Right. That is one of the things that has been in the discussion. We are looking into a different schedule for mowing, either longer time between mowing or even an on-call mowing schedule. These have all be discussed.

Mr. Ernst: The other thing if you decided to go with wildflowers and things of that nature, that can only be mowed once a year in the Fall. Because in the Spring once it starts growing you have the flowers and then they germinate and have seeds. And then you mow. And the price to mow it once a year will be more costly.

Mike Borello: Again, as President I'm not an expert in fieldwork. not certain how to start the meadow. We will need to continue to do research as the Board to figure out if this is the direction we are going.

Mr. Ernst: The other thing is there may be people allergic to bees and all. With more flowers you are going to have more bee populations in the area. (Garbled audio) I like honey. You might have kids running around in the meadows with the bees and somebody might get stung and find out they are allergic to bees. You might have a lawsuit for that.

Mike Borello: That's a little different. That's wildlife itself. Bringing back animals is not necessarily a liability for the Board. Regarding that concern, bees set up at our houses, bees setup everywhere. The question is are bees good for the environment? From everything that I have learned so bring back a stronger bee population may help limit the damage to the trees that we have and that can help some other stuff. All that stuff is going to be addressed as the Board moves forward, but we appreciate the input from everybody to make this decision. It is not a light decision for the Board to make but we definitely want to continue to get input. Again, after the (and I'll bow to Don?) I personally ...this is where I going to put my opinion in, I would like to have a resolution by the end of the year. That to say yes, the Board can move forward. When will it be implemented? Probably the Springtime before they get all the research done whether they are going to return them to continue to mow them whether to mow them twice a week, on call, twice every two weeks. That will all happen in the Spring. Make sense to everybody so far?

Laura Ehrhart: (Garbled) Will we have a subcommittee of neighbors interested in information gathering, neighbors who have experience.?

Mike Borelli: Yes. I would advise the Board to take on a subcommittee similar to the Social Committee. Figure out the best place, the best location. 100%.

Laura Ehrhart: So, a place that's small and furthest from homes as a pilot area for a more realistic expectation. It's worth a shot.

Mike Borelli: Any questions online?

JT: Mt only concern with the HOA is the clean out behind my house at 97 Arden. It just seems when we get heavy rain that really fills up rapidly.

Mike Borelli: That is one of the reasons our maintenance has gone up over the years. Is making sure the clean out for most of the drains and catch basins through out. There is a stream drainage kind of between Arden and Milbury that we need to maintain. We have cleaned it out multiple times over the years.

JT: Yes, I've seen you guys clean it out.

Mike Borelli restates the discussion with JT. He was concerned with the basins when they get filled up with debris. I believe that if we create some of these meadows we might be able to cut down on some of that debris. A lot of the leaves and debris goes right into those drainage ditches and heads right down towards the drains themselves that have to be unclogged continuously, especially with these big storms, like we just had after a full day of rain. That also will slow some of the erosion that has been happening. There is quite a bit of erosion happening from Arden going into the path and then down the path that we had to repair over the last couple of years. That's just my opinion on that. When we mow so tightly, the water just runs right off. We have to slow that down somehow.

Ross Nicolini: 176 Milbury. Is there another opinion that we can do? It seems like everything is just going off the schedule and the money that we are paying for the maintenance. Have we looked into just doing – we have a path that runs throughout the entire development where we do the full mow every other week and the other times we go right around the path, the walking path just one or two mows then and leave the big field open where we are not paying them to do the whole open field. Because I still feel he should be mowing a lot around people's property but in the middle we can let that grow because that is an open area but I still think that around the trail that we can drop that down from I think 7 grand to 3,000 per week. We do that half the summer; we have saved 25%. Letting grass grow longer in the middle and we still have it maintained around people's property.

Mike Borelli likened Ross's idea to the area in East Fallowfield Park, where paths are maintained but the areas of the field itself are allowed to grow taller and then be harvested.

This is all information gathering for the new Board, we will pass all this information which will help them make an informed decision.

Samantha Chalfont: I am for trying a testing area. And I understand a lot of people aren't. Two meadows. But if we aren't going to do two meadow areas, then we should probably look at Snowbury (?) (possibly Arcraby? Cresanbury? Or Sadilbury?) to Broadhurst (?) - that nice little wooded patch there and try to control the dumping of grass clippings and everything else that goes on back there because those two will attract ticks and rodents and everything else. And upholding other people's lawns like weeding and nuisance properties, you know if we are going to go that route, we should do it across the board.

II. Parking Proposal

Mike Borrello gave a reiterated summary background from 21 Sept 2023 meeting.

There is a need to address the parking issue from new Police Chief with a desire to obtain proposals to have a constructive discussion with the Police Chief. Proposed options are:

1. Allow sidewalk side only parking but will need a variance to the Board of Supervisors. No parking on the sidewalk. Keeping access for walkers so they do not have to walk in the street.
2. To use the East Fallowfield Township Park public lot as overflow/longer term parking
3. Use the additional Community Lot for a parking lot but would require clearing and Plat change for non-meadow and woodland preservation permissions.
4. Designating areas within the Community as safe parking spaces.
5. Create a permit parking option for Residents and/or Guests.

Our development is unique. We have some driveways that can handle 4,5,6 cars. We have other ones that can only handle 1 or 2 cars. It depends on your lot. And there are nuances: how far can you park from somebody's driveway, how far do you park from a corner, are there any areas where we don't want people to park, like around a corner or something like that. When we have a storm I can't get out of Danbury Circle because of cars parked on the street the plows can't get through. So how do we address all those things that are involved with taking this forward? There are some residents that say leave it as it is, make the police do their job and enforce the law as is, which is a good standard too. But there is also a growing need in our development of increased cars because of families, which are getting older and getting more vehicles. We are trying to play to everybody's needs and feelings. So we are again opening this up for discussion with the people on line and the people here at the meeting.

Laura Ehrhart: I don't think it is realistic to fine everyone all the time. Because we can not reduce the permeable space of our driveways there may be ways to encourage people to park in their driveway, using other methods (gravel, etc.) to increase their parking area.

Beverly Ernst: Realistically you have to allow for some parking on the street. If you have a contractor, visitors or who ever it is you have to allow some parking.

Female resident (not identified): A point of clarification please. Originally, you could park on the street as long as you did not park there overnight. Also, if you were having a party, etc., you could call the township police and tell them. Is the new police chief saying you can park on the street during the day or he wants no cars parked on the street at all times?

Mike Borelli: According to the law, there is no street parking at anytime. However, the new chief is not setting any precedence and is going off of what we have been doing. So you are 100% right. We have had no over night parking and calling about large numbers of cars, and they appreciate that. He is up for any proposal that we want to give him. As he came in he was presented with a crap show about what he wanted to enforce- so how can I do this without making a lot of people mad? Because by law, he could ticket anyone parking on the street at all time. So if he can't follow that law, maybe we need to create an ordinance to help him do his job correctly.

Chris Nicholson: 102 Milbury. I have created a vector illustration of the streets in Branford Village so we can highlight the parking areas, define parking parameters: types of vehicles ineligible for street parking, acceptable parking direction and acceptable parking placement. It's easy to understand and I think if we took it to the police chief, it would go over very well. Initially we could run this as a test pilot program and revisit it in a year to see if we need to make some changes. There was talk about parking permits but that may be for down the road. Might have to paint some curbs for areas you can't park in front of and maybe put up a couple of signs which might incur an initial low cost.

Mike Borelli: Yes, please pass that along to the Board. Mike summarizes Chris's ideas about certain areas can have parking, some can not, certain sized vehicles can be in certain areas and to really spell it out in terms of safety rather than the broad statement of parking only on the sidewalk side of the street.

Will Carter (?): My concern is if we do this as a pilot program, what happens if it doesn't work. We can't put the genie back in the bottle. Now we have people that don't obey the laws. If we have parking on the street, where are people going to park when it snows so the plows can get through unimpeded? If we can find something for that problem we may have a solution.

Mike Borelli: This is a problem. From the back of the development I can weave in and out, thanks to my four wheel drive, but generally the plow guy just plow one path for fear of taking out mailboxes. If we do have a lot of snow, where then do you park-on your lawn? The Board will

have to figure that out. Maybe there will need to be an emergency parking area. It is something that needs to be looked into.

Chris Burwell: some of this needs to be on the responsibility of the home owner, if you tell them to move their car off the road in a snow emergency, they will have to figure it out on their own. The Chief seems to be going neighborhood to neighborhood, saying what is it you want to do? - so there might be a number of variances going before the Supervisors-do we know if the Town Supervisors are going to go for this?

Mike Borello: I don't know I haven't spoke to any of the Supervisors. They may just say nope, suck it up. This is what it is. That absolutely could happen. But we want to do our due diligence and I think if we have enough votes and we come with reasonable explanations and solution, rather than a problem and that is what we are trying to get to.

Mike Borelli reads some comments from the web: DeeDee says "They shouldn't be parking on the sidewalk side for any reason. We should be able to walk on the sidewalk."

Mike Borelli: There are some people now who park on the actual sidewalk, That has to stop. We want to get them on the street against the curb where they are supposed to be. "I have small grand children that try to walk the neighborhood and to get around that car is unacceptable." We want to make sure that we have good pathways for anybody on a bicycle or walking. We have sidewalks in our neighborhood which is a great thing. Some places don't have sidewalks and I want to make sure we open up these sidewalks as much as possible. Trimming our trees too. Because in years past we had tree issues. Ducking under trees. There are cars which when parked in the driveway block the sidewalk. So it is hard to get around them.

Samantha Chalfant/Jayne Keiner: My car doesn't fit in my driveway without being on the sidewalk. How are you going to ensure that the sidewalk is clear for those of us who's regular cars (don't fit)?

Mike Borelli: It would be up to the enforcement by the police chief at that moment in time.

There then is a discussion regarding easement at the front of people's property amongst Samantha and various members of the audience in regards to parking in your driveway if you have a short driveway.

Mike Borelli: I appreciate everybody input on this. Again this is a big decision for the Board. Hopefully they got a lot of input over the last three months in regards to coming up with a proposal. But it will be up to the Board to make that final decision to the Police Chief and then the Township supervisors. We have to try and do what is best for the entire neighborhood. One more comment on line: "First responders need to get through first and foremost".

V. ELECTION RESULTS

Mike Borelli: This election will possibly fill all the Board seats. With the possible exception of Bob, who is running unimpeded. This will allow us to then create some non Executive Board sub committees. The polls are now closed.

Recording Secretary: Laura Ehrhart: 170 Milbury.

Financial Secretary: Christin Nicholson 102 Milbury

Treasurer. Bob Flinchbaugh 302 Crescent.

Vice President: Ross Nicolini 176 Milbury.

President. Mike Borello.

Mike Borello: Thank you everybody for the vote of confidence. I appreciate everybody's input over the three months and the last 16 years I have been doing this. I will continue to do my best and with the full Board it is definitely is a lighter burden for me. The last 3,4 years we have had fluctuations in the Board in regard to how many we have had on it and what positions were filled and within the last two years it has pretty much been Bob and myself trying to keep this thing afloat as much as possible. So I appreciate everyone coming on. The plan is to have at least quarterly or every third Executive Board meeting and then have two annual meetings or biannual meetings for the entire development over the next couple of years as we see fit. These are 3-year terms. So we appreciate it. Please feel free to reach out at any moment in time. Our email address is: Branfordboard@ gmail.com. I look at it all the time. Bob's email is Branford treasurer@gmail.com. And the social committee is (garbled) Branfordsocial@gmail.com. We will continue to post on both Facebook pages as well. Please feel free to join any of the sub committees.

Any new business? Helen on zoom: What is the status of the meadows?

Mike Borello: We have received information from all the neighbors and the new Executive Board will be making a decision.

Unidentified resident: Anyone having problems with American Water? A general discussion of various water problems ensued. Some of it is garbled)

Chris Nicholson asked for residents to send him any information regarding water bill spikes. He is working with various organizations to highlight people's concern to state government.

Speeding on our roads was also brought up.

Mike Borello: Speed limit is 25 mph. Speed bumps are not an option. We will continue to address this issue.

Thank you all for coming out. I make a motion to adjourn. Adjournment is seconded.

Agenda item closed 08:22pm.

III. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 08:23pm EST.