

**Cottonwood HOA**  
**Board of Directors and ARC Requests**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday August 16, 2021 (virtual)**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 PM by Jon Wright, seconded by Alphonso Robinson and approved by Jon Wright.

**2. Directors Attending**

Jon Wright - President  
Alfonso Robinson - Vice President  
Jen Ruffini - Treasurer  
David Satore - Director  
Fred Hall - Director  
Larry Blackwell - Director  
Karen Williams - Director  
Jim Belliant - Director  
Kaley Wright - ARC Chairman

**3. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for July are on our site with Etheridge Property Management and on our Facebook page, so they will not be read this week due to the absence of the secretary. Dave made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Fred, and Jon approved.

**4. Old business**

○ **Reminders**

- i. Animals must be on the leash at all times unless in the back yard/behind a fence. We're still having a problem, and we don't want anyone getting hurt. So please make sure animals stay inside or in a fenced in yard.
- ii. No repairing your vehicles in your driveway; this is in the covenants. Please be cognizant of this.
- iii. We voted on the front gate enclosure last month and decided not to pursue that at this time due to the expense.
- iv. Trash cans need to be put up promptly. We had an episode at the beginning of July due to the holiday and the companies behind schedule, but in general please print in your bins.
- v. Yard maintenance - please make sure to edge, mow, and remove cuttings from the street especially with the pressure washing if it kicks up anything.

○ **Financials with Jenn**

- i. Got a hold of Kevin and will have a meeting with him in the next month or so about the new upcoming budget. For now, the board voted on him

taking streetlight purchases off. Also, he suggested putting the money slated for the streetlights originally to the road fund.

1. **Unanimous vote:** agree.
- ii. They sent the invoices from Johnson Communication about one of the gates having a bad battery (the gate was previously opening/closing on its own). The module was fixed and the backup batteries were replaced.
    1. **Kaley:** The entrance gate is fixed, but the backup battery at the back gate now needs to be replaced as well. I thought they were on one battery but they're on two.
    2. **Jen:** They charged us \$766 for two batteries per the invoice. I'll find out if this covers the back gate battery and we can go from there.
  - iii. All is good for this month sans the delinquent dues.
  - iv. **Jon:** Dawn said that Johnson Communications said that we should go with the new company for \$1700 so that we don't have the same internet issues, etc, that we have with AT&T. Found out recently that EPM has not yet paid a delinquent bill to AT&T for \$159. This may be why AT&T is dragging their feet on coming out to fix things. If the board wants to discuss what to recommend, but if we pay the \$1700 everything would totally be under Johnson Communications at that point.
    1. **Jen:** I'd like to see what the AT&T bills are before we vote.
- **Delinquent Dues**
    - i. Jon spoke with EPM to see if they were dragging their feet about getting the fees taken care of. Also spoke with the HOA attorney; they spoke with the two homeowners that owe \$605. He will sue them and also place a lien on their homes due to this. For the other 4 that owe this year, he's going to send a letter and give them 30 days before giving the board next steps on how to pursue those homeowners.
  - **Sign/Wooden Fence - Back Gate**
    - i. **Alfonso:** EPM sent the check over to the sign company and they did today so I can pick up the sign now. Once the sign is picked up we can proceed with posting it.
  - **Suspicious Vehicle**
    - i. **Jon:** Jim checked with EPM about a suspicious vehicle in the neighborhood. EPM stated it wasn't one of theirs. However, two days later I received a picture of my own home in my mailbox from a refinance company about a refinance offer. I have a feeling that the car was someone from the company taking pictures of the houses to send out fliers. Be aware of any additional suspicious vehicles.
  - **Food Truck**
    - i. Next food truck will be Greeks on September 17, 2021 6:15-7:45 PM. They're booked in multiple neighborhoods that night. We're also working on getting additional food trucks in.

- ii. **Kaley:** Fresh Food Factory came in and we received a complaint from this event. I've reached out to EPM about determining who the homeowner who sent the complaint in is so we can speak to them and resolve the issue. So far, EPM has not been able to contact the homeowner. The truck that came the other day - Who Cut the Grilled Cheese and Cake - there were no complaints about.
  - iii. **Jon:** Kaley and Erin were out there for a good while, about an hour, hour and a half, and Jen was out there for a while as well. You can watch the food truck on Live on Facebook, which I did. One of the complaints was that there were vicious and dangerous dogs at the food truck. Erin and I both looked at our security cameras and there was no evidence of this. Only one person brought their service animal, which did not cause any problems either. Also, the complaint included blocking the traffic which also was not the case. I'm at a loss at what the complaint was outside of possibly not wanting a food truck, so that's where we stand.
  - iv. **Larry:** Is it possible to have EPM send out a notice, or put on the site when the homeowners put in a contact to EPM, that if they do not sign the contact that it'll be ignored?
    1. **Jon:** This is a good idea, and I've said the same thing to EPM. We can't follow through on things like this if we don't know who is submitting the information.
    2. Larry motions to vote on this idea:
      - a. Jen approved the motion.
    3. **Larry:** we should put something on the site/Facebook page about this.
- o **School Buses / Front Gate Closure**
    - i. **Jen:** Haven't been able to ask the questions to the Santa Rosa County School rep, she hasn't had the time to speak and I've left several messages. Per the first communication with her, direct from the supervisor of the school buses: if our gates are closed when the buses get here, then the school buses will not come into the subdivision and the kids will either have to walk to/from Anderson or the parents will have to take them there. For those in Kindergarten, you are required to show your face to the school bus driver in order to have them drop the kids off. The supervisor was very direct about this and that they've done this in several subdivisions here and in Gulf Breeze.
      1. **Concerns:** the parents (in vehicles) will be backed up through the neighborhood halting traffic or out on Anderson, parking in HOA grass and causing damage and halting traffic on Anderson as well. Plus, it's simply a dangerous street to drop any kid off at especially to then have them walk through the neighborhood to get home, especially the little ones.
      2. **Larry:** Safety of the children is the primary concern.

- ii. There's a group of people who want the community to be completely closed like a true gated community. This has been a conversation for the last 10 years, but this has been an ongoing issue with doing that.
  - 1. Some places, like Stonechase/Stonebrook, have attendants at the gates to let the buses in so they are unaffected.
- iii. **Option:** Gates on a timer.
  - 1. Jen: I think that's more wear and tear on the gates in the long run. I've also tried to reach the person with the bus times for Santa Rosa county and since I've been unable to get a hold of her, I don't have the times that we could, potentially, discuss leaving the gates open during certain times.
- iv. **Mr. Brimer (homeowner):** Confused about the gate issue, specifically the excessive wear and tear on the front gate. The back gate is closed all the time and has no more wear than the front gate.
  - 1. **Jen:** On any given day, the buses can say they'll be here at one time and they'll be here at a totally different time due to any number of reasons. The buses won't drop those kids off at that point and they'll take the kids back to the school and make the parents come get them.
  - 2. **Karen:** Wouldn't we have an issue with deliveries?
    - a. **Mr. Brimer:** As a prior carrier, we do not have that issue as we have access to every neighborhood through key/code.
    - b. **Karen:** Could we give a clicker to the bus drivers?
    - c. **Jen:** No, SR county won't give a clicker to the bus drivers, I asked. Due to changes in drivers that are possible.
  - 3. **Mr. Brimer:** I'd guess there's at least 30 neighborhoods that are gated in SR county and the buses go in and out of them. I think we're just accepting the answer because it's an easy answer.
    - a. **Jen:** Only if it's attended, based on what the supervisor said to me. Plus, she said that all the parents were notified by email or voice call that if the gates were closed that the kids would be left at the stop or they'd need to pick them up at school, etc. And, if we keep the gates open for any potential time the buses could come through then they're basically open the same amount of time they're open now.
- v. **Dave:** We've had the same question for 12 years, "Why can't we close the gates?" The real thing is that we're concerned about safety. Well, a crook who wants in just needs to case us to see when they're open and come in, or come in after another vehicle, or walk around the gate on foot.
- vi. **Jen:** Plus, we could have an issue with the gates and they just not open and cause the same mess of the parents having to go get the kids, or the older kids having to walk.
- vii. **Jon:** Also, all the service vehicles - such as an electrical issue, etc - won't be able to get in unless someone goes out and lets them in.

- viii. **Mr. Henderson (homeowner):** I understand we've talked about this a lot over the years and there are issues one way or the other, but I was curious if we could poll the community on what they'd like. Vote for it being open as it is now, voting for the timer system, or voting for full closure. We just keep talking about the same issue with no solution so that's my opinion that we ask the community.
- ix. **Karen:** That's a good idea, and while I'd like the gates to be closed I understand that the difficulties with attaining that during the day prevent it because the kids are the priority.
- x. **Mr. Henderson:** Perhaps we could put some benches with an awning out there in case there's rain, to make things safe, but we haven't had the conversations about these alternate options either.
1. **Jim:** This idea came up a few years ago, but our lawyer stated that the weather shelter idea was a liability with the insurance unfortunately.
- xi. **Larry:** What about hiring attendants?
1. **Jen:** We don't have the ability to afford that.
  2. **Jim:** HOA fees would go up a ton since we'd have to employ 3-4 of them for shifts and a backup for vacations.
  3. **Mr. Henderson:** There's the possibility we could find volunteers from the neighborhood to do this, maybe.
  4. **Jen:** The volunteer would have responsibility over the kids in that case and I don't know that we'd get that.
- xii. **Mr. Henderson:** has anyone reached out to Johnson Communications to see what the price would be to install a timer?
1. **Jen:** I haven't been able to get a hold of the bus people to get the times they're supposed to be here, so we haven't gone down anything on that path.
  2. **Karen:** Plus things happen and they're never here at an exact time.
  3. **Jen:** True, last week some of the buses were an hour and forty five minutes late.
  4. **Dave:** How do the other ones handle it?
  5. **Jen:** I don't know, however the SR county lady said that there are plenty of close gate communities where they let kids out on Hwy 98 even.
- xiii. **Dave:** We have to decide what the lesser of two evils is, right now.
- xiv. **Jen:** Right now, we stay as is and leave them open.
1. **Mr. Brimer:** Then why do we advertise as a gated community?
  2. **Jen:** When everyone purchased their houses here we knew the gates were open 6-6.
  3. **Mr. Brimer:** But when the question was asked, we were told that as soon as Timberland finished selling all the homes that the gates would be closed. But maybe that was just a falsehood.

- xv. **Homeowner (chat):** Could they drop off on Shamrock?
1. **Jen:** the supervisor only spoke about Anderson because that's our front entrance, so dropping off at the back gate would be a whole separate issue. Plus, that gate is closed so all the kids would need clickers or codes since that gate is completely closed in.
  2. **Jim:** A homeowner told me that Timberland said that once the last lot was sold then it'd be closed up, but it's not in writing anywhere.
- xvi. **Jon:** I've also spoken to Timberland about the claim that we'd be closed up after every lot was sold, but they claim they had never said that.
- xvii. **Dave:** But what about the pizza boys and delivery guys who don't have the codes?
1. **Mr. Brimer:** Our covenants say that everyone has an individual code and after being used 50 times it becomes disabled.
  2. **Kaley:** This is true, we had an issue with this a few years ago where a teenager gave a ton of people the code and it was used that night and the code was disabled.
  3. **Jim:** How many homeowners actually know this, because I didn't?
  4. **Kaley:** EPM claims they sent out that information in a packet when you moved into the neighborhood. Johnson Communication has a list of codes that are disabled and they pass that onto EPM. EPM, depending on if they've moved or not, will reissue the code depending on the issue and then Johnson Communication will follow up on it.
  5. **Jim:** Can Johnson give a list of codes/names that are valid or invalid?
  6. **Kaley:** To clarify, it's only when the code is used within 24-48 hours.
- xviii. **Dave:** This is good conversation, but we're stuck where we began with no clear direction to go on the gate situation.
- xix. **Mia (homeowner):** I may have a school age child in residence soon. I was told when we looked at model homes by Timberland that the gate would be closed 24 hours in the future. We've come to the realization that this may not happen, but I'm for the gate being closed on a timer. We are aware that there may be one off situations where parents have to go open the gates or similar, but on the whole giving it a 30-45 minute buffer on the latest end of when the buses should be expected will give enough time for the buses. Yes, if someone wanted to come in through those times, there's more people milling about the neighborhood keeping it safer as well. Crime is getting worse in the area, so perhaps this could help.
- xx. **Karen:** There are several numerous homes in this neighborhood that don't have fencing and people could come in those ways or even around the front gate on foot. The gate being closed will stop a vehicle but it won't stop everything.

- xxi. **Dave:** Let alone the pest people, the UPS people, etc.
  1. **Jen:** At that point, it's the same thing - they'd end up having our codes.
  2. **Homeowner (chat):** Plus early release days or emergency release days due to weather, etc.
- xxii. **Dave:** Why don't we send a questionnaire to see who actually wants this done. I don't care, Jen doesn't care. We don't want only 10 people to want this done and the rest of the community doesn't. We can't hold the neighborhood to that.
  1. **Jen:** And if we do go with the timer system and we have Johnson Communication come out and change the timers for all those half days, etc, then that's \$200 each time they come out.
- xxiii. **Mr. Henderson:** to the point of the early release days or emergency release days, etc, we have enough people in this neighborhood that I think we would be able to cover those times. There are ways to open and close the gates and we need to put it up to the community to voice their opinion.
- xxiv. **Jon:** I for one would like to know the cost involved with any of these solutions before moving forward.
- xxv. **Jen:** At any rate, we need a majority to vote on this to get any change made.
  1. **Larry:** This has been going on for years. We have the annual meeting in six months; we could include it on the agenda for the meeting.
  2. **Mr. Brimer:** Does a quorum have to be 51% of the residents or 51% of those that vote?
  3. **Larry:** Per the bylaws: Voting at an Annual Meeting requires the presence of (i) Members (in person or by proxy) representing 30% of votes, and (ii) Declarant or its representative(s) so long as Declarant owns at least one lot.
  4. **Jon:** I'd like to get the attorney's opinion on this. Until then, we'll postpone until another meeting when Jen gets the additional information from the county.

## 5. ARC Requests

- **Walker - Huntington, new neighbor - Fence**
  - i. Installed a fence without ARC approval. Again, new to the neighborhood and may not have known. She installed 115 linear feet of 6 feet tall privacy fence with one 10 foot wide double gate of the driveway area.
    1. All approved.
      - a. Notice: Realtors are supposed to give the new homeowners a copy of the covenants. Kaley and Mr. Hiney also go around and introduce themselves and give a copy as well.

- **Newsome - Brighton - Pergola**
  - i. Pergola estimated at 15 x 22 in the back of his home which will be built just on the boundary of the current back porch. On the plot map it says 10 x 20 he corrected that and said it will be 10 x 20. He stated it will be made from pressure-treated wood. Right now he has no plans of staining it at this time but will allow it to weather naturally. The location of the Pergola is noted on the attached plot map which specifies the location is just off the existing back porch area on the back of their home. I did state that he would have to put in an ARC request when he plans on staining; he stated that he would.
    - 1. All approved
- **Ward - Iron Gate - Cottage Playhouse**
  - i. Installing a play cottage, a 10 x 12 all wood construction. Exterior painted white and black trim. Shingle roof natural timber to match the house. Location of the Playhouse will be 40 feet from the back of the house and 5 feet off the property line. He stated that it would be white to match the soffits of the house and black around the windows and the door. He stated that he would not be staining it.
    - 1. All approved
- **Stall - Heatherton - Landscaping**
  - i. Homeowner would like to use limestone landscaping on small rocks, and wants to change the material in her outer flower beds from dirt to stones. Wants to slow down the bugs and other critters that like the dirt. Stones will be located in the front of the house and the front garage, driveway until the project is complete.
    - 1. Jon: Does she know how long the materials will sit in the driveway?
      - a. Homeowner: Just a week or two, just enough time to complete the project. Will attempt to put it behind the gate, but if not it'll be blocked by the cars from the street.
    - 2. All approved.
- **Cook - Greymoss - Plant Blueberry Bushes**
  - i. Plant two blueberry bushes. They'll be planted in her backyard, the side nearest the front entrance. They're currently in grow bags and will be planted in the ground against the fence on the side of the yard. They should not grow to be taller than the fence/seen from the road.
    - 1. All approved.
- **Morgan - Huntingdon - Landscaping**
  - i. Removing Mulch and installing small white river rock. Removing the boxwoods and shrubs. Replanting knock out roses.
    - 1. All approved.
- **Middendorf - Iron Gate - Permanent RV**
  - i. Requesting he be allowed to park a 26 foot class c RV in the driveway on a permanent basis as it is their primary (new) family vehicle. They have 5

children and 2 are special needs who they take to therapy 3 times a week in Navarre. This vehicle allows them the flexibility needed to function in today's society. Working on setting up the easement area on the back of the property to eventually park when they will not be using it for an extended period of time. Fact that it will be used 3-4 times a week for everyday travel for the unforeseeable future. 2 years until they receive orders (military).

1. No vote taken - pending speaking with the homeowner.

○ **Blanchard - Iron Gate - Tree Removal**

i. Removing a diseased Trunk. Major limb fell onto the street several years ago during a hurricane. 4 trunks are healthy, one diseased. Requesting permission to remove diseased the trunk. Three healthy trunks remain.

1. All approved.

○ **Dranginis - Heatherton - Tree Removal/Install**

i. Requesting to remove and replace the magnolia tree in the front yard with a palm tree. Tree is over the septic tank and the root system will eventually crack their tank. Trying to get ahead of the damage occurring to the septic tank.

1. All approved.

○ **Burns - Iron Gate - Metal Rod Fence**

i. 6ft privacy standard stockade natural color 3 sides 1 side is already existing, front/ returns of fence to be 6ft black metal I will be putting climbing roses in front of the black metal fence returns as well there will be a double black metal gate on garage side and single metal gate on ac side

1. No vote taken - pending speaking with the homeowner.

**6. Homeowner Time**

○ **Mr. Brimer:** Recently reviewed the covenants. In an Amendment on November 20, 2014, there was an update about notifying the homeowners about expenses, etc. Initially, we were supposed to just be provided the budget. But this changed and now under the Financing Reporting in Article 9: the board shall prepare an annual financial report of cash expenses and receipts within 90 days at the close of the fiscal year and provide each member a copy of the report or provide a written notice that a copy of the report is available upon request. This means every homeowner should be provided a copy of every expense and every receipt, and I'm interested in that.

i. **Jen:** I'll look into this and find out.

**7. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:48 PM. Motion by Larry, seconded by Dave, and Jon approved.