

# LakeRidge Falls

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4200 LakeRidge Blvd.  
Sarasota, FL 34243

02-12-2021

Here are the more important stories we had this past and upcoming weeks:

**2021 Election** – At the organizational meeting that took place early on this week, the newly elected Board of Directors chose its officers. Mr. Scott Sims was elected as LakeRidge Falls’ new **President**; Mrs. Suzi Weinstein was elected as LakeRidge Falls’ new **Vice President**; Mr. Calvin Fitzgerald was elected to continue and serve as the **Treasurer**; Dr. Judy Buffa was elected also to continue and serve LakeRidge Falls as its **Secretary**; and Mrs. Kate Cornings will serve the community as **Director at Large**. More than ever, your Board will need your full support as it navigates through what are truly difficult times (i.e. COVID-19). Therefore, we would like to congratulate the new Board of Directors and wish this community a successful and productive year.

**Landscape Mowing** – As some may have noticed, this week West Bay Landscape was not on-site mowing. Here is why. Recent cold temperatures affected the growth of the sod. While Bahiagrass and bermudagrass tend to go dormant when temperatures drop below 55 degrees, Saint Augustine will still grow in the same condition. However, when temperatures drop to around 40 degrees, as we experienced in recent weeks, Saint Augustine will stop growing almost completely. Therefore, there is not much sense in mowing lawns that are lower than the mowers’ blade level. Of course, mowing during a frost is never a good idea as it may damage the lawn. For this reason, West Bay Landscape advised us late last week that they have no other choice but to skip this week’s mowing. Please note that the next mowing cycle will take place on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021.



Picture by: Ms. Maggie Gat

However, there is no bad without good. In exchange for mowing, West Bay Landscape fertilized this week all the palms in the community. Here is why. Not many know, but there has been an increased concern among professionals and scholars regarding a variety of palms’ diseases, such as Gernadoma and Lethal Bronzing, which may leave Florida palmless within a couple of decades. LakeRidge Falls is no exception. In recent years, the Association has been losing

palms at an alarming rate due to these diseases. In an attempt to address this issue, the Board of Directors formed the Long-Term Landscape Group asking it, among other things, to explore alternatives for these lost palms. At the same time, the Board of Directors asked the Landscape Committee to find immediate operational routes to slow this process down.

And indeed, the Long-Term Landscape Group came up with several alternatives that were included in their long-term architectural landscape designs, some of which the Board of Directors will consider during today's meeting. On the other hand, the Landscape Committee came up with a recommendation last year to adopt a palm fertilization program at a total cost of \$8,000 a year which potentially may make the palms more immune to the diseases mentioned above. While the palm fertilization program could not have been adopted on time for this year's budget, i.e. considered after the Budget Committee concluded its work on the 2021 Budget, the Landscape Committee didn't give up and drafted a motion during its last meeting that recommended the Board of Directors will adopt such program and fund it by exchanging two mowing cycles for it.

In simple terms, the Landscape Committee recommended that instead of having 40 mows in 2021 the Association will direct West Bay Landscape to execute 38 mows. This act will save the Association \$8,175, which is the same amount needed to adopt the palm fertilization program mentioned above. This recommendation will also be considered by the Board of Directors during today's meeting.

However, sometimes an opportunity presents itself without trying. As you may guess by now, West Bay Landscape went ahead and executed the first part of the annual fertilization program which includes boron, magnesium, potassium, and other necessary nutrition that palms need to stay healthy. After all, their crews were available. Moreover, this helped West Bay Landscape the "headache" of figuring out a way to fit an extra mow sometime in the future. More importantly, this service was at no extra cost to the Association. We truly hope it will help with lowering the loss of palms that so many members in the community cherish.

**Front Gate Emergency Access** – As reported in the past, all gated communities in Manatee County must, per County Code, have a designated access control system, or systems, in addition to the community's own access control system. The emergency access system, as the name may indicate, is designed to allow first responders access to all of the gated communities in Manatee County. This way, emergency service vehicles can enter any community when they need to without any delays. One of the approved systems is referred to as the Emergency Clicker System.

The Association first noticed an issue with the Emergency Clicker System somewhere around 2014. Through resident reports and footage from the security cameras, many non-emergency vehicles, mainly Manatee County vehicles and parcel delivery trucks, such as FedEx and UPS, were gaining access to LakeRidge Falls via the Residents Only Gate off of Lockwood Ridge Blvd. We attempted to identify how these vehicles were able to enter the community but were unsuccessful. Then a lightning strike, literally. As a result of a lightning strike, a power surge damaged the emergency clicker system's motherboard. Because we had to order a new motherboard, the Emergency Clicker System at the back gate was down for almost a week. During that week, we noticed that Manatee County, FedEx, and UPS trucks were attempting, unsuccessfully, to enter the back gate. Once the motherboard was replaced, you guessed it right, they were able once again to enter the community without interruption or registering with the front gate as required by the Association rules. This led us to the realization that these drivers obtain, somehow, an emergency clicker.

So, one day I intercepted one of the UPS drivers who entered the community from the Residents Only Gate. What we learned from this was amazing. Apparently, any person who wants to purchase an emergency clicker can do so by purchasing it from Amazon.Com. The driver even shared with me the code sequence used for the clickers. The code was, and still is, an open secret. Thereafter, we paid extra attention to the activity at the back gate and witnessed how on a daily basis Manatee County employees, delivery trucks, waste management vehicles, plumbing companies, cable companies, unmarked private cars, and many others were entering the community from the back gate while using

emergency clickers. Of course, attempts were made to intercept each one of these trespassers asking them to stop using the emergency clicker. Warning letters were even sent to such companies/entities/individuals. However, these efforts were fruitless.

As a result, the Security Committee and the Board of Directors started drafting an action plan to address this concern. To make a long story short, a delegation from LakeRidge Falls met in late 2016 with the County Commissioner and County Administrator. In the meeting, the delegation explained the problem and asked that the code that controls the emergency access system be changed at least bi-annually to minimize the problem. However, nothing was done as the reality of daily unauthorized vehicles entering the community without permission continued. As one can imagine, many in the community were unhappy with this especially knowing the Association invests over \$150,000 per year on security measurements. Therefore, Board sought the advice of its attorney who argued that the Association must act to ensure the safety and security of its residents. After much consideration, the Board approved a couple of years ago to deactivate the emergency access system, of course, not before officially notifying all of Manatee County Officials. Since then, the problem of unauthorized vehicles entering the community without permission has stopped. It is important to note that first responders are successfully using the other two available emergency access systems that are available to them.

Fast-forwarding to 2020. The Gatehouse started reporting more and more incidents in which Manatee County vehicles, waste management trucks, and parcel delivery trucks are entering from the Residents Only Lane at the front entrance to the community. Following on these reports, the Association collected significant evidence, mainly from security footage, and presented it to Manatee County's Commissioner, Administrator, and Public Safety Director. Once again, nothing was done by the County to solve or even address this matter.

Left with no other choice, the Security Committee investigated the emergency access requirements per Manatee County's Land Development Code and after much deliberation and discussion recommended to the Board of Directors to consider disconnecting the Emergency Clicker System at the front entrance to the community. As with the back gate, the Committee suggested first responders use one of two available emergency access systems. Following this recommendation, the Board of Directors approved, once again with the Association attorney's blessing, disconnecting the Emergency Clicker System at the front gate early on this year. Following the approval, official letters were mailed to Manatee County's Commissioner, Administrator, and Public Safety as well as to Manatee County Sheriff's Office and Southern Manatee Fire Department's Chief and Fire Marshal advising them on the Board's decision. Please note that the Emergency Clicker System was disconnected effectively on February 1st, 2021.

That said, this action does not affect residents' ability to enter the back or front residents only gates. As hoped for two years ago, the goal is to ensure the security and safety of LakeRidge Falls' residents while encouraging the County to act on the matter.

Have a healthy and safe weekend.

Sincerely,

Oded Neeman - CAM

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