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What Do We Do About Domestic and Wild Animal Problems?

The City of Federal Way hired an animal control specialist a few years ago, and we breathed a collective sigh of relief. Unfortunately, although the intentions have been good, there remains a lot to be desired. Take the case of coyotes for instance, an issue that your Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee regularly hears about. Here is a story of frustration that demands action by residents.

It turns out that coyotes regularly move about all over the City and surrounding areas, often traveling 20 or more miles a night. The key to reducing impact is to NEVER leave anything outside they would consider food—and that includes letting your pets wander about, or feeding them outside.

Beginning about October 25, a coyote was observed from mid-morning to mid-afternoon lurking about in the lower part of Marine Hills. That is very unusual as coyotes are normally nocturnal creatures. Calls were made to the City resulting in a message that the animal control specialist only dealt with domestic animals and that safety concerns were to be dealt with by calling 911. There was considerable cause for alarm as the animal clearly was displaying unusual behavior (a possible indication of rabies, canine distemper, or ?). Those calls resulted in another call to the Fish and Game Department, upon which a third call was placed to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Biologist. He was a very

cordial and helpful person, but he indicated that cuts to funding meant that a fee (probably in the order of \$400-\$800) would have to be paid to handle the problem.

Some cities do have their officers handling wildlife issues and some Homeowner's Associations (HOA) do have contracts with the Wildlife Biologist's unit. That unit has contacted the City of Federal Way and been politely told that an agreement was not needed.

So, where does that leave residents who are scared out of their wits, or at least greatly concerned, about particular wild animals? One possibility is just to pay a fee. Another is to ask the Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee to pay -- which is not going to work due to our meager budget, since only half or less residents pay their \$30 annual "contribution". The other, and the one strongly advocated by the Biologist is to harass the City Council to either change the job description of the City's animal specialist, or make an agreement with the Biologist's unit. In either City Council option "it is the squeaky wheel that gets the grease." And, in the current City viewpoint, if it is about your safety and concerns—what are you going to do – or not bother with?



MHACC and Residents' Duties and Responsibilities

Requests for help from our Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee reveals considerable confusion about duties and responsibilities of Marine Hills' residents and the Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee.

The duty of the Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee is to interpret and enforce the 21 covenants applicable to our neighborhood's 525 residences. This is different than the typical Homeowner's Association (HOA) that usually has considerable regulatory powers. Most of the activities and issues typically dealt with are explained in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) outlined in the Committee's website: www.MHACC.net.

The Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee does not deal with private issues between neighbors. For example, if a neighbor is complaining about a light shining in a person's yard or house, or if there is encroachment on a person's property, those are private issues.

Loss or significant impairment of view is a Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee issue as is, for example, painting a house a color unbecoming of good taste, or building a deck that impedes a neighbor's view even though the City could issue a permit based on City Code.

Offensive activities such as obnoxious pets or noise are not permitted by the covenants. Please review your particular plat's covenants or the ones of adjoining residences. A map showing the various covenant plats is on the cover of your Residence Directory for Marine Hills. You can obtain a copy of any covenant on the Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee website.

Some other examples of issues that the Committee considers private matters are those

that pertain to facilities or land regulated by and maintained by the City or utilities companies. Examples are concerns about trees and shrubbery on City right-of-ways and power poles and lines.

To reiterate, the Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee is an all-volunteer committee comprised only of Marine Hills' residents. We try our best to keep Marine Hills attractive and a wonderful place to live. However, especially because Marine Hills is not a Homeowner's Association (HOA), all residents have the responsibility of calling 911 on immediate safety issues, and calling the City or utilities about other problems.



Big Improvements in Marine Hills' Entrances... *cont. on page 4*

As all of you have probably noticed, and so many commented on (thank you!), there has been a dramatic improvement to our entrances. So, how did all this come about? An important reason is the substantial increase in Marine Hills' residents contributing their annual voluntary \$30. Last year 54 percent of residents contributed –still a devastatingly low number considering the low cost – but considerably more than the 40 percent, and sometimes less, than in previous years. For purposes of comparison and for emphasis, if the Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee was a Homeowner's Association (HOA), the annual dues would be \$300-400 and the dues would be mandatory, not voluntary.

The take-home message is that for the first time your Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee has had enough funding to make major improvements to both entrances, and improve the frequency of maintenance along Dash Point Road. Improvements at the 9th Place South and 11th Place South entrances into Marine Hills have included the following accomplishments; to wit –

- i. The Marine Hills entrance signs, long in need of upgraded façades, were sealed and repainted in welcoming colors, accentuated by carefully chosen plants in the fore-gardens.
- ii. On the west side of the 9th Place South entrance, shrubs, dwarf trees, and blackberry overgrowth were obscuring the entrance sign and the flower garden. The shrubs and dwarf trees were carefully shaped to again draw attention to the Marine Hills' sign. Physical removal of invading blackberries and trimming of shrubs near Dash Point Road dramatically improved line-of-sight when driving out of the 9th Place South entrance looking west.
- iii. The east side of the 11th Place South entrance had presented with a row of evergreen trees whose lower limbs were dead and unsightly. All of these dead limbs were excised and removed, the grass and forbs around these trees trimmed, and the area debris raked up and removed. A sidewalk hidden by years of plant and evergreen needle accumulations was once again made visible.
- iv. Without question, the most significant and substantial improvement to the Marine Hills' entrances was that effected on the west side of the 11th Place South entrance. The overgrowth of laurel, holly, and blackberries enveloped the area surrounding the Marine Hills' sign like a temperate zone jungle which reached a height of 25-30 feet, sufficient to extend to overhead power lines. Given the extent of the unrestrained vegetative growth, the difficulty of ascertaining beautification options without some degree of cut-back necessitated the task being performed in two (2) phases. Completion of the first phase revealed how best to proceed with the second phase. The second phase was characterized by heavy trimming of the two (2) main laurel clusters; removal of five (5) laurel bushes, including the roots; removal of a network of intertwined blackberry bushes; removal of two (2) dead, horizontally- configured pine trees and associated debris; heavy trimming of scraggly holly; removal of a mesh of chicken wire through which holly and blackberries had grown; removal of selected dead branches on free-standing trees; clean-up of enormous amounts of debris and societal detritus; and disposal of at least thirty (30) defunct political, garage sale and realty advertisement signs that had accumulated over the years behind the Marine Hills' sign.

Maintenance of the entrances is the direct result of wonderful voluntarism by what have become known as the "Friends of 9th Place South" and "Friends of 11th Place South. These two (2) groups of visionary

Organic Fertilizer from the Hayfield

Alfalfa is recognized mostly as a variety of hay cows, horses and other ungulates consume in their daily diets. *Have you considered using alfalfa for your garden?*

Alfalfa is a legume and one of the best-kept secrets for your garden. The pellets are an excellent source of nitrogen and they add to the organic matter in your soil. Alfalfa has a nutrient content of 3-0-2 or 3 parts Nitrogen, 0 parts Phosphorus and 2 parts Potassium. It's a light fertilizer and won't burn your turf or garden plants like chemicals such as ammonium sulfate, diammonium phosphate, ammonium nitrate and urea can do. Rose gardeners have been using alfalfa around their roses for a long time with successful results. Alfalfa is an all-purpose fertilizer and soil conditioner. Alfalfa in pellet form can be used on roses, other garden plants and your lawn. Derived from alfalfa plants and pressed into a pellet form, alfalfa meal is beneficial for adding nitrogen and potassium to soil, as well as trace minerals and growth stimulants. Roses, in particular, seem to like this fertilizer and benefit from up to 5 cups of alfalfa meal per plant every ten weeks, worked into the soil. Add it to your compost pile to speed up the process. The pellets are very compacted and are small and hard in the package, but one good rain or watering will fluff them up. They can be raked or worked into the soil and are invisible in no time. On turf, rake the pellets in; otherwise, just as with conventional fertilizer, you will end up with patches of deep green. A spring addition of alfalfa is a great way to get your lawn off to a good start. Alfalfa pellets are an outstanding way to fertilize your garden organically.

You can find alfalfa pellets at your local animal feed supply store. One animal feed supply store that has carried alfalfa pellets for many years (as rabbit food) is Reber Ranch, located at 28606 - 132nd Avenue SE in Kent, Washington 98042. They have alfalfa pellets in only one size bag of 50 pounds, priced at \$16.99.

Big Improvements . . . *cont.*

and neighborhood-minded volunteers frequently amalgamate to achieve the best results for both entrances. These groups have been recognized in previous issues of the Covenant Courier Newsletter, and we are pleased to recognize them and their dedicated work again. Speaking of volunteering, residents sometimes forget, or even are not aware, that your Marine Hills Architectural Control Committee is completely made up of neighborhood volunteers. Planning and execution of the many activities that help keep the neighborhood beautiful, property values up, and focus on the safety of our residents is a very time-consuming task.

You can show your appreciation to all these volunteers, who selflessly give so much to our community, by mailing your annual \$30 contribution for 2012 if you have not done so, to MHACC, PMB 311, 27013 Pacific Highway South, Des Moines 98198-9250. Just do this – and again in 2013 when you receive the Spring Covenant Courier – and we promise continued awesome improvements in Marine Hills.



You can't get too much winter in the winter.

— Robert Frost