At the 2012 Annual Meeting it was announced that one of the goals for the Finance Committee for the upcoming year was to place a greater emphasis on accounts in arrears. Approximately 13 property owners together owed a little under $50,000 to the POA. Letters were sent to each property owner with a follow-up personal conversation from Finance Committee member Hugh Mayronne. Hugh’s goal was to work out a payment plan for paying back this money owed to the POA. In some cases Hugh was not able to persuade the property owner to settle with a reasonable payment plan. Unfortunately further legal action had to be initiated by filing a lien on these delinquent accounts. To date $32,800 has been collected which amounts to 66% of the money owed. A special thanks to Hugh Mayronne for his time and dedication to this project. In 2014 an additional effort will be made to collect the rest of the $16,800.

Since the Fire Station Lodge assessment has been retired, all the funds which are collected from delinquent accounts that are for the Fire Station assessment and future assessments collected from newly constructed homes will be placed in a Board Directed Fund for the Fire Station/Lodge. The current amount in this fund is $18,361. This money will only be used for the maintenance of the facility and/or improvement to the building and site as directed by the POA Board of September 2007. These funds are not to be used for purchasing supplies, equipment or any other items not permanently attached to the building.

In the Annual Meeting letter sent in late August, every property owner received a copy of the 2014 budget. During the September meeting Warren Stillwell directed everyone to the line items that will change from the previous year’s budget. Increases in receipts are from the increases in dues. Unfortunately the decreases were much lower than the increases made to the budget. There was a decrease in the cost of mailings, gate maintenance and the POA truck. The increases were seen under insurance including bond insurance for the treasurer, truck and liability. There was an additional increase for road and landscape maintenance and propane for the pump houses. The budget is sent to the POA Board for final approval. The dues for 2014 were increased by $50 as approved by the POA Board and not influenced by the addition of funds outside of the normal operating receipts.

It is important to remember that Laurel Ridge is a business and must be operated as one. When dues and assessments are not paid on time, everyone suffers. Excess funds are not spent in a frivolous manner. The Board will be directing the majority of these funds into road reserves. The Road Reserve Fund needs to be a growing fund for future road expenses that will be incurred by the community.
Once again Laurel Ridge was blessed with a relatively mild 2012-13 winter. This had the effect of not taking the normal rugged toll on our roads. We prepared for the 2013 growing season by doing a lot of cutting along the roads last fall, and again this spring. We hired Newcomb Tree Service to cut back limbs, remove fallen trees and clear some of the seldom used roads in order to keep growth into the road areas less severe.

This year the Roads Committee signed a contract with InDemand Landscape Service to maintain the grassy areas along the roads. In the past, this work had been done by hiring college students and using Laurel Ridge volunteers. Due to the potential liability should any of these individuals get injured, it was decided by the Board that the work should be hired out to a company with proper insurance. A list of specifications for the work to be done was developed and bids were taken for 2013. InDemand Landscape Services won the bid and has done a good job of keeping up with the tremendous amount of work on nine miles of roads. Volunteers continue to do work as well, over and above what the contractor does. Additional weed-whacking and cutting back of locust shrubs (thorny bushes and trees) is still needed and done by volunteers.

This year has been a record setting year for rain. This rain has caused erosion problems in certain areas around Laurel Ridge. An especially needy area was the gravel road leading up to water tank #3. This road suffered from some serious erosion and Godfrey Grading was called in to re-grade the road and to improve the drainage and add more gravel. At the same time he graded the unpaved portion of Hemlock Circle and added more rock there. He also graded the area leading into the dumpsters and added more crushed rock there as well. Sometime later, and after a good deal more rain, the road to tank #3 once again experienced some washout. This time two additional culverts were added to ease the downward flow of water, and the road was once again graded. The drainage ditches were also seeded with grass seed to try to prevent further erosion.

An unusual problem resulted from all the rain. It seems a runoff developed near the corner of the bridge crossing Laurel Branch Creek on Sugar Maple. This problem evidenced itself by a portion of the road sinking down about 1 to 2 inches. It was determined that a great deal of dirt had been washed out on the back side of the concrete supporting the bridge creating a big hole behind the concrete. This was not evident until one went down along the creek and peered behind the rocks there. A contract was authorized with F & F Trucking and Bridge Construction. They filled the area behind the concrete support for the bridge with additional concrete, cut out and repaired the damaged portion of the roadbed, and filled the area along the bridge with more road bond.

Appalachian Paving worked in June to repair washed out places along the side of the road with more road bond. They then came along and patched with asphalt the sides of the road that had been broken by heavy construction traffic. In early August they cut out about six sections of roadbed that were breaking up, then put in more road bond, and put about 2 ½ inches of asphalt on top. They will be coming back when the rains let up to seal cracks in the roads and put an asphalt sealant on some of the cracked portions of our roads.

Another contract was signed with JLS Paving to pave the unpaved portion of Hemlock Circle. Additionally, they will repave a section of road by the POA lot that leads up to the High’s property. The asphalt there has broken up badly and needs replacement.

All in all, the roads within Laurel Ridge are in pretty decent shape considering their age. Those that have come to give estimates on road work have stated that they thought we were in pretty good shape compared to many developments they had seen. The Roads Committee will continue to do there best to keep up with needed work within budget constraints.
ARC Annual Report
Dan Smullen, Chairman

The Architectural Review Committee administers the ARC Standards and Guidelines. In addition, the Modifications Committee which is the same as the ARC reviews and approves any request for exterior improvements.

Currently there are 72 homes completed in Laurel Ridge. Since the last Annual Report, 4 Orchard Knob Lane was completed and 21 Great Aspen Way was completed as well.

Currently, there are two new building projects underway. One is located at 4 Acacia court and the second at 34 Wedgewood Terrace.

At this time, we know one application will be submitted for 2014. Two deck modifications were requested and approved since last fall. One is completed at 32 Winding Poplar Rd. The second project is waiting to begin in the spring of 2014.

The ARC Guidelines have been largely left in their original form for many years. A rewrite had been planned for this year but unfortunately did not occur. We hope 2014 will allow more time for important updates to be made to the guidelines.

The 2013 ARC committee members are as follows: Dan Smullen, chairman; Thom Hill, Tom Newhouse, David Begley, Lew Kolak and Secretary Liz Stillwell a non-voting member.

The committee continues to meet as needed to review applications for new construction or review any changes requested during construction such as exterior color schemes and/or exterior design modifications if they differ from the initial design.

I have served as ARC chairman since January 2008. Business workload and utilities committee work continue to place heavy demands on time, and I must step down as chairman as of December 31. This will give an opportunity for another person in our community to have a hand in the ongoing stewardship of the process and bring a fresh perspective to the ARC.

Beautification Report for 2013
Sam Boatwright, Chairman

There are many volunteers who help throughout the year to help make Laurel Ridge look even better than the years before. Some of those wonderful volunteers are: Kay Blaisdell and Cheryl Fernandez who keep the front gate area and Jo Jane’s garden looking nice, Ron and Karen Horgan, Richard Fernandez, Debi Monday, Larry and Cheryl Avery, Dave Taylor, Lauren Kolak, Greg Vogt, Lynn Newhouse, Warren and Liz Stillwell, have helped in various places around Laurel Ridge. Additionally, Edith Hicks added hostas to her corner on Winding Poplar which look really nice. Thanks everyone!

The following is a list of accomplishments from this committee in 2013.

1. Five additional mini gardens in the upper pasture curve were planted with annuals and perennials.
2. A new garden has been started at the Y of Winding Poplar Road and Sugar Maple Drive in memory of Jan Boatwright.
3. Continuous maintenance of 13 additional garden sites.
4. Twenty-five additional wild azaleas from Andy Whipple.
5. Continued nurturing of 55 wild azaleas.
6. At the corner of Wedgewood Terrace and Winding Poplar Sam calls it Sharon’s corner, additional Rhododendrons were planted.
7. 450 daffodils are scheduled to be planted this fall around the community.
8. And finally, twelve more pink and white dogwoods were planted along Sugar Maple Drive.
This summer and as late as this past December a few of our residents were challenged by the bears trying to break into their homes. Unfortunately, some of the bears have succeeded. The most active area has been around Hemlock Circle at the bottom of Laurel Branch Drive and Great Aspen Way. Some good news is that some residents have been extremely fortunate because they have not been disturbed by a bear, yet. The committee was hopeful that the early break-ins would be minor and handled easily, but we realized by late July that action had to be taken. Once again, Liz Stillwell called upon David Wilson to bring his Walker breed of dogs into the neighborhood and chase the bears. This action has created much discussion throughout our community. Some are violently opposed and fear we are harming the bears. It needs to be understood that what we are doing is called “bear shepherding” unlike another program called “bear hounding.” Bear hounding refers to a practice in bear hunting where a large pack of dogs is set upon a bear with the intent of killing the bear. The bear shepherding program is different and was approved by the POA Board as a measure to protect the bears by re-instilling in them their natural wariness of humans.

In August of 2012, we had two State Wildlife Biologists, Michael Carraway and Justin McVey who has now taken over the position from Mr. Carraway for Buncombe County, come and talk with our residents. These men advised that residents should be careful with trash disposal and should avoid feeding the bears, including the use of bird feeders during the spring, summer and fall months. When they were asked about running dogs as negative or aversive conditioning, Mr. Carraway stated that the bear shepherding program would work to recondition the bears and would return them to their natural behavior. He also stated that the NC Wildlife agency does not trap and relocate bears. The bear shepherding program is called “bear hounding.”

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Other areas of concern are the growing population of deer. The deer population is growing every year. The residents need to remember to drive with caution within the neighborhood. The same is true of the turkeys. The turkeys tend to be a little more “scattered brained” than the deer and are not going to move any faster than they deem necessary.

Laurel Ridge is a wildlife refuge, and we are very fortunate to be able to observe these animals up close and personal. We just need to remember that they are wild and to respect their space as much as we want them to respect ours. The POA Board continues to take seriously their positions to make Laurel Ridge a safe place to live and to promote the recreation, health, safety and welfare of our residents.
2014 Laurel Ridge Committee Members

**ARC:** Thom Hill (Chair), Liz Stillwell* (Secretary), David Begley, Tom Newhouse and Greg Vogt.

**Beautification:** (Chair) Sam Boatwright*, Cheryl and Larry Avery, Kay Blaisdell, Cheryl Fernandez, Jo Jane Korbach, Lynn Newhouse and those residents who love to dig in the dirt.

**Budget & Finance:** Warren Stillwell (Chair), Paul Denyer*, David Esker Thom Hill, Hugh Mayronne, Liz Stillwell and Lyons Williams

**Community Care:** Group Leader: Kate Dewey* (Chair), Greg Vogt, Kathleen & George Busch, Wanda & Bill Friedrich, Marilyn & Jim Caro, Cheryl & Richard Fernandez, Kitty Lou & Nick Kimmel, Bette & Mike McKee, Penny & Hugh Mayronne, Amy & David Esker, Lynn & Tom Newhouse, Connie & Lyons Williams

**Emergency Preparedness:** Thom Hill (Chair), Sam Boatwright*, Jim Caro, Cheryl Fernandez, Priscilla Hill, Warren & Liz Stillwell, Lyons & Connie Williams

**First Friday:** Connie Williams (Chair) Marilyn Caro

**Front Gate:** Duane Jennings* (Chair), Richard Fernandez, David Esker and Warren Stillwell

**Gathering:** To be determined at a later date.

**Lodge:** Marsha Shafer (Chair) Penny Mayronne, Marilyn Caro, Connie Williams, David Esker, AV Equipment and Facilities Engineer

**Mountain News and Views:** Liz Stillwell* (Chair), Thom Hill and Connie Williams

**Nominations:** Liz Stillwell* (Chair) plus two

**Roads:** Lyons Williams, Chair; Sam Boatwright, Jim Caro,* David Esker and Bob Lueck

**Utilities:** Dan Smullen (Chair), George Busch, David Esker and Warren Stillwell

**Waste Management:** David Esker (Chair), Sam Boatwright, Jim Caro, Warren Stillwell and Dave Taylor*

**Web Site:** Calvin Briden* (Chair)

**Wildlife Management:** Gene Mills, (Chair) George Busch, Jack Korbach and Lyons Williams

**Wilderness:** Gene Mills (Chair) Duane Jennings*

* Denotes Board Representative
During the past year, the water system has had periods of reasonable good performance, but has provided us with some surprises as well. There was a serious large leak that turned out to be a line from the street to a resident’s home, and a second occurrence at another home in which only a small amount of water was lost because of early detection. There also was a Tank 4 overflow issue that caused some water loss early in 2013. At that time, a failed valve at the tank had to be rebuilt.

This past summer a sudden failure occurred of valves and supply pumps to Tank 2 located at the Lodge which supplies over 40 homes with water. That tank actually ran dry, and Bolton Service was able to quickly respond. They were able to get Tank 2 operational; and after the crisis passed, the altitude valve at the Lodge was rebuilt to restore the system to normal status.

The system is fundamentally okay, although it is aging and needs more monitoring than in the past. The underground lines, pumps and tank remain in fairly good shape, but the many valves, sensors and controls are starting to have issues that show their obsolescence. The committee is looking at ways to better detect issues sooner, since some failures can result in nearly empty tanks if not caught quickly enough. We may add smart meters to each residence to help locate leaks quicker. These can provide radio data to a drive-by car for 170 days of use at each tap. The meters would not be used for billing just as a means to monitor. We only know today how many gallons passed through Asheville’s meter. If the billing amount jumps, it’s very difficult to reconcile the metered amount with usage to confirm that the amount is actually used and not lost to a leak. The equipment cost is being requested. These are the same meters that Asheville has added to their system.

There have been several check valve failures in pump houses 1 and 2. Three were replaced in pump house 1 last year; but have again failed, and they cannot be rebuilt. The original ones lasted for a number of years. Bolton Service has ordered new valves of a higher quality for Laurel Ridge. These are slated for installation this fall. Since the life was so short, Bolton has sold us these valves at no markup to help alleviate the cost. The bottom line is we have learned that some of these components must be replaced with new ones of equal quality to the originals, even at the higher cost.

The pumps houses and tanks are constantly checked for proper operation approximately twice a week when things are going well and checked daily when problems occur.

The holding tanks provide us with water during electrical power outages; and even more importantly, they provide water in fire emergencies. We are fortunate indeed to have such a system in our community! There are some service issues from time to time; but our committee is quite capable, and we are committed to keeping the water system as optimized as possible.

The Utilities committee members remain as before - George Busch, David Esker, Dan Smullen and Warren Stillwell. We check the operation of the pump houses and tanks on a regular basis to assure that all is operating as intended. A fair amount of maintenance and monitoring can be accomplished on our own; but for major preventive maintenance or repairs, we have a contract with Bolton Service Group.

In 2012, we made two major changes in the gate system, which have continued to work well. We began closing the gate on a 24/7 basis, instead of just evenings and weekends, and we upgraded the rollers supporting the gate to an entirely new design, with much stronger rollers.

This year, as a result of gate age and increased usage, a number of important gate parts have had to be replaced. This includes the wooden support system for the keypad control box, the keypad itself, the chain-drive idler rolls, and the system of securing the master chain to the gate. In each case the replacement equipment was chosen to be more durable and/or more reliable or more convenient. We actually went to a weather resistant, back-lit keypad design which should last longer and be much easier to read at night.

At this point, we do not foresee any major repairs being required in 2014, but severe thunderstorms are always a threat to the computer board which is one of our more expensive components. Probably the most expensive piece of equipment that could fail is the multi-gear transmission connecting the two big motors to the chain drive sprocket. The manufacturer claims it should have a long life with little maintenance.
Black Mountain Fire Department and County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are the same for the Laurel Ridge residents as for anyone else in the Black Mountain fire district. The limiting factor as for anyone in the county is the transit from the main station to a residence. For medical responses, BMFD always sends out Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) from the main station to gather information, stabilize the situation and to assist the county EMS paramedics who can provide more advanced medical services and who do the patient transport to Mission Hospital. BMFD does not transport patients to the hospital but in case of, for example, a cardiac arrest, may provide personnel to provide CPR en route to the hospital.

Our homeowner's insurance rates were dropped from classes 9/10 to 4 when the Black Mountain fire district was expanded to include all of Laurel Ridge based on two things. First, was on our having a Fire Station, which is referred to as Station 3 for the town of Black Mountain, on an unmanned basis and second, by having every lot within Laurel Ridge within a 1,000 feet radial or straight-line distance from a fire hydrant. Volunteers from Laurel Ridge, Jim Caro being the main one, installed 14 hydrants that met those criteria. Our facility has the capacity to house both men and women with wheelchair accessible showers. We also have a functional kitchen and two rooms that could be used as bunk rooms at the back of the station. Had the center property been developed as a retirement center our station would have been a welcomed site for the management company. Additionally, the Black Mountain Fire Department (BMFD) would have been thrilled to have a station so well designed for their firemen. Today there is nothing planned for that piece of property; and therefore, no reason for Black Mountain to man Station 3.

Should one of our homes have a fire, the response times by the Black Mountain Fire Department and County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are the same for the Laurel Ridge residents as for anyone else in the Black Mountain fire district. The limiting factor as for anyone in the county is the transit from the main station to a residence. For medical responses, BMFD always sends out Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) from the main station to gather information, stabilize the situation and to assist the county EMS paramedics who can provide more advanced medical services and who do the patient transport to Mission Hospital. BMFD does not transport patients to the hospital but in case of, for example, a cardiac arrest, may provide personnel to provide CPR en route to the hospital.

In the past year Laurel Ridge’s property owners have had the opportunity to experience and utilize a new private social network called Nextdoor. It has proven to be a useful tool, allowing neighbors to connect with each other and events within the community. Our Nextdoor membership consists of 71 members in 44 households and still growing. Those members have enjoyed getting to know one another on the net as well have been able to exchange information that has proven helpful for those asking for assistance. Residents with a Smart Phones can now download an app for your iPhone or Android to access Nextdoor.com.

The biggest problem we have encountered this year is the way Nextdoor has mapped the properties in our neighborhood. Some of our properties within Laurel Ridge are not showing on the boundary map which has prevented some of our residents from joining. As of August 30, a solution was offered. If you are one of those homeowners, you must have a physical address in Laurel Ridge for it to work, please contact Cal Briden by email: cal.briden@wellsfargo.com for assistance in getting recognized on the Laurel Ridge map.

Our Laurel Ridge Web Site is stable and remains on its hosting service, JustHost.com. It is in need of updates to bring it both visually and technically up-to-date. Cal is currently evaluating ways to improve the site.

One new feature is the “Owner’s Portal” which has been added. Access to this area is protected by a user name and ID/password. The user name is: XXX and the password is XXXXXXX Please note that it is case sensitive.

If you have not visited our web site, please do. It was created by Jim Cropper and is now being maintained and updated by Cal Briden. It is really a great site to visit whether you are a property owner or a potential buyer.
We have completed two years of service with Waste Pro as our vendor. They have proven to be a reliable supplier and have addressed each of the minor issues that have come up. The single stream recycling program has been a great success. In fact as of September, we have started biweekly recycling because we have such great participation. Both dumpsters will now be emptied twice a week. We have also asked year round residents to try to make more use of the mid-week pickup when possible to leave more room on the weekend and that seems to be making a difference in balancing the load.

Please continue to be vigilant in keeping the dumpster doors locked. The bears are constantly probing the dumpsters and are unable to gain access when the doors are properly closed. Please be aware of items that are not allowed in the dumpster. Construction waste, sofas, fluorescent lights, TV’s, and computers are some examples of items that have been seen in the dumpster this year. If you have items of value to recycle, please do not leave them sitting by dumpster as some have done. Post a note on Nextdoor so that we can help find a home for the item or donate it to a local charity. Thank you for your support and participation in the Laurel Ridge Waste Management program.