

2024 Pepper Ridge Civic Association Annual Meeting Minutes

The annual meeting was held on Tuesday, October 8, 2024, in Goldey-Beacom College's Fulmer Center, Room 100.

Attendees

Pepper Ridge Civic Association (PRCA) Officers

Fairlight Zimmerman, Treasurer; Heather Brooks, Secretary; Hoa Nguyen, District 1 Rep.; Doug Rossi, District 3 Rep.; Kristine Anderson, District 7 Rep.; Megan Brozek, District Volunteer; Brett Lenderman, District Volunteer.

Community Members

Robert Colton, Mary Page Bailey, Rose Ehlen, Kevin Touhey, Rebecca Down, Kathleen Johnson, Diane Masciantonio, Carolyn Eldridge, Mike and Carol Laukaitis.

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

Introduction

Board members and volunteers were introduced. Treasurer Fairlight Zimmerman explained the organization of the neighborhood (200 homes divided into eight representative districts), and the duties of board members. Annual dues are \$40 and are payable by cash, check, or credit card. Dues pay for snow plowing and common area maintenance.

Secretary Heather Brooks, who also runs the PRCA website (pepperridgecivicassoc.org), listed the resources available there.

Fairlight Zimmerman explained the differences between PRCA's Facebook page and group, both administered by Lauren Zimmerman:

- Pepper Ridge Civic Association (<https://www.facebook.com/pepperridgecivicassociation>) is a public page. Anyone on Facebook can view it and leave comments.
- Pepper Ridge Neighbors of Pike Creek, Delaware (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1523780624809575>) is a private group open only to Pepper Ridge residents. To join, neighbors must submit their addresses. So far, the membership has been respectful and helpful, finding lost pets, offering items for sale or giveaway, and asking for recommendations for contractors, etc.

Community members are encouraged to visit the website and Facebook group for helpful information and to submit questions to the civic association.

Presentations by State Representative District 21 Candidates

Brenda Mennella, Republican Candidate

Ms. Mennella introduced herself and listed her experience: she is an educator, veteran, nonprofit founder, and nonprofit board member. Mike Ramone, who held the seat for 16 years and is now running for governor, asked her to run for the seat.

On the issues:

- Ms. Mennella pledged to support working families and veterans and focus on improving Delaware's public school system. She believes that improving education will improve economic conditions and reduce crime.
- She supports school choice but believes that improving the education system will reduce the need for charter and choice schools.
- She pledged to fight to keep the Polly Drummond yard waste site open.

Dr. Frank Burns, Democratic Candidate

Dr. Burns introduced himself and listed his experience in science and medicine and as a small business owner.

On the issues:

- Dr. Burns wants to see the public school system redesigned from the ground up but realizes that might not be possible.
- He is cautious about the issue of school choice, which potentially diverts resources from disadvantaged to economically advantaged students. He opposes school vouchers.
- If elected, his priorities will be education, energy, and the environment.
- He would fight to get the Three Little Bakers property designated as open space, preferably as a state park with managed recreational use. Under the current ownership, it is private property, and although community members use the golf cart paths as walking trails, they are technically trespassing.
- He wants to improve the responsiveness of the New Castle County Conservation District, which handles stormwater management, erosion, and flooding issues.

The candidates were thanked for taking the time to attend and meet our community members, and they then left the meeting.

Business

Zimmerman presented the Treasurer's Report and the 2024-2025 budget and explained some of the issues that occurred with contractors in the past year.

- Snow plowing: We had a contract with Boesen to plow our community. Most companies start with their commercial customers first and then their larger communities down to the smaller ones. This is what happened to us last year. By the time they came to us, the

snow was already packed down, and there wasn't really anything to plow. We reached out to Ramone as they were already plowing the neighborhoods on either side of Pepper Ridge. They plowed Mermaid Blvd. for the next two events and proved to be responsive and reliable. Although they are a little higher in price, it makes sense that we continue using Ramone's for winter 2024-2025. The sand barrels were a success last year. We will be requesting five sand barrels for this winter. Two at each of the common areas on Mermaid Blvd. and another one at the end of N. Tupelo Turn. Since we do not have a common area on N. Tupelo Turn, District 7 Rep. Kristine Anderson is allowing us to place one on her property so that the neighbors will have access to it. We understand that many of you used them for your personal property, but we ask that along the way you put some on the roads and make sure the lids are on tight.

- Common area maintenance: McDonald Lawn & Landscaping does the maintenance of our three common areas. Over the years, they have done a wonderful job, but they now have over 500 customers. There is a lack of communication between the owner and workers. We had a spring cleanup that didn't go well and is still in dispute. We will be moving to McKenna Lawn Care & Services, a small business that promises more flexibility, better communication, and slightly lower prices. Because of this, the mowing and common area maintenance numbers will be slightly lower than shown in the budget.

Other items:

- The spring community event offering free Woodside Creamery ice cream to neighbors was a success. More than 50 neighbors participated despite steady rain.
- Spring and fall volunteer cleanups save PRCA money, but very few (about 10) residents participate. Unless more residents express interest in helping out, PRCA will pay a landscape company to do the cleanups.

Election of Officers

A quorum is required to hold an election. A quorum is met when 30% of members (defined as residents up to date on their dues) attend a meeting. A quorum was met.

The previously elected secretary, treasurer, and district representatives will continue in their duties. The presidency and vice presidency will remain open.

- President: No candidates; the office will remain open.
- Vice President: No candidates; the office will remain open.
- Treasurer: Fairlight Zimmerman to continue.
- Secretary: Heather Brooks to continue.
- District 1 Rep: Hoa Nguyen to continue.
- District 2 Rep: Barbara Prendergast to continue.
- District 3: Doug Rossi to continue.
- District 4: Kathleen Johnson was voted in unanimously.
- District 5: Tanvi Rastogi was voted in unanimously.
- District 6: Will remain open and covered by a volunteer.
- District 7: Kristine Anderson to continue.
- District 8: Lauren Zimmerman to continue.

Questions and Concerns From Attendees

- Where are the neighborhood's common areas? The civic association is responsible for the maintenance of three common areas:
 - The island on Mermaid Blvd., where the Pepper Ridge sign is.
 - The island on Mermaid Blvd. opposite Gingerwood Turn.
 - A small area at the end of Pepper Ridge Ct. near the golf course.
 - All other areas, including lawns, gardens, and places where mailboxes, fire hydrants, and utility boxes are located, are private property belonging to our neighbors.
- Who is responsible for the wooded area on Mermaid Blvd. between N. Raintree and the neighborhood of Linden Ridge? It is New Castle County property.
- Some homeowners commented that they weren't notified ahead of time about the recent Delmarva Power work along Mermaid Blvd. It was disruptive, and the workers weren't able to supply information about how and when neighbors would be impacted.
- Attendees were reminded of the neighborhood discount with Evergreen Waste.

Door Prize Drawing

Attendees entered their names in a raffle for two gift cards from Pike Creek Community Hardware. (PRCA purchased one gift card, and the business donated the other.) The winners were Rebecca Down and Carol Laukaitis.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Brooks
Secretary, PRCA