

The 2007 History of Mentone

The year started out with a substantial change, as our prior management company left the industry with very little notice. Ultimately, this worked to the advantage of the neighborhood as certain deficiencies were not being handled. The Board found itself in the unfortunate position of rebuilding much of the homeowners association. This process has been painful for all involved, but we do see light at the end of the tunnel.

The first order of business was to hire a new management company, no small task. We interviewed every management company in Gainesville and discovered that the prior management company was hired largely as a result of how inexpensive they were. Other management companies that handle neighborhoods the size of Mentone were at least double the price. After our interview process and trial runs, we, as a Board, felt that Florida Community Management was the best fit for the needs of our community. The time involved with the interview process also presented other challenges such as; opening a new bank account and catching up with financials that were seriously behind. Upon an in depth view of the financial standing, it was determined that Mentone was not taking in enough money to pay our current bills nor to meet any unexpected bills and our reserve fund had not been contributed to in at least two quarters. Among other issues, we had a sink hole to fill and stabilize, fallen trees from the hurricanes, and a pool heater to replace. There was no other fiscally responsible choice to meet Mentone's financial requirements other than to increase dues. While this was a difficult choice, it was the only responsible choice for our community.

In addition to the financial hardships that Mentone faced, we had to reorganize all the common area expenses which had resulted from poor communication to our vendors who were responsible for the duties and tasks at Mentone. We found that separating the duties to many companies would be more expensive and since we had already raised dues we were looking for the most economically conservative solution. The decision was made to hire one individual to a more expanded role in an effort to save money. The tasks were clearly outlined from the Board, but were not able to be completed in such a way that the community or the Board could support. As a result, we now have multiple companies performing the duties at a higher cost than the single individual, but realize that the amount of work required spans many areas of expertise and this should prove to provide much better service for Mentone.

During this past year, the Board lost 3 members due mostly to the stress of the job. We, as a Board, have taken a lot of written and verbal criticism from the community; most of it is probably due to a lack of understanding and communication of the details involved in the decisions the Board had to make for Mentone throughout this past year. To try and alleviate both the perceived and real lack of communication, the Board created a website and have had some successes in increasing communication that and also with renewing the publication of our newsletter in the last quarter of 2007.

This past year also brought stronger enforcement of the Covenants, Codes, and Restriction rules. Some have expressed they are too tough; however, we believe that this resulted from the very high number of non-compliant yards throughout the neighborhood. During a drive through last spring, we found that over 113 of the homes in Mentone had poor to seriously neglected lawn conditions and / or additional violations. Some real estate professionals had even communicated that Mentone was starting to get a bad reputation in the area for poor upkeep of our properties. This is a problem we are sure all agree needed to be addressed.

The Mentone Homeowners Association Board of Directors has strived to do the best job we could pulling our neighborhood out of financial trouble, and reorganizing the inner workings. We anticipate this coming year will bring the community back together and that is our goal. We hope that everyone in the community will be understanding and perhaps more supportive to the difficult position Mentone was in and the hard decisions the Board had to make. We encourage all residents to participate in the solutions. The Board is comprised of volunteers and we cannot solve all issues ourselves. Please help us to successfully come together as a community and make Mentone the best neighborhood to live in Gainesville!