



Willow Brook Estates Homeowners Association, Inc.

The annual meeting of the Willow Brook Estates HOA Association was held **May 1, 2025, starting at 6:30pm** at the Plainville Municipal Center, One Central Sq., Plainville, CT 06062

- 1. Call to Order** – meeting was called to order at 6:35 by Donna Ortelle, President of Willow Brook HOA Association
- 2. Establish a Quorum** – there were 60 residents in attendance representing 45 units (numbers derived from sign in sheets)
- 3. Proof of Notice for meeting** - was emailed out on 4/20/25 along with agenda and notice was added to the bulletin board by the mailboxes as well
- 4. Introduction of HOA Board** – (see Officer's information at bottom of page)
- 5. Meeting asks** – please put cell phones on silent and state your name and house number/street address when speaking for accurate meeting minutes
- 6. President's messages and unit owner's discussions**
 - a. Complaints** – please follow appropriate speed limit and stop at stop signs for everyone's safety
 - b. Reminders about bird feeders** - so as not to attract bears, bird feeders should only be out 12/1 thru 3/31, unless the bird feeders are filled with safflower and/or nyjer seed (adopted Wildlife guidelines set forth by the Town of Farmington, 11/27/24 email)
 - c. Willow Brook (WB) Estates Website** - thank you to Dave Wilson for establishing the website, Board of Director's email addresses and Contact email box. If you have contractors (licensed and insured) information you want to share with the community, please forward the information via the locked mailbox or thru the Contact email so can be added to our website.
 - d. Email boxes for HOA officers and concerns**- please use the contact@willowbrook-HOA.org email box for questions and concerns.
 - e. Additions, Alterations, and Improvements Form** - has been created to use for requests to make changes, add plantings, add solar panels, etc. for anything on the outside of house which includes information needed from the contractor performing the work (license & insurance certificates). Paper copies supplied at meeting and form will be put on website.
 - f. Lights for the entrance and mailboxes** - is a nice addition to beautify and add safety to our community. Thank you to Wade Vianney for the spotlights



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at the entrance and Dave Wilson and Dave Paul for installing the solar lights at the entrance.

- g. Residents Only/No trespassing sign** - added to the bottom of the hill near the retaining pond for liability protection (same sign as at the entrance to complex).
- h. Bulletin board and lock box** - Thank you to Fran and Gerry's son-in-law (Wayne) for the installation of the bulletin board and lock box. Concerns and complaints along with the monthly HOA checks can be placed in the lock box. Just a reminder that the HOA bill is due by the 15th of each month to avoid incurring a late charge. Please do not post signs on the bulletin board or mailboxes, please submit your requests in the lock box.
- i. Ali's Walking tour with the HOA officers-** conducted on 4/7/25 to review lawn maintenance (including mowing, fertilization, mulching, trimming) with Greg Ali.
 - Fertilizing in April with crabgrass prevention, grub application May and mid-July, and Ali's is adding a 5th application in the Fall of lime based on soil testing at no cost. Marty Hurwitz (96 WBD-P) wanted to know what is being put down for fertilizer and if it's dog friendly. We would at least have a week's notice before they fertilize and Sil will speak with Ali's to see if fertilizer is pet friendly or not. Armand Minutillo (143 WBD-F) asked if Costello (who is doing the fertilization of the lawns) is a subcontractor of Ali's. Yes, they replaced the subcontractor that was used last year. Armand stated they did a good job.
 - Lawn mowing will continue to be on Thursday's, weather permitting. Dumpster for grass clipping was put on Whispering Pines parking area. Ron Brown (66 WBD-P) asked to keep the Thursday mowing schedule since most unit owners use LawnCore irrigation systems and sprinklers are set to go off Monday, Wednesday & Friday mornings.
 - Mulching will be done annually including berms and trimming in front of the units in June. The rain gardens have a fall clean up scheduled. The retaining pond at the bottom of the hill needs to be dredged every 5 years or so and will cost ~10K so we need to start building our reserves now.



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- Reviewed some concerns about lawns that have been dug up by mowers, especially on steep sloped areas. Ali's will address this with workers and will make the repairs needed. A few requests have been received about unit owners not wanting their lawns mowed and/or fertilized. If you do not want your yard fertilized/mowed, you can place a sign in front of your house.
- Roman Mietkiewicz (108 WBD-P) pointed out that trees are being hit by the weed whackers and are causing damage. The street tree in Sophie Dynak (99 WBD-P) yard has died as a result of this. It was suggested that a border (mulch/stone) be put around trees to prevent this. Lorna Zammatt (206 WBD-F) has also sent out an email suggesting the use of tree rings that can be purchased at Lowes.
- Pat Meneo (36 WPD-P) asked when is the best time to reseed given the above fertilization schedule. Sil stated that Ali's said the best time to plant grass is August 15th to the end of September.
- Paul Sirois (25 WBD-P) spoke about the grass been cut too low. Sil to contact Ali's to request to have the grass cut at 4 inches.
- Armand Minutillo (143 WBD-F) paid an independent arborist to look at the spruce trees in the Farmington conversation area. Since there is some needle disease, the arborist suggested that they spray twice a year starting in May. Armand to provide pricing (each application \$137 per yard?) for the board to review. No trees in the conversation area can be touched without the permission of the Town of Farmington.
- The Board decided to mulch the area around the mailbox and are considering stone in portions of the parking area instead of mulch since the grass is not growing. This does not include rain garden areas. The watering truck recommendation by a few community members is not in the budget this year.
- It is recommended that if you are going to mulch your own areas around the house that the mulch needs to be same color as Ali's mulch to be consistent.
- Contracts with Ali's are being reviewed and will be renegotiated to combine with the snow contract for best price. The board is also



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getting bids from other lawn/snow removal companies. A 2nd estimate was obtained with Green N Beyond and a possible 3rd estimate may be obtained.

j. Builder's Walking tour with several the HOA officers - conducted today (May 1) to review final repairs and Anthony Valenti and Paul Danboise represented the Lovley Development.

- Mark Lovley's office was contacted about their completion of the community (reseeding common areas). They will meet with Ali's to coordinate their schedules.
- Any street side trees that are dead were marked and will be replaced.
- The dead trees on the berms will be replaced with a more disease resistant variety.
- There are certain diseased trees in the Farmington Conversation area and the Town of Farmington will need to be contacted to see if these trees can be replaced (more information to come on this).
- Any trees that are replaced will need to be watered if there isn't enough rain. Neil Wasserman (155 WBD-F) was told they watered the trees too much. Meg Moran (174 WBD-F) stated she has been watering the street side trees and was told not to water the one on the berm. Sil is our Ali's contact and will ask them what the watering guideline should be for all the trees that will be replaced.
- Albert Peluso (131 WBD-F) asked about washed out stone dust walkways. Builders said they are responsible for fixing them and will be changing the slope and adding more stone dust. The HOA will be responsible for upkeep after that.

k. Electrical boxes – There has been some inquiries about planting around the boxes. Eversource has some strict guidelines that require 10ft clearance in front and 4 ft on other 3 sides which means no planting around electrical boxes.

l. Snow removal concerns – Fran Franck (71 WBD-P) discussed safety concerns about the frozen snow pile left at the stop sign at the end of Whispering Pines Dr. In the past, removal of snow off the property was not included in the contract. The board has negotiated with Ali's to include that in the contract going forward and Ali's stated it won't happen again.



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Discussed with Ali's about using parking spots in each parking areas to pile snow to avoid piling at or near the stop sign if snow can't be hauled away. If that happens, there may be a parking ban on certain spots in those lots. Repairs will be done to damaged areas caused by the snow removal. Processed stone was ordered for the bottom of the hill in front of the retention pond (emergency driveway area) in order to place snow piles away from the sign and decrease the mud in the area to allow for safe walking to the trail and emergency exit. John Gladysz (200 WBD-F) stated that there was damage to the lawn over there as well. As stated above, Ali's is responsible for the damage and will do necessary repairs. This issue shouldn't happen again with the placement of the processed stone. A special thanks to Mary Campbell for chiseling some of the ice/snow pile by the stop sign and Mark & Lorna Zammett for the parking area near their house.

- m. Lawn & drop off concern** – Cheri Halleran (204 WBD-F) expressed several concerns regarding the drop off behind her property into the conservation area, the lawn not being fertilized (because no grass) and grass not growing due to missing topsoil. These were ongoing issues between the builder and the homeowner. Donna stated that's not the role for the HOA because it's been an ongoing problem since the since the home was purchased, so that's something Cherie need to take up with the builder to follow up on.
- n. Trash and recycle** - there was a question about other developments in Plainville (not Farmington since the private homes pay for their trash and recycles) where the town paying for trash/recycle pickup. Members of the HOA Board along with Bob Michalik (90 WBD-P) met with the Town Manager and Town Planner in December. There were multiple calls and email exchanges to determine if the town vs the HOA pays for pick up. The bottom line is that the HOA pays in the other communities, however those are condos not PUD (Planned Urban Development) like our community. The town is still reviewing this matter and we want to thank Bob for his continued assistance.
- o. HOA Approvals** - after the handoff from builder
 - **Solar Panels, skylights** - 3 solar, 1 skylight
 - **Fences** - 1 around patio
 - **Lawn irrigation systems** – 3



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7. Financial Overview – budget documentation handed out at meeting

a. HOA accounts receivable (A/R) - co-treasurer (Fran Sledge)

- **A/R** – Sends out the HOA invoices, collect the checks, and deposit the checks into the Willow Brook Estates Bank account. Quickbooks is the accounting software used to track all HOA financial information.
- **HOA fees**– Curtesy invoices are sent out a few days before the beginning of the month and are due the 1st of the month with a 15 day grace period. If not received by 16th of month, a \$25 late fee is assessed as stated in our bylaws under the standard collection policy, page 2 section 2. Checks can be deposited via EFT, mailed to our HOA address or put in the locked drop box over by the mailboxes. Unit owners can prepay HOA fees but be aware that if the fees increase, the difference per month will be owed. No credit payments card or automatic payments will be accepted at this time due to costs that the HOA would need to absorb. (direct bank transfer charge \$1.99 per transaction, Venmo charges 1.9%, which would be \$3.77 per transaction, PayPal charges \$2.99 cents per transaction) Irene Melasky (30 WPD-P) stated she has automatic payments for HOA fees taken out of her bank account (bill pay or EFT) which may work for others. Please make sure payment is set up early so we get check mailed from bank on time. (This won't work at Liberty bank since they say our HOA address (1 Willow Brook Drive, Farmington) doesn't exist.) Fran is going to bank to deposit checks instead of using a check scanner machine because the bank wanted \$50/month for the scanner.

b. HOA budget & accounts payable (A/P) - co-treasurer (Mary Campbell)

- **Budget 2025** – With 90% of bills received (except landscaping), at the end of year our HOA is expected to be in the red \$4100.57. When HOA booked turned over from builder, we had ~\$28K but there were \$11,758 of outstanding checks that we didn't know about until we saw the bank statement almost 30 days later, so our HOA actually started with ~16K in the checking account. Joanne Diesel (152 WBD-F) asked if any way we could get Lovley Development to cover outstanding checks. Those bills were something that needed to be paid but we received a snapshot in time and we didn't facture them in.



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1. Karen Maher (100 WBD-P) asked where the almost \$400 that was prepaid by unit owners for two months (first/last month) worth of HOA fees were. Mary stated they are in reserves but not on budget sheet. Karen asked for a Balance Sheet that will show the reserves as well and Mary will be supplying that. There is \$24,738.32 in the reserve account.
2. Someone asked what are the reserves for? Mary stated the reserves are used for capital improvements. The bank looks for at least 1% of the value of the home in reserves when buying or selling a home. Since we are a new community, the bank expects those reserves to be build up over time. (The originally two months prepaid HOA fees are returned to the unit owner when the unit is sold.)
3. Line items for Expenses on 2025 Budget were discussed. The three different insurance costs totaled \$3037. Electricity is currently ~\$65/month but Eversource stated they hadn't billed us for four street light poles for the last three years. Our HOA board is refusing to pay for those poles and will not sign the Eversource contract for them. The HOA board feels it's Lovley Development's responsibility to pay for that. Our bill will now be \$130/month for the street light poles from this point on. Kim DeFusco (14 WPD-P) asked if we could use a third party provider (like Consellation) to reduce our electric bill. Mary stated the Eversource owes the street light poles so we can't change providers. Trash/recycling cost is \$21,797.52 is renewal January 1 with a 2% increase. Ali's fee for snow management \$57,085.50 & landscaping \$59,559.50 is how it exists today. We are in negotiation with Ali's now for a multi-year combined contract. Snow removal is a fixed price regardless of how much snow accumulation. Mary explained the smaller line items and no one had any questions. The line items for beautification for \$2500 was put into the budget. A shortfall for ~\$4100 is projected.
4. John Gladysz (200 WBD-F) asked why we don't get a reduction in taxes since we maintain our private roads. There



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was much discussion on this and several unit owners in Plainville tried to get the taxes reduced with no luck. Cherie Halleran (204 WBD-F) asked about both Farmington & Plainville votes for the upcoming budget. Both had been posted on our HOA website as well as the bulletin boards by the mailboxes.

- **Budget 2026 projection** – Budget sheet shows increase in HOA fees to \$225/month or \$250/month. (see enclosed budget sheets) The HOA would still be in a deficit if we go with \$225/month HOA fee. If we increase the HOA fees to \$250/month, we could put 10k into reserves and allocate money toward asphalt, curb and sidewalk repairs. This could include putting curbs on both sides of the streets except around the rain gardens. Every contractor seems to increase their costs ~3% a year.
 1. Dave Firmani (18 WPD-P) asked how we're going to handle the 2025 budget shortfall (one-time surcharge?). Mary/Donna explained that we are trying to renegotiate our contracts for the snow & landscaping services and are also looking at increasing our HOA fees in October of this year.
 2. Irene Melasky (30 WPD-P) stated that increasing our fees is the prudent thing to do and \$250 is not a lot of money and is in line with HOA fees in other communities. Mary stated that Lovley's new development HOA fees are start off at \$225/month in Southington and \$250/month in Middlebury. Anne Wroblewski (171 WBD-F) agreed that we need to start putting money away ASAP and many other unit owners agreed with this sentiment.
 3. Ron Brown (66 WBD-P) asked if the 10K in budget for curbs could be used for the side of the street with no curbs and he was for that. Right now, it's \$7 linear foot for curbing. That doesn't include back filling the topsoil or seeding so we'd need to get a price on that as well. We can vote on this later if this is what the community wants to spend the money on.
 4. The board is looking at putting stone in the small areas on the side of the parking spaces (pie shaped sections) because the grass is not growing there.



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5. Sue Vitelli (112 WBD-P) stated the rain garden in front of her house needs beautification. Lovley Development is supposed to pay for the reseeding on most of the edges throughout our community. The actual rain garden can only be cleaned out in the fall according to the DEEP regulations. The rain gardens are allowed to have four feet of mowed grass around the edges by the street then a variety of wildflowers can be planted.
6. Kim DeFusco (14 WPD-P) stated that Bristol Eastern High School worked with the DEEP to beautify their rain gardens. She asked if the HOA's Beautification Committee could work with the DEEP to clean up the rain gardens. The HOA Board does the original plan for the rain gardens that can be used as a guideline.

8. Committees

- a. **Beautification Committee** – many people volunteered for this committee:
 - Armand Minutillo (143 WBD-F) – committee chairman, Michael Baruffi (145 WBD-F), Lorna Zammett (206 WBD-F), Mary Campbell (21 WPD-P), Marsha Kennedy (47 WBD-F), Amy Gladysz (200 WBD-F) We have budgeted \$2500 this year for the beautification of our grounds.
 - b. **Social Committee** – many people volunteered for this committee:
 - Jackie Hurwitz (98 WBD-P), Eileen Lupia (86 WBD-P), Irene Melasky (30 WPD-P), Sandy Andre (28 WBD-P)
 - c. **Others?** - Book Nook/Free Little Library idea was like by many people in the community. Eden Abrams (161 WBD-F) described the actual structure being a composite or made out of wood. Eden was willing to purchase it for \$500 and would take donations toward it. Neil Wasserman (155 WBD-F) had made a similar suggestion earlier and volunteered to build it. John Gladysz (200 WBD-F) volunteered to install it. The building plan and location (maybe by gazebo) will need to be approved by the HOA Board.
9. **Homeowner Comments** – Volunteers to clean up by walking trails could be part of the Beautification Committee. Gardens can be put right behind the house 10 feet out including patio. Be vigilant at the supermarket for someone follow you. Cheri had her wallet stolen at Hobby Lobby.



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10. Adjournment – HOA Board was thanked for all their hard work. Meeting was adjourned at 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Wilson
Secretary Willow Brook HOA

Website: <https://willowbrook-hoa.org>

Email concerns to: contact@willowbrook-hoa.org

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