



THUNDERBIRD PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION



Photo by George Evans

Fall Newsletter 2023

PO BOX 1263, Robbinsville, NC 28771

OFFICERS (2023 – 2025)

President.....Bette LoBue (727-519-3902)
 Betteannl@verizon.net
 Vice President...Bill Piel (305-238-7836)
 williampx@aol.com
 Secretary.....Mary Roemer (404-918-1330)
 marycroemer@gmail.com
 Treasurer.....Greg Connor (404-569-6738)
 tgconnor@yahoo.com

SANTEETLAH TOWN COUNCIL

Connie Gross, Mayor
 Ralph Mitchell, Vice Mayor
 Tina Emerson, Chief Finance Officer
 Diana Simon, Councilwoman
 Jim Hager, Councilman

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Happy Fall to one and all!

What a busy summer we had! Our neighborhood civic association is now stronger than ever, with 112 households as of October, 2023, a thirty percent increase in membership over last year. This year has shown many incidences of engagement by our members. This includes your thoughtful public comments at the Planning Board meeting, email input on issues such as addressing drainage problems and high lake levels, and more people taking advantage of our wonderful parties to meet their neighbors and share resources! Thank you, members, for your support!

Committee members have been busy as well, and we thank our new volunteers for all their hard work. Committee members did due diligence this past year to contemporize and clarify our by-laws and organization documents. We kept our membership informed through fact-based FYI bulletins and our quarterly newsletter. We had interesting and informative speakers for our general meetings. T.P.O.A. continued with our commitment to keep roadsides clear of debris, to support worthy charities, and to encourage positive interaction among neighbors through fun social functions. We heartily thank our committees for their dedication and hard work toward fulfilling our 2023 goals! We also want to thank our board members for working with committee members to strengthen our organization.

The Planning Committee really outdid themselves with a fun end-of-season party for T.P.O.A! First and foremost, we want to thank Becky Block. She and her husband Larry coordinated everything, including finding and contacting the band and arranging for the band's overnight housing. We also need to thank Scott Kamps, assisted by Becky, Larry, and Frances, for tent set-up and take-down; Greg Connor for his hot dog expertise; and Connie and Jack Gross for providing the portable facilities. Everyone enjoyed dancing and/or just listening to the band.

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NOTICE TO READERS

Please note the correct address
for TPOA is:

TPOA
P.O. Box 1263
Robbinsville, NC 28771

This is the only address at which membership renewals and election ballots will be received and considered valid. Thank you again for your support!



A special treat was watching the Scott Kamps Dancers, also known as Scott's kids, entertain us with their sometimes-unique dance steps, adding to the enjoyment of all!

One of our major concerns this year was the high lake level that resulted in the flushing out of entire trees and huge branches that presented a navigational hazard on the lake itself before collecting in individual coves and in turn trapping man-made debris such as plastic bottles, Styrofoam containers, syringes, etc. Removal of the trees and debris was affected at a sizeable expense to individual property owners on the coves. Thank you to homeowners who helped us document issues such as erosion, undermining of seawalls, and other problems.

Another concern is the problem of accurate mail delivery. Be sure to check your incoming mail to make sure items are not addressed to someone else.

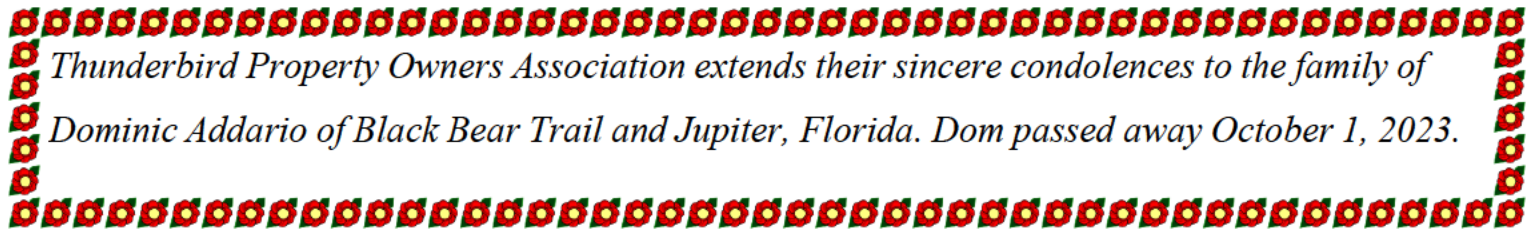
Please remember that T.P.O.A., as a volunteer-led organization, strives to work in the interest of all property owners, especially those who are not eligible to vote in Graham County. Again, a heartfelt thank you goes out to our wonderful members, committee members, and officers for contributing their time, ideas, and expertise to the benefit of our beautiful Santeetlah lake community.

Sincerely,

Bette LoBue

"Compassion and tolerance are not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength."

--Dalai Lama



*Thunderbird Property Owners Association extends their sincere condolences to the family of
Dominic Addario of Black Bear Trail and Jupiter, Florida. Dom passed away October 1, 2023.*

GREENE FAMILY MEMORIES

by Danny Greene

For fifty-two years, my family has had a home on Lake Santeetlah. Mel and Judy Greene (my parents), Debbie (my sister), my wife, LaGena and I have cherished our slice of heaven here in the Smoky Mountains!



One of my recollections from years ago is a white, snow-covered Thunderbird Mountain. It was just my dad and me. Coming up from warm and sunny Miami, Florida, I remember being awestruck at the beauty--it looked like a post card. That was actually our last Fall/ Winter visit as our little house didn't have heat.

Through the years, I remember our family walks around the mountain, swimming and floating in the lake, pontoon boat rides, cooking out on the grill and then dinner on the deck as the sun went down. Quality family time just does not get any better.

My parents loved their community of friends around the lake. They would tell us about group dinners out, pontoon tie-up parties, TPOA welcome gatherings each year, Robbinsville Fall Festivals, Fish Frys and so many other fun activities. A favorite for them was Frank and Bette singing a duet, and we'll never forget Michael LoBue out on the lake playing the Bagpipes---so awesome!

LaGena and I have enjoyed Yellow Creek Falls, Huckleberry Knob, Stoney Hollow Farm, Fontana, Nantahala Outdoor Center, Tapoco Lodge, Tail of the Dragon, and other local areas of interest...and we'll never forget the Solar Eclipse at Lake Santeetlah with Mel in August, 2017. That was a pontoon tie-up party to remember... the food, fellowship, darkening of the sky, eerie quietness, the temperature drop, owls hooting and dogs howling. Nothing like it!

FOCUS COMMITTEE

Greg Connor & Susan Robinson

The Focus Committee is an ad hoc committee that was formed by the TPOA president in 2022 to study how to strengthen and modernize the Thunderbird Property Owners Association (TPOA) to better serve Lake Santeetlah property owners. In 2022-23, we focused on performing due diligence for the organization, reviewing TPOA's current and future work, updating documents, and revising the by-laws to match our current activities. As a result, in the by-laws, we rebalanced some work across board members and formed two committees to better serve members. First, the Vice-President will oversee distribution for the Green Elephant Fund and can form an ad hoc committee each year to discuss opportunities for helping local charities. We formalized a Membership Committee to continue the additional activities we performed this year that resulted in a 30% membership increase, including information updates. Lastly, our ad hoc committee, the Focus Committee, was formalized to continue work on strengthening the organization. In September, we presented this work to a packed house of over 40+ members (at Town Hall and on Zoom). The by-laws passed overwhelmingly, after an excellent discussion and some final wordsmithing (thank you members). We really appreciate everyone who participated and supported TPOA in moving forward. Stay tuned for the minutes of our meeting, the revised by-laws, and more positive developments. Have a wonderful holiday season.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Frances Connor

The Planning Committee finished the year with a very fun band concert and dance party, featuring Men without Memories (that's the band's name!). This event is detailed elsewhere in this newsletter. We are thankful for our committee members who have not only coordinated several social events this summer, but secured speakers for the regular TPOA business meetings. Both Jared Shuster (July's speaker) and Kim Haige (August) have informed and educated us. Kim Haige was fascinating in describing the variety of hiking trails and nature walks available in our locale. Kim is a valuable resource here in Graham County, and her social media pages continue to inform! We are planning several events for 2024 that are still in the planning stages. We plan to start with a welcome back party in late May or early June. We will mix it up a bit next year and plan to have local favorite, T. Dubbs, cater for us! Other suggestions have been covered-dish potlucks, an ice cream social and boat and float parties! The Planning Committee meets periodically via Zoom and would welcome anyone who is interested in joining. If you have suggestions for social events or speakers or if you would like to be a part of this committee, contact Frances Connor (fconnor@outlook.com).

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

Beth Carlton and Kevin Haag

Many thanks to the TPOA members who volunteered for litter pickup each month this season! Faithfully showing up at 9:00 a.m. to don a lovely orange plastic vest and wield a trash grabber, they covered the streets from Rt. 129 through town to the western end of Nantahala Trail collecting every bottle, wrapper and food container that found its way to the roadside. Our town has looked so much better for their efforts! We cordially invite anyone who can spare an hour once a month during the summer months to come join the team in 2024!

A HEARTY WELCOME TO NEW HOMEOWNERS, NICK AND ELIZABETH JESSEN!

The Jessens are refurbishing their home at the top of Thunderbird Mountain on Cheoah Trail. Good luck, Nick! and Elizabeth, on your move-in! We will look forward to getting to know you!

MAYOR'S CORNER

Connie Gross



Right on schedule, the colored leaves have started falling and cool mornings are here. The town is moving forward with the Goldleaf grant road work, and we hope to have the project completed in a few weeks.

I am grateful to the Zito team for addressing homeowner's concerns and coming to the rescue to fix our internet and phone service. I appreciate the kind words homeowners said to me for taking the initiative to fix things and get results. I am hopeful for the continued response from Zito for any problems. I hope to have an update from the Zito team soon on further upgrades that may be possible. The new pressure tanks are installed and working at the pump house. This is the first step in providing water to the top of the mountain when there is an electrical outage. Recently, two zoning proposals were submitted to the planning board for review. With all the attention this subject has brought to light it shows that further discussion is needed. I believe in two things: 1) People want zoning 2) People want it to be fair and adaptable to our specific homes and lot sizes. The concerns of our homeowners need to be addressed with an equal and open mind. Simply said, every homeowner has a right to voice his or her concern and have it addressed.

I have enjoyed working with the Graham County and Robbinsville TDAs. Our working together with others producing this year's Heritage Festival was a wonderful experience. Graham County has so much to offer, and I love being a part of it. Our little town has had a big impact countywide, and I am thankful for the outpouring of support and friendships that have developed from my time as mayor. My vision for our town continues. Improving infrastructure and developing long-term plans are just the beginning. Just look at what has been accomplished by good leadership, thoughtful decisions, and teamwork. This proves that the town can prosper even in times of difficulties. I was taught as a young girl to stand by my convictions. Despite pushback, I will continue to do what I think is right. It is a wonderful life, and I am blessed.

Sincerely,

Mayor Connie (828-479-3637)

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Diana Simon

The Tourism Development Authority met on September 29. Besides our board members, Bill Piel, Kyle Garland and myself, the meeting was attended by Jodi DeVerges, Alan Davidson, Pam Kieth and Joe Simon. The TDA financial report showed a balance of \$15,108.03 in the account. The Majority of that is to be spent on our fiscal year 2023-2024 advertising. Advertising has highlighted Lake Santeetlah, which was named in Travel and Leisure Magazine in their top ten most beautiful lakes in the United States listing. Keep an eye out for our ad in the October issue of Our State magazine.

Daniel Allison, Director of Graham County Travel and Tourism, confirms that the County will NOT collect TOLS occupancy tax. They will only collect the three percent county tax.

I reported on current vacation trends in the South. This year, revenue has been down due to holiday travelers flying to destinations and spending holidays on the coast, rather than the mountains. The Town of Lake Santeetlah shows twenty-six rental homes listed on airbnb.com.

Photo Gallery



AROUND THE MOUNTAIN

Bette LoBue

What happened to those warm, sunny days of swimming, boating, and picnicking we were enjoying on our beautiful Lake Santeetlah such a short while ago? The brilliant butterflies flitting on the summer breezes have morphed into a brilliant display of fabulous fall foliage in vibrant red, yellow, and orange blotches of color, raining down on our driveways, decks, and stairs. Enjoy the colors, layer up, and look for some cooler weather entertainment!

If you are searching for fun fall activities, here are a couple of ideas to put on your list—that is, if you are willing and among the able:

Partway between Thunderbird Mountain Road and Tapoco Lodge lies the entrance to the Yellow Creek Falls hiking trail. The trail up to the falls is rather short—about a third of a mile each way—but it can be a bit challenging for the novice hiker. Even though some improvements to the trail have been made recently, a walking stick will help with balance and stability. One or two hiking companions are an absolute must! Large, exposed tree roots, wet leaves, and irregular surfaces can certainly pose a challenge to some. Be sure to wear non-slip shoes and have a first-aid kit on your person or in your car. However, the beautiful fifty-foot falls and the sparkling wading pool are well worth the trip. Splashing in the pool looks inviting during the warmer months, but you might want to pass on any splish-splash in the fall.

Another fun afternoon you might pursue can be found at the Nantahala Village Riding Stables, owned and operated by the Loftis family since 1977. The stables are open from March 15 through November 30. For \$30 per person per hour, you can book a day, half-day, or over-night trip. One- and two-hour trips are also available. Trails wind through the Nantahala National Forest, over-looking Fontana Lake. Some of the trails follow an old logging road and the original highway. For questions or reservations call 828-488-9649 or 828-788-6486, or check out their website: www.nantahalavillageridingstable.com. Basic tips, riding instructions, and novice-friendly horses make this a doable activity for riders with no or limited experience. The minimum age permitted is five years. No maximum age was given.

Seen wielding axes in a throwing contest at the Graham County Heritage Festival, held in Robbinsville, were Connie Gross and Becky Block. “No worries,” quipped Mayor Connie. “Becky and I couldn’t even hit the mark!” However, both insisted that it was a lot of fun, win or lose!

Meanwhile, back at the Thunderbird “ranch,” sometimes there is entertainment of a different kind going on. For instance, one of our Thunderbird Trail residents asked a neighbor to check on her house while she was away. The neighbor, who shall not be named, dutifully checked on her house as requested. However, he mistakenly checked the house next to hers. When the next-door neighbor checked her security footage, she saw someone peering into her windows. Fortunately, she recognized the dutiful house checker before she called the police! It pays to know your neighbors!

Speaking of neighbors, what a treat it was to see former residents, Bob and CiCi Crabtree, who returned as guests of Mary Humphlett. Accompanying them were their son and daughter-in-law, Scott, and Vicky Crabtree. Among those greeting the Crabtrees at a party hosted by Bill andCarolyn Piel, were Myra Allmond, Beth and Roger Carlton, Mary Humphlett, and Bob and Becky Wehr. An added treat for Bob and CiCi was a tour of their former home on Cheoah Trail, courtesy of the current owners. Of all the homes they had, the Crabtrees averred that the one on Thunderbird Mountain was their favorite!

A favorite water “toy” for many of us is the wave-riding jet ski, which can offer a thrilling and fun-filled ride with speeds of more than forty miles per hour! Kyle Keith found out the hard way that they can be dangerous, too! While he was zig-zagging across the wake of a boat pulling a raft, his jet ski nose-dived into a wave, catapulting him over the handlebars and catching his foot in the process. Good Samaritans pulled Kyle from the water and onto their boat and called 911. Paramedics met them at Santeetlah Marina and stabilized Kyle. Kyle finished his “thrilling” ride aboard a helicopter bound for Missions Hospital in Asheville. He is recovering on crutches with speeds quite a bit under forty miles per hour!

Chalet Village was the site of the T.P.O.A. August 26 End-of-Season Party, chaired by Frances Connor. Over sixty attendees danced to the wide variety of tunes provided by the Men Without Memories band, featuring guitar, banjo, bass, and cigar-box guitars. Particularly entertaining were the unique dance steps exhibited by Scott Kamps’s crew of kids! Thank you, all those who helped in any way! What a great time, filled with smiles, hugs, and good conversations. Congratulations, T.P.O.A. Planning Committee, for a great event! And that is the way it should be, ALL AROUND THE MOUNTAIN!

Town of Lake Santeeetlah
Ph: (828) 479-8190

Kim Matheson, Town Administrator

Kala Farley, Town Clerk

Scott Kamps, Public Works

2023 Candidates for Lake Santeeetlah Town Council*

Connie Gross

Education: *not provided*

Santeeetlah since: 1989

TOLS service: Mayor (2021-2023), Councilwoman (2015-2017)

Email: mayorconniegross@gmail.com

Diana Simon

Education: Valdosta State University, Fine Arts; Chattahoochee Tech, Certificate of Computer Science/ Web Development

Santeeetlah since: 1990

TOLS service: Councilwoman (2019-2023); Chairperson, Tourism Development Authority (2020-2023); TOLS

Representative to Southwestern Commission, TAC Committee (2020-2023)

Email: halfmoonbay@mindspring.com

James Hagar

Education: University of Louisville, Marketing & Community

Development Santeeetlah since: 2014

TOLS service: Councilman (2022-2023) Mayor (2016-2021) Vice Mayor (2015-2016)

Email: jimdhager@gmail.com

Keith Predmore

Education: Boston University, Education (MeD); UNC School of Government, Leadership Course

Santeeetlah since: Early 1990s

TOLS service: Councilman (2017-2019)

Email: keith.villabonita@gmail.com

Kevin Haag

Education: California State University; Seminary School in Costa Mesa, California

Santeeetlah since: 2019

TOLS service: Councilman (2020-2021)

Email: kevinhaag1@gmail.com

Tina Emerson

Education: College major, Economics

Santeeetlah since: 2014

TOLS service: Councilwoman, Finance Officer (2021-2022)

Email: tme2468@yahoo.com

Ralph Strunk

Education: University of South Carolina, Accounting MBA

Santeeetlah since: 2021

TOLS service: N/A

Email: rhsfinex@gmail.com

**Candidate Alan Davidson wrote to say he did not wish to be included.*