

# **Caroline Oaks Newsletter**

## **1 March 2025**

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### **Topics:**

- Polybutylene Pipe Bursts
  - Masonry Repair Recommendation
  - Solar Panel Installation Advice
  - Annual Spring Walk Thru
  - WhatsApp
  - Comments from Homeowners
  - Reminders for Newcomers to the Community
  - Passing of Vernon Smith
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### **Polybutylene Pipe Bursts (by Walt Seiberling, Board Member)**

When the community was built over 30 years ago, polybutylene pipes were installed from the water main to the house. These grey plastic pipes have a lifespan of approximately 20 years. Many have burst and been replaced. These pipes are no longer used as they are brittle and prone to leaking, especially when exposed to chlorine. The chlorine in water treatment plants breaks down polybutylene over time, making the pipes weak and prone to leaks. Many insurance companies refuse to insure homes with polybutylene plumbing or will restrict coverage for damage caused by these pipes leaving you, the homeowner, paying for the cost of damage and repairs. Pipe bursts can cause expensive water and structural damage.

American Plumbing Inc. is a reputable company for replacing pipes (<https://waterlineservice.com/>). They offer replacement at a fraction of the cost of other companies and ensure the job is done correctly while preserving your lawn and landscape. Many homeowners, including myself, have used them. I've included a picture of the pipes so you can check for yourself. Trust me, having your basement flooded with inches of water is not fun—take it from someone who has experienced it.



Submitted by Board Member Walt Seiberling  
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### **Masonry Repair Work (by Walt Seiberling)**

A big shout-out to [First Choice Masonry in Springfield](#) for their excellent work in our community and the adjoining HOA. They recently repaired brick entrance signs for both HOAs and replaced the retaining walls on Peter Roy and Wm Kirk Lanes. They've also handled paver projects within the community. We appreciate all their hard work and encourage you to consider them when looking for masonry project estimates for your home.

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## Solar Panel Installation Considerations (by Rich Gargano, Board Member)

1. **Lighting conditions:** First, check whether your roof gets enough sunlight. Google has a great tool called “Project Sunroof” <https://sunroof.withgoogle.com/> where you can enter your address and check your roof’s sunlight exposure. In general, a south-facing roof is ideal, though east and west can also work (although less efficiently). Bad shading conditions (from tall trees, adjacent roofs, chimneys, etc.) and roof structures (skylights, vents) should also be considered. Poor lighting conditions usually mean solar panels aren't feasible.
2. **Roof condition:** Solar panels last 25+ years, so it’s best to install them after a roof replacement. Panels can be removed and reinstalled, but it’s an added expense and hassle.
3. **Cost-benefit:** Start by focusing on solar panels (not battery storage). The Tesla Solar website provides custom estimates instantly. You can enter your address, electric bill info, and select “solar panels” (not “solar roof”). The estimate provides key info:
  - o Size (kW): The total number of solar panels your roof can fit.
  - o Cost per Watt: Divide total cost (after incentives) by size (in kW) and divide again by 1000.
  - o Energy offset: The percentage of your home’s energy needs that solar panels will likely provide.
  - o Breakeven point: Calculate how long it will take for the solar panels to "pay for themselves." Example: If you save \$1500/year on your \$2000 electric bill with 75% energy offset, and the total solar cost is \$15,000, it would take 10 years to break even.
4. **Multiple estimates:** Always get multiple quotes. Normalize costs by comparing the “cost per watt.” Also, research companies’ reputations via sites like the [Better Business Bureau](#) and compare warranties. Be cautious of door-to-door solar salespeople.
5. **Tax Credit:** A Federal tax incentive offers 30% back on solar panel costs (not at purchase but during tax filing). This incentive is available through 2034 but may change with new legislation.
6. **RECs:** Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) allow you to earn money from your solar panels throughout their lifetime. Companies like [RECmint](#) manage RECs for you, providing quarterly deposits of \$50-\$150.
7. **Net metering:** In Virginia, when your solar panels produce more electricity than you need, it goes back to the grid. You won’t get paid for it, but your meter keeps track of “spinning in reverse.” [Dominion Energy’s website](#) explains this in detail.
8. **Energy storage:** Opinions on whether battery storage is needed vary. From an economic standpoint, in areas with stable electric grids, it may not make financial sense. However, if you’re concerned about blackouts, a battery provides backup power. If you have an off-peak rate plan with [Dominion Energy](#), you may benefit from battery storage during peak electricity rates.
9. **Maintenance:** Solar panels typically require little maintenance. If needed, companies can offer cleaning services.
10. **HOA rules:** Caroline Oaks has a policy regarding solar panels (see [policy link](#)), which permits solar panels with reasonable restrictions and requires review by the Architectural

Control Committee to maintain community safety and aesthetics. Contact Rich Gargano at gargano.rich@gmail.com for more details.

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## **Annual Spring Walk Thru**

The Grounds Committee and Shenandoah Landscaping Services will conduct a walk-thru of the community in late April or early May. We'll survey tree and shrub health and consider new plantings. Homeowner suggestions and comments are welcome.

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## **WhatsApp**

Caroline Oaks Community has a WhatsApp group for community events and notifications. Join the group to stay updated on events happening in the community: [Join WhatsApp Group](#)

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## **Comments Submitted by Homeowners:**

- **Dog Waste Issues:** We continue to receive complaints about dog walkers not picking up after their pets. Please do not dispose of filled poop bags in other people's garbage cans, particularly those at the curbside. Trash collectors only take large bags and close the lid. The homeowner may not open the can until days later, only to find the smelly poop bag still inside. The homeowner must then handle it, putting it in their large garbage bag for the next collection.
  - **Overnight Parking of Commercial Vehicles:** Overnight parking of commercial vehicles is not permitted. Vehicles may be towed if a written warning is ignored. See [Policy Resolution 22-03, Parking](#) for more information.
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## **Reminders for Newcomers to the Community:**

- Vehicles should not block sidewalks or be parked in fire lanes (curbs painted yellow). Park vehicles in your designated spots. For garage townhomes, the designated spots are the garage and driveway. For homes without garages, the two designated spots are marked curbside with your lot number.
  - Trash containers and recycling bins may be placed curbside the evening before collection. Afterward, please remove them promptly and store them out of sight until the next collection cycle.
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## **Passing of Vernon Smith**

Sad to report Vern passed away at the end of last year. Vern served as HOA president for more than two decades. His funeral will be held at Arlington National Cemetery at 1 p.m. on May 8th.

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## **Next Board Meeting**

The next board meeting is tentatively scheduled for 7 p.m. on May 5th at the Pohick Library. Updates, if any, will be posted on the community website: [Caroline Oaks Website](#).