

Wilderness Property Owners'
Association

WPOA

FALL 2025
NEWSLETTER

ANNUAL MEETING

December 2

6:30 PM

Fellowship Hall

Grace Community Covenant Church
5501 Wiggins Rd SE

AGENDA

- ✓ 2025 activities update
- ✓ Board elections & dues votes

LOOK FOR THE MEETING NOTICE
AND BALLOT IN YOUR POSTAL
MAIL OR INBOX SOON

VOLUNTEER BOARD

OFFICERS :

John Cusick

President

Brooke Allan

Vice President

Ben Edwards

Treasurer

Albert Rios

Secretary

MEMBERS AT LARGE:

Larry Rus

Philip Frisk

Nick Quinn

FIND US:

WEBSITE:

wildernesspropertyowners.org

EMAIL:

WildernessBoard@gmail.com

PO Box 466

Olympia, WA

98507-0466



MESSAGE FROM THE WPOA PRESIDENT

As we enjoy the beautiful fall colors throughout Wilderness and winter approaches, it's time to reflect on some of 2025's accomplishments:

SAFETY

After more than 10 years of dedicated volunteers' efforts, we finally have Thurston County's traffic calming measures in place on our busiest streets. It seems traffic has slowed, and we look forward to next spring, when the county will conduct a follow-up analysis to determine the measures' effectiveness.

We obtained a grant from Firewise USA®, enabling the purchase and installation of 61 Speedy Spotter signs for fire safety. More are needed, but we are uncertain about grant opportunities for 2026.

GREENBELT MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

As always, our focus has been on the health and integrity of the WPOA's greatest asset: the community's many greenbelts. Within the constraints of a limited budget, we have continued to remove identified hazardous trees and acted to protect the community's property as needed.

Our capable and dedicated volunteers removed blackberry from the LBA Woods trailhead and planted native shrubs, improved a muddy trail near Wilderness Loop, cleared invasive plants and dangerous trees from the WPOA Park area and the greenbelt between Donnelly and Edgeworth, and began to plant native shrubs and trees to suppress invasive species, hauling away several pickup loads of abandoned debris from these greenbelts. We applied for and were awarded grants from the City of Olympia and the Thurston Conservation District to help pay for some of the associated costs.

With an eye to the future, we worked with a local arborist to develop a multi-year forest management plan to help us continue to manage our greenbelt forests over the coming years.

ADMINISTRATION

We implemented a welcome letter to deliver to new property owners and began evaluating general legal counsel alternatives to help prepare the WPOA for upcoming changes in state law. This law will necessitate a transition to using an HOA management service to keep the books and help administer the WPOA in an increasingly complex environment. As of January 1, 2028, HOAs will no longer be subject to RCW 64.38, the existing law that pertains to HOAs established prior to 2018. Accordingly, we need to begin assessing and, if necessary, modifying our governing documents to comply with the provisions of SSB 5129, which will make us subject to a new RCW chapter in 2028. As WPOA Treasurer Ben Edwards articulates below, this will involve increasing our budget and associated dues assessments.

PROPOSED 2026 DUES INCREASE

The WPOA board is proposing an annual dues increase from \$175 to \$245 for 2026. There are multiple reasons to justify this increase, including:

- WPOA board members have approved the acquisition of a local HOA management firm to handle administrative and accounting tasks to begin later in 2026.
- Our aging greenbelts require attention to address needs identified in a 2025 forest management report.
- New state law taking full effect in 2028 will require general legal services to review and revise WPOA covenants, bylaws, and any other rules or regulations to ensure compliance with the new law.
- Adjusting for inflation since the last dues increase in 2014. (Adjusting for inflation alone, dues would be approximately \$245 per year.)

Hiring an HOA Management Service

The decision to acquire a local HOA management service provider was made due to the increasing administrative burden of running this HOA, particularly given upcoming changes in state law and the inability to attract and retain volunteers to manage such a large endeavor. The board solicited bids from three local HOA management groups and selected *VIS Group* in large part because their services are the most cost-effective for the association. VIS was asked to attend a recent board meeting to present its services and respond to questions. The board subsequently approved VIS as the HOA management service provider best suited to WPOA. The cost of these professional services will be \$11,800 annually, and VIS services could begin sometime mid-year, after the collection of the 2026 annual dues and after our data and records are transitioned to them.

VIS will provide remote administrative support to WPOA, which will include:

- **Bookkeeping** services using their accounting software
- **Collecting annual dues** either by check or electronic payment
- Provide WPOA members access to their **payment history**
- Fulfill **title company requests** for information
- **Retain documents and transition us to electronic storage** of documents

Greenbelt Management

WPOA manages nearly 30 acres of greenbelts, spread throughout our expansive neighborhood, making greenbelt management a high priority for our association.

In 2025, the board hired Waxwing Tree Specialists to provide a multi-year forest management plan. This plan follows the 2018 arborist report, which focused on tree concerns rather than forest management practices. The new plan will serve as a guide for WPOA to proactively address the removal of dead or dying trees in the WPOA-owned greenbelt and to provide a multi-year plan for managing invasives and replanting native shrubs and trees to help us manage our aging forest greenbelts.

Median Dues in Surrounding HOAs

We recognize that raising dues is not a popular proposal, but it is necessary to keep our HOA fully operational and to manage our nearly 30 acres of greenbelt proactively.

In October of 2024, the WPOA board surveyed other HOA dues amounts in the surrounding area. We found that the median HOA dues in our locale were \$360 per year. However, most of these organizations have much less – if any – greenbelt to manage.

The proposed increase to \$245 will bring our dues into alignment with inflation since 2014. It is not sufficient to immediately meet all of our greenbelt management needs, but it is a step in the right direction.

The board urges all members to ratify this dues increase for 2026.

