

LAKE SIDE FOREST WESTERVILLE OHIO

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



The Records Retention Project: 2018–2023

In the summer of 2018, resident Judy Reuter volunteered to inventory contents of the Maintenance Building with the Maintenance Committee. They found seven plastic bins and four cardboard boxes of moldy and mildewed materials (some partially rodent-eaten) that were identified as LFA historical documents from 1987-2008. Included were 40 floppy disks that contained corrupt Quicken annual financials from 1999-2005 (hard copies of most were also found). Judy volunteered and was appointed by the Board to research, organize, and digitize the materials.

Phase 1: Move and Clean Documents. The 2018-19 Board approved to move the materials out of the building to the 381 Birchwood garage for easier access to determine the contents and for possible digitization. The Board also requested that as many historical records from 2009-2018 as possible be collected from residents. Cedar chips and other methods were used to remove mold, mildew, and a pungent aroma on the documents. Two cardboard boxes were wet, and most had rodent droppings. Materials were moved into plastic bins and moist papers were set out to dry.

Phase 2: Re-organization of Materials. Meeting minutes were the first and easiest to organize. Then other materials were sorted by category and year, according to purpose or content. Duplicates were shredded. The earliest annual meeting minutes were from 1988, but many years were missing. LVA board minutes, newsletters and resident directories were among the materials, from 1989-2008, as well as discussions about the lake and its surrounding common property, which were from past Forest residents who were LVA presidents or representatives. Several requests were sent out to residents for materials from 2009-2018.

Phase 3: HOA Records Retention Legality. HOA Records Retention Guidelines were researched and found on the Kaman & Cusimano (LFA's legal firm) website. The schedule included requirements specified for various subjects and the retention period required — some forever, most for 5–15 years.

Phase 4: Database Creation. An initial Excel database was created to try and track board and annual meetings, assessments, lists of board members, presidents; committee members; and discussions about loans, amenities including the pool and maintenance shed, common and limited common property, use of property management companies, etc. The Board has used the information to research current and ongoing issues in the community, including assessments, loans, limited common property discussions, amenities, etc.

Phase 5: Organize/Re-organize. The older file folders had a pungent aroma, so as the process progressed, an additional step of was taken to move the materials to 70 donated three-ring binders and onto shelves, marked by subject. As materials were digitized, the binders were used for material relocation or given to other residents to reuse.

Phase 6: Digitization Decisions. Best methods for digitization storage were discussed. With Board approval, Board Secretary and LFA Website Manager Terry Cowans provided access to the secured files space on the LFA website (Wild Apricot), a file structure was created, document scanning and file upload to the website began. Originals remain on a personal laptop with backups on an LFA purchased external hard drive and on the LFA website.

Phase 7: Shredding. As documents were digitized, hard copies were shredded. As well, nearly 5,000 pages were tagged as not necessary to scan, digitize or keep. An Excel spreadsheet was created to indicate what documents were not scanned or kept; most were bank or other statements, some from non-existent entities, all from 1987-2006.

Phase 8: Completion. From the Fall of 2018 to the Fall of 2022, nearly 70 three-ring binders and nearly 400 file folders consisting of more than 50,000 document pages were read, categorized, researched, digitized, and shredded. Many files from 2009–2022 were provided by various residents. The entire records process was handed over to the Board Secretary in February 2023.

The Board commends Judy for her commitment to and diligence in fulfilling this Herculean task, which has and will continue to help the Board analyze and present historic data, and the Community to become aware of the history of the Association and its governance and processes.