

SEASONS@BRL



2024 BRL
Annual Meeting
& Elections
March 16th
5PM at the
Lodge

- * **Our New Architectural Guidelines Launched!**
 - * **Holiday Moments**
- * **2023 Community Overview**
 - * **Signs of the Times**
 - * **Trees of Honor**
- * **Looking Forward to Spring**



Snow blanketed Riverview Road

New Architectural Guidelines Launched!

The Board of Directors have happily completed and released the much anticipated **updated Architectural Guidelines**. You will find them on our community's website - www.brlca.com/documents . As time goes on, these BRL guidelines can be further polished and tweaked by a majority vote of our directors at any point, if it is deemed necessary, as our community continues to evolve.

The Covenants, aka the C & Rs , are in the last phase of revamping before they will be sent to you for your vote. Changing the C & Rs requires a vote of two-thirds of the land owners that are in good standing. All eligible property owners will receive the options for each C & R section that has an update to vote upon. Mountains of mindful research & countless hours of work have been done by our directors and committee members to accomplish these two daunting projects. Elevating property values, preserving our natural habitat, safety strategies, long term & everyday maintenance, and having stable finances were at the core of every decision.

The Board of Directors thanks you for your patience, input and now for your vote to complete the C & Rs. We believe 2024 will be a happy and significant year in Bear River Lodge history!



The Holiday Cookie Exchange & Lodge Decorating Event was wonderful! Every home was represented on the tree with a handmade ginger house, which Tish Desjardins assembles to the left. Jay Denman, Roger Maris & Mike Foster finished decking the loft railings in the upper right hand picture. Callie Wellendorf (not pictured), untangled yards and yards of lights & helped to put up our 7-foot and 12-foot trees! Joy Coelho facilitated the event (center picture), and big thanks to Danis Maris for trimming our trees with such love (in center picture with Joy & Roger). Dave & Silvia Bell have our gratitude for donating the 7-foot tree. All of the lights illuminated with just one button, thanks to imaginengineering by Joy & Jay.

Signs of the Times

BRL History Revealed...

Special thanks goes to Mike Foster & Kent Brooks for their cliffside adventure, the article, photos and this interesting discovery.

Many Bear River Lodge owners and guests, as they approached the 'T' intersection at US Hwy 25-70 and NC 208 from the west, remember the 8' x 4' sign high on the cliff advertising homesites at BRL. Over the years, with the increasing vegetation, the sign became obscured through most of the year, but come winter it once again became visible.

Over 20 years of neglect and a recent tree fall all but destroyed the sign, so in January of this year your Maintenance Committee decided it was time to purge the eyesore from the mountainside. Upon removing the sign, however, we recognized there were actually three separate signs, layered one on top of the other, each promoting the property that many of us now call home.

A subtle reminder of a little recent history. The Gahagan family had long owned the property (see <https://www.brlca.com/history/>), but in 2001 the Gahagan heirs sold 608 acres, including the future Bear River Lodge, to Lloyd and Peggy Sineath of Charleston, SC for \$360,000. The Sineaths had a retirement dream and in December 2001, they filed a rezoning application with Madison County, requesting the land be rezoned from Residential Agriculture to Residential Resort District, with plans to offer horseback riding and cabin rentals with a clubhouse. It was at this time that the stables were built, and though no records were found that indicated the business was a success, the oldest of the three signs prominently points the way, just '2/10 MILE FROM OLD MILL WHEEL' (near where the current Laurel River Store is located).

There's only speculation as to why the Laurel River Smokey Mountain Retreat was short lived, but in March 2004 the same 608 acres, plus a little more, was sold to Landtrust Inc., a subsidiary of North American Land Development, for a cool \$3.5 million, with plans to develop the property into a residential community. The initial sales office was established in the existing log cabin at 460 NC 208 (now owned privately and currently on the market), and the second of the signs points the way, just 300 yards down the road. By the next year, in 2005, lot sales were increasing, and the sales office was moved to the newly constructed lodge late in the year, and with the move came a new sign. It was this third and latest sign that greeted drivers for the next 18 years, and though Landtrust is long gone, some of those 'Mountain View Lots' are again available (on the secondary market), but now you'll need Google Maps, or the directions from a friend, to point the way. The signs are gone, but the memories remain.



Now you see it,
now you don't
thanks to the lush foliage.



2002 Smokey
Mountain Retreat
Business Sign



Circa 2004 BRL
Homesites Office
Directional Sign.
Lower photo-
2005 BRL Sales
Office Sign



Trees of Honor

The loving action of planting a tree is a living statement of faith in the future. During the week of Thanksgiving our BRL neighbors, the Welty and Bell family, planted two very special trees to honor two of our friends who had journeyed to the heavenly realm.

Norsha Cone, wife of Tim Cone, left us in the beginning of 2023 and Ray Desjardins, husband of Tish Desjardins, departed this past October.

Our beloved friends sowed much happiness and great service into our community. Ray & Tish were our first BRL residents and these pioneers have served on our board and committees throughout the years.



Ray was a local billiards team champion and the cornerstone of Pool Night on wednesdays at the Lodge. Pool Night has become a wonderful weekly tradition for gathering to enjoy a friendly game with neighbors.

Norsha and Tim came to BRL for a mountain getaway vacation at RiverDance and shortly thereafter bought the house just down the street, enjoying that home for years with their chocolate labrador Pete.

Norsha was honored with a Black Tulip Magnolia and Ray was remembered with a Ginko Biloba Goldspire. Great gratitude goes out to all the folks that made this tribute happen. We send much love & admiration to their families.

This legacy will grow more beautiful each year, blessing our community with their vibrant presence on the rise across from the Lodge for all to enjoy.



Kim Bell, Rachel Welty and John Welty, installing the two memorial trees for Norsha and Ray's legacy.

BRLCA Annual Meeting at the Lodge **Saturday, March 16th at 5pm** **(Zoom link will be provided)**


Our community made great strides in 2023. All of the milestones that came to fruition this past year brightened both our present and our future. Watching each project fully manifest from just an idea into a reality was a true team effort from the Board of Directors, the Architectural Committee and the Maintenance Committees members. The community's input helped to inspired the vision our leaders put into motion.

Here are the highlights-

- * Restoration of the Construction Road from SR 208.
- * Diverted a curbside spring for roadway safety by the Lodge driveway.
- * Paving the Main Entry Road, Lodge Parking & Mailbox Areas.
- * Updating the Architectural Guidelines Documents.
- * BRL became a National Wildlife Federation certified Wildlife Preserve Community.
- * Spearheaded a Madison County Commission Proclamation for June to become Pollinator Awareness Month Countywide.
- * Debuted Seasons@BRL Community Quarterly E-Magazine.
- * Excuted the research & work to update the BRL Covenants (C&Rs).
- * Re-established the Winter Holiday tradition to decorate the Lodge & the Community Cookie Exchange.
- * Research for a possible future Fire Station by the stables.
- * Restoration of all of our original Street Signs.
- * Trees of Honor Planting.

Two Board of Director seats are now up for election. At the time of this magazine's release, Vice President Jason Goldstein and Secretary Mike Foster are running for re-election. As you already know, via the email sent on January 16th, **the deadline to submit for these seats is February 9th.** If you wish to throw your hat in the ring to run for office and work on the Board of Directors contact the BRLCA secreatry at mefoster8@gmail.com .

The Board wishes to recognize and thank Dave Bell for his continued service as Treasurer and also welcomes Jay Denman to both the ARC and Maintenance Committees.

A close-up photograph of a groundhog's head and shoulders. The groundhog has light brown, textured fur and is looking upwards and to the right. In the foreground, the black, cylindrical lens of a camera is visible, partially obscuring the groundhog's face. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white, suggesting snow or a bright, overcast sky.

Groundhogs all over the world ALL agreed that we will enjoy an early Spring. Punxsutawney Phil, Staten Island Chuck, Nova Scotia's Shubenacadie Sam, Ontario Wiarton Willie, General Beau Lee of Georgia, Washington DC Potomac Phil & Canadian Fred La Marmotte all made it official on February 2nd.

Looking Forward to Spring 2024

Upcoming FREE Gardening workshops at Reems Creek Nursery are a great way to usher in Spring. Education from these landscape & botanical experts helped BRL acquire our National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat Preserve certification.

You will find the upcoming available workshops on page 7.

You do need to register even though the workshops are free since there is limited seating in their comfortable classroom.

Visit their website <http://reemscreek.com> to learn more.

First Quarter WORKSHOPS at Reems Creek Nursery

FEBRUARY

Seed Starting Workshop

At Reems Creek Nursery

Tues. Feb. 6. 2024

10-11:30

With Susan P. Reavis & Ruth Gonzalez

NEW! Sign up [here!](#)

There are only a few spots left.

*If you can no longer attend, please cancel your ticket in Eventbrite so someone else can have your spot.

Fruit Pruning Workshop

At Reems Creek Nursery

Sat. Feb. 17, 2024

2-3:30 PM

With Randal Pflieger

During this workshop, we will focus on fruit trees (apples, pears, peaches, plums, cherries, figs, mulberries, elderberries, and hazelnuts) in our yards, landscapes, and backyard orchards. There will also be a brief discussion of small fruits including...[read more and register.](#)

The Layered Garden

At Reems Creek Nursery

Sat. Feb. 24

10 AM

With Mardi Dove

March

Welcome to Gardening in WNC

At Reems Creek Nursery

Sat. March 2, 2024

10-11:30

With Ruth Gonzalez

New to the area? New to gardening? This workshop will introduce you to gardening in Western North Carolina with tips and tricks for success in these beautiful mountains. We'll discuss WNC soil, typical seasonal weather, a general planting calendar, judging the amount of light your garden receives, plant palettes, useful tools and more. We'd love to get you off to a great start in your new gardening region. Questions will be welcomed! Free, but you must pre-register.

Cut Flower Garden

At Reems Creek Nursery

Sat. March 16. 2024

10-11:30

With Libby Oswald



COMMUNITY WILDLIFE
HABITATTM

BRL Resources

Vacation Destination BRL

The locations listed are featured on Airb&b & VRBO and are individually owned Vacation Homes in BRL

* SkyView Mountain Retreat & River Haven at RiverDance-
www.RiverDanceNC.com or (847) 809 3098

* Water's Edge Cabin-
<https://www.vrbo.com/410179>

* Wildcat Cove Mountain Home-
<https://www.vrbo.com/2655327>

* Mountain OverLook BlueRidge Retreat
<https://www.vrbo.com/1175018>

Helpful Links

Bear River Lodge Website- <https://www.brlca.com>

BRL Architectural Guidelines and Covenants & Restrictions:

<https://www.brlca.com/documents/>

Madison County Environmental Services Department (Septic & Well)

<https://www.madisoncountyhealth.org/environmental-health.html>

The next Seasons@BRL e-magazine will be delivered April 2024
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Please send ALL submissions and inquiries to- SeasonsEditorBRL@Gmail.com
Editor Joy Coelho, BRLCA Board of Directors

Deadline for Spring 2024 Edition - March 22, 2024 at 5pm EST