

KEENE MILL VILLAGE IV HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION
C/o National Realty Partners
365 Herndon Parkway, Suite 111
Herndon, VA 20170

October 2010

Dear Residents:

As some of you may know, the playground on Tiffany Park Court has been removed. The decision to remove the playground was made based on several key issues: the condition of the grounds due to a drainage issue and the decline and safety concerns of the equipment.

For a number of years, the playground has been plagued with a severe drainage issue. During rain storms, the area would flood and the subsequent runoff washed the mulch into the grass and parking areas. This drainage left a serious erosion problem.

In an effort to address the drainage issue, the Board contacted several independent contractors to assess the situation. Each contractor reached the same conclusion: The original placement of the playground was on an incline, and the area was never properly graded.

The cost for the drainage would be approximately \$5,000. However, there was no guarantee the plan would work. The existing trees and root systems posed a problem. There was a possibility that the roots, over time, would damage the drains, and during installation, cutting through the roots would most likely raise the cost of the project. Furthermore, redirecting the water into the parking area would, in colder weather, create an icing issue. Lastly, the drains would need to be properly cleaned and maintained over the years.

While this was a disappointment, it wasn't the end of the problems for playground. During the inspection of the area, the contractors noted serious structural damages to the equipment. Also noted were the tree roots. Due to the soil erosion, a number of large tree roots were exposed, presenting a safety hazard if a child should fall or land on the roots. While county codes require mulch to help address issues such as this, the flooding of the area didn't allow us to maintain the needed mulch on the playground.

It became clear to the Board that the erosion and flooding were not our most serious problems; safety was now our primary concern. In order to maintain a safe playground, we would need to have the area properly drained and graded. We would also need newer, safer borders surrounding the play area. In addition, we would need to remove and replace the equipment. To accomplish this, the required funds were more than our community could afford. In essence, we would have had to start all over and the expense would have been too much. Even if we were not faced with our current financial difficulties, the funding would have been beyond our means.

As mentioned, the most startling revelation was the deterioration of the equipment. The swing set had serious structural damage. Several bolts supporting the structure had noticeable rust and deterioration. Also, the support beams above the swings were damaged. We later learned, after removal, that at least one of the posts had rusted away from the concrete base.

The wooden fort had, by far, the worst damage. Rusting and exposed nails, noticeable rotting of the planks and the anchor supporting the fort had rusted away. It was barely standing. When the crew removed it, they found it was not cemented into place and was easily toppled.

The other two pieces of equipment were in relatively good condition, but they were also suffering from wear and tear. Based on the safety report from the contractors, it was evident that the playground was a safety hazard for children. The playground had deteriorated to the point where the Board felt children were in danger from both the equipment and the grounds. Putting aside possible lawsuits from an injury, the Board felt we could no longer risk the safety and security of our children on deteriorating and structurally unstable equipment.

The decision to remove the playground was not taken lightly; it was based solely on the safety and well being of the children in the community. The Board was in full agreement, allowing children to play on equipment that was knowingly unsafe and presented a danger was a risk we were not willing to take. It was believed that if parents were aware of the safety issues and the deterioration of the grounds and equipment, they would readily agree with the decision to remove the playground.

The playground removal cost approximately \$980. The area has since been raked out and seeded. Due to the aforementioned ground conditions, we have no plans to rebuild or replace the playground. It will be returned back to common area.

We would like to remind the community, we still have a playground, complete with swings, slides and other equipment on Field Master Court.

Thank you for your time and understanding. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Board either through Kristine Caraway (703-435-3800) or through email at info@keememillvillage.org.

Sincerely,

Mary Margaret McKinney
President
Keene Mill Village IV