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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Howson Branch Library
May 7th, 2001, 7:00 pm

West Austin Neighborhood Group
 P.O. Box 5722
 Austin, Texas 78763-5722



West Austin Neighborhood Group
 Organized 1973

"To preserve our neighborhood and protect it from deterioration."

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Hal Katz
 President

Linda Neavel Dickens
 Vice-President

Gwen Jewiss
 Secretary

Ian Inglis
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James Allman
 Membership Chair

Blake Tollett
 Zoning Chair

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Joyce Basciano
 Michael Cannatti
 Eric Cary
 Chris Garrigues
 Balie Griffith
 Sara Madera
 Susan Pascoe
 Selina Serna
 Irwin Spear

HONORARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mary Arnold
 Sinclair Black
 Hon. Lloyd Doggett
 Hon. Beverly Griffith
 Hon. Ann Kitchens
 Hon. Will Wynn

THE NEIGHBOR

P.O. Box 5722 • Austin, Texas 78763-5722

April, 2001

President's Message
April 2001
MOPAC: SHOULD IT BE JUST ANOTHER HIGHWAY?

It's hard to imagine MoPac as a neighborhood boulevard that ends at the river, prohibits trucks, and posts a speed limit of 45 miles per hour. However, that is what Governor Ann Richards described at the April 9, 2001, Capitol Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) meeting as what was envisioned by the Austin Transportation Study when it approved the creation of MoPac in the late 1960's.

The CAMPO meeting brought roughly 900 citizens to the LBJ Auditorium to hear public comment on the MoPac expansion concepts proposed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Governor Richards was one of 10,000 Central Austin Residents who received a hand delivered flyer from the West Austin Neighborhood Group informing the public of the meeting and the TxDOT proposals. Public comments were led by the MoPac Neighborhood Association Coalition (MoNAC), a group comprised of the Allandale, Bryker Woods, Highland Park West/Balcones Area, Oakmont Heights, Old West Austin, and Pemberton Heights Neighborhood Associations, and the Johnson Creek Neighborhood Conservation Association, the Old Enfield Homeowners Association, the West Austin Neighborhood Group, and the Westminster Manor Association, all impacted by MoPac. The Coalition members are working together hand-in-hand to ensure neighborhood concerns are communicated. The MoNAC speakers included a local scientist, an urban planning professor from the University of Texas, an expert on historical district designations, and other neighborhood residents.

There is obvious conflict over MoPac. The surrounding neighborhoods have suffered over the years from noise and air pollution, cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets, hazardous wrecks along the sections of the highway that back up to their homes, and the loss of homes. As Austin has grown, a significant number of people have located north and south of town, relying upon MoPac as their means of travelling north and south. To these residents, the problems of

MoPac include congestion and increasing travel time. Many have little sympathy for the residents impacted by MoPac and see the solution as more general-purpose lanes. Unfortunately, they do not realize the threat MoPac poses to the City as a whole and to some of the oldest areas of the State, which also serve as a draw to many tourists.

TxDOT's statistics and projections are alarming. Historical traffic counts taken along MoPac show that traffic growth within the corridor has been substantial since 1980. Overall, traffic growth has tripled since 1980 and increased about 30% since 1992. The 2025 road demand is expected to almost double.

The first phase of TxDOT's Loop 1/US 183 Improvement Study will provide the various potential concepts that are available and screen them for feasibility. This phase is crucial, as it provides the basis for moving forward. This is where creative and comprehensive analysis must occur. There is no doubt, as Governor Richards acknowledged, that although TxDOT means well, it is in the business of moving vehicles, not preserving neighborhoods. The frustration of neighbors to the north and south is understandable, but even the most aggressive concept proposed by TxDOT, requiring the removal of 162 homes, would only bring temporary relief. Ten to fifteen years from now, we will face the same traffic issues.

While our challenge of improving traffic flow seems daunting, we only have to look to Fort Worth to see how a community can come together to force highway planners to think outside of the box. There, community members forced the redesign of the Southwest Parkway, also known as the extension to 121, changing the portion running through the neighborhood area from a tollway to a parkway with landscaping and a park-like setting. This was accomplished after the City Council approved the recommendations of an independent consultant hired to review TxDOT's recommendations.

CAMPO will hold its next meeting on June 11, to consider the endorsement of the short list of concepts. Endorsement is the next step before moving forward with Phase 2. The four recommended concepts at this point include:

Please see President's Message, next page

Be sure to visit our website at <http://www.deepeddy.com/wang/>!

1. No-Build: This includes projects that have already been funded and will serve as a comparison to the benefits and impacts of other concepts.
2. Safety and Operations Improvements: This consists of low to moderate cost, short-term projects like improved signing and striping, Intelligent Transportation Systems (a group of technologies that provides commuters with information on traffic conditions and accidents, gives route advisories, and can improve responses to highway emergencies), and improved ramps and interchanges.
3. A Reversible High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lane System: A total of five HOV lanes, which are designated for use by carpools, vanpools, and buses only, would be added to the two corridors.
4. A Managed Lane System: New lanes would be managed through various methods, including metering access and restriction to HOVs during certain hours. The proposal would add a total of nine new lanes to the two corridors.

If TxDOT decides to add new lanes, it may accomplish this in three ways. First, the freeway can be widened to add more lanes. Second, the new lanes could be elevated. Third, the added lanes could be depressed underground. There are advantages and disadvantages to each one of these options. The first two will cost approximately \$10-20 million and \$15 million per mile, respectively, to build. In contrast, the third option will cost approximately \$40-60 million per mile to build and would thus be a much more expensive project. However, the first two options will substantially increase the traffic noise for residents living near MoPac. It is estimated that a raised freeway will radiate noise and pollution more than five times the current levels. Widening the freeway also will create more noise and could result in the destruction of at least 70 homes along MoPac.

As all of the public commentators expressed, CAMPO should require TxDOT to provide additional concepts that adequately consider the needs and challenges of the community. There is consensus among the neighborhood groups that MoNAC must continue to work together and require TxDOT to develop more com-

prehensive and creative proposals. The neighborhoods do not have the expertise to make these recommendations. TxDOT must work with urban planners, City officials, and residents to create a proposal that also looks at a City-wide traffic plan that includes elements of mass transportation. To do otherwise is short sighted and irresponsible.

It is now up to the residents of North, South and Central Austin to work together to force highway planners to devise a solution that addresses all of our concerns. What can you do to help? Write letters and send emails to the members of the CAMPO Policy Advisory Committee. For those interested in obtaining more information contact Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, P.O. Box 1088 - Municipal Annex Austin, Texas 78767 (phone number 499-2275, facsimile 499-6385, website <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/campo/>). Now is the time to get involved. The neighborhoods, and the City, need your help.

Hal Katz
703-5715
hkatz@hwlaw.com



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WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA MAY 7, 2001

- I. Call Meeting to Order (7:10)
- II. Citizen Communications
- III. Approval of Minutes
- IV. Committee Reports
 - A. Zoning
 - B. Communications
 1. Newsletter
 2. Website
 3. WAYA Update
 - C. Transportation
 1. MoPac
 2. Sidewalks
 - D. Liaison
 - E. Neighborhood Plan
 - F. Membership
- V. Treasurer's Report
- VI. New/Old Business
 - A. Camp Mabry
 - B. Dill Elementary
 - C. Legislative Update
 - D. Other
- VII. Adjourn (8:45)

This year the Austin Public Library is celebrating its 75th anniversary of providing library services to the community. The Howson Branch is marking the occasion with outdoor festivities on Saturday, May 19th, from 1:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon. Help us celebrate the library's Jubilee with carnival games for the kids, ice cream for everyone, and music by Corky Robinson and his Dixieland jazz band.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 

Take care of your neighborhood! Send in this membership form or call Blake Tollett at 477-4028. Please take forms to your friends and neighbors and ask them to join WANG. An active membership will be a strong voice that's heard when critical issues are debated.

Yes, I want to join WANG.
 I want to renew my WANG membership.

I have enclosed:
 \$20 household membership
 \$10 student/senior membership

Date _____
Name _____
Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____
Email _____

Make checks payable to WANG and mail to:
WANG
P.O. Box 5722
Austin, TX 78763-5722

Pet Peeves

Have you been awoken to the sound of your neighbor's barking dogs in the early morning hours? Have you watched in disbelief as a neighbor encouraged his or her dog to leave a "gift" on your lawn? Have you been in fear of life or limb as a neighbor's pet chased you with the apparent intent to chew on you? Nearly all of us have experienced the frustration, anger, and even fear involved in these types of situations. However, if each person in the neighborhood follows the City's ordinances and basic common courtesy, situations like this should not occur.

I love my pets (two dogs and a cat) as much as the next person, but I believe that they should not interfere with my neighbors' use and enjoyment of their property. In the worst case, my pets should never place another in fear. By following these common-sense rules (and the law) we can all enjoy and protect our pets, the other members of our families, and our neighbors, and that, of course, is what we all want to do.

First, a leash law in the City of Austin prohibits dogs to "run at large." The fine for violating the leash law is up to \$500 for each violation. The only exceptions are the so-called

"leash-free" areas. The City of Austin's web-site posts a list of these zones at www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/dogparks.htm.

Second, it is "unlawful" to fail to promptly remove and dispose of feces left by a dog or cat. In addition to being unsightly, pet waste exposes our families to viruses and bacteria. Also, according to the City of Austin's watershed protection initiative, pet waste poses a threat to our water supply and encourages the growth of algae in our lakes and streams. Therefore, when you recycle plastic grocery bags into poop-scoopers you are being courteous as well as environmentally friendly.

Third, each of us should strive to be respectful regarding the noise our pets make. This is especially true during the night and early morning hours when our neighbors sleep. Dogs bark when they see and hear passers-by. Dog owners should make every effort to find an appropriate outdoor play zone located away from areas where neighbors regularly walk. When you hear your dog barking outside, please bring him inside. This will help to minimize the noise. Dogs that cannot help but bark should be kept indoors at night.

Fourth, potentially dangerous encounters with animals should be treated seriously. According to the

Humane Society, dogs bite over a million people each year – most of whom are children. The SCPA has great advice on how to avoid such dangerous encounters. This information is can be obtained on the web under the "safety tips" section of: www.AustinSPCA.com.

Finally, attempts to domesticate wild animals should be avoided. At the extremes, lions, tigers, and other wild cats have no place in the City limits. Other exotic animals should be left in the wild – for their safety and ours. The City only broadly proscribes the possession of "dangerous animals," and defines dangerous animals as those that, by their nature or breeding, have "the capability of inflicting serious bodily injury to humans." However, courteous neighbors should never risk the safety of others by possessing animals that might react instinctively to kill or maim a threat – which might be you, your pet, or other family members.

Following these common-sense tips and City rules will allow us all to enjoy our wonderful neighborhood and keep it a safe and friendly place.

—Erik Cary

Questions and comments regarding this article can be sent to Mr. Cary at: ecary@mjtpc.com.

Dispute Resolution Center
512/371-0033
5407 N 1H35, #410
Austin, Texas 78723

(non-profit, community resource for conflict resolution)

Who do I call to report a missing stop sign?

Citizens can report a downed or missing street sign to the Department of Public Works and Transportation. If the missing sign creates a dangerous situation such as a stop or yield sign, replacement will be made within two hours. Street signs and information signs are inspected within two days. Replacement may take four to six weeks. For more information, call 457-4850.

Minutes of the WANG Executive Committee Meeting - April 2, 2001

Executive Committee Attendees: Erik Cary, Blake Tollett, Irwin Spear, James Allman, Hal Katz, Chris Garrigues, Balie Griffith, Ian Inglis, Sara Madera, Selina Serna, Linda Dickens, and Mike Cannatti

Current Events

WAYA Brush/Tree Removal

Neighbors living on the north side of the West Austin Youth Association (WAYA) property expressed their concerns about the removal of brush and trees on the northern boundary of the WAYA property. WAYA has taken out the plants in order to run 6 inch water pipe as required by City for fire suppression. Hal reported that he had spoken with WAYA about the issue. WAYA representatives agreed to appear at the next WANG executive committee meeting and promised to re-plant the area (although no promised were being made yet about the height of the replacement foliage). WAYA agreed to work with the parties to address the neighbors' concerns.

Indian Trail House Tenant Noise

Neighbors of a rental property on Indian Trail voiced their concerns about behavior by tenants of a rent house on Indian Trail. According to the neighbors, the tenants have been making excessive late night noise (including parties after midnight) and have engaged in numerous other instances of inappropriate conduct that does not belong in a residential neighborhood, despite repeated protests by the neighbors. The neighbors' efforts to work with the police and to inform the owner of the property have not been successful, and they are considering filing suit against the tenants and owner. A motion was passed for WANG to write a letter to the owner of the property raising concerns about the tenants' behavior and requesting action by the owner to address the neighbors' concerns.

Minutes

After revising the previous minutes (to reflect that the EMS Station completion is moved back from October, 2001 to May, 2002, and to reflect that EMS Service has been moved up to October 2001 by provision of temporary service), the minutes from last meeting were approved.

Committee Reports

Zoning Committee Report

- 1601 Forest Trail variance request: After

a brief introduction of the variance issue by Blake, Mr. McAden presented his explanation of the permit and inspection history for this structure, which is already largely constructed. According to Mr. McAden, the City had approved, through the various inspections and approvals, the placement of the building so that it appears to be within ten feet of at least some of the property boundaries. According to Mr. McAden, the City currently is taking the position that it made a mistake in approving the plans and is requiring a formal variance. Executive committee members raised a number of questions about the particulars of the set back dispute and variance request. A motion for no action was not passed. Subsequently, a motion was passed that WANG take no action if Blake confirms the facts of Mr. McAden's presentation and if there were no complaints filed by neighbors.

Communications Committee Report

Chris Garrigues will be working with a high school volunteer to update the WANG website.

Membership Committee Report

James Allman reported on the distribution of new membership applications and described the plan to revise the membership form to include committee options.

Transportation Committee Report

• MOPAC/CAMPO: Ian Inglis reported on the success of the recent CAMPO meeting and reported that the next CAMPO meeting to consider TxDOT's proposals for the MoPac Expressway will be on April 9, 2001, 6:00-10:00 p.m., in the LBJ Library Auditorium. Ian will be WANG's representative at the CAMPO meeting. Ian also reported that the MONAC fliers were being distributed to 10,000 households along the MoPac corridor.

• Landmark Designation Update: Irwin Spear reported on the requirements for obtaining a historic landmark designation for a neighborhood, which include preparing a Statement describing the neighborhood and assessing the neighborhood development. Irwin explained that it is advantageous to use smaller districts when applying and that the application process takes a couple of years. Irwin agreed to prepare a draft Statement.

Liaison Committee Report

• EMS Status: James Allman reported on the EMS completion date (May, 2002) and service initiation dates (October, 2001) and also reported that demolition bids were

being considered.

• East Austin: Balie Griffith complimented Hal on the President's Message and described recent instances of East Austin offenses in City Council decisions: Mueller airport, Waste Management, BFI.

Treasurer's Report

Paid current members: 384
Checking: \$2,755.78
Savings: \$4,561.25
Oak Wilt: \$1,186.65

New Business

• Neighborhood Plan: Hal reported that the Neighborhood Plan Committee will consist of Blake Tollett, Hal Katz, Selina Serna, Mike Cannatti, Susan Pascoe, and Gwen Jewiss.

• Camp Mabry: Hal reported that there was no apparent progress on the proposed Camp Mabry land swap.

• Dill School: Hal reported that AISD is considering selling the Dill School property. He will work to coordinate with AISD in any proposed sale.

• Legislative Update: Hal reported that there were no legislation bills affecting the WANG neighborhood, although there is a bill proposed to continue using Mueller field as an airport.

• Tarrytown Shopping Center: Hal reported that the owners of the Tarrytown shopping center had been receptive to the vegetarian restaurant proposal. Linda urged that other proposals amenable to the neighborhood be advanced.

• Sidewalks: Selina distributed maps to executive committee members so that each part of the WANG area can be surveyed for existing sidewalks and for areas where sidewalks are needed.

• Zoning Report: Blake reported that the variance request for 2206 W. 11th had been denied and that the Planning Commission had denied the request concerning 510 Atlanta, which is being appealed.

• Award for James Allman: The Austin Neighborhood Council presented James Allman with a reward in recognition for outstanding work on behalf of Sector 4 at ANC.

• Tarrytown United Church Agreement: Hal reported that WANG did not sign the agreement at the church's request.

Neighborhood Questions and Answers

What can I do about a dispute with a neighbor?

Your next door neighbor's tree is hitting your roof, and she won't trim it. A neighbor plays loud music at 3:00 a.m. on a weeknight. You think your neighbor constructed his new fence on your property. When she waters her plants, your neighbor ends up watering your car, as well.

These are common disagreements or issues neighbors face. Handling disagreements with a neighbor is a delicate and important issue. Mediation is a technique that can help you resolve small to big issues.

Mediation is a process in which people involved in a dispute sit down and find their own solution with the help of an objective third party. A

mediator is a person who is neutral to the dispute and has training in techniques to get people talking.

Mediation can be done for small to large disagreements. The choice to enter into mediation means that both parties want to resolve the conflict, want to make their own decision or outcome (as opposed to a judicial decision), and maintain confidentiality for the issue. Common case issues that are covered in mediations with neighbors are: pets, harassment, property boundaries, vandalism, noise, money issues, cross-cultural conflicts, improper use of property (unauthorized auto repair, day care, etc.). The City of Austin currently does not have staff mediators for neighborhood disputes, however, below is a suggested location that you can contact for more information about mediation in Austin:

Not a Secret Anymore

The Austin Recreation Center (ARC), near the intersection of 15th and Lamar behind the House Park Football Stadium, is centrally located and convenient to downtown Austin. ARC houses a gymnasium with six basketball goals, two lined volleyball courts, and two lined badminton courts. Other amenities include a dance studio with mirrors and bars, a weight room, kitchen/conference room, an arts and crafts room, and shower facilities. Four lighted tennis courts are available on a first come, first served basis.

The Austin Recreation Center offers a variety of classes, workshops, and camps. Youth classes include: an after school program, American Karate, Youth Basketball (ages 6-7, 8-10, 11-12, 13-15), dance classes offered by Dance Associates, Kids Fun Night (Parents'

Night Out), Volleyball Clinics, Teen Travelers, Totally Cool Totally Art, and seasonal/one day camps for youth ages 6-15.

Adult Classes include: Aerobics, Abominable Abdominals, Afro-Haitian Dance, Basketball open play, Capoeira, Jazzercise, American Karate, Shotokan Karate, Personal Fitness Training, Volleyball Leagues, and Yoga.

The weight room is open for individuals on a self-taught basis and consists of a universal system, dumbbells, incline bench, bench press, calf-raise, preacher curl and squat rack. Aerobic equipment includes monarch exercise bikes and recumbent bicycles.

Come check out what we offer at our family friendly, convenient Center. Call the center for times and fees.

—Cindy Wade

Austin Recreation Center

1301 Shoal Creek Blvd.
476-5662

Hours of operation:

Monday-Friday,
7:30 a.m.-10:30 p.m.

Saturday,
9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Sunday,
12:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

West Austin Oral History Project

Did you know that the first industrial village in Texas once sat on the site of Reed Park? Or that Bridle Path was so named because it was a horse trail? As one of the earlier sites of our city's development, West Austin provides rich material that speaks to who and what has contributed to our identity.

WANG members want to identify the significant events, locations, and personalities of West Austin. We're collecting information on the sources of influence that have helped shaped not only our community, but the greater Austin area, as well. By giving voice to neighborhood

residents, documenting local commerce, and celebrating our architecture, we hope to preserve and strengthen our sense of local history.

Do you want to be interviewed for this oral history project? Do you know someone else who should be included? If so, then please call Linda Dickens (458-9408) or Gwen Jewiss (478-8184). You may also contact us via email at keldickens@aol.com and gjewiss@austin.rr.com.

We have valuable treasures by having some of the original West Austin residents still living in the neighborhood. Help us to archive their memories before they're lost forever! If you grew up in the neighborhood and are

here still (or again) raising your own children, share your stories with us. Neighbor Mike recently talked about watching his young children run around on the same streets that he did 30 years ago. Do you have a similar experience to share?

If you have older photos of the area, family, and friends, then we would like to make copies of them, as well as to hear the stories that accompany them. We also would like to borrow your maps and other documents that show the West Austin that was.

The plan is to serialize the results in *The Neighbor*, with a bound edition to be published at some point in the future.



From left to right: Council Member Beverly Griffith, Mayor Kirk Watson, Mayor for the Day, and WANG members Blake Tollett, Balie Griffith, Linda Neavel Dickens, Hal Katz, Sara Madera, Joyce Basciano, James Allman, and Dudley Houghton.

Former WANG President Blake Tollett Receives City Award

On January 25, 2001, the Austin City Council awarded a proclamation to Blake Tollett for his many years of service as the WANG President. For 4 1/2 years, Blake led the neighborhood association with grace, dedication, and fairness. The ExComm members appreciate both his commitment to staying in communication and his thoroughness. Always accessible, Blake did a commendable job and deserves our gratitude. Thank you, Blake.

The Office of Neighborhood Services in partnership with Austin Community College is pleased to announce several FREE training opportunities for neighborhood leaders, associations, groups, and just everyday interested citizens who desire to build a better quality of life within their neighborhoods. These sessions will help you learn the skills necessary to organize and lead your neighborhood. Designed to be quick, informative, and open to anyone who wants to help make their neighborhood a better place to live!

Neighborhood Academy offers over 30 classes that will give you the knowledge and information you need to help your neighborhood!

Mini-courses on a variety of topics:

- How to Get Complaints Resolved
- What to Do about Dangerous Buildings and Substandard Housing
- Zoning 101
- Smart Growth: The Basics
- Building Safe and Livable Neighborhoods
- Effectively Representing Your Neighborhood Before Council and Commission
- Resolving Neighborhood Issues and Disputes

- Neighborhood Leadership
- Fundraising and Grant Writing techniques... and more!

On the Road Series -- We will bring classes to your group of 15 or more on the topic of your choice designed to meet your community needs.

ANTS (Association of Neighborhood Training Specialists) – Meets quarterly to discuss neighborhood issues and give valuable input that shapes the Neighborhood Academy course calendar. Is your neighborhood represented? Join today, no membership fees!

Located at the Austin Community College Eastview Campus, 3401 Webberville Road, a central location convenient to downtown. Look for other locations in the future!

Pre-registration is encouraged.

For information, course schedules, and registration, contact:

Donna L. Jackson
499-7670

donna.jackson@ci.austin.tx.us

Excerpted from The Office of Neighborhood Services at www.ci.austin.tx.us

West Austin Safety Report

Officer Tim Atkinson, our police department District Representative, conveyed that burglary reports have increased in West Austin. He is hopeful, however, that our men in blue have, as he said, "nipped that one." Furthermore, he stated that quite a few car burglaries have occurred, especially at Mt. Bonnell. So remember to keep those home—and car—doors locked.

Officer Atkinson also reported that he and other members of the Street Response Unit have been keeping their eyes on targeted intersections in their unmarked vehicles, watching for traffic violators. "I have seen some amazing things," he said. We're glad that Officer Atkinson is working on keeping our streets safe. Thank you, Tim.