



# WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

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

December, 2009

Organized 1973

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

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Assistant Secretary

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Hon. Lee Leffingwell

Background Photo of Lime Kiln #PICA24140,  
Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

### \*\*\*MEETING NOTICE\*\*\*

Meeting will be at the Whole Foods Downtown  
Upper Plaza Level Conference Room  
Monday, January 4th, 2010 at 7 PM



## President's Message

By August W. "Happy" Harris III

Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and our best wishes to each of you for a joyous, healthy and prosperous New Year from your WANG Board of Directors. I would like to think that ya'll are enjoying the season with family and friends. It has been a spectacular late fall in the neighborhood. Years blend together but I was particularly taken by the vibrant yellow of the leaves this year. Speaking of vibrant, it has been fun, as always, to see the extent to which folks decorate for the Holidays! Walking, running or cycling through the neighborhood is such a great way to see it all while burning off some of those goodies!

As you may remember, WANG announced its intention to move to a company called Peel for the publication of the monthly newsletter. Because of rising mail and printing costs, the move was deemed neces-

Take a moment **RIGHT NOW** to look at your mailing label. As always, look at your renewal date and don't forget to renew (and remember you can do it online at [www.WestAustinNG.com](http://www.WestAustinNG.com)). If you see a "Z" on your mailing label, it means that we have an email address for you. In January, we will begin emailing PDF copies of the newsletter to those who have requested that format. Email [Membership@WestAustinNG.com](mailto:Membership@WestAustinNG.com) if you wish to receive your monthly newsletter in this format rather than in print format. If you don't see a "Z" on your mailing label, please do email us so that we may add you to our email list and include your preference on electronic format or print format. Only those folks who have renewed since August have been given an option as a result of changes in our membership form. We want to extend that opportunity to everyone. Electronic delivery does save WANG the cost of printing and mailing.

sary. We also felt that, given the critical issues at hand, it was and continues to be imperative that we reach a wider audience. The Board continues

Be sure to visit our website at <http://www.WestAustinNG.com>

to look for the most effective, economical way to communicate to the neighborhood and is still working on the best option to accommodate all needs. Consequently, the move to Peel will not take place.

As we did not include our October minutes in the Annual Newsletter, I am going to abbreviate my President's message so that they and our December minutes can be included. I hate to bring this subject up during this time of year but given despicable elements of our society, I feel it is important. Recently, one of my neighbors had all of their outdoor Christmas decorations stolen. It happens. Sometimes it may be nothing more than a prank but please be vigilant and report anything suspicious to 911. DO NOT leave anything in your car. Thieves are looking for any opportunity – especially during the holidays. We are reminded that even food can be a target. Lastly, make sure that your home is secured and make some effort to have it occupied or at the very least appear occupied if you are traveling. We have encouraged the West Austin community to create Neighborhood Watch programs. Even if one is not formally organized, keep



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an eye out for your neighbors. Finally, WANG recently weighed in on the Heritage Tree Ordinance now passing through City boards and commissions on the way to Council. Surveys have consistently shown that Austin as city and West Austin as a neighborhood highly value our trees. What is often overlooked by folks is that trees, particularly significant trees, not only add beauty but add very significant dollars to the overall value of homes and businesses. Further, significant trees have the added benefit of reducing our cooling costs. Only the shortsighted and the uninformed cut significant trees down for development purposes. That being said, much of our area urban canopy is aging. Winter is the time both to contemplate and to plant new tree stock. Elm is predominant through much of Tarrytown and Deep Eddy while Bryker Woods and Pemberton seem to have more pecan and red oak. We have been encouraged to diversify our trees. Look at other opportunities, particularly hardy native species, that may enhance your home. It is a great long term investment in your property!

Now, more than ever, in the history of West Austin and WANG, is it critical that you renew your membership

and encourage friends and neighbors to join WANG. Please go to our NEW website, [www.WestaustinNG.com](http://www.WestaustinNG.com). And as always, let us know of any suggestions that you might have! Happy Holidays to all!



**October Meeting Minutes**  
 By Michael Cannatti, Secretary

These are the minutes of the West Austin Neighborhood Group Board of Directors Meeting on Monday, October 5, 2009 at the Lions Municipal Clubhouse.

**I. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm with the following Board members in atten-

dance: Blake Tollett, Ann Keene, Selina Serna, August Harris, Gwen Jewiss, Joseph Bennett, Mary Arnold, Cathy Kyle, Joyce Basciano, and Michael Cannatti.

**II. Approval of Minutes:** The minutes from the September 2009 meeting were not approved at this meeting.

**III. Neighbor Communications:** None. The neighbors were so quiet this meeting!

#### **IV. Committee Reports:**

##### **A. Communications**

(1) WANG Annual Social – Serna, Jewiss, and Cannatti to assist with labeling and stamping of newsletters. August reported that the Annual Social will occur on Saturday October 24 (10:00 to 12:00) at ELLERS PARK. Topics to be addressed include Brackenridge Tract Update, Neighborhood Planning, Website, Green Building, Water and Energy Conservation. Bennett is obtaining yard signs and banner, and will notify board when signs ready. Blake and Cannatti are to coordinate on equipment pickup. Gwen is finishing Annual Newsletter for delivery to entire neighborhood. August reviewed food and refreshment responsibilities, and Cannatti agreed to buy Maudie's breakfast tacos. Keene is looking into some raffle prizes.

(2) Newsletter – There was no discussion of this item at this meeting, but Cannatti previously reported that the proposed Peel contract does not prevent WANG from soliciting ads for the WANG website or from publishing its own newsletter with advertisements.



##### **B. Infrastructure**

(1) Brackenridge Tract Update: August reported that there have been updates from Cooper Robertson & Partners (CR&P) concerning its proposed development plan at the Brack Tract, and that the faculty proposal for developing the tract is to be presented to the Board of Regents in the fall of 2009. In light of the appointment of Board chair James Huffines to the Austin Chamber of Commerce, August agreed to circulate the names of the other Chamber members. Mary Arnold noted the Daily Texan article (<http://www.dailytexanonline.com/top-stories/brack-tract-plans-raise-faculty-woes-1.1907537>) where UT President Powers was quoted as saying that the CR&P proposals "were not in the long-term interest of the University." Regarding possible financial considerations relating to the purchase of the Brack Tract, August noted that the City's water reclamation project has saved the University \$800-900K in cooling costs, and that the City Council recently voted to find means within the city budget to relieve the Golf Enterprise Fund the duty of paying the university the annual fee for the use of the Munny golf course, thus freeing up about \$450,000 that can now be used on other golf needs, such as course improvements and buildings needs.

(2) Municipal Golf Course Historical Marker: Mary Arnold reported that a marker dedication event will be held at the Munny clubhouse on October 28, 2009, though the location for the marker has not been determined. Cannatti noted that support for the historical designation might result from the City's recent African American Quality of Life Initiative, and Arnold noted that the First Tee Program was being organized at Munny for interested O. Henry kids.

(3) Neighborhood Planning: The next scheduled neighborhood planning meeting will occur on Tuesday, October 13th (6:30pm to 9:00pm) at the Sanctuary, 2600 Exposition Boulevard. The upcoming meeting will address proposed rezoning of the condos at 1500 Scenic from retail to multi-family, and will also address the proposed rezoning of properties at Bonnie/Robinhood from retail to single family and office. Blake noted that the proposed rezoning to office should be denied since only residential is appropriate at that location, but Mary Arnold noted that the intersection had retail back in the 1970s. Concerning the overall progress of the neighborhood planning process, it was agreed that the draft plan chapters need to be reviewed. Cannatti suggested that each board member take the lead on reviewing a chapter, and will assign individual chapters to board members. Tomas Pantin suggested that WANG seek to negotiate on points of disagreement with City Staff before presentation to Planning Commission and City Council.

##### **C. Zoning**

(1) SPC-20089-0052C – Girls School of Austin (GSA) Site Plan. Board discussed CUP resolution and Blake's proposal to request reconsideration of the Planning Commission's decision to (1) clarify the enrollment cap to 50% maximum of the 150 student cap in middle school grades 5 through 8, and (2) revisit the possibility of opening a second Windsor driveway for occasional use given

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## Directions for the January meeting

Take the elevator from the Garage, or in the Store by the Pizza Bar, to the Plaza Level. Exterior stairs, accessed near the Coffee Bar doors, may also be utilized to reach the Plaza Level. Enter at the main reception door - someone will be there to greet & direct everyone to the conference room.

the lack of clarity about minimum spacing requirements.

(2) C15-2009-0108 -- 2002 Forest Trail (Owner: Patricia Donahue (210) 849-3128 and Applicant: John Paul McDaris 300-8383): The applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum side yard setback requirement from 5 feet to 0 feet in order to erect a carport for a single-family residence. After the applicant's presentation, Blake provided a review of the permit history at the property concerning the previous remodels to the property (where the back garage was converted to a guest house and work studio), and the extension of the single car driveway sideways to fit two car widths. The requested variance is to allow the current owner to build an open carport to cover the entire driveway width. The applicant stated that the Houston-based owner of the rental property immediately next door has not objected to the variance request. Blake reviewed the permit history at the property (which appears to have

some possible permit problems), and the applicant was informed that there did not seem to be any hardship unique to the property which justified the variance request.

Board Action: No action was taken at this time in order to see if there is any neighbor input and to give the applicant an opportunity to establish a "hardship" showing.

**D. Liaison:** No report.

**E. Historic District:** No report.

**F. Nominating (Actually discussed after the Treasurer's report):** August reported that John Holmes has bowed out of consideration for family reasons, and then introduced Cathy Kyle and Selina Serna by describing their previous work for the neighborhood. Notwithstanding the absence of Linda Dickens (tsk, tsk, tsk), the Board voted unanimously to elect Linda Dickens, Cathy Kyle, and Selina Serna to the Board.

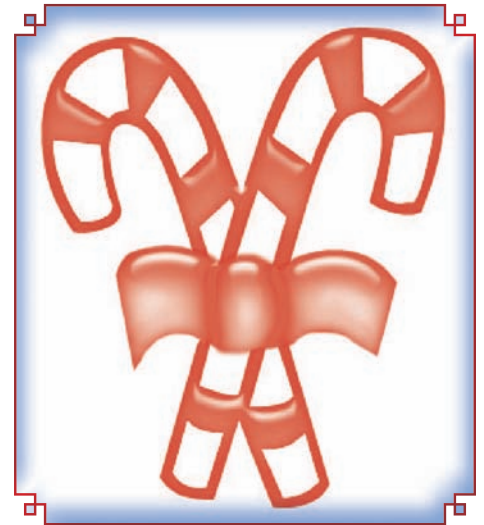
**V. Treasurer's Report (Actually discussed after New Business)** – August reported that the operating account had a balance of \$ 2632.97, and Bennett reported that the ACL ticket proceeds generated \$1,900 for WANG.

**VI. Old Business** -- No report.

**VII. New Business (Actually discussed after the Zoning Committee report)** – Jeff Berres presented information concerning the upcoming Run Austin Run Half Marathon, which will be a 5K and 10K race on Sunday October 11th, including information on the course map and the new "active course" which will be used to allow for officer-assisted course crossings by neighborhood drivers. The race will be relative small (1200 runners), will be run in stages with a rolling pickup so that the course will be cleared as the last runners proceed down the course.

This is the first race under the City's new street closure ordinance governing temporary street closures under which affected neighbors (living within a half-mile of the course) and neighborhood associations are notified of requested closures, and the request can be denied if 20% of affected residents or a single neighborhood association objects.

**VIII. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 pm, more by virtue of a spontaneous departure by all board members rather than any formal motion. The next WANG Board meeting will occur on Monday, November 2, 2009 at a location that is to be determined.



## December Meeting Minutes

By Michael Cannatti, Secretary

These are the minutes of the West Austin Neighborhood Group Board of Directors Meeting on Monday, December 7, 2009 at the LCRA Redbud Facility.

**I. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at with the following Board members in attendance: Blake Tollett, Selina Serna, August Harris, Joseph Bennett, Mary Arnold, Joyce Basciano, George Edwards, and Mi-

chael Cannatti. Cathy Kyle joined the meeting shortly thereafter.

**II. Approval of Minutes:** The minutes from the October 2009 meeting were unanimously approved by a vote of 8 to 0 (prior to Cathy's arrival).

**III. Neighbor Communications:** Austin Marathon – February, 2010. John Conley was scheduled to present information about the upcoming marathon, but did not attend the meeting. Board members noted that the two recent run events had worked fairly well, and that the rolling barricades and the officer-controlled street crossings were a significant improvement.

#### **IV. Committee Reports:**

##### **A. Zoning**

(1) 3311 Clearview – Scott Stovall presented information on an upcoming request to the RDCC (not yet filed) for a waiver to increase the FAR limit to 42.8 percent for a new structure on the lot. A previous FAR waiver for the property was granted but not used, and the Applicant is seeking a new waiver based on the configuration of the corner lot setbacks and easement limitations, the articulation included in the proposed design, and the fact that there are numerous other properties in the area that exceed the .4 FAR. Board members noted that there does not appear to be a hardship with this new construction, and that the existence of other properties about the FAR limit reflects the fact that there was significant overbuilding in this area which provided a significant part of the motivation for having the McMansion Ordinance enacted in the first place. Cannatti also noted that there appeared to be a building tent violation based on the submitted drawings unless there was a drawing error.

Board Action: No action was taken at this time in order, but the Applicants was advised to be prepared to establish a "hardship" showing.

(2) C15-2009-0145 -- 702 Meriden

Lane (Applicant: Christian Bingham 293-6520): The applicant has requested a variance to extend beyond the setback plane requirement in order to erect a second story addition to an existing single-family residence. Applicant explained that the original structure was preserved and maintained by raising the structure into the air and building a first floor thereunder, but that due to construction challenges, the overall height of the structure resulted in the protrusion through the setback plane.

Board Action: On a motion by August that was seconded by Joseph, the Board voted unanimously 9-0 to not oppose the variance request since there was no neighbor opposition, based in significant part on the efforts by the applicant to preserve and maintain the original structure.

(3) C15-2009-0130-- 3105 Pleasant Run Place (Applicant/Owner: Ronald C. Barnett 585-7035): The applicant has requested three variances, including (1) a side yard setback variance (from 5 feet to 2 feet) in order to maintain a detached carport for an existing single-family residence, (2) a rear yard setback variance (from 10 feet to 0 feet) in order to main an attached wood deck for an existing single-family residence, and (3) impervious coverage variance (45% to 67% for an existing single-family residence). Applicant did not appear at the hearing to explain the variance requests. Blake reviewed the history of the property which was purchased 18 months ago, including a summary of various oppositions by neighbors. In addition, the adjacent neighbor provided additional information concerning enclosure of the garage into

a room, which does not appear to have been permitted.

Board Action: On a motion by Blake that was seconded by Mike, the Board voted unanimously 9-0 to oppose all three variance requests based on the absence of any documented hardship, the request to increase the impervious cover, the presence of neighbor opposition, and the presence of an apparent egregious violation of City Code.

##### **B. Communications**

(1) Newsletter – August reported that Peel Publishing will not be used to publish the WANG newsletter because of delays. Instead, August and Gwen will investigate other publication options to determine cost, publishing schedules, etc. In the meantime, the December President's message will ask neighbors to enroll for electronic newsletters. We also need additional advertisers, though Grande Communications and Comerica ads are being placed.

(2) Website – August is interested in setting up the website to perform polls on various topics, and asked Cannatti to look into whether this is within our skills.

**C. Nominating:** August reported that Anne Keene has decided to step down from the Board. As a result, there are three openings Christi Buerger as a possible addition to the Board from the Deep Eddy Heights area of the neighborhood. She is checking us out, and thinks WANG would benefit of having representation of young families from the neighborhood.

##### **D. Infrastructure**

(1) Brackenridge Tract Update: August reported that, because the City's Neighborhood Planning process is unwilling to engage with planning for the Brackenridge Tract, WANG will prepare its own Master Plan for the Brackenridge Tract based on one or more baseline charettes to obtain public comment, survey in-



put, background documents and our knowledge of the issues. Input will be confined to neighbors and property owners from the neighborhood. Cathy will prepare a description of the charettes. Regardless of whether City staff wants it included or not, WANG will present our plan to the Planning Commission and City Council during the presentation of the neighborhood plan.

Mary noted that the Save Muny group is interested in working with UT on the Biology Field Research Lab, graduate student housing, etc.

(2) Neighborhood Planning: As of December 7, the next neighborhood planning meeting had not been scheduled. (After the December WANG board meeting, it was announced that the next Central West Austin neighborhood planning workshop will be on Monday, January 11th (6:30pm to 7:50pm) at Bryker Woods Elementary School, 3309 Kerbey Lane. The meeting will discuss the creation of a Neighborhood Plan Contact Team which is the team that will help with the implementation of the neighborhood plan. In addition, there will be a discussion on whether the neighborhood would like to adopt design tools that regulate the placement of garages as well as parking.

Board members are asked to complete their review of the draft Chapters for the Central West Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan before the next WANG meeting. Cathy reported that the language in the Community Life chapter was very vague and quite disappointing. Joyce will seek input from ANC sources on recommended language to include (or not include) in chapters. George and Mary recommended having each chapter reflect specific neighborhood values from other chapter topics (e.g., Community Life chapter notes value of green space and desire that neighborhood not be used for urban infill).

(3) Heritage Tree Resolution - The December 8 Planning Commission

meeting will consider the Heritage Tree Resolution. Mary Arnold noted that Hyde Park has prepared a resolution in favor of protecting heritage trees. Joyce briefly reviewed the previous efforts by the Urban Forestry Board and Environmental Board to prepare an ordinance for protecting heritage trees, and noted that many of the recommendations from the Urban Forestry and Environmental Boards have been removed from the ordinance being proposed by City Staff. After a short discussion, Joyce and Mary agreed to prepare and circulate resolution language by WANG which was subsequently approved for submission to request that the Planning Commission support the adoption of a Heritage Tree Ordinance in accordance with the Environmental Board recommendation.

**E. Transportation:** August reported on that Ken Pfluger will work with Selina to look into placing and funding a sidewalk on the north side of Westover Road as it approaches Exposition from the east to provide safer pedestrian access to Casis School. Selina noted that the decision should reflect community priorities, and Cannatti noted that the previous mapping of priority sidewalk locations be used as a resource. Cannatti also noted that there was interest in placing a bike lane with parking limits in the same area to promote safe school access, so that there might be funding available through the City's Bike and Pedestrian program.

**F. Historic District: No report.**

**V. Treasurer's Report** – Selina reported that the operating account had a balance of \$3020.86, and that the oak wilt account had a balance of \$1204.14. In addition, Selina reported on the expenses incurred with the Annual Social (totaling \$4979). Selina also requested authority to obtain a credit card if required to open the online banking account with

Frost Bank, but August suggested that this requirement could be waived by talking with Mike Falk. Finally, Selina requested authorization to purchase a copy of the software needed to access WANG's account files, but a confusing discussion ensued which proposed other solutions to gaining access to WANG's account files, though at the end of the day, we all trust Selina to do what's right.

**VI. Old Business** -- No report.

**VII. New Business** -- (Actually discussed prior to the WANG Board Meeting as part of the Parks Board meeting) – Jodi Jay, Aquatic Supervisor for the City of Austin, discussed upcoming plans for the reconstruction of West Enfield Pool. There are 3 pools that are in the same phase of renovation, Bartholomew, Deep Eddy and West Enfield. In the case of the latter, they will be reconstructing both the pool and bathroom facilities. In order to maximize the use and staying in essentially the same footprint of the existing pool, they will incorporate both lap swimming facilities and a shallow 2 to 3 foot area for children's swimming and instruction. The project will be undertaken using the design/build method. There will be 3 design stages at the 30%, 60% and 90% completion points. It will take approximately 6 months to have the design/build contract in place. In the interim, the City would like to have a neighborhood team in place to act as a consultancy. WANG will assist them in putting the team together, relying in part on the WANG Parks Advisory Board. The City is very open to suggestions and



opportunities, one of which was a splash pad. The time to completion is estimated to be 2 years. Jodi may be reached at 512.974.9336 or jodi.jay@ci.austini.tx.us.

**VIII. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned somewhat organically and without any noted formal motion. The next WANG Board meeting will occur on Monday, January 4, 2010 (7:00 pm) at a location that is to be determined.



### Regents Adopt Recommendation for Brackenridge Field Lab

The University of Texas System Board of Regents met in special session on December 22, 2009. After a very brief presentation by Regent Janiece Longoria, the Regents unanimously adopted a recommendation that would retain Biological Field Laboratory. Longoria is a member of a special advisory committee appointed by Chairman Huffines this fall to review Cooper Robertson's submitted master plans that also includes Regents Printice Gary and William Powell.

"After several discussions, it became clear that UT Austin's Brackenridge Field Lab is an integral part of the College of Natural Sciences and its mission to provide an outstanding academic experience for students,

faculty and researchers," said Regent Longoria. "The advisory committee feels strongly that its retention is of paramount importance to the UT Austin academic community at this time. Furthermore, this decision is consistent with the Board of Regents' commitment to respect Col. Brackenridge's wishes that the land be used to serve the best interests of UT Austin."

UT President Powers said "I applaud this thoughtful decision by the Board of Regents. It reflects their understanding that the field laboratory is a vital resource for world-class scientific research at the university. The special advisory committee has clearly listened to our faculty's concerns and perspectives. This is an important step in a long-term process to develop the Brackenridge site for the benefit of the university. I am extremely grateful for our Board's hard work and vision during this process."

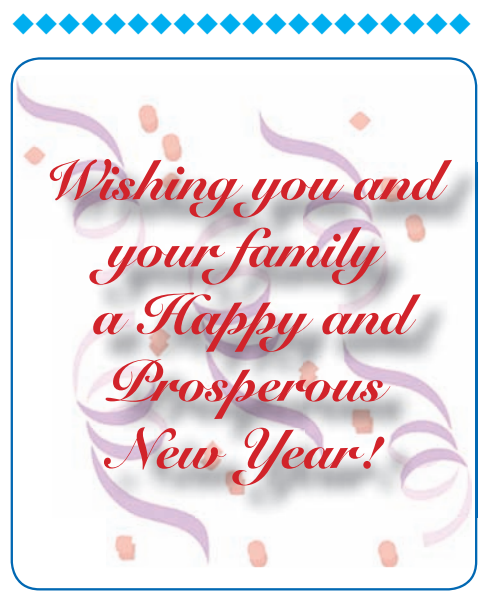
While WANG applauds the decision to leave the Field Lab in place, we have two major concerns about the language in the motion as amended. Regent Longoria stated that it is the best option at this time. In our opinion, it is likely that this will be the case continuing into the future. However, there is no assurance of permanency, which gives us great discomfort. The one of greater concern was brought by Regent Hicks in the form of an amendment recommending that the location of the Field Lab site be reviewed every 10 years. Powers stated his support for a review every 10 years adding that UT does that anyway.

Interestingly and perhaps coincidentally, the first 10 year period ends about the same time as the leases for Muny and WAYA do. Despite that, we hope that the College of Natural Sciences will proceed with its master plan for the BFL anyway. We have endorsed CNS' master plan for the Field Lab. It will be good for CNS, good for

the neighborhood and great for the Austin community. However, it may be challenging for them to proceed with its vision that was so widely and well received, particularly in terms of funding the project.

Detrimentially, the adopted motion leaves the West Austin community in uncertainty. The Regents may have taken some of the fight out of the faculty as they have been given a 10 year reprieve. We believe that support of the faculty, particularly those that live in the West Austin neighborhoods, is very important to our long term viability. The adopted motion also doesn't rule out either of the CR&P master plans as both are long term visions. Had the motion been in support of permanence for the Field Lab, we could have considered the denser and more destructive Brackenridge Village plan all but dead. Perhaps it is on life support. But it has not been eliminated from consideration.

The special advisory committee will continue to evaluate the two proposed master plans and will receive feedback during the academic year ahead. WANG will be involved in the discussions and will be highlighting options and opportunities both to the advisory committee and to the Board of Regents.



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**Scott Ferguson** - Chief Operating Officer, West Austin Native



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**ALL ARE WELCOME**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
Meeting will be at the Whole Foods Downtown  
Upper Plaza Level Conference Room  
Monday, January 4th, 2010 at 7 PM  
Please Check Mailing Label for Renewal Date

**West Austin Neighborhood Group**  
P.O. Box 5722  
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