



West Austin Neighborhood Group

Organized 1973

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

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# THE NEIGHBOR

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

February, 2009

## President's Message

By August W. "Happy" Harris III

It has been very quiet since Cooper Robertson & Partners presented their preliminary findings to the Board of Regents on their master planning efforts for the Brackenridge Tract. On February 12, the Regents will receive an update. I expect that there will be little of import at this juncture. We will be in attendance of course and keep you informed. Later this spring, we expect to see the first inklings of what Cooper Robertson has in mind.

The landscape has changed considerably over the last few months and far more dramatically, in and of itself a gross understatement, since the Regents started this whole process by creating the Brackenridge Task Force three years ago. It is no secret that the economy has fallen into a precipitous decline with the distinct possibility that things will get far worse before they get better. We weren't immune in the 1980's and there is no reason to believe that history won't repeat itself. On one hand, the economic decline puts more pressure on the Regents to maximize revenue to make up for shortfalls at UTIMCO and at the Legislature. On the other hand, it may be challenging over the next few years to realize revenue from any non university development given the state of the economy.

We are monitoring changes at the Board of Regents as well. Those changes materially could affect the direction of the Brackenridge Tract. With the abrupt resignation of Vice Chair Rowling, who according to the news reports was the favorite to take over as Chair, a significant void has been created on the Board of Regents. Chairman Caven and Regent Huffines' term on the Board of Regents ended February 1st along with Regent Barnhill. They will stay in their roles until the Governor appoints successors. Depending on who the Governor appoints to fill those

four positions and who now takes over as Chair could either improve our lot as a neighborhood or make things much, much worse. There is also the distinct possibility that the Governor will reappoint the latter three or any combination thereof.

The West Austin community has historic fabric. But much of what hasn't been destroyed might be or is threatened. Borrowing liberally from the Heritage Society, we have a fantastic opportunity "for you to get directly involved in saving the character of Austin's historic neighborhoods. In December 2004, the Austin City Council authorized the establishment of local historic districts. These districts will be the most powerful tool to protect the character of our historic neighborhoods." The Heritage Society has been a key player in advancing the cause of Local Historic Districts and we owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude. From Deep Eddy at one end to Bryker Woods on the other, there are opportunities to create these districts. We are looking for volunteers "to help with tasks such as surveying the neighborhood, researching house history, doing data-entry, and stuffing envelopes. All levels of expertise are needed, and training will be provided." To expand on that, WANG would love to have volunteers willing to begin the collection of both oral histories as well as the compilation of written documentation on the history of our neighborhood. We will be setting up a working group for all interested.

As always, your continued support of the West Austin Neighborhood Group is critical. If you are behind on paying your dues, it is one of the most important investments you can make in your community. Your membership allows us to publish the newsletter and improve the website ([www.westaustinn.org](http://www.westaustinn.org)) to provide you with essential communication. It also enables us to support worthy projects like those undertaken by the friends of the parks.



## February Meeting Minutes

By Michael Cannatti, Secretary

These are the minutes of the West Austin Neighborhood Group Board of Directors Meeting on Monday, February 2, 2009 at the Howson Branch Library, 2500 Exposition Blvd.

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm with the following Board members in attendance: Mike Falk, Joyce Basciano, Mike Cannatti, Anne Keene, August Harris, Joseph Bennett, Connie Heyer, and Blake Tollett. Mary Arnold, Gwen Jewiss, and Susan Pascoe joined the meeting shortly thereafter.

II. Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the January 2009 meetings were approved by the board by a vote of 7 to 0 (Cannatti abstaining).

### III. Neighbor Communications:

(1) Rainforest Partnership Benefit Fundraiser: Aaron Googins invited neighbors to attend the Rainforest Partnership fundraiser by Executive Director, Niyanta Spelman, who will talk about the Mushuk Llacta de Chipaota project in Peru, which is a project to help reduce deforestation by allowing partner communities to sustainably harvest its principal cash crop, the fiber of the piassaba palm, and other non-timber products of the forest. The fundraiser will be hosted by Mr. Googins on Wednesday, March 4, 2009 (5:30 pm to 7:30 pm) at 3302 Enfield Road 78703, and anyone interested in attending is requested to RSVP 462-4921. WANG agreed to post information about the fundraiser on its website and in the newsletter. To learn more, please visit [www.rainforestpartnership.org](http://www.rainforestpartnership.org).

(2) Rawson Saunders / Sanctuary Tract: Sam Buford (chair of the Rawson Saunders school) described the Agreement in Principle to purchase approximately 2 acres of land from the Sanctuary Church for the Rawson Saunders school so that the school can continue to operate in its current location, and to have joint use of the parking lot by the school and church. Currently, there are about 100 students at the school, with

plans to potentially have as many as 130 students. There are no plans for immediate changes at the site, although a re-subdivision process may be required, and the portables may eventually be replaced with permanent buildings. Board members briefly reviewed the neighborhood's efforts to retain the current SF3 zoning with various church properties along Exposition. The school is not requesting any variances, but was wanting to notify the neighborhood of their plans.

(3) Street Closure Task Force: Tomas Pantin (our neighborhood representative on the Downtown Street Event Closure Task Force) described the major recommendations in the Taskforce Recommendations in the Dec. 16, 2008 Report to City Council. The major recommendations regarding street and building access include requiring that there be no moving event that shall encircle or entrap any area city-wide without an alternative route or reasonable ingress/egress, and that 5th and 6th streets be designated as open access routes for the downtown area with only 6 exceptions per year. In addition, the Report recommends changing the permitting process to require that interested parties be notified of an application for a street closure event, and requiring that notified parties affirmatively object for their response to count as an objection for purposes of counting against the application requirement of obtaining 80% approval per block by affected persons. The Report also recommends creating a centralized Office of Special Events at the city to review and coordinate applications for street closure events, and preparing a comprehensive annual report of City's financial contribution to events including fee waivers, costs incurred for public safety, etc. Mary Arnold noted that the many waivers of the fees for running events has meant lost revenue for the City, and August noted, in response, that the running events bring revenue to the downtown and area businesses. Tomas reported that the City Council has not acted on the Taskforce Report, and will keep us apprised of future developments. Additional details on the report are posted at [http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/downloads/DSECTF\\_Presentation\\_121808.pdf](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/downloads/DSECTF_Presentation_121808.pdf).

(4) Austin Police Department Regarding Crime Data – APD District Representative for West Austin, SPO David J. Knutson (974-5917 or [David.Knutson@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:David.Knutson@ci.austin.tx.us)), reviewed crime statistics and information concerning the Central West Patrol Area which showed that criminal activity in gen-

eral is lower in 2008 than in 2007, though it still remains high with more vehicle burglaries at the Austin High running trails and Mount Bonnell parking areas. A handout provided a detailed breakdown of crimes by category and neighborhood association area, as well as a mapping of vehicle burglaries in our area showing a concentration of vehicle burglaries in the northern part of the neighborhood along Hillview Road. Officer Knutson explained that most burglaries occur during daylight hours when the house is empty, so it is important to lock your doors, arm your alarm systems, and try not to have easily observed patterns of absence. Officer Knutson also described the magazine solicitation schemes where young men aggressively solicit money from neighbors. According to Officer Knutson, such solicitations can violate the City's ordinance against aggressive solicitation if the solicitation continues after being given a negative response, and if a neighbor feels threatened by aggressive solicitation, it is appropriate to call 911 for emergency assistance. In response to a question from Mary Arnold about the effects of the City's recent merger of the Austin Police Department and the Parks Police group, Officer Knutson explained that the merger will increase the number of police on the street, but he does not expect that there will be regular patrolling of the parks, or that such patrolling will have a lower priority.

### IV. Committee Reports:

#### A. Zoning

(1) Girls School of Austin Site Plan Changes – Blake reported that the Unified Site Plan Condition Use Permit (CUP) is being filed with the City, but that WANG has not seen if the filing includes notes addressing the neighborhood's concerns regarding the adjacent property and traffic/parking improvements.

Board Action: No action taken.

#### B. Infrastructure

(1) Brackenridge Tract Update – August reported that Cooper Robertson & Partners will be presenting a summary report of preliminary findings to the Board of Regents. Mary Arnold noted that the Cooper Robertson summary reports on the Board of Regents website ([http://www.utsystem.edu/reo/Brackenridge/brack\\_process.html](http://www.utsystem.edu/reo/Brackenridge/brack_process.html)) have not reflected the neighbor concerns about the development. Mary reported that the City's effort to identi-



fy city property for potentially swapping UT has been delayed because of health problems with the City's coordinator. Mary also reported that the historical marker application for Muny golf course is expected to be approved shortly, and that various fundraising events to support the historical designation effort are planned for the Spring 2009, including a Lady's Tournament on March 21, 2009.

(2) Neighborhood Planning – The last Neighborhood Planning on Jan. 29 failed (yet again) to finalize the land use options for 35th St east of MoPac and between 38th St and Lamar. Board members expressed frustration that the process is taking so long, and at the City's reluctance to establish a new future land use category for this area that takes into account the vertical mixed use designations here. The 16th Land Use meeting will be on February 11, 2009, 6:30pm to 9:00pm, LCRA Red Bud Facility (3601 Lake Austin Blvd). Board members noted that the City's upcoming Comprehensive City Plan efforts may conflict with or undermine the existing neighborhood planning efforts. In addition, we will be losing Greg Claxton (one of the City planners for our plan) who is being reassigned to the Comprehensive City Plan effort. Mary suggested that a Citizen Advisory Group be given a role in the Comprehensive City Plan process. August reported that we have not heard back from Councilmember Laura Morrison after our meeting to discuss neighborhood plan concerns, although her aide (Robert Levinski) did attend one of our recent land use meetings.

(3) Austin State School – August reported that he is monitoring Senate Bill 336 which changes the way state school closure decisions are made.

#### C. Communications

(1) Website Proposal & Update – Anne Keene reported on the status of the website design process, including Keene and Cannatti's recent meeting with Ally Curtis to discuss the site design, and the most recent proposal and cost estimate from Ally Curtis. Anne will circulate example sites for review by Board members, and is thinking about new ways to generate advertisement revenue from the site, as well as ways to include neighborhood pictures on the new site. Bennett reported that new email addresses have been established for each board member and for various officers, departments and issues. The website will be

updated with the new email addresses.

(2) Newsletter – No report provided.

#### D. Liaison

(1) ANC Meeting – Susan Pascoe reported on the results of the January 28, 2009 ANC General Meeting which included a presentation by Austin City Manager Marc Ott on "Financial conditions and budget reduction process" and an introduction of Sara Hensley as the new Parks and Recreation Director, who appears to be very impressive, passionate and interested in addressing parks concerns. City Manager Marc Ott's slideshow on the city's financial conditions and budget reduction process is posted at [http://www.ancweb.org/docs/community\\_outreach.pdf](http://www.ancweb.org/docs/community_outreach.pdf), the city has set up a special email (Communityfeedback@ci.austin.tx.us) where feedback on concerns and priorities about the budget reduction process can be sent. Susan also reported that ANC is recommending restoring the original wording of the Townlake Overlay Ordinance.

E. Membership – No report provided.

F. Transportation -- August reported that he has received no response from the City regarding the status of the bike lanes or the Windsor Road improvements.

G. Historic District – Bennett reported on his meeting with city officials regarding the City's local historic district program which has had only one application passed. An effort is underway to improve participation in the City's local historic district program by considering changes to the allocation of city resources, historic district standards and city support. Suggested changes will be presented to the Austin Heritage Society for their input.

H. Nominating -- No report provided.

V. Treasurer's Report – Mike Falk reported by email that the operating account had a balance of \$1,770.58 and the oak wilt account had a balance of \$1,203.74.

VI. Old Business – We ran out of time before addressing any old business.

VII. New Business – We ran out of time before addressing any new business and without con-

firmed that our next meeting will be at Howson Branch library on March 9, 2009, one week later than usual.

VII. Adjournment: Upon conclusion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm sharp!

### **Trowel and Error Mayfield Park Gardening Symposium**

**Saturday, April 4, 2009 Rain or  
shine!!**

**9:30 A.M. – 1 PM**

**Mayfield Park 3505 W. 35th St.  
Austin, Texas  
(next to Laguna Gloria Art  
Museum)**

For more information:

1-512-453-7074,  
neenok@aol.com or  
mayfieldpark.org

### **Rainforest Partnership**

LINKING PEOPLE TO PEOPLE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Join us and help support  
**A New Austin-based Nonprofit**

**Wednesday, March 4th,  
5:30 pm to 7:30 pm**

**Hosted by  
Aaron Googins**

**3302 Enfield Road 78703  
RSVP 512-462-4921**

### **Sara Madera**

Realtor®, ABR, CRS, GRI, SRES, Broker



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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**ALL ARE WELCOME**

*We meet on the first Monday of the month  
at 7PM at the Howson Branch Library.*

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