



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

April, 2009

President's Message

By August W. "Happy" Harris III

WANG is hard at work arranging our Crime & Safety Seminar to be held at O.Henry Junior High School on April 22 from 6:30 to 9:00. We are pleased to announce that Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo will be our keynote speaker. This program is a direct response to the emails we have been receiving and news reports about criminal activity in our section of town. WANG is leading the initiative to resuscitate neighborhood watch programs throughout the area. Vigilance is our greatest safeguard. The Austin Police Department will be there to assist us in this process and answer other questions. We will also have a number of folks from the private sector talk about security options for your house including discussions about what you can do yourself. It is a program that is desperately needed in West Austin and we hope that you will take advantage of it.

Neighborhood planning is slowly progressing and we are in process of wrapping up future land use discussions east of MoPac. This process has not been without some controversy, more centered on what City staff wants versus what the neighborhood wants. We are moving in the direction of the Austin State School Tract. This too has been the subject of controversy over the years.

There will be very divergent opinions on potential future uses of the State School tract as it arrives on our schedule. There is a separate debate within the greater community regarding care of the clients of state run schools such as this, much covered in local and statewide media. That is not a discussion WANG has engaged in and I don't foresee that changing. Planning discussions are not focused on the needs of this special community

either; as such a discussion is well beyond the scope of the neighborhood planning process. However, it doesn't diminish the need for this very sensitive conversation.

We were recently asked to provide reassurance to parents and guardians of clients of the Austin State School that West Austin residents would like the school to remain at this location. Whatever the motivation, our neighbors consistently have supported the State School at this location. Surveys from previous years reaffirm this. That being said, there is legislation pending, once again, that could impact the future of the Austin State School. At this writing, most of the legislation is sitting in various committees at the house awaiting action. We do monitor some of this legislation and if anything pertinent passes, we will certainly review its impacts and keep ya'll abreast of the changes.

During the neighborhood planning process, there will be dialogue on what we would like to see in place of or adjacent to the campus – nearly 100 acres. That a state school remain there is certainly something that must be considered. With the Brackenridge Tract on one end and the Austin State School on the other, neighbors must be very pragmatic and engaged in this process. I urge you to thoughtfully participate in the neighborhood planning process from this point forward.

Speaking of the Brackenridge Tract, there will be a public information session May 20 at the LCRA Red Bud facility. There will be a morning session at 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and an evening session 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. WANG, of course, will be in attendance. Cooper Robertson is coming down to crunch time on the two or more charrettes that they are preparing for the Regents. We will soon

know the extent of our call to arms. It would be nice if this would all quietly go away, but we all know better!

Our friends at Save Muny have been busy. This is just a reminder of the Junior Golf Tournament at Muny on Friday, June 5. There is room for 250 kids under age 18 and we are told that there will be no green fees. There will be morning and afternoon tee times for a scramble and a family event at end of day when scores are announced. Please get out and support Muny. It is such an intrinsically valuable part of our neighborhood!

I would ask that you look at your mailing label to see if your dues have expired and make a note if you need to renew your membership. Our dues primarily support the publication of the newsletter and your WANG website. This is the means for us to get critical information to you and we can't do it without your support.



April Meeting Minutes

By Michael Cannatti, Secretary

These are the minutes of the **West Austin Neighborhood Group Board of Directors Meeting** on Monday, March 9, 2009 at the Howson Branch Library, 2500 Exposition Blvd.

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm with the following Board members in attendance: Mary Arnold, George Edwards, Mike Cannatti, August Harris, Joseph Bennett, Joyce Basciano, Susan Pascoe, Gwen Jewiss, and Blake Tollett.

II. Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the March 2009 meeting were discussed, and approved unanimously.

III. Neighbor Communications:

A. 3801 Stevenson: Tina Contros presented preliminary information concerning the proposal by Ann and Jack Swingler to obtain a .05 modification to the FAR limit to enclose a 286 sq.ft. second floor porch area in the back of the house. The Swinglers contacted 26 neighbors about their plans, resulting in 16 or 17 neighbors supporting their request, and one neighbor in opposition. Blake noted the previous front yard setback variance for this property concerning the garage, and suggested that the property owners enter a deed restriction/covenant which prevents the garage space from being turned into habitable space. The property owners will consider the suggestion.

Board Action: No action taken until Board receives formal notification of the modification request.

IV. Committee Reports:

A. Zoning

(1) Girls School of Austin Site Plan -- Blake reported that the Unified Site Plan Condition Use Permit (CUP) filed with the City is incomplete, has a number of irregularities, including some drawings that were prepared by neighbors. Most importantly, the submittal does not include any notation of the agreements reached with the neighbors pertaining to design and operational issues. The Board discussed the need to notify the City of the omissions at this preliminary stage.

Board Action: Blake will prepare a letter from WANG to the City and the School noting the deficiencies and informalities to make sure that the agreed details are included in the site plan.

(2) C15-2009-0024 -- 3402 Happy Hollow Lane, a.k.a. #10 Happy Hollow Lane (Applicant: Deborah Alexander 796-6848 Owner: Mary Helen Wheelock 695-3500) -- The applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum lot size requirement from 5,750 sf to 4,587 sf in order to erect a single-family residence. In addition, the applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum through lot setback requirement from 25 feet to 5 feet in order to erect a single-family resi-

dence. The Bryker Woods Neighborhood Association Board of Directors has voted to oppose the variance request. Mary Helen Wheelock and Stuart Norman presented their case that the unique history and location of the lot adjacent to MoPac justified a variance. A number of neighbors spoke in opposition concerning the deed restriction limitations that prevent the project, the need to protect the front yard tree. The neighbors also expressed interest in buying the property and maintaining it as a neighborhood park. Joe expressed an interest in obtaining more information about the tree location and was concerned about applying the larger lot deed restrictions to this truncated lot if it would prevent someone from building on the lot. Joe also agreed with Gwen's suggestion of supporting the variance request if the neighbors were amenable to modifying their deed restrictions for this piece of property to allow for the smaller lot, thereby keeping the deed restrictions intact. However, the applicant and neighbors did not seem interested in pursuing this option.

Board Action: The Board voted to oppose the variance request with six voting to oppose the request, one (Joe) in favor, and two (Mary and Happy) abstaining.

(3) C15-2009-0018 -- 3708 Stevenson Avenue (Applicant/Owner: Katie and Lawson Brice 480-5091) -- The applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum side yard setback requirement from 5 feet to 0 feet in order to rebuild an existing carport structure to create a garage structure for a single-family residence. The applicant briefly reviewed their prior work in converting the duplex into a single family home, their objective in obtaining better security by building an enclosed garage on the existing carport footprint, and the existing 10 foot easement on the other side of the property. According to the applicant, the immediately affected neighbor does not oppose the request. The Board discussed the possibility of moving the entire garage over 5 feet to comply with the sideyard setback, but the applicants noted the drawbacks associated with this idea. Joe proposed a compromise whereby the carport was retained under

its grandfather rights over the sideyard setback, and the enclosed garage portion is built to comply with the setback. Blake explained the various safety issues for having the sideyard setbacks, and Joe clarified that the sideyard setbacks were intended to create a 10 foot fire safety spacing between structures.

Board Action: To provide applicant with some time to consider the compromise, there was no action taken by the Board at this time, but applicant was notified that the Board would likely oppose the requested variance, and that the Board would likely support (not oppose) any variance that was required for the compromise proposal.

(4) 2503 Woodmont – David Webber (architect/designer) presented preliminary information concerning the plans to obtain a demolition permit for the duplex structure in order to construct a new residence. The information was presented out of awareness that the neighborhood values the historic properties in the neighborhood.

Board Action: No action was taken at this time.

B. Infrastructure

(1) Remodel Ordinance Changes (Not discussed)

(2) Neighborhood Planning (Not discussed): Twentieth Land Use Meeting: Continued discussion and decision for the future land uses on West 35th Street from Jefferson to Mills Avenue in addition to discussion of the northern side of West 34th Street from Jefferson to Mills Avenue, April 8, 2009, 6:30pm to 9:00pm, LCRA Red Bud Facility (3601 Lake Austin Blvd).

(3) Brackenridge Tract Update (Not discussed): Public info session May 20 at the LCRA Red Bud facility. There will be a morning session at 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and an evening session 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

(4) Save Munny Update (Not discussed): Junior Golf Tournament at Munny on Friday, June 5. Room for 250 kids under age 18, and no green fees. Family event at end of day when scores are announced. Morning and afternoon

tee times for a scramble.

C. Communications

(1) Website Update – (Not discussed)

(2) Newsletter – (Not discussed)

D. Liaison (Not discussed)

E. Membership (Not discussed)

F. Transportation (Not discussed)

G. Historic District (Not discussed)

H. Nominating (Not discussed)

V. Treasurer's Report (Not discussed)

VI. Old Business (No report)

VII. New Business

(1) Library Renovation – Heidi Ruiz from the City of Austin presented information concerning the planned renovation of the Howson Branch Library. Under the renovation plans, Howson Library will be closed on May 18, and reopened Nov. 2, 2009. Planned renovation work includes re-roofing the structure, installation of a rainwater collector, asbestos remediation, increased power and broadband connection support, basic repair of walls and flooring, revised internal layout. For additional information, contact Heidi at heidi.ruiz@ci.austin.tx.us.

VIII. Adjournment: Upon conclusion, the meeting was adjourned at the unusually late hour of 9:10 pm.

Howson Branch Library Closing for Renovation

Howson Branch Library will be closing May 18 for renovation. Renovation will incorporate a "Cool Roof" with high reflectivity and a "Rain Water Harvesting System" for irrigation are two of the Green Building provisions to be incorporated into the scope of the project. Library Facilities Services Division has hired an asbestos abatement contractor to perform the necessary asbestos remediation which must precede the renovation of the facility. The building will need to be sealed and closed to allow a negative pres-

sure zone to be created for the abatement process. Following completion of the roof replacement, an interior remodel of the facility will be carried out to include new finishes, a new furniture/shelving layout, additional electrical circuits, enhanced internet conductivity, mechanical improvements, and provision for an automated door to enhance accessibility. Howson will reopen November 2, 2009. Patrons are invited to go to the newly renovated Central Library which will open its doors on April 15th as well as nearby Yarborough Branch Library. In addition, the new North Village Branch Library at 2505 Steck Avenue will also open May 30. The Howson book drop will also be closed during construction. Returned books can be dropped off at any of our other branch libraries. Please follow link to get specific library hours and directions. <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/library>.



CRIME & SAFETY FORUM

Keynote speaker

Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo

O. Henry Jr. High School

April 22nd
6:30 - 9 pm

Brought to you by the
West Austin Neighborhood Group

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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.*

LOOK FOR NEW LOCATION AFTER MAY MEETING.

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