



WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

P.O. Box 5722 • Austin, Texas 78763-5722 November, 2009

Organized 1973

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

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

MEETING NOTICE

meeting will be at the LCRA Redbud Facility,
Monday, December 7th at 7 PM



President's Message

By August W. "Happy" Harris III

Well, Happy Thanksgiving to all of you from your WANG Board of Directors. As I write, we have just gotten through Halloween, you have hidden or disposed of or, dare I suggest, eaten a bunch of goodies that were either collected by the kiddos or, as in my case, never made it out of the house.

And now it is time to put out those decorations that remind us of Thanksgiving. The weather is glorious and we have been blessed with beneficial rain. Fall flowers are blooming, leaves are starting to change colors, the landscape has renewed and the Monarch butterflies are floating through our neighborhoods on their amazing trek south to Mexico. These are the days that make it so wonderful to live in Austin.

I think of Thanksgiving and I am reminded of large family gatherings, typically at my grandmother's house, and the delicious aroma of turkey, stuffing, fresh rolls and pie. And yes, there were plenty of veggies and salad for those concerned. We kids were either wisely spaced between all the adults or seated at a card table in the next room. Lunch was usually followed by

walks, naps, and the Texas – Texas A&M football game on the television.

As many of you know, every other year, when the Aggies are in town, the Corps marches up Congress Avenue. Before the Congress Avenue sidewalks were redone and leveled, many of the ones on the west side were the height of loading docks. My grandmother loved to see the Aggies march, even though she was a Longhorn, so we went down every other year to watch. I don't think she was a hair over 5 feet tall and those elevated sidewalks were ideal for her. It doesn't seem like it was all that long ago. May each of you create your own cherished memories this Thanksgiving.

Speaking of memories, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to recognize Veterans' Day on November 11th. The armistice ending World War I was signed on the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. Historians point to the terms of the peace treaty that followed as the precursor to World War II. The fallout from the latter led to the Cold War from which the Korean War and the Vietnam War arose. Perhaps one day we'll have a lasting peace. Generations of Americans have served in our defense in each of these conflicts and so many more, many having made the ultimate sacrifice. As I write, we now are struck by the horrific tragedy at Fort Hood. I am at a loss for words and our deep felt sympathies go out to the grieving families. I would hope that you found and continue to find a way to honor those that have served and that serve today.

Now to the business of the neighborhood. I often talk about the Brackenridge Tract. It is not the only thing impacting West Austin but it is the most significant topic. If you have topics that you would like me to address, please email me at harris@

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

WestAustinNG.com. I want my messages to be entertaining and informative and there is an opportunity for both. Local Historic Districts, the Heritage Tree Ordinance, the Waterfront Overlay Ordinance, the McMansion Ordinance, Neighborhood Planning, the Bicycle Master Plan, neighborhood parks, green building, gardening, criminal activity, the Cap Metro 2020 Plan and various MoPac issues are all viable topics. So let me or any of the WANG Board know what you would like to see more information on and we'll do our utmost to accommodate you.

On Brack, as I have said before, CR&P came out with two suggested master plans that would result in between

12 million and 15 million square feet of development. In a recent publication by the Downtown Austin Alliance, it states that Downtown Austin has 8.3 million square feet of office space. Think about that for a moment! All of this is absurd. We are in process of addressing this with the Board of Regent's select committee assigned to review the master plans.

Change is going to come and we need you to start thinking about that. There will be no status quo over the long term. Though we are supportive of having graduate student housing remain on the tract for a variety of very valid reasons, the Brackenridge Apartment tract and the Colorado Apartment tract are well suited for redevelopment, with or without a graduate student housing component. Under the terms of the 1989 Brackenridge Tract Development Agreement, the University of Texas could do so now. We need to take a closer look at what that potential redevelopment alone might look like and what impact it might have. For instance, it allows development closer to the waterfront than the City's Waterfront Overlay would allow and in some places closer than CR&P proposes. It also enables fairly significant mass. Over the next few months, WANG is going to undertake some modeling so that we have a 3 dimensional concept of what the Brackenridge Tract Development Agreement would allow on these student housing tracts.

WANG has openly supported the Faculty Council's vision for the Brackenridge

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Field Lab. It is a wonderfully remarkable possibility. For too many years, the Field Lab has allowed itself to be isolated from the community. And this may be at its own peril. But theirs is a bold vision that would create more educational opportunities for University faculty and students. It would also create superb opportunities for the Austin community and for our school system. It truly would reflect the language of Colonel Brackenridge's gift. That being said, the advocates of the Faculty Council vision are in an interesting (read "political") position and at the moment are taking a "wait and see" approach. There are those of us that feel that they must be out there finding partners and name donors to make their vision a reality. Otherwise their concept might be relegated to the dustbin of great ideas. In WANG's visioning, without any assurance that the Field Lab would remain in its current or proposed configuration, we must proceed with two visions, one with and one without the Field Lab. I must underscore that it is most desirable and beneficial for it to remain, but as a neighborhood, we must prepare for the contingencies and hope that the Faculty Council succeeds with its concepts.

We've talked often enough about Munny and WAYA in prior newsletters. Few folks want to see development occur on those tracts. Suffice it to say that a preponderance of folks are desirous that these parcels remain as open space. I have mentioned in a previous message

that the Brackenridge Tract might lend itself to Green Urbanism which encourages open space of more than 60%. In reviewing the Travis County Greenprint for Growth completed in 2006, it stated that our denser inner city is in need of additional parkland to address the needs of Austinites for both recreational opportunities and for critical urban greenspace. All of that said, our friends and allies with Save Munny are going to have to be willing to think outside the box. This might include incorporating other recreational opportunities or a reconfiguration of the course. We continue to provide what advice, counsel and support we can.

What's up with the Howson Library you ask. As you may or may not know, the Howson Library may not reopen until the beginning of April, 2010, roughly 6 months behind schedule. We have gotten a number of calls and emails expressing a variety of concerns. During the remodeling process, water was found to be seeping through the foundation, unfortunately after the new carpet had been laid. The City found that the cause was hydrostatic pressure. City staff negotiated the replacement of carpet that had been laid and damaged by the water and have identified a vendor who can lay a barrier to prevent the seepage in the future. That process will begin shortly. Additionally, the City was forced to clear some vegetation that was encouraging the moisture issues. So you can get your checked-out books and media back to

the Austin Public Library on time, the City has installed a book drop in the parking lot underneath the solar collectors. We have discussed the possibility of coordinating a grand reopening event with the City for the Howson Library so stay tuned!

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. If what I have underscored above isn't enough to get you to call on your friends and write a meager \$30 check (\$15 for students and seniors) for dues, then West Austin may well be lost. Please go to our NEW website, www.WestaustinNG.com. And as always, let us know of any suggestions that you might have!



November Meeting Minutes

By Michael Cannatti, Secretary

These are the minutes of the ANNUAL MEETING of the **West Austin Neighborhood Group** on Saturday, October 24, 2009 at Eiler's (Deep Eddy) Park.

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:30 am by President August Harris with the following Board members in attendance: Ann Keene, Gwen Jewiss, Mary Arnold, Cathy Kyle, Joyce Basciano, Erik Cary, and Michael Cannatti.

II. Introductory Comments and Status of the Neighborhood: After providing some introductory comments, August provided a report on the activities of WANG over the past year and the status of the neighborhood, including a discussion and update on the status of the Brackenridge Tract development saga. August explained that there will be develop-

ment of the Brackenridge Tract and that the neighborhood needs to embrace this possibility, but the development needs to be sensible and sustainable so that the Muny Golf Course is maintained as open space, even if it is not maintained as a golf course. With TCAD data indicating that the property is worth at least \$650K/acre for a total value of at least \$100M, August described public funding scenarios that might be used to purchase the property from UT.

The status of the Municipal Golf Course Historical Marker proceedings was also reviewed, including the marker dedication ceremony that will be held at the Muny clubhouse on October 28, 2009. Gwen Jewiss reviewed the status of the neighborhood planning efforts this past year being conducted as part of the City's Central West Austin Combined Neighborhood Planning Area effort.

III. Program Topics:

A. Austin Water Conservation: David Turnage presented information on "Residential Water Conservation," including tips on the City's Rebate Program for washing machines, toilets and other household items and free irrigation evaluations, as well as updates on Drought Stage 2 Restrictions and other future water issues for the region.

B. Austin Energy: Mathew Phillips presented information on Austin's "Residential Energy Efficiency" measure that the entire family can practice. In addition, the City's High Performance Energy Star Program was reviewed to describe available rebates and loans for participating residents. Finally, information was presented concerning Solar Water heater systems.

C. Sunflower Design: Adams Kirkpatrick offered information concerning "Sustainable Landscaping Resources," the most favorable plants to use in Austin, and techniques for fostering water conservation in household landscapes.

D. Austin 2006 Bond Package Improvements: Dennis Crabill (City of Austin, Project Manager, City of Austin Public Works Department) discussed upcoming reconstruction projects on portions of

Forest Trail, Stamford Way, Elton Lane, Griswold Lane that will replace existing curb and gutter, install new storm drainage lines and potentially add sidewalks on one side of each street.

IV. New Business

A. Election of Board: The membership of the West Austin Neighborhood Group elected the Board Members for 2010: Mary Arnold, Joyce Basciano, Mike Cannatti, Erik Cary, George Edwards, August Harris III, Gwen Jewiss, Anne Keene, Cathy Kyle, Susan Pascoe, Selina Serna and Blake Tollett. Pursuant to the requirements of WANG's bylaws, the board was elected by a vote of 20 members from the West Austin Neighborhood Group.

B. Bylaw Amendments: The membership of the West Austin Neighborhood Group voted to amend Section 5.1 of the bylaws to require "Membership dues shall be \$30.00 per household or \$15.00 for seniors and students, and required annually of all Members," and voted to amend the bylaws to include "Section 5.1.1 Sponsorship Levels. The Board may establish other membership levels from time to time and set rates for these categories by majority vote of the Board."

V. Prize Drawing: Winners were announced for the prize drawings, including the winner of the Breed & Co. gift certificate, and the Grande Communications gift basket.

VI. Adjournment: The Annual Meeting was adjourned at noon-ish.



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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
ALL ARE WELCOME
meeting will be at the LCRA Redbud Facility,
Monday, December 7th at 7 PM

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