



WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

P.O. Box 5722 • Austin, Texas 78763-5722 • April, 2013

Organized 1973

“To preserve our neighborhood and protect it from deterioration.”

Our next meeting will be Monday May 6th, 2013, 6:00PM at the Lion’s Municipal Golf Course Clubhouse. We look forward to seeing you! Please join us.
And speaking of joining us....

President’s Message

By Cathy Kyle

Board of Directors

Cathy Kyle
President

Michael Cannatti
Secretary

Blake Tollett
Assistant Secretary

August “Happy” Harris III
Past-President

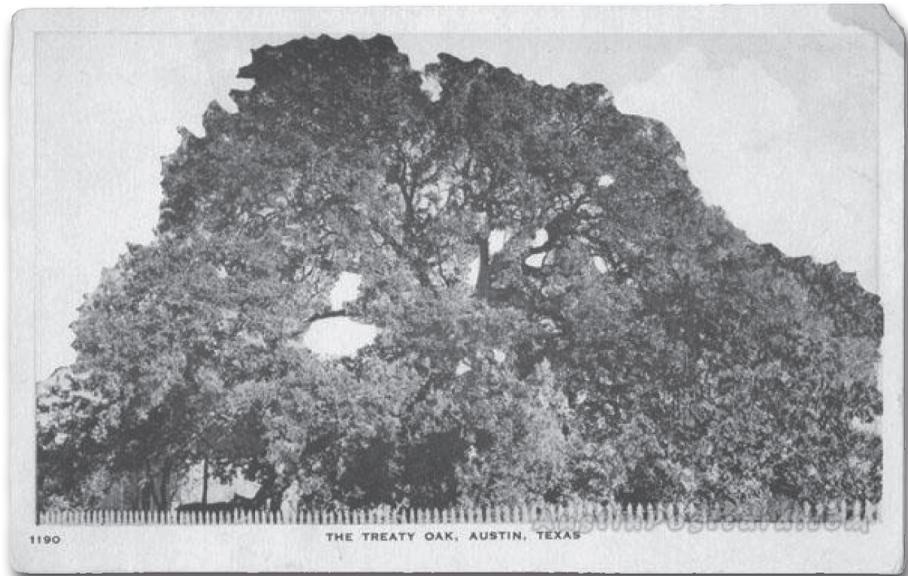
George Edwards
Treasurer

Committee Members

Mary Arnold
Joyce Basciano
Joseph Bennett
Erik Cary
George Edwards
Gwen Jewiss
Haidar Khazen

Honorary Committee Members

Hon. Lloyd Doggett
Hon. Lee Leffingwell



I think that I shall never see

It’s raining this morning, a pretty rare event in Austin these days. I remember when it rained often. My books would mildew; my hair curled; the humidity and the damp invaded everything. The city was covered in green. Moss, mushrooms, the heavy scent of flowers in the spring permeated the air. But lately, it’s felt a little more like El Paso. Or – dare I say it – Phoenix. We still have not recovered from the awful, scorching drought of 2011. Lake levels remain low, and we have been on water rationing through the winter (we’re still under Stage 2

watering restrictions -- austintexas.gov/departments/stage-2-watering-restrictions). According to the LCRA, even the three inches of rain we received in early April barely put a dent in the severe drought gripping Austin and the Lower Colorado River basin. Today, we’ve registered less than an inch – barely enough to settle the dust, as my grandmother would say.

The drought in the local area remains “severe” to “extreme.” Lake Travis and Lake Buchanan – that’s our water supply, folks – are only 40% full. Earlier this year,

Notice:

Meeting location and time change:

The May WANG board meeting on May 6, 2013 will be held at the **Lions Municipal Golf Course Clubhouse** starting at **6:00PM**

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

the LCRA requested emergency relief for commercial and industrial customers, and these measures went into effect on March 1. More and more neighbors are installing rainwater collection systems. Some cities have promoted the use of gray water (from your shower, laundry and sink) for irrigating the lawn. My husband grew up in California during a long drought, and he has shamed me into turning off the faucet while washing dishes and brushing my teeth. So, there are conservation efforts we can take while we're prayin' for rain.

One of my neighbors has drilled a water well in her yard. Another neighbor has been using her own well water to keep her lawn and flower lush for quite a while now. Last October, the City adopted an ordinance regulating the drilling of water wells, which includes registration requirements for new wells as well as for those already in existence. For more information, see <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/water-wells-program>

One significant casualty of the prolonged drought has been the loss of trees, or as city planners like to say, losing our urban forest. I like the image of an urban forest. The greenbelt behind Reed Park, hiking trails behind Mayfield Park, and the trails along Johnson Creek all remind me of what Austin must have looked like before the glass, steel, cement and asphalt took over, like an unwieldy kudzu vine. These areas perhaps are the closest I'll ever be to an "old-growth" forest, at least locally. So, how many trees have you lost to the drought so far? We lost a crape myrtle and a magnolia. The year before the drought, a 50-foot cedar elm blew over in a storm. I expect that the tree was planted when my house was built, making it about 60 years old. Many cedar elms in our neighborhood are reaching the end of their span. Suddenly, I had full sun in my backyard, completely changing my planting strategy – which now includes lots of drought-tolerant plants that can also withstand our searing summers.

To combat the loss of trees, plant more! A few years ago, I got a free Arizona ash from the Texas Forestry Association. When the Legislature is in session, the TFA gives away hardwood seedlings at the Capitol to raise public awareness of the tree planting efforts that

take place across the state (alas, this year's event was on March 6). My seedling is now over 20 feet tall. Losing the cedar elm gave me some flexibility, too. In its place, I planted a goldenball leadtree, a native of the Edwards plateau, as well as three possumhaw hollies. This year, we've planted a Texas ash, a persimmon tree and three live oaks. Take care with live oaks, however, because of their susceptibility to oak wilt.

The City also recognizes the importance of trees. Austin's Tree and Natural Preservation Area ordinance notes, "the urban forest has social, ecological, cultural, economic, historical, and aesthetic benefits for the citizens of Austin...[and] enhances the health and welfare of the citizens of Austin." According to the ordinance, trees with a diameter of 8", or 19" on residential property, are protected. Protected trees require a permit from the City before they can be removed. In 2010, the City Council took further action by adopting the Heritage Tree categories. Heritage trees can now only be removed if granted a waiver by the director of the Planning and Development Review Department; that waiver can only be granted if the applicant has already been denied other variances that would eliminate the need for the tree's removal, or if removal would result in "maximum ecological service" or "cultural value" from the trees preserved. And if the tree in question is larger than 30 inches in diameter, it gets even harder: The same conditions still apply, but it would require a hearing before and permission from the city's Land Use Commission. If you have any questions about tree removal, contact cityarborist@austintexas.gov, or visit the website at austintexas.gov/department/city-arborist.

According to the Austin Heritage Tree Foundation, even established trees require watering during severe drought conditions. Established trees need to be watered slowly and deeply, for about 90-120 minutes every three weeks, or every 2 weeks when the temperatures range above 90°F (which will be any day now). Young trees, one to three years old, need to be watered twice weekly for about 10 minutes until well-established. This schedule of watering is permissible under the current watering restrictions. For more information on caring for new and established

trees, check out the Heritage Tree Foundation's website, austinheritagetreefoundation.com.

I found this old postcard of Treaty Oak, and it speaks to me as a symbol of our urban forest. This is what we once had. Treaty Oak is the last remaining of a grove of 14 oak trees that made up the Council of Oaks, a sacred meeting place for the Comanche and Kiowa peoples. The size of the tree is breathtaking; arborists estimate it to be over 500 years old. In 1989, it very nearly died following a bizarre act of vandalism, but through careful and vigilant efforts, Treaty Oak continues to recover. In 1997, it produced the first acorns since the attack. As with our remaining urban forest, we can continue to preserve what we have and replace what we've lost.

WANG MINUTES

FOR APRIL 1, 2013 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

By Michael Cannatti, Secretary

These are the minutes of the **West Austin Neighborhood Group Board of Directors Meeting** on Monday, April 1, 2013 at the Howson Branch Library.

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm without a quorum. The following Board members were in attendance: Cathy Kyle, Joseph Bennett, George Edwards, Blake Tollett, and Michael Cannatti, later joined by Joyce Basciano.

II. **Neighbor Communications (7:08):**

- A. **2412 Dormarion:** Linda Moore and Lucy Netherton expressed concern about development plans for 2412 Dormarion which may include adding a second story to an existing structure. There are concerns about the size and proximity of any new structure to adjacent properties, as well as concerns that McMansion limits may be exceeded if the city is not aware of the existing two-story garage structure on the property. Tollett explained how to use the city's permit search website to track permit information. Cannatti described

the "interested party" procedures under city code, which were reviewed to give adjacent neighbors the ability to review and appeal any erroneously issued permits. The neighbors were urged to be vigilant in reviewing development and permit activity, but to understand that the City's development rules often allow much larger structures to be built than is commonly understood.

III. **Approval of Minutes (7:20):** After a quorum was reached, minutes from the March meeting were unanimously approved.

IV. **Additional Neighborhood Communications:**

- A. **Mount Bonnell/West Point Society (7:27):** Cathy Kyle and Blake Tollett reported on the status of WANG's withdrawal of support from the Covert Park/Mount Bonnell Improvement Project being pursued by the West Point Society of Central Texas (WPS) due to historical objections from City PARD Staff, the Historical Landmark Commission, and the Texas Historical Commission to their proposal to replace the existing limestone marker with their designed granite marker. In response to WANG's withdrawn support, WPS sent a lengthy email to state, *inter alia*, that they would continue to be involved with supporting Covert Park at Mount Bonnell.

Action: No action taken since WANG previously submitted a letter to city staff withdrawing our previous support for the project.

- B. **Parkland Parking Ordinance (7:36):** After noting that the proposed Parkland Parking Ordinance has not been passed by Council (as reported in the March meeting minutes), Joyce Basciano noted that the ordinance will be considered at Council's April 11 meeting with a vote at Council's April 25 meeting. Cathy Kyle and Blake Tollett reported on neighborhood concerns that the proposed parkland parking ordinance (to allow city parks to be used to meet business parking requirements) would harm our neighborhood parks by limiting park access due to commercial parking use. The board also noted concerns about using the

ordinance to address the parking requirements of a single business (Casa de Luz) which has numerous violations of city requirements, when such an ordinance will broadly affect all of the city's parks.

Action: Cathy Kyle will draft a letter to City Council and staff expressing WANG's opposition to the proposed parkland parking ordinance.

V. **Committee Reports:**

A. Zoning:

- 1) C15-2012-0111 (3312 Beverley Road; Owner: William & Katie Fowler, Jr.; Applicant: Pablo Serna). The applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum side street setback requirement from 15 feet to 10.6 feet in order to maintain and erect an addition to an existing single-family residence. This Bryker Woods NA case is actually a request for reconsideration. The applicant's request was denied last month and this is the sole appeal of that decision.

Action: No action taken in deference to Bryker Woods Neighborhood Association.

- 2) C15-2013-0022 (1706 Westover Road; Owner: John and Tamara Plemmons; Applicant: Smith Holt). The applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum side setback requirement from 5 feet to 2.85 feet (second floor will be in compliance with the 5 foot setback requirement) in order to maintain and erect a second story addition to an existing accessory structure. The applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum rear yard setback requirement from 10 feet to 3.38 feet (second floor will be compliant with 10 foot setback requirement) in order to maintain and erect a second story addition to an existing accessory structure. This also appears to be a BWNA matter.

Action: No action taken in deference to Bryker Woods Neighborhood Association.

- B. Membership (7:40): Joe Bennett reported that our current membership (203 members) is up 29 from last month. Board members are (as always) encouraged to solicit memberships from neighbors. On the question of membership, Craig Duewall was introduced as the current president of Pemberton

Heights Neighborhood Association. Cathy Kyle reviewed the historical role of a PHNA representative on WANG's board, noting that there were no formal bylaw requirements for a PHNA representative, but that WANG's board has historically included representatives from the various neighborhood associations within our overlapping jurisdictions. Craig stated that he or the PHNA vice-president, Diane Umstead, would try to attend WANG's monthly board meetings.

- C. Newsletter (7:50): The deadline for receiving content for the next newsletter is 10 days from the board meeting (April 11). Lucy Netherton proposed an article addressing the topic of trees in our neighborhood recommending that an arborist assess trees for health and age and possible replacement with appropriate tree types.

D. ANC Liaison Report (7:51):

1. ANC's 40th Anniversary – Joyce Basciano reported that the Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) will receive a Proclamation from City Council, 5 pm, May 9th, at City Hall in celebration of the ANC's 40th anniversary.
2. Parkland Parking Ordinance – Joyce Basciano reported on the ongoing work on an ANC resolution opposing the city's parkland parking ordinance, expressing concern that the ordinance is an overbroad response to the parking needs of a single business (Casa de Luz) which has historically abused the city's rules regarding restaurants, parking, etc.
3. LDC Rewrite Group - Joyce Basciano reported on concerns that the LDC Advisory Group is being staffed with development-friendly appointments, and that ANC is requesting that an environmental representative be appointed to the LDC Advisory Group. In addition, ANC is requesting that a neighborhood representative be appointed to the LDC Advisory Group.
4. Project Duration Ordinance Correction -

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION
Crane flies

Joyce Basciano reported that City Council voted to repeal the city's project duration ordinance under pressure from development interests (namely RECA) to conform to an Attorney General Opinion opining that Austin's ordinance does not comply with state law regarding grandfather rights. Only councilmembers Morrison and Tovo opposed the repeal, noting concerns from city advocates and neighborhood representatives that the repeal would weaken Austin's development regulations and allow "zombie" projects to use looser development rules (e.g., pre-McMansion rules). While the original council vote had been delayed to provide time for representative data on possible defunct projects to be reviewed, the data provided by staff was incomplete and unclear. Unfortunately, it remains to be seen what will be the full impact of this vote to repeal the city's project duration ordinance. Cannatti proposed that the newsletter include an article reporting on the repeal of the project duration ordinance and possible results. Cathy Kyle will check with contacts at city staff to find out what progress is being made to implement the repeal of the project duration ordinance.

Crane flies can be small to large insects- topping out at about 1 inch- with long, slender legs and a V-shaped suture on the thorax. Legs tend to break off very easily, so you may often encounter these insects with less than 6 legs (see image). Adults are often mistaken for giant mosquitoes and may frighten some people.

Crane flies are often referred to as "mosquito hawks". The name mosquito hawk is usually used to refer to dragonflies, but sometimes is also used to refer to a large species of mosquito with a larval stage that feeds on other mosquito species.

Some people think that crane flies eat mosquitoes, but this is untrue. Adult crane flies feed on nectar or are non-feeding.

Crane fly larvae are found in moist soil feeding on decaying organic matter. The larvae are wormlike and legless without well-developed heads. Some species of the larvae feed on roots of turfgrass or other plants. Crane fly larvae usually do not cause enough damage to be considered a pest, but with very high populations management may be needed.

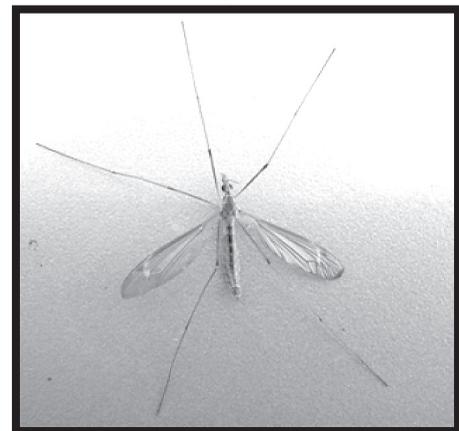
In Texas, crane flies can become abundant in the spring. While the adults may become a nuisance coming into homes or disturbing outdoor activities, they do not cause damage and do not bite. Encourage people to keep doors and windows closed, make sure that screens are in good repair. Either turn off outside lights at night or use "bug bulbs" to reduce the number of crane flies that are drawn near the home because of light sources.

VI. **Treasurer's Report** – The Checking Account Balance is \$8,698.85, and the Oak Wilt Account Balance of \$1205.95.

VII. **Old Business** – None.

VIII. **New Business** – Cannatti reported that the Annual Meeting of the Central West Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan Contact Team will occur on Monday, April 29 at 7 pm. The location of the meeting has not be finalized, but will be circulated once selected. Possible meeting topics include election of officers and replacement executive committee members, and identification of sidewalk projects in the neighborhood to use available city sidewalk funds. Joyce Basciano also reported that the Urban Trails Master Plan may provide an additional source of funds for neighborhood sidewalk projects.

IX. **Adjournment** -- The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 pm. The next board meeting will occur on z



For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Also check out www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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West Austin Neighborhood Group

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