



# WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

P.O. Box 5722 • Austin, Texas 78763-5722 • August, 2012

Organized 1973

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

**Our next meeting is Monday, September 10 at 7:00PM at Howson Library. We look forward to seeing you! Please join us. And speaking of joining us....**

## Board of Directors

August "Happy" Harris III  
President

Michael Cannatti  
Secretary

Blake Tollett  
Assistant Secretary

Gwen Jewiss  
Past-President

George Edwards  
Treasurer

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Mary Arnold  
Joyce Basciano  
Joseph Bennett  
Erik Cary  
George Edwards  
Haidar Khazen  
Cathy Kyle  
Laura Sharp

## Honorary Committee Members

Hon. Lloyd Doggett  
Hon. Lee Leffingwell

## AUGUST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By August W. "Happy" Harris III

Here we find ourselves in the "dog days" of summer. And that is not fair to dogs! After all, we love our dogs don't we..... To err on the side of inclusion, I should suggest that we love our pets of choice.

Until the rains of this past week, we had gone a month without rain and the glimmer of hope that was Hurricane Ernesto headed into Mexico. Temperatures have been hovering around 100 for several weeks now. After last year's record setting summer, you like I probably look at the nightly weather forecast with a sense of dread and hope. Do your eyes drift like mine do to the satellite view of the Gulf of Mexico searching for signs of the development of a low pressure trough that could turn into a tropical storm? Well, let's hold out hope for more rain and cooler temperatures. Absent rain, do not forget to adequately water your trees. Last year's stress was devastating for our urban trees. They add value to our properties, help reduce our cooling costs and clean our air in addition to many other benefits.

Now when I was a kid, we would begin two-a-day training for football season right about now. I remember it being so hot at Austin High that the heat would sear through my cleats making my feet feel like they were on fire. It was absolutely miserable – but I wouldn't trade a single moment of the experience or the friendships I made, many of which are still strong years later. We had one water break between sessions from a T shaped spigot on the field and we had to keep our helmets on at all times. Practices ended with the dispensing of a salt tablet. I like to think we were tougher than kids today. The UIL now has an acclimation period of a few days so kids can adjust to the heat before transitioning to full pads. We didn't get an acclimation period. It is indicative of two things, one a much better understanding of the effects of heat stress and the other, a reflection on how our society has changed.

Despite the drought and heat, we have been

hearing about cases of West Nile Virus which can be debilitating and in certain cases lethal. DO NOT for a moment think that it can't happen in West Austin. We have had two reported cases. As the disease is spread to humans by mosquitoes, with a little rain and standing water as breeding grounds, there could be more cases soon. Please go to <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm> for more information. In the meantime, make sure that you have no standing water. When outdoors, it is recommended that you spray yourselves with any of the following per the Center for Disease Control following all instructions and safety precautions:

- ✓ **DEET** (Chemical Name: N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide or N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide)
- ✓ **Picaridin** (KBR 3023, Chemical Name: 2-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperidinecarboxylic acid 1-methylpropyl ester)
- ✓ **Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus\*** or **PMD** (Chemical Name: para-Menthane-3,8-diol) the synthesized version of oil of lemon eucalyptus
- ✓ **IR3535** (Chemical Name: 3-[N-Butyl-N-acetyl]-aminopropionic acid, ethyl ester)

## Next Meeting

**Our next meeting is Monday, September 10 at 7:00PM at Howson Library. We look forward to seeing you! Please join us.**

## Membership

In years past, we had a floating dues schedule. Your year of membership began when your payment was accepted. The Board has decided to move towards a fixed date to streamline management of the membership and to make it easier for you to remember when your membership is set to renew. From this point forward, dues will be due on November 1 annually. This year, those who have renewed between July 1 and November 1 will be paid through 2013. Those who renewed prior to July 1 will need to renew on or before November 1 to be active. If you do

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

Presidents Message, continued from page 1

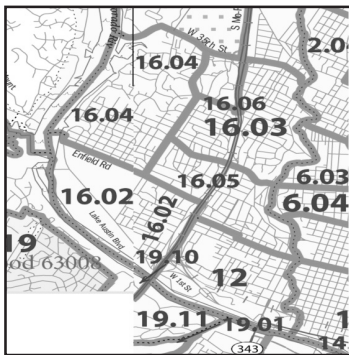
have questions about your membership, please contact membership@westaustinng.com. We are constantly working on outreach and membership development. Joe Bennett, our illustrious Membership Chair, welcomes your comments and offers. We have the Annual Meeting and Social – **ON OCTOBER 27TH** – and we would love for you to lend a hand. I hope you will think about it and find a place in the organization.

Short Term Rentals

A couple of weeks ago, the Austin City Council approved rules regarding short term rentals. As you know, WANG supported owner occupied short term rentals but opposed commercial short term rentals (CSTR). For homeowners, renting out their homes periodically can help them make ends meet and bear Austin’s escalating cost of living. CSTR’s are simply commercial ventures. By prohibiting CSTR’s, the Council would NOT have prevented investors from making money on their properties. They could have continued to rent them out to tenants via longer term leases. Certainly, long term leases can be more stable than STR’s depending on the property and the investor’s ability to manage it or lack thereof.

Had the City enforced its own codes, the STR issue would never have arisen in the first place. But they failed miserably by turning a blind eye to the problem. Proponents argued that since CSTR’s exist anyway, the City should just legalize this use. From a broader policy perspective, this is an absolutely asinine argument. Should we just legalize everything that is a code violation or that is illegal because people do it? While there are those that would argue to the contrary, allowing a commercial use in residential areas cracks the door for other commercial uses thus undermining the very reason for zoning districts.

The Council approved regulations that would allow up to 3% of all residential tracts within a census tract to become CSTR’s. West Austin is divided into five census tracts with varying numbers of residential tracts. Note the map. Apartments and condominium communities would be exempted thus paving the way for “mini-hotels” while reducing housing stock for long term tenants and residential occupants. We have yet to do an analysis of the impact on the WANG area but expect to do that over the next month.



Regrettably, the Council did nothing to prevent clustering of CSTR’s near each other. Recommendations included a 1,000 foot minimum separation between them but that very reasonable item was defeated. They also came up with no solutions on how to deal with census tracts that already have in excess of 3% CSTR’s. Based on the number of CSTR’s, Barton Hills and Travis Heights might be the first cases of the City’s willingness to enforce new rules. We are, at the very least, disappointed with the five members of the City Council who bowed to the pressure of CSTR advocates despite overwhelming opposition from the community. We will watch them carefully to make sure that they aren’t lax in enforcement again.

If you are concerned about the possibility of CSTR’s creeping into your subdivision in West Austin, look CAREFULLY at your deed restrictions or restrictive covenants. There are over 250 legal subdivisions in West Austin. Some prohibit commercial uses or have language defining acceptable uses such as residential only. If you do have language, let those in your subdivision know. If you fail to enforce deed restrictions, they may be deemed waived and thus unenforceable. Neither the City nor WANG may enforce deed restrictions. It is up to you as neighbors to do so.

Municipal Bond Election

The City Council approved a \$385 million bond package for the November ballot. There is good news and bad news here. The good news is that this is the amount that could be approved without raising tax rates. The bad news is that it falls short of our needs even for critical items like infrastructure. I hate taxes – I really do and I like many of you feel that our various governmental entities waste our money on projects that we individually don’t feel have merit. But they have merit to somebody. Those items that have the greatest merit to me are investments in our infrastructure such as our transportation network and our parks, both of which are woefully underfunded.

Because of cost overruns at Deep Eddy and the need to reconstruct Bartholomew Pool that is in a high need area, proceeds from the 2006 bond package will not be available to reconstruct Westernfield pool, now around 80 years old and in bad shape. With Deep Eddy restored and Reed Pool about to begin a significant reconstruction, the City had to make some difficult decisions about allocating remaining 2006 funds. All is not lost though. Instead, we will be relying on several million dollars of parks bonds that are in the upcoming package. We have received assurances from PARD staff that should the bonds pass, Westernfield Pool will be rebuilt in time for the 2014 swimming season.

Name

Business Friend/Sustaining

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I prefer to receive the newsletter via:

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☐ Friend

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☐ Benefactor

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☐ Sustaining

\$500.00

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E-mail: membership@westaustinng.com

# MINUTES FOR AUGUST 6 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

By Michael Cannatti, Secretary

These are the minutes of the West Austin Neighborhood Group Board of Directors Meeting on Monday, August 6, 2012 at the Howson Branch Library.

I. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:12 with the following Board members in attendance: Mary Arnold, August Harris, Gwen Jewiss, Joe Bennett, and Michael Cannatti. Cathy Kyle subsequently joined the meeting

II. **Approval of Minutes:** In an absence of a quorum, approval of the July minutes was tabled. Apparently, the minutes from the April 2012 board meeting have not been approved.

III. **Neighbor Communications** (7:13):

A. 2100/2102 Hopi – Rosemary Schwarzer did not attend to discuss her concerns, but Joe Bennett reported that there are concerns about the size and encroachment of two new construction projects at this location which include a 3-story structure with basement and accessory structure. There a large number of permits for these properties, and board members will be reviewing the site for further information.

B. Digital Signage at Tarrytown Shopping Center (7:20) – Patrick Adiaman (SidusLink) presented information about a community signage concept promoting community connection by installing digital signs in local businesses to display information on community events, entertainment and news, along with local business advertisements. Additional details at <http://siduslink.com>.

C. 700 Upson (7:44) – Thomas Pantin presented information about the apparent office use of this single-family zoned property in violation of land development code, including information on ownership history and observed activity at the property. Board members discussed concerns about this stealth office intrusion into the residential neighborhood, particularly in view of recent erosions from the commercial short term rental ordinance. Cannatti will look into requesting a code enforcement inquiry at the property.

IV. **Committee Reports:**

A. Zoning (7:54) – No report.

A. Infrastructure –

1. Short Term Rentals (7:55) – The Board discussed the recently passed ordinance concerning commercial short term rentals at the August 2 council meeting. Over objections from council members Morrison and Tovo, council passed an ordinance proposal by council member Riley which was endorsed by HomeAway and the Austin Board of Realtors (ABOR). Under the ordinance, commercial STRs are allowed in single-family zoned properties with minimal limitations, including a 3% cap per census tract, but no such limits are applied to commercial STRs in multifamily housing units (apartments and condos). Cannatti proposed that council member Riley be invited to write an article for the WANG newsletter explaining his reasons for approving the STR ordinance, and August will request such an article. The board noted that rules are being developed to implement the ordinance. Mary Arnold questioned whether there was sufficient budgetary support for monitoring all CSTR activities and tax compliance requirements. The board also discussed the ADA compliance issues presented by the STR activities. Mary asked if neighbors would be notified when a CSTR registers in a neighborhood.

• **Board Action:** The rules being developed to implement the STR ordinance will be monitored by Joe Bennett. In addition, WANG will notify neighbors about the importance of monitoring and reporting any STR violations to appropriate code enforcement authorities and council members, such as by having Haidar include

appropriate information in the newsletter and web-site. August will provide information in the President's Message concerning the private deed restriction issues presented by commercial use of single family properties, since private deed restrictions may apply to prevent commercial STR activity, though this requires private enforcement. Finally, Cannatti will look into possibly using the Neighborhood Plan tools, including possible amendments thereto, to address commercial STR activity in our neighborhood.

2. ACL Parking Issues (8:24) – Joe Bennett reported on the neighborhood parking plans for Deep Eddy Heights area during the ACL Music Festival on Oct. 12-14. After meeting with C3 Presents (event promoter) and neighbors, the parking plan will allow parking on one side of the affected streets (Upson, Johnson, Deep Eddy, West 7th, Hearn, and Meriden). Six officers will be assigned to traffic/parking control, and a phone number will be provided to report parking violations. In short, the plan that was successfully used last year is being tweaked and applied again this year.

3. Local Historic Districts (8:32) – August reported that the City is promoting Local Historic Districts as the historical preservation tool of choice since local residential landmark protections are no longer worth pursuing due to reduced tax incentives. At this point, only three LHDs have been enacted in Austin – Castle Hill, Harthan Street, and Hyde Park. The minimum size for an LHD is one block, but there are challenges to locating even one block neighborhood areas in our neighborhood that have sufficient historical integrity to qualify for LHD protection. Additional details on Austin's LHD program are posted at <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/local-historic-districts>.

C. Membership (8:45)

1. Membership Development – Joseph Bennett reported that WANG membership is increased under his renewal program, with 243 active members. The board discussed implementing a fixed November 1 membership renewal date for all members by providing a grace period for any membership date adjustments.

2. Annual Meeting – The Annual Meeting will occur on October 27, 2012 (10 am), with tentative plans to repeat the "Holiday House" social. Each board member is responsible for placing a ½ page advertisement in the Annual newsletter.

D. Liaison (8:55)

1. Selection of new ANC Rep – A new Austin Neighborhoods Council representative for WANG is required. August expressed his objection to ANC's recent policy positions to support single member districts.

E. Transportation – No report.

V. Treasurer's Report (8:57) – August reported a Checking Account Balance of \$8,021.15, and an Oak Wilt Account Balance of \$1205.79.

VI. Old Business (8:57) – None

VII. New Business (8:58) – Mary Arnold noted her concerns about Council's proposed charter amendment which would park land use to be changed by 2/3 council vote without voter input to allow the lease of dedicated parkland to an independent school district if that 2/3 identifies the school use as a "park purpose."

VIII. Adjournment -- The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm. The next board meeting will occur on Monday, September 10, 2012 (7 pm) at Howson Branch Library.

# West Austin Neighborhood Group

P.O. Box 5722

Austin, Texas 78763-5722

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Permit No. 272

## Please Check Mailing Label for Renewal Date



## BAITING FOR FIRE ANTS IN THE FALL

*By Wizzie Brown, Extension Program Specialist at Texas AgriLife*

While you may not be seeing too many mounds yet, fall is a great time to bait for fire ants. Baiting in the fall can help reduce the number of mounds that appear in the spring. Baits take time for results to be seen, so be patient and plan to schedule a baiting program for spring and fall. If you need fire ants killed quickly, you may want to use an individual mound treatment.

### Tips on using baits:

- Make sure you have a bait, not a granular
  - Baits are either broadcasted over an entire property or sprinkled AROUND individual mounds for fire ants to pick up as food. Baits should NOT get wet.
  - Granulars are sprinkled on TOP of a mound and watered in to carry the pesticide into the mound to come into contact with the ants.
- Broadcasting baits using a handheld spreader can save time and reduce the amount of chemical applied
- Use the proper amount of bait and application equipment for your yard size
  - Read the label, it will tell you the rate of application and equipment required for application
  - Many baits are placed at a rate of 1-1 ½ pounds per acre
  - Many people put out more bait than is needed
- Check that fire ants are foraging before putting out bait
  - Place a hotdog slice or potato chip near a mound, leave for 10 minutes, then check for fire ant activity
- Do not use stale or old bait
  - Smell bait to make sure it is not spoiled; spoiled bait smells rancid
  - Store bait sealed in the original container
- Try to get your neighbors to bait around the same time as you do; this will push the reinvasion boundaries further away from your property
  - Even better, organize a community-wide fire ant management plan, they can help reduce the amount of fire ants within the community & save money on chemical costs

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600.

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