



WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

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

Organized 1973

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

**Our next meeting is Monday, July 2 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

Committee Members

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

JUNE PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

By August W. “Happy” Harris III

Membership

WANG has committed to more than double its membership and we need YOUR help. Please don't forget to renew your membership and *encourage your friends and neighbors to join!* You may renew at www.WestAustinNG.com. For your convenience, we have enabled recurring billing that will automatically charge your credit card on an annual basis so that you don't have to worry about your membership status. If you do 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.

Well, guess what. We love to see your smiling faces at our meetings. We want you as Members, and participating Members at that. We need to hear your voices, thoughts and concerns. We sit here month after month working on a host of different issues, big and small, that affect the greater neighborhood. We carefully weigh and deliberate our actions and our advocacy. We don't and can't operate in a vacuum so it is imperative that you let us know what is on your mind. We get calls on a regular basis from non-member residents asking for assistance with one issue or another but rarely do we hear from our Members. So what say you!

We have not had a robust committee structure over the years but we would like to find ways for you to engage. We have several standing committees, notably Membership, Communication and Transportation, that would be perfect for some of you. Hot areas of interest for the neighborhood also include Crime and Safety, Parks, and the Brackenridge Tract. 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.

As stewards of the neighborhood, what we do is terribly rewarding. If you are or have ever been interested in serving on the WANG Board,

committee service is a perfect way to get to know more about what we do, how and why we do it. After serving on a committee for a while, we hope you will consider expressing an interest Board service. An initial Board term is 2 years. It never hurts to remind each of you and our West Austin community what WANG's mission and vision statement are:

“To preserve the neighborhood and protect it from deterioration”

The West Austin Neighborhood Group (WANG) is a non-profit organization of neighborhood residents with the shared goal of preserving the character of West Austin and protecting it from deterioration. WANG is concerned with community development, ecology, safety, and many other matters that indirectly and directly affect the quality and character of our neighborhood and the City of Austin.

Our neighborhood needs committed volunteers. We hope you will be one today and in the future.

Tarrytown Fourth of July Parade

Over the years the West Austin Neighborhood Group has encouraged the creation of neighborhood watches and to raise awareness about best practices. One of the best ways to increase awareness in our neighborhoods is by getting to know one another. The Tarrytown Fourth of July Parade, one of the biggest in Austin, is a splendid way for us to meet our neighbors. And you know what, it is just about the biggest darn community event that we have in West Austin!

The annual Tarrytown Fourth of July Parade is ramping up! It is always a lot of family fun and one of the largest in Austin! The parade will begin at 9:00AM on the 4th at the corner of Exposition and Windsor proceeding down Pecos an ending at Reed Park. Waiting for you there will be food, beverages and fun. For those participating in the parade itself, floats and participants will be gathering starting at 7:30AM. The parade will feature the Austin Fire Department and for the

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

Presidents Message, *continued from page 1*

first time, we will have the participation of the Texas National Guard!!!! For more information including sponsorship opportunities and float registration, contact Drew Tate at drew@tateproperty.com. The Fourth of July will be here before you know it. Contact Drew right away.

Water Wells

Recently, the media, including the *Austin American Statesman* and the local news outlets have done stories on the spike in private wells being drilled in Austin – and primarily West Austin at that. To some extent, it is being portrayed as a haves versus have nots. It is far more complicated than that as I am sure you know. It is an issue of water rights. According to court decisions, property owners have a right to the water under their land. It is an issue of efficiency in that the water, primarily used for irrigation, is not treated nor is it pumped through the City's water utility system at some expense. It is an issue of cost effectiveness for the property owner with the rising cost of water services in Austin, driven in part by the construction of Water Treatment Plant #4. Payback periods for the costs of drilling a private well can be relatively short especially during the high need months of the summer. It is just plain smart in many ways.

But is it sustainable. Perhaps not. Pumping and use could be very difficult to regulate or even monitor. This is a bold statement – but barring a cataclysm, we will never be part of a water conservation district as it requires a legislative mandate. Rather than suggesting municipal regulation, which could result in litigation against the City, the West Austin Neighborhood Group would encourage all those who choose to drill wells follow intelligent irrigation practices. Just because one has an “unlimited” supply of water doesn't mean that this precious resource should be wasted. There are a host of simple and proven strategies that can be used effectively to efficiently use water.

Short Term Rentals

We are disappointed thus far in the compromise approved by the City Council on Short Term Rentals. The vote, as of press time, has only been through first reading and may be amended. Type I properties – those that are occupied by their owners and rented periodically - were never controversial

as the majority of stakeholders including WANG actively supported these. More controversial are the Type II properties – those that are held strictly for investment purposes – and located in single family or SF3 zoning districts. The use of Type II properties in SF3 districts for short term rentals is an illegal use; it is a commercial use. As a part of the compromise, Type II properties are being limited to 3% of dwelling units in any zip code. That is not a small number. In 78703, that would be well in excess of 200 properties. Provisions that required a minimum separation of 1,000 feet between such properties to mitigate the impact on neighbors were stripped away as were requirements for a conditional use permit. This is a disappointing turn of events that may well have an adverse on many neighborhoods as houses are turned into hotels. This is one reason leading cities in the US and abroad have prohibited them. It is ironic that Council supports a “denser urban core” yet this removes housing stock from those who would choose to live in our neighborhoods.

Traffic Congestion

A brief review of Travis County traffic saturation counts doesn't tell the whole story of traffic or congestion in our neighborhood. It is, however, enlightening. 24 hour saturation counts are done periodically at various points throughout the community by the City of Austin and other agencies. The counts are done when school is in session and during the week to get the most accurate representation. Numbers certainly vary on a day to day basis. Folks might choose different routes skewing the count and peak traffic times are not broken out though the data is likely available. Give or take a couple of hundred cars here and there – that can drive you nuts - below are simplified daily counts for a few key streets.

Exposition Blvd.10,000 - 11,000	Lake Austin Blvd (MoPac)26,000
Northwood Rd.11,000 - 13,000	Lake Austin Blvd (Brack)18,000
Enfield Rd10,500 - 11,500	West 35th (W of MoPac)15,000 - 18,000
Red Bud Trail15,200 - 16,200	West 35th (E of MoPac)35,000 - 36,000

For more information, go to http://www.campotexas.org/programs_rd_traffic_counts.php.

Proper Set Out Of Trash And Recycling Containers

Residents frequently set their trash and recycling carts too close together, causing operational issues for Austin Resource Recovery collection crews. Carts should be placed 5 feet apart and away from mailboxes, cars and other objects. Please help us spread the word to your neighbors, friends and family.



Why 5 feet apart?

The trucks that collect trash and recycling are equipped with automatic arms that pick up the carts. If carts are set too close together or too close to other objects, the drivers have to get out of their trucks to move the carts so the automatic arm can pick up the cart without bumping into or knocking over anything.

The crews can collect materials more safely and efficiently when your recycling cart, trash cart and yard trimmings are placed 5 feet apart from each other and from other objects like parked cars, mailboxes, etc.

What if I don't have room to set my carts 5 feet apart?

We understand that some areas won't allow for this; simply set the carts as far apart as possible.

Other Important Collection Guidelines:

- Always place the handle of the cart toward your house.
- Your trash cart, recycling cart and yard trimmings must be placed at the curb by 6:30 a.m. on your collection day.
- Do not put recycling or yard trimmings in plastic bags. Plastic bags cannot be recycled in Single Stream Recycling and cannot be composted with yard trimmings.
- Help prevent litter by bagging your trash and allowing room for the cart lid to close.
- Extra bags of trash that do not fit in your trash cart with the lid closed must be placed next to the trash cart and tagged with an Extra Trash Sticker, which can be purchased at most local grocery stores (\$4 + tax).
- Extra bags without a sticker will be charged a per-bag fee of \$8 + tax.
- Do not put carts in the path of the mail truck or on top of a water meter.

For more information, visit austinrecycles.com.

MINUTES FOR JUNE 4 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

By Michael Cannatti, Secretary

These are the minutes of the **West Austin Neighborhood Group Board of Directors** Meeting on Monday, June 4, 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: August Harris, George Edwards, Joyce Basciano, Gwen Jewiss, and Michael Cannatti, subsequently joined by Blake Tollett who was attending the RDCC meeting. Excused and unexcused absences were noted.

II. **Approval of Minutes** (7:12): The April minutes were not approved due to lack of quorum. There are no May minutes, due to the lack of a May meeting.

III. **Neighbor Communications:**

1. Emmett Shelton (Red Bud Trail) Bridge Project (7:12) – Demira Wyatt (City of Austin) and Ed Poppitt (City of Austin Infrastructure Management Group) presented information about a possible redesign of the Emmett Shelton Bridge at Red Bud Trail which is being proposed because the existing 60 year old bridge is past its design life. According to Mr. Poppitt, a TxDOT proposal to rehabilitate the bridge with a new top to provide 20-30 years of additional use failed to secure funding, in part because of problems relating to the utilities carried over the bridge. The City of Austin's Public Works Department is now proposing a new design study for inclusion in the upcoming bond package. Conceptually, the new bridge design would be one lane each way and re-routed as a higher bridge (25 feet taller than the existing bridge). It would extend from approximately the same location on the Austin side (actually slightly downstream from the current location), but would extend diagonally across Red Bud Island to a new location on the West Lake Side downstream from the existing location. The new location would require excavation of the hillside and possibly right-of-way acquisition from different property owners and/or park lands. The new design would include a bike and pedestrian passage. Upon completion of the new bridge, Red Bud Isle would be accessible from the old Emmett Shelton bridge segment to the West Lake side, but the Emmett Shelton bridge segment to the Austin side would be removed. Board members asked questions about the bike lane and pedestrian access, access to Red Bud Isle, and related parking concerns. August noted that Town Lake Comprehensive Plan requires that the upper part of Town Lake/Lady Bird Lake would be kept in its "natural" state, as much as possible. Bond funding would be required before the design study would be undertaken, and construction funding would be a separate matter.

IV. **Committee Reports:**

A. Zoning (7:49) –

1. C15-2012-0061(2401 Westover Road, Applicant, Anna Lauri (949) 813-9144, Owners: Andrew and Jean Jones (205) 223-6188) -- Applicant has requested a variance to increase the maximum impervious coverage requirement from 45% to 46.5% in order to maintain a swimming pool and patio in an SF-3-NP zoning district. This pool and deck were permitted last year at an impervious coverage amount just below the LDC maximum of 45%. According to Applicants representative, the problem was caused by a construction error by the previous owner, and was discovered by a subcontractor while the pool hole was being excavated. Applicants' representative also stated that a portion of the impervious between the house and garage cover had been removed in attempt to comply with the impervious cover, but this appeared to cause structural cracks or shifting. Board members noted that there did not appear to be any hardship, and that the owner had recourse against the construction company or previous owner. Board members also pointed out that the impervious cover requirement could be met by removing a portion of the driveway or even the front yard path.

• **Action: On a motion by Blake that was seconded by Joyce, the Board voted unanimously to oppose the variance request.**

2. C15-2012-0067 (1105 Norwalk Lane, Applicant: Gary Robinson (512) 636-0726, Owner: Laurie H. Worsham (512) 469-9607) -- Applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum front street setback requirement from 19.8 feet to 19 feet in order to complete the construction of a carport for an existing single-family residence in an SF-3-NP zoning district. The BOA approved a variance #C15-2010-0099 to erect a carport with a 19.8 foot setback on 13 September 2010 based on support from neighbors for the open design and on the condition that the carport would not be enclosed or built over. Applicant explained that a construction error in shifting the location of the carport away from the house caused the front support posts to intrude .8 feet past the previous variance allowance. Board members noted the minor intrusion, but noted the absence of apparent hardship. Cannatti expressed frustration that this was the second request being presented for the project, noting that another variance request would be denied.

• **Action: No action taken.**

3. Residential Design And Compatibility Commission (RDCC) Case Number: 2012-036829PR (1807 Stamford Lane, Applicant: Eleanor F. Reshetnikov 554-5004, Owner: Richard & Andrea Stovall 426-3514) – Applicant is requesting an FAR modification to allow a FAR increase from the maximum development permitted by the Land Development Code (LDC) of 40% (4,425.6 s.f.) to 48.2% (5,335 s.f.) to build a detached single-story accessory structure (bathroom/storage) in a SF-3 zoning district. Blake noted that the immediately adjacent neighbors supported the modification request, but there are 2-3 neighbors in opposition. Cannatti reviewed the history of the property vis-à-vis the McMansion Ordinance, the prior variance request, and the lack of mitigating RDCC modification factors, but requested that the board not take action based solely on his concerns. Board members noted the existing policy of supporting neighbor opposition to variance requests, but more info is required on any neighbor opposition.

• **Action: In view of the postponement at the June 4, 2012 RDCC meeting and the need for additional information, consideration on the matter was postponed with no action taken for now.**

4.

B. **Infrastructure (8:21) –**

1. **Water Wells** -- August Harris noted that the Statesman article about private water wells being drilled mostly in West Austin will likely add to negative perceptions about our neighborhood. To address these concerns, he proposed using the President's Message to urge responsible water use, such as night time watering and other water conservation practices. George proposed including recommendations to use water capture measures to conserve water.

2. **Austin Historical Survey Wiki Initiative** -- August Harris reported on the recently created Austin Historical Survey Wiki which provides an opportunity for citizens to input local knowledge through an on-line application to create an historic survey for Austin. The web tool was developed as an information system and public engagement tool that will be run by the City of Austin. More details at http://www.soa.utexas.edu/hp/austin_survey. Neighbors are encouraged to use this tool to provide historical information for the survey.

3. **Short Term Rentals** -- Blake Tollett reported that City Council will consider the Short Term Rental issue at their next council meeting. Cannatti will circulate the neighborhood's position statement to our email list.

C. **Membership (8:40)**

1. **Membership Development** – No report.

2. **Annual Meeting** -- August Harris noted that a date needed to be set. After reviewing the calendar of available dates, October 27, 2012 was tentatively set for the Annual Social meeting. For now, we will repeat the "Holiday House" social, but Cannatti will ask for permission to hold the event at a private property location on Bowman Avenue.

D. **Liaison (8:49) f**

1. **CWANP Contact Team Update** – No report.

2. **Selection of new ANC Rep** – A new representative to the Austin Neighborhoods Council is required. No board members in attendance jumped at the opportunity, though Cannatti suggested that Joyce could serve as our rep.

E. **Transportation (8:50)**

1. **MoPac Managed Lane Update** – August reported that the Federal Highway Administration approved the preferred alternative for the MoPac Managed Lane which includes express lanes in each direction with sound walls. – Haider has agreed to assume responsibility for the Communications committee, including preparation of the newsletter.

F. **Communications (8:54) – No report.**

V. **Treasurer's Report (8:54)** – George Edwards reported a Checking Account Balance of \$7,339.53, and an Oak Wilt Account Balance of \$1205.64 (still).

VI. **Old Business** – None

VII. **New Business** – None

VIII. **Adjournment** -- The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

The next board meeting will occur on Monday, July 2, 2012 (7 pm) at Howson Branch Library.

West Austin Neighborhood Group

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By Wizzie Brown, Extension Program Specialist at Texas AgriLife

A proper flea management program has two parts- managing fleas on your pet and managing fleas in your environment. You may want to consult a veterinarian about flea control for your pet; there are numerous products on the market that work well.

If you find fleas in your home and you do not have a pet, inspect the attic and/ or crawl spaces to see if wildlife has moved into the area, bringing fleas with them. Remove wildlife with traps and then treat the area with an insecticide labeled for fleas. Once the problem is resolved, you may want to seal the area so that wildlife cannot move in again.

If you are a new homeowner with no pets and have fleas, it is possible that the previous owners had pets. Fleas can remain dormant for several months, but become active again when they sense vibrations of new hosts.

When you find fleas on a pet, you most likely will need to treat the pet, inside the home and the yard. Treatment should be targeted to areas where your pet likes to hang out.

There are many things you can do to help reduce fleas without the use of chemicals. Vacuum regularly, getting under furniture and along baseboards. Make sure to dispose of the vacuum bag in an outdoor garbage can at least once a week so the fleas do not hatch out and reinfest the home. Wash pet bedding in hot water. Bathe your pets regularly and use a flea comb to remove fleas. Avoid walking pets in known flea infested areas.

When treating for fleas, you will usually need to treat at least two times. The second treatment should occur 10-14 days after the initial treatment.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

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