

WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

P.O. Box 5722 • Austin, Texas 78763-5722 • July, 2011

Organized 1973

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

Board of Directors

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Secretary

Blake Tollett
Assistant Secretary

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Past-President

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Mary Arnold
Joyce Basciano
Joseph Bennett
Erik Cary
George Edwards
Cathy Kyle
Susan Pascoe

Honorary Committee Members

Hon. Lloyd Doggett
Hon. Lee Leffingwell

The next WANG Board meeting will occur on
July 11, 2011, 7:00 Howson Library

MAY PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By August W. "Happy" Harris III

Fourth of July Parade

Well Neighbors, it's on! A transition team wasn't in place this year but with frenetic, hard work by a number of key folks, the Tarrytown Fourth of July Parade will take place once again. Floats and participants will gather at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church at 8:30AM. The Parade will start at 9 and will proceed down Windsor to Pecos and from there to Reed Park. Lloyd Lochridge will be the Grand Marshal. Plenty of food, fun and merriment will await us all at Reed Park! Sadly there won't be the traditional Austin Symphony Concert at Auditorium Shores – but we'll have music! Please come and enjoy all of the festivities as we celebrate this great Nation of ours.

Reed Pool

Recently, 2012 budget proposals were forthcoming for Council consideration. Among the recommendations was the closure of Reed Pool. City staff made this determination based on the need to balance neighborhood pool closings throughout the City in order to make their budget number. Altogether, 6 pools were identified. Reed was considered closeable because of its proximity to both Deep Eddy and West Enfield and its higher operating cost. Neighbors contacted me with rapid fire succession after hearing the news. Instead of pitting pool against pool and neighborhood against neighborhood, which would be counter productive, I have asked the City to create a citizen driven and transparent working group to look at how we fund and operate our pools throughout the City and to remove from closure any pool during this 6 to 8 month review period. While all Council Members are supportive, Council Members Morrison and Cole have both stepped up to shepherd this. Our pools are the very essence of our parks especially during long summer months. We urge you to stay engaged!!

Cost of Living

Let's talk about the cost of living in Austin. Why you ask? Well let's see.

- 1.Austin Energy has announced that utility rates will rise 10% to 12% in early 2012;
- 2.Austin Water Utility, after a 4.5% increase in rates in November to offset losses in revenue in part, ironically, as a result of conservation, anticipates that water rates are going to increase more than 35% over the next decade. 2011's projected increase was 6.75%. The Austin Business Journal noted that our residential rates are already among the highest rates in major cities throughout the state. Of course a significant portion of this increase is to pay for Water Treatment Plant 4 which is being built for anticipated growth;
- 3.Solid Waste Services is reviewing an increase to its base rate – oh and that is already after some hefty increases – for the same level of service;
- 4.AISD is considering a tax increase (Thank you Texas Legislature and Governor Perry) and they haven't even mentioned the enormous bond package they are considering
- 5.ACC, which was founded on the promise that they would never tax Austinites – but is at their statutory limit, is looking at a significant bond package as well;
- 6.Central Health is mulling a tax increase of roughly 10%; and
- 7.Travis County staff has come out with a recommended tax increase of 3%. That doesn't include the additional 1.2% rate increase they anticipate from an enormous bond package that they are going to bring to you in November – oh and that few if any of us will actually benefit from. Poor Travis County doesn't have any money but has thrown \$100 million out to acquire two properties in downtown Austin. I find it only mildly amusing that the County's Chief Operating Officer lives in Hays County, doesn't pay Travis County taxes and is about to get a fat pension. I also find it amusing –

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

April President's Message, *continued from page 1*

OK, I don't – that Sarah Eckhart is more concerned with "tax equity" than she is with "tax burden" fellow Precinct 2ers.

Add in the above referenced projected increases in taxes and utility rates and it becomes increasingly costly for all of Austin and certainly, given the average property value in the WANG area, that much more expensive to live and do business here. City demographer Ryan Robinson noted that declining affordability is driving families out. No kidding!

As every single dollar of property taxes collected by the City alone is required to fund the Austin Police Department and as 65% of all City expenditures are consumed by Police, Fire and EMS services, sales taxes and transfers from Austin Energy and Austin Water Utility are what provide us with all other services, particularly like those we care about such as parks, libraries and roads. Both utilities are facing increasing and increasingly expensive challenges. In spending half a billion dollars on Water Treatment Plant 4 to subsidize growth, overlooked was our ailing and aging water distribution network. How much longer will it last? A lot of intelligent, thoughtful leadership will be needed in the years ahead if Austin is to maintain its place among leading cities. Please stay engaged and participate in upcoming budget hearings. It is so critical to our City's future.

Drought

As I look outside my office, I see the most clouds I have seen in weeks. It has not rained in a month, we are nearly 17 inches behind since last fall and the Llano River has run dry. We have had 16 100+ degree days and set a bunch of records and it is only the first day of summer! Yikes. There is nothing we can do about the heat but avoid it. Many in our community are struggling to keep their homes cool. You might consider a donation of fans via KXAN's annual fan drive. (www.kxan.com) KXAN has been partnering with Family Eldercare for a while now. They noted that "there have been fewer donations this year than previous ones, but the organization is hoping to ultimately distribute 7,000 fans." It is not my intent to promote one TV station or another nor one charity over another. But we are in the midst of an epic and potentially catastrophic heat wave so please consider what you might be able to do.

Barring a tropical storm, this weather pattern doesn't appear likely to abate any time soon. Of course, you know about the warnings to stay hydrated, and for heaven's sake not to leave children or animals in the car – even with the windows cracked. There have already been too many senseless tragedies this year.

For those of you who have lawns and gardens, this is a real challenge. I am watching my own wither and have noted the beginning of the cinch bug attacks on parts of my lawn. Even some of my hardy annuals are struggling this year. The one thing I am trying to do is make sure my trees stay watered. The grass and the shrubbery I can replace, the decades old trees I can't. As you know we are under mandatory water restrictions. I have included Austin's restrictions below.



If things don't abate before too long, I wouldn't be surprised if the City prohibited outdoor water use altogether as Llano recently did. So please water smart – and do that rain dance!

Membership

WANG is continuing to work on and improve its communications with you. We are in process of enhancing the website. We are also looking at changing the way newsletters arrive to those of you who choose to receive them electronically. Currently they come as Adobe PDF files but we anticipate that these will be converted to HTML format shortly. Please don't forget to renew your membership! 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@westaustingng.com. Our next meeting is Monday, July 11 at 7:00PM at Howson Library. We look forward to seeing you!

MINUTES FOR JUNE 6, 2011 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 6, 2011 at the Howson Branch Library.

I. Call to Order: Due to appallingly poor attendance by the board, the meeting was called to order without a quorum with the following Board members in attendance: August Harris, Susan Pascoe, and Mike Cannatti, joined shortly thereafter by Gwen Jewiss.

II. Approval of Minutes: Approval of the minutes from the May board meeting was tabled due to lack of quorum.

III. Neighbor Communications:

A. Reed Park Pool Closure Issue: August provided a short overview of the 2012 budget proposals being proposed by City Staff which propose the closure of Reed Pool, and explained the decision-making process used to identify possible pool closures. Concerned neighbors are organizing citizen input to prevent the pool closure.

B. Elton Lane Street Reconstruction Project: City officials provided an overview of the upcoming public works improvement project slated for Elton Lane (from Windsor to Woodmont) and Griswold (from Elton to Forest) that is funded by the 2006 bond

package. General traffic control phases were reviewed, and the project is slated for completion in 130 working days. Neighbors were assured that bike lanes and sidewalks are not included in the project. For any questions, contact Clay Harris, Project Manager with the City, clay.harris@ci.austin.tx.us or office phone (974-7895) or cell phone (963-0483).

IV. Committee Reports

A. Zoning

1. C15-2011-0060 (2206 West 11th Street, Applicant/Owner: Uffe B. & Allison Peterson) -- The applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum rear yard setback requirement from 10 feet to 5 ½ feet in order to erect an addition of a landing and stairs to an existing single-family residence in an SF-3 zoning district. August noted the difficulty of showing a hardship in this case. Cannatti suggested that any variance be conditioned on the specific plans provided of the proposed landing. Electronic copies of the plans were requested from the applicant

• Action: There was no action requested on this case, but allowance was made for a subsequent electronic vote due to lack of quorum.

2. C15-2011-0062 (1201 Exposition Boulevard, 1206 A & B and 1210 Norwalk Lane; Owner: Allison Robert Ockley 818-599-3725 Applicant: John Carter Shanklin, PSW Homes 512-276-5414) -- The applicant has requested a variance to decrease the minimum front street setback requirement from 25 feet to 15 feet in order to erect one-story detached condominium units on each lot in an MF-3-NP, Multi-Family-Neighborhood Plan zoning district. Applicant's presentation referenced the intense density allowable under current zoning, and explained they were asking for much lower density with a single story height limit on the south of the property as shown in their proposed plans. Board members expressed an interest in conditioning any variance to reflect the single story limit shown in the plans, to prevent any heritage trees from being destroyed, and also possibly to preclude any parking variance from being requested/granted.

- Action: There was no action requested on this case, but allowance was made for a subsequent electronic vote due to lack of quorum.

B. Infrastructure

1. Short Term Rental Update – Blake and Joyce are monitoring the taskforce on this topic. Cannatti noted that there was a code amendment to the LDC's Building Code being proposed which would broadly define "Bed and Breakfast" in a way that might allow Vacation Rental properties under the LDC. According to City Staff, these changes are being proposed to grant an exception to the sprinkler installation requirements for residential structures built before January 1, 2006 and used as "bed and breakfast" occupancies. According to the Fire Official, any residential "detached single family home" built after Jan. 1, 2006 and used for "bed and breakfast" occupancy would have to comply with the sprinkler requirement.

C. Communications

1. Newsletter Update & Communications Team Meeting – No report.

D. Membership

1. Planning for Annual Social. Cannatti agreed to assist Cathy Kyle with planning. August is to provide a date that does not conflict with UT football games. Additional discussion of having BBQ fundraiser at or adjacent to Tarrytown Shopping Center properties, with members eating free.

E. Liaison – No report.

F. Transportation – August reported that the Design Team Meeting results show MoPac soundwalls with columns and caps. Scheduled approval in Sept. 2012, and scheduled construction start in 2013.

G. Nominating – No report.

V. Treasurer's Report – – According to the emailed treasurer's report from George Edwards, WANG has a Checking Account Balance of \$6,556.58, and an Oak Wilt Account Balance of \$1205.04.

VI. Old Business – None.

VII. New Business – None.

VIII. Adjournment: -- The meeting was adjourned (if technically it was ever started) at 8:30 pm. The next board meeting will be July 11, 2011, 7:00 at Howson Library.



Cicada Killers

Many people panic when they see large wasps flying low over their yard during the summer. It can be a common sight and if one looks, they will often find holes in the yard or flower beds that are surrounded by small piles of dirt. The wasps are cicada killers and can be considered a beneficial insect.

Cicada killers are about 1 ½ inches long with a reddish-brown head and thorax and an abdomen that is black with yellow markings. Wings have a rusty color. Males can be aggressive and buzz near people, but they are unable to sting. Females are capable of stinging but are rarely aggressive towards humans or animals.

Females dig burrows in the ground for nesting areas. Females sting cicadas to paralyze them, take the cicada back to the burrow and then lay an egg upon it. When the egg hatches, the larvae feed upon the cicadas provided.



Cicada killers usually do not warrant any control methods. They are actually beneficial insects that help to reduce populations of cicadas. If you feel that you must do something to manage them, you can sprinkle insecticidal dust around the opening of the burrow.

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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CRIME REPORTING

Here's how to send your anonymous tip via text message.

1. Text "APD" and your message to 847411 (Tip411).
2. Austin PD may reply to your message asking for additional information.
3. Text "STOP" to end the dialogue.

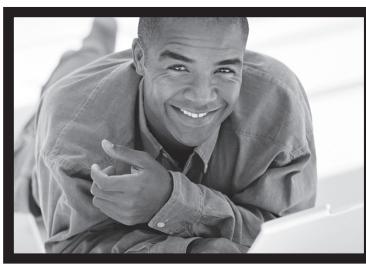
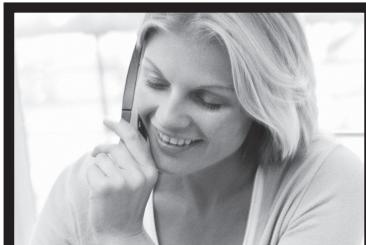
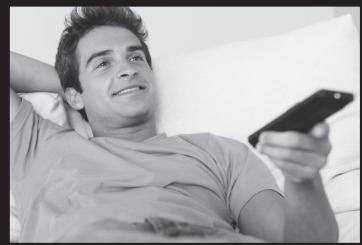
West Austin Neighborhood Group

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