

WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

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

Organized 1973

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

The next WANG Board meeting will occur on
August 1, 2011, 7:00 Howson Library

Board of Directors

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JULY PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

By August W. “Happy” Harris III

West Austin is in a bit of a peaceful lull. Perhaps it is the uncertainty of Congressional budget negotiations or perhaps it is the incessant heat and drought. Perhaps it is because everybody is (wisely) off and gone! I don’t know about you but a vacation in cooler climes would be most welcome. I hope each of you is finding delightful ways to enjoy these summer days with family and friends.

More than a decade ago, I was working on a project in Ft. Worth. The city was in the midst of similar weather conditions. I found it exhausting to even step outside. I remember getting an evening walk in and not only had the walk to myself but the parks and the streets as well. I thought it was odd that even the restaurants had no business. It was certainly peaceful yet lonely and desolate. Now I won’t besmirch Ft. Worth folks. Maybe we Austinites are just more intrepid and resilient. But there are certainly times when stepping outside takes your breath away!

I know that many of you are concerned about land use issues. Over the years, I have spent a lot of time talking about them. But frankly there isn’t much going on. That said, there are lots of remodels and even some new construction in the neighborhood. It is wonderful that our neighborhood housing stock continues to be revitalized. Hopefully homeowners are pulling proper permits so they don’t get caught later. And they do..... It is important to understand that WANG “typically” is engaged only when a variance or zoning change is requested. Folks have adjusted to the nuances of the McMansion Ordinance so the number of cases has diminished.

Our two significant developable tracts, the Austin State Assisted Living Center and the Brackenridge Tract, are on hold. For many concerned, despite budget reductions, ASALC made it through the legislative session.

Obviously, we will continue to monitor its status as things could always change. I am asked often about the Brackenridge Tract. There is nothing going on at the moment – but that could change on the turn of a dime. Chairman Powell and President Powers would like to monetize Munny sooner than 2019. Now that a new Council is seated, conversations may be renewed. Again it is something we’ll keep an eye on.

Reed Pool and Parks Update

At the moment, we believe that Reed and the other neighborhood pools projected for closure in 2012 will be funded in the final budget. This is just a one year reprieve however. A working group has begun convening to look strategically at long term funding for pool operations so we don’t have to fear closures year after year for any of our municipal pools. Updates will follow.

With budget cuts, it is “easy” to look at our parks as low hanging fruit – particularly when budget cuts are imperative. But our parks are the egalitarian heart of our communities. Folks in West Austin – and I tend to be careful about generalizations – have lots of recreational opportunities. WAYA has a constant buzz. But I want you to think about how we can bring more life into our parks. Ideally, I’d like YOU to be part of movement!

Deep Eddy is slightly different because of its year round pool. Reed and West Enfield have seasonal pools. The latter has a “derelict” tennis court that desperately needs to be resurfaced. Each has what I consider underutilized playscapes. Of course they aren’t as much fun any more without seesaws, merry-go-rounds and jungle gyms. Am I showing my age? We need our parks to be attractive and well maintained – even in a catastrophic drought. But we – as a neighborhood – also need to bring life an activity into our neighborhood parks. Our society is facing an “enormous” childhood and adult obesity problem. (Not to be

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

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

hypocritical, I confess I am not light as a feather myself – alas too much time behind a desk.) More activities would certainly benefit our community health. And here is a little factoid. The more activity you have in a park – the safer it is.

Transportation

The MoPac Managed Lane project is in the final stages of review prior to submittal to submission to the Federal Highway Administration for final approval. The project team has held numerous open houses to show the community the project and get feedback. As I have noted before, sound walls are part of the project. It is important that folks understand that the sound walls are not a panacea. Those that live immediately adjacent are the most impacted (and thus they are the only ones entitled to vote) but properties within a few hundred feet should also see a positive impact. For more information, go to www.MopacExpress.com

There are three road projects in the neighborhood of concern at the moment. An extension of the Lance Armstrong Veloway is being completed along Lake Austin Boulevard. Many of you have seen the construction over the past several months. The northern most lane has been striped off but I have been assured that as soon as the project is finished, that lane will be reopened to westbound traffic.

We have asked the City's Transportation Department to look at three things. The first is the intersection of 35th, Pecos and Balcones. Traffic has increased to the point, particularly during rush hours, that

the intersection is impassable. In large part, this is due to congestion on MoPac as folks seek alternate routes. We have asked them to look at a traffic study in Deep Eddy. This has been an ask for years and should have been done as part of the neighborhood planning process but wasn't. They are seeing heavy volumes of cut-through traffic and a host of other complications. Deep Eddy neighbors have divergent opinions on what should be done. However, if we can get the study approved, the City can lay out viable options for their consideration. Lastly, we are asking the City to look at the installation of a sidewalk on Exposition to Enfield. The presence of WAYA certainly has something to do with it but safety in general is of great concern, particularly after the tragic hit and run death recently.

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@westausting.com. Our next meeting is Monday, August 1 at 7:00PM at Howson Library. We look forward to seeing you!

MINUTES FOR JULY 11, 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, July 11, 2011 at the Howson Branch Library.

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order without a quorum at 7:14 with the following Board members in attendance: August Harris, Susan Pascoe, Mike Cannatti, Joyce Basciano, Mary Arnold, and George Edwards. Blake Tollett and Joe Bennett subsequently joined the meeting to establish a quorum.

II. Approval of Minutes (7:14): The minutes were addressed after a quorum was established, at which time all unapproved minutes from the May and June meetings were summarily approved by unanimous vote at 8:10 pm.

III. Committee Reports (7:15):

A. Neighbor Communications (7:15): No report

B. Liaison (7:15):

1. Typhus: Susan Pascoe reported on the outbreak of typhus in our city and neighborhood, and provided information and pamphlets from the City and State. The disease is conveyed by rodents and flea bites, causing a variety of non-deadly symptoms, such as abdominal pain, backache, dull red rash that begins on the middle of the body and spreads, extremely high fever (105 - 106 degrees Fahrenheit), which may last up to 2 weeks, hacking, dry cough, headache, joint pain (arthralgia), nausea, vomiting. Additional information is posted on the City's website at http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/healthcare_typhus.htm.

C. Transportation–

1. MoNAC Update (7:29) – August reported that the sound wall workshops on July 12, 13 will review the soundwall technology and options, as well as noise testing. There are gaps in the plans near

Happy Hollow and at the Deep Eddy area due to property constraints or ineffectiveness, but soundwalls are to be included on the flyover. August noted that there are some sectors of the neighborhood that are ambivalent about the soundwalls due to their massive size, but other recognize the sound blocking benefits. Other benefits and drawbacks were discussed.

2. Deep Eddy Traffic Study (7:40) – August reported on the efforts to obtain a traffic study in this area as a precursor to obtaining traffic calming measures, but noted that there are some unrealistic expectations due to city funding limitations. However, August has requested that the City's Transportation Department look into this issue. Susan Pascoe noted that this might also be appropriate for action by the Neighborhood Plan Contact Planning Team.

3. 35th/Pecos/Balcones Study (7:46) – August reported that the intersection here is being studied by the City's Transportation Department, and that the City has determined that a sidewalk on 35th Street is not justified by current use and traffic patterns. Regarding the intersection, Cannatti noted that this intersection was identified in the Neighborhood Plan for action.

4. Lake Austin Bike Lane – August reported that the new bike lane on Lake Austin Boulevard is now complete, and that the street will be returned to its original four lane traffic configuration.

5. Residential Parking and Parking Benefits Districts -- Joyce Basciano reported on developments in setting up the residential parking and parking benefits districts which would generate parking fees from solar powered kiosks that could be shared with neighborhood projects. According to Joyce, City staff is setting up rules similar to the Vertical Mixed use rules to make such districts more difficult to establish by adding notice requirements, increased voting thresholds, etc.

D. Zoning – No report.

E. Infrastructure

1. Short Term Rental Update – Blake and Joyce continue to monitoring the taskforce on this topic. Blake reported that other neighborhood associations are working to address the commercial use of residential property rental as opposed to occasional “mom and pop” rentals. The Planning Commission is proposing a 15 day total limit for short term rentals, after which the Bed and Breakfast rules apply. Cannatti noted that there may be private deed restriction limits on such commercial use, but this requires private enforcement. ANC is considering a proposed statement in opposition to short term rentals.

2. West Enfield Park – August reported on the City’s design plans for the pool and park areas at West Enfield Park. A “Friends of the Pool” group is needed. Cannatti will ask Ann Phipps to engage with this issue, including soliciting volunteers from the pool users and families.

3. Reed Park Pool – August reported on efforts to keep west side pools open, including using increased sales tax revenues. A series of meetings will be held with City staff and council and Austin Parks Foundation and PARD to achieve holistic solution.

F. Communications – No report.

G. Membership

1. Planning for Annual Social. Cannatti and Kyle will work on planning Annual Social on non-UT football weekend, probably on Oct. 22 (or maybe Sept. 24) as a BBQ fundraiser at or adjacent to Tarrytown Shopping Center properties.

H. Nominating – No report.

IV. Treasurer’s Report – According to the emailed treasurer’s report from George Edwards, WANG has a Checking Account Balance of \$6,722.62, and an Oak Wilt Account Balance of \$1205.19.

V. Old Business – August reported that the 4th of July Parade was a huge success with proceeds going to Friends of Reed Park. Efforts to find coordinator for next year have started already. August hopes to have the Austin High Marching Band join next year’s parade.

VI. New Business – None.

VII. Adjournment: -- The meeting was adjourned at 8:55-ish, give or take a few minutes. The next board meeting was not set.



Wood-boring beetles of trees

There are numerous beetles that can be found on trees, but this focuses on two groups specifically: round-headed borers and flat-headed borers. Borers can be damaging to trees that are newly planted or weakened and stressed by conditions such as drought, frost damage or mechanical damage.

Round-headed borers larvae are creamy white with round heads and no legs. Adults are often called long-horned beetles because of their long antennae that can extend past the tip of their abdomen. Eggs are laid in wounds, in cervices or under bark on trees that are stressed or in poor health. Larvae bore under bark into the heartwood of the tree. They may leave a round opening where sawdust-like material, called frass, and sap may exude.

Flat-headed borers are creamy white larvae, legless and have a flattened head area. Adults are bullet-shaped, often with metallic colors on the body. Eggs are laid around cracks or wounds of stressed trees, but some species will attack healthy trees. Larvae bore into the cambium under the bark and then move into the heartwood.

It’s best to keep trees in good health. Try to plant native or adapted trees that perform well in Central Texas. Properly water and fertilize trees; water is especially important during drought conditions. Avoid wounding above ground parts of the tree.

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.

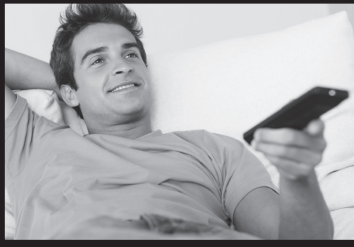
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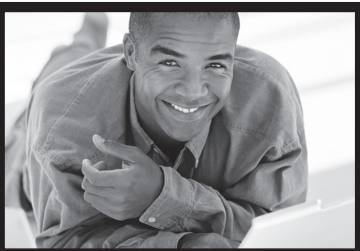
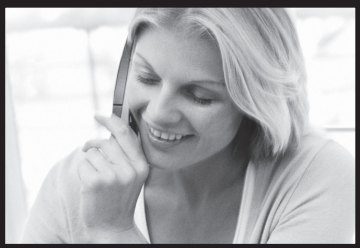
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