



WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

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

Organized 1973

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

**The next WANG Board meeting will occur on
December 5, 2011, 7:00 Howson Library**

Board of Directors

August "Happy" Harris III
President

Michael Cannatti
Secretary

Blake Tollett
Assistant Secretary

Gwen Jewiss
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George Edwards
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Erik Cary
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Susan Pascoe

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Hon. Lloyd Doggett
Hon. Lee Leffingwell

AUGUST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By August W. "Happy" Harris III

From the Board of the West Austin Neighborhood Group, we wish each of you a grand and a happy Thanksgiving. We are indeed truly blessed to live in a great neighborhood in the heart of a wonderful community. One has but to glance at the New York Times or one of the many news outlets to truly appreciate the enormous economic, social, political and environmental struggles faced by people throughout the world, in much of this country and even in Texas. While we may complain about our many trials and tribulations, and heavens knows I do, few reach the magnitude faced by others and for that alone we can be most grateful. May your travels be safe, your company delightful and your plates filled with deliciousness!

A special thanks goes to Mike Cannatti, whose zeal and energy were boundless in organizing WANG's Annual Social held on Bowman next to the Howson Library. We departed from our typical presentation defined format to more of a purely social event that seemed to be very attractive to all. Celebrating memories of our beloved and long lost Holiday House, it was a cathartic event for many as neighbors recounted their fondest recollections of what was our community gathering spot, an egalitarian place for all generations to mingle. PTerry's served so many burgers that they had to have their team bring more and actually ran out of French fries. They smelled so good – darn diet!

We had one of our largest turnouts in history and I am pleased to report that WANG had a wave of new members and renewals. Could this be the magic formula? My one disappointment was that Howson Library was not open. It is such a rich treasure for our neighborhood. I do hope you have the opportunity to visit the

Library from time to time. As always, we would like to hear from you about how we could make the Annual Social better.

Brackenridge Tract

There has been some press about the Brackenridge Tract at last. According to the Austin American Statesman, The University of Texas System is considering the feasibility of constructing a four to five story building on the portion of the Brackenridge Tract adjacent to Red Bud Trail. This would bring an estimated 500 employees to the area and at least perhaps 1,000 extra car trips per day into the neighborhood. If the System were to make lease payments to the University of Texas, who owns the land, then under the premises set forward by the Board of Regents, it would benefit the University as intended. Absent rent and without some level of transparency regarding the agreement, it is difficult to see how this development might meet the terms of Colonel Brackenridge's gift that has so often been referred to. That said, perhaps this institutional use, from a neighborhood perspective, is not all bad. Discussions around the formation of a more concrete medical school in Austin led by Senator Kirk Watson are welcome. This has the potential to become a significant economic driver for both Austin and the region. The medical school, while working in collaboration with various UT colleges and departments, will actually be under the University of Texas System umbrella and not under UT Austin. The ideal location, for a variety of reasons, is proximate to campus and to both Level I trauma centers, Brackenridge and Dell Children's Hospitals. The Brackenridge Tract, while close to campus, is not as well situated as land that UT owns and could redevelop in the Waller Creek corridor. Nonetheless, it does make one ponder the thought that the managing

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

agent of the Brackenridge Tract would relocate its offices to overlook the area.

This is a gentle reminder that the Lions Municipal Golf Course and WAYA leases expire in 2019, barely 7 years from now. The closer we get to that date, the less leverage we will have. However, it is imperative that you never believe something is inevitable and that we as a neighborhood can't effect change.

Neighborhood Safety & Crime

If you aren't a member of when of the neighborhood Yahoo groups like Tarrytown West or Deep Eddy, I would encourage you to join. WANG has been asked on a number of occasions to set up a neighborhood wide one. It is something that we have considered and taken under advisement. In the meantime, these two offer the opportunity for you to keep up with it seems primarily criminal issues in the neighborhood. We are seeing an ongoing pattern of break-ins, attempted home invasions and car burglaries – even during daylight hours. There have been furtive efforts at organizing neighborhood watches but it takes the time and commitment of neighbors and sadly, there aren't a whole lot of folks willing to step up. Absent an organized neighborhood watch, I would encourage you to be vigilant and report anything suspicious.

I have been asked by folks in Pemberton and Bryker Woods, for which WANG serves as an umbrella organization, to address the issue of stolen decorations, particularly Christmas

and Halloween, with the University of Texas and its student organizations. Student organizations have been identified virtually on an annual basis with at least a portion of the theft. In some cases, decorations have been recovered and in other cases, treasured ones have been severely damaged or destroyed. Folks in these neighborhoods are fed up and have threatened civil and criminal action against the perpetrators. The ability to identify the specific criminals or to assess civil damages certainly presents a real challenge but their anger and frustration is certainly understandable. In the coming weeks, I will be meeting with University officials and representatives of the student organizations along with the Austin Police Department. Hopefully we will be able to affect a change for this holiday season and perhaps create a punitive mechanism that will raise awareness at the organizational and student level – because Santa really does know if you've been naughty or nice....

Look at the date on your mailing label to see if your membership is current. While doing so, don't forget to pass along your preferred email address to us! A growing percentage of WANG members now receive the newsletter via email. We certainly would encourage you to shift from a hard copy of this newsletter to an electronic edition. Don't forget that your continuing support of WANG is never more critical than now. In addition to paying your dues by check, you can always renew your membership online at www.WestAustinNG.com.

MINUTES FOR AUGUST 1, 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, November 7, 2011 at the Howson Branch Library.

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:07 with the following Board members in attendance: George Edwards, Mary Arnold, August Harris, Joseph Bennett, Joyce Basciano, Haidar Khazen, Gwen Jewiss, and Mike Cannatti.

II. Approval of Minutes (7:08): The minutes from the October board meeting were unanimously approved on a motion by Cannatti that was seconded by Bennett.

III. Election of Officers (7:08): The item was suspended, tabled, avoided, or otherwise not addressed at this time.

IV. Neighbor Communications:

1. Austin Energy Rate Increases (7:09-7:34) – Bill Oakey and Carol Biedrzycki presented information on the citizen groups' opposition to the electric rate proposal by Austin Energy because. According to Mr. Oakey, the rate proposal is too complex in requiring five payment levels, including a flat \$25 monthly fee that will discourage energy conservation and disproportionately affect low-income individuals and residential customers while favoring larger commercial users. Ms. Biedrzycki explained that Austin Energy's requested \$1.1B revenue requirement is too high, and recommends that the rate proposal process be re-started so that industry standards can be used and potential PUC hearings can be avoided. Residents are encouraged provide feedback to City Council at the January 2012 public hearing. Mr. Oakey requested that our membership be notified of the proposed rate proposal and additional information posted at <http://affordableenergyforaustin.blogspot.com/2011/10/welcome-to-affordable-energy-for-austin.html>.

- Action: There was no action taken.

IV. Committee Reports:

A. Zoning (7:34) –

1. O.Henry Sign Variance Request No. C16-2011-0010 – August reported that a neighbor has requested reconsideration of the sign variance granted to AISD to erect a freestanding sign with LED lights for a O.Henry Middle School.

B. Infrastructure:

1. Parks Board (7:37) – August briefly reviewed the pending projects in our neighborhood parks, including Eilers (which needs a Adopt-A-Park group to implement the master plan and oversee grant funds), West Enfield (which needs neighborhood input on the pool, tennis court, and park construction projects), Johnson Creek (which needs trail lights installed), and Red Bud Isle (which is currently embroiled in conflicts between competing factions). Haidar noted that the development on Forest Trail adjacent to West Enfield Park has no fencing to protect against park access. To address these unadopted parks, it has been requested that WANG's Parks Advisory Board temporarily take over as the official adopter at Red Bud Isle and possible serve as an incubator for Adopt-A-Park groups. Mary Arnold and Gwen Jewiss both noted objections to development at Red Bud Isle, stating a preference for a more natural park with less parking and fewer dogs. Cannatti noted that the Parks Advisory Board is welcome to take on this requested role if they are willing.

- Action: There was no action taken by the Board, but August will approach the Parks Advisory Board to see if they are interested in helping.

2. Tarrytown/Bryker Woods/ Pemberton decoration thefts (8:00) – August reported on the efforts to address Christmas decoration thefts by UT students, including August's meeting with representatives from APD, University of Texas to notify fraternity students that criminal penalties will be imposed on folks caught stealing decorations.

C. Communications (8:05): No report.

D. Membership (8:06):

1. Membership Impact From Annual Social – August noted the success of the Annual Social and the associated filming of "The Best Little Hamburger House In Texas" documentary film. Over 200 neighbors attended the event to participate in filmed interviews and eat hamburgers from P.Terry's. In addition, there were 43 new memberships.

2. Website Membership Service – Mary asked if the PayPal sign-up tool had been modified to allow payment for only one year. Discussion of including a membership status check tool on the website. Haidar notes that membership will increase with better messaging and content.

F. Liaison (8:15) – No report.

G. Transportation (8:15) –

1. Triangle Park Traffic Calming – August reported on three traffic calming proposals for slowing traffic around Triangle Park by reducing the street width at the corners and extending the curbs into the street to slow traffic. According to August, Elizabeth Adams will confer with neighbors to determine which plan they prefer, and then WANG will provide additional input at that time. Board members briefly reviewed the proposals, and it was noted that the curb extensions into the street at the corners would appear to pose a risk of damaging vehicles.

V. Treasurer's Report (8:25) – George Edwards reported a Checking Account Balance of \$11,399.18, and an Oak Wilt Account Balance of \$1205.34.

VI. Old Business – None.

VII. New Business – None.

VIII. Adjournment: -- The meeting was adjourned at 8:34. The next board meeting will occur on Monday, December 5, 2011 (7 pm) at Howson Branch Library.



Join WANG Today!

Contributing Levels

<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$30.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior/Student	\$15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Friend	\$50.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron	\$100.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$250.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Friend	\$500.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Sustaining	\$1,000.00

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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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