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August 2nd, 2004, 7:00 pm
Howson Branch Library
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Please Check Mailing Label for Renewal Date

West Austin Neighborhood Group
P.O. Box 5722
Austin, Texas 78763-5722



West Austin Neighborhood Group

Organized 1973

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

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Hon. Will Wynn

THE NEIGHBOR

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

August, 2004

President's Message
August 2004

Hi y'all:

Well, I've got to say that last month's message about "Less Can Be More" elicited more response than I've seen in two years here, and all of it positive! It's always gratifying to know that these messages are being read by more folks than just my mom and wife.

As promised last month, this message will focus on developments concerning transportation and historic preservation issues that could affect us.

TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

As reported here, the July 12 toll road amendment vote at CAMPO has created lots of controversy regarding the creation of toll roads around Austin. From an excessively parochial perspective of this writer (and not necessarily WANG's board), the toll road situation doesn't bother me. It won't affect me much since I'm lucky enough to conduct most of my business here in the "inner city" of Austin, and I can easily imagine that the increase in traffic in the central MoPac corridor would only be worse if the new highways were toll-free.

Whatever one thinks about the toll roads, our neighborhood should be glad that Mayor Will Wynn had the amendments passed that require sound wall funding for our neighborhood (even if these are long overdue). That should limit the size and scope of any MoPac expansion, as explained below.

In the wake of the toll road controversy, the MoPac Neighborhood Associations Coalition (MoNAC) hosted a comprehensive presentation describing the current transportation plans in Austin that will directly or indirectly affect our MoPAC corridor. At the MoNAC meeting, guests shared the following information:

Karen Sonleitner (Commissioner, Travis County) provided details about the CAMPO toll road vote on July 12, and provided details about the sound walls that were approved in the CAMPO vote for protecting single-family homes backing up to MoPac Blvd/Loop 1. Commissioner Sonleitner reported that noise tests will be conducted to make sure that the

sound walls don't simply re-locate the noise impact on our neighborhood and that the individual neighborhoods will have an opportunity to individualize the appearance of the neighborhood-facing wall surfaces, even though the highway-facing wall surfaces will be uniform.

According to Commissioner Sonleitner, another benefit from the CAMPO Amendments is that Amendment 6 requires that funds from the Loop 1/William Cannon toll lane revenues be used "to retrofit the construction of environmental controls for water quality" in the central Loop 1 corridor. This would allow existing and new toll expressways from south Austin over the aquifer to be retrofitted for water quality control. Anyone who has tromped through the Barton Creek Greenbelt trail will know that this is a good thing.

Commissioner Sonleitner also reported that any possible toll expressway on MoPac from South Austin would not exit through Zilker Park, but would instead use off-ramps at 1st Street (Cesar Chavez), 5th Street, 15th Street and possibly a new road along the 3rd/4th Street corridor. In addition, these exits would likely not use fly-over exit ramps.

Perhaps most significantly, Commissioner Sonleitner explained that the Context Sensitive Design requirements from Amendment 5 to the CAMPO plan would likely preclude any double-decked solution to transportation needs on the central corridor of MoPac.

Sam Archer (CapMetro, Phone 474-1200 www.capmetro.org) reported on the current planning status of All Systems Go!, the proposed long-term transit system vision for Austin. The presentation focused on the Proposed Long-Range Transit System Vision plan to provide express bus service and new commuter rail service, as indicated in the map at this link.

Cid Gallindo (Downtown Austin Alliance Task Force) described the interim proposal (currently under consideration by TXDOT) to promote usage of Bus and Van Pool Lanes on Central MoPac by using one of the existing MoPac lanes for express busses, car pool vehicles, and toll-based access, depending on availability. According to the presentation,

Background Photo of Lime Kiln #PICA24140,
Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

Be sure to visit our website at <http://www.deepeddy.com/wang/>!

TXDOT is not favorably inclined to accept the proposal, and there may be a certain amount of legal and political infeasibility with taking away an existing lane on MoPac.

Sid Covington (Commuter Rail District) described the status of the commuter rail plans being prepared by the Austin-San Antonio Commuter Rail District, which generally involve relocating the Union Pacific rail line from the MoPac corridor to east of Austin in hopes of freeing up the central area down central MoPac for use by commuter rail services and for use in constructing new toll way or HOV lanes and/or bike path routes.

PROPOSED HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

After meeting with representatives of the Historic Preservation Task Force at our July board meeting to discuss the Proposed Historic Preservation Ordinance, and after further review and discussion of the various historic preservation proposals from the Task Force, the City Staff and other concerned entities, the WANG Board notified the City Council that WANG supports the following proposals for promoting historic preservation by establishing local historic districts and associated preservation incentives:

1. Historic Landmark Designation Criteria – WANG supports the Task Force recommendations to strengthen the Historic Landmark Designation Criteria. This will restrict the number of properties that will be eligible for Landmark-level abatements, thereby managing potential revenue loss to the City while ensuring protection of our most significant structures.

2. Qualification for Financial and Tax Incentives For Rehabilitation Of Properties In Local Historic Districts – WANG supports the Staff recommendation to make tax incentives available to all properties that are at least 50 years old and that otherwise meet the historic landmark designation criteria.

3. Local Historic Districts – WANG supports the Task Force recommendation to create a local historic district process so that groupings of properties in neighborhoods may be protected in accordance with the locally established guidelines.

4. Financial Incentives for Local Districts – WANG supports the Staff recommendation to provide financial incentives only for contributing properties in the form of a tax freeze for a limited term. WANG also supports the Minority Report Task Force recommendation to provide enhanced incentives

for low-income property owners.

GRATUITOUS OBSERVATION AND SLAM OF DALLAS

What's so great about Austin? As if anyone here needs another reason to appreciate what we've got, I thought I'd contrast two recent experiences I had that show what's great about Austin.

The first experience was on a business trip to Dallas, a sanitized city pulsing with corporatized citizens whose only reason to be there is the pursuit of the almighty dollar. There is just no other reason or naturally occurring attraction in that part of Texas. (And I lived there for seven years, so I know.) The bleakness of life in Big D is on parade in the airport where the joyless corporate types march through the airport on their way to and from some homogenous business trip. I don't mean to pick on Dallas, but some things are just too easy.

In contrast, my favorite Austin destination recently has been a bike ride down to Zilker Park where the Barton Springs Pool empties into Barton Creek. Where else could one experience the "multi-ness" of Austin with its mixture of class and language, lifestyles and culture, recreational activities, creatures, and terrains? The terrains vary from West Austin hills to the Colorado River and the Greenbelt trees and creeks. The creatures include the garden variety humanoids trotting around the trail, dogs barking and swimming in the creek, salamanders nestling in the protected spring waters, and God know what else that may be in the river. The recreational activities include rowing, canoeing, biking, swimming, floating, soccer, running, walking and simply sweating. On the lifestyle front, a recent visit to Barton Creek found a small church baptism underway in the creek right next to scantily clad swimmers and beer swillers, kids playing at the Zilker playscape and family picnic outings in the park. And where else can you hear traditional baptism choir music, Spanish language soccer exclamations and barking dogs, all on one bike ride to the periphery of our neighborhood! Damn, I love living here.

Best wishes for the close of summer, and as always, please call me with any matters of neighborhood concern.

Michael Rocco Cannatti
338-9100 or
mike@hamiltonterre.com

WANG Executive Committee Meeting Minutes Aug 2, 2004

Attending Board Members: Joyce Basciano, Erik Cary, George Edwards, Michael Falk, Jim Girardeau, Blake Tollett, Ken Pfluger, Selina Serna, Joe Bennett and Mike Cannatti.

Neighborhood Guests: Sara Madera, Mary Arnold, Elizabeth Wynn, Mark and Alexandra Weaver.

I. Call to Order
Mike Cannatti called the meeting to order at 7:05pm, Aug 2, 2004.

II. Member Communications

Water Works in Tarrytown

Mary Arnold provided a short history of two areas that are undergoing waste water improvement construction, the Taylor Slough lift station and the Reed Park/Taylor creek sewer line from Pecos to Scenic. The Taylor Slough lift station is located at the bend in Scenic as it approaches Lake Austin. The adjacent land is owned by the city and was considered in 1976 for a public park as part of the bi-centennial plan. At that time the neighborhood committee created plans to establish a small amphitheatre park on the river. Mary requested that we monitor the construction at the lift station to make sure that it does not preclude the future addition of this small park. Many members of the board had not heard of the past plans for this site, and expressed a strong interest to resurrect the idea of creating a small sitting place along the lake next to the lift station.

The city is planning to close Reed Park and the trail behind it for 9 months (starting in mid-2005) for enlargement and replacement of the Reed Park/Taylor creek sewer line. They have plans to clear a 40 foot wide swath of the trail. Mary mentioned the historical significance of the trail behind the park and its early use as a road to haul limestone to the river. Wagon ruts are still visible in some of the rocks near the creek. The neighborhood committee plans to carefully monitor the construction project to help preserve the site. The committee also will look for ways to keep more of the park open in lieu of a complete closure.

Tarrytown Halloween Party

Elizabeth Wynn described her plan to provide a safe and more concentrated Halloween celebration in Tarrytown. One street will be closed (probably Windsor) and

a meeting place established (probably the "purple park"). A sample route will be suggested for children to proceed together with guidance to neighbors who are amenable to Trick or Treaters. If the celebration works well, then it could be expanded to more areas of the neighborhood next year. The celebration is in the planning process, so please contact her with ideas or concerns.

III. Committee Reports

Communications
The next WANG meeting will not be on the 6th of Sept as that is Labor Day. Check the website for the latest scheduling information: www.deepeddy.com/wang

Liaison

The recent vote on Toll Roads in the area provides funds for "real" sound walls along Mopac. This is a project that has been in the planning stage for many years, but which has never received funding.

Tarrytown will receive a new neighbor APD representative, as John Evers (our current representative) is leaving his position.

Historic District

The WANG board sent a letter to Mayor Wynn supporting the following proposals for promoting local historic districts:

1. Historic Landmark Designation Criteria – WANG supports the Task Force recommendations to strengthen the Historic Landmark Designation Criteria. This will restrict the number of properties that will be eligible for Landmark-level abatements, thereby managing potential revenue loss to the City while ensuring protection of our most significant structures.

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4. Financial Incentives for Local Districts – WANG supports the Staff recommendation to provide financial incentives only for contributing properties in the form of a tax freeze for a limited term. WANG also supports the Minority Report Task Force recommendation to provide enhanced incentives for low-income property owners.

5. National Register Historic Districts – WANG supports the Task Force recommendation that the Historic Landmark Commission no longer review applications for building permits in National Register Historic Districts, and limit their review to applications for demolition and removal permits of properties contributing to the National Register district.

Membership

WANG will purchase a large banner to use at neighborhood events.

Transportation

APD is planning a higher presence and "watch" on the intersection of Windsor and MOPAC to help slow traffic violations in that area caused by drivers using the access road as a bypass for congestion on MOPAC.

Zoning

C 1 5 - 0 4 - 0 8 2
1905 Pecos Street
Curtis and Burke

Hill; 322-9286
The applicant has requested a variance to increase the maximum fence height from six feet to eight feet in order to maintain an eight foot fence for a single-family residence. The applicant did not come to the monthly meeting to provide additional details on the fence. Three letters of opposition to the fence and one letter in favor of the fence were filed with the city. WANG voted 10-0 to oppose the variance request.

3208 Enfield

The WANG board will ask the City to go forward in bringing the property into compliance with the Land Development Code.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Account balances: \$ 2,122.82 checking, \$1,196.83 Oak Wilt, \$3181.70 Savings. 264 paid members.

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by Mike Cannatti at 8:55 pm. Minutes recorded by Jim Girardeau.

Join WANG



Yes, I want to join WANG.
 I want to renew my WANG membership.
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