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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
ALL ARE WELCOME
We meet on the first Monday of the month
at 7PM at the Howson Branch Library.

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

THE NEIGHBOR

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

August, 2006

President's Message

By Gwen Jewiss

August 2006

By the time you read this, it will be too late. School will have started and the pools will be closed. The heat of the summer may still be with us, but the lazy days of summer are over.

Such is the dour back to school outlook of my Lemony Snicket loving daughter. Actually, after thoroughly enjoying the nurturing environment at Casis, she has grown to be quite comfortable with the challenging magnet program at Kealing Middle School. Who knows where her world will expand to by this time next year?

I recently realized, that unlike the past few WANG President's initial messages, I had not given you all some background on me, so here goes. Yes, I am a Yankee transplant, having grown up in Connecticut, graduating from Pratt Institute, and then having spent my formative professional years working as an architect in New York. I then moved to the San Francisco area for a few years, before settling in here in Tarrytown. My curiosity about the beginnings of this neighborhood and all of the east coast street names is part of what got me involved with WANG, and I continue to enjoy playing a part in the growth and transformation of Austin.

In last month's message, I introduced Chris Alguire (and in Mary Arnold's case, re-introduced) our newest Board members. This month, I would like to recognize a few of our other Board members, and highlight some of their many accomplishments. As I have assumed my new role, one of the first orders of business was to find a President-Elect.

I am delighted to report that August "Happy" Harris III has consented to step into that role. Serving as our Secretary for the past year and a half, Happy has tactfully and conscientiously documented our proceedings. In addition, he has brought

some of his expertise and enthusiasm for transportation to our neighborhood, initiating and hosting the Transportation Summit held at the Casis cafeteria last April. I look forward to working with him as we pursue both the Neighborhood Planning process and the establishment of a dialogue with the UT Brackenridge Tract Study Task force.

Over the past few years, Blake Tollett has poured countless hours into his role as Zoning Chair. His attention to detail and zealotry continue to make him a worthy successor to long-time Zoning Chair Dudley Houghton. This tenure of public service is even more noteworthy as it comes on the heels of four years as WANG President. In addition, Blake is tireless in facilitating the distribution of the newsletter – we wouldn't want to have to do it without him.

Michael Cannatti is another role model for past presidents. Besides managing our website, and designing tee shirts, Mike was most giving of his time energy and enthusiasm in being a very active member of the Residential Development Regulation Task Force. We cannot thank him enough for all of his hard work!

These folks a just a few of your neighbors who help to uphold our mission – to preserve and protect our neighborhood. Please come out to the Annual at Reed Park on Saturday, October 21st to thank these folks and meet all of our Board members.

Meeting Minutes

August 7, 2006, 7:00 PM Howson Library

Chair: Gwen Jewiss, President

Attending: Alguire, Arnold, Basciano, Bennett, Harris, Jewiss, Pfluger, and Tollett.

Guests and Visitors: Sara Madera, Barbara Meyers, Sylvia Benini, Lynda Rife

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

Call to Order: Jewiss called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes: E x C o m m approved the minutes of the July meeting.

Introductions: President Jewiss introduced Mary Arnold as our new WANG board member adding how pleased we were that Arnold was willing to lend her time and great depth of knowledge to ExComm. She then introduced ExComm member Harris as President Elect. Harris currently serves as Secretary and that position will be filled shortly.

WANG Fall Social:

Jewiss reminded all that the Fall Social and Annual Meeting will be held at Reed Park on October 21 at Reed Park. Speakers are being arranged and hopefully will include speakers for the pending formal neighborhood plan, the Brackenridge Tract and the Deep Eddy Historic District. Tollett is still working on advertisers for the annual newsletter. Pfluger offered to provide assistance.

Neighborhood Presentations:

A. City Library Bonds

Lynda Rife spoke briefly about the upcoming City bond election. There are 7 bond items on the November ballot including those dealing with libraries, transportation, parks, affordable housing, public safety and public health. While she recommended voting in favor of all the bonds, she presented on the Library bond package. Proposition 6 asks for approval of \$90 million in bonds to build a new central library, 96,000 new volumes, 40 more computers for public use, meeting rooms and expanded parking. Libraries improve everyone's quality of life regardless of demographics and income levels. The central library has become dated and can no longer handle any additional books because of its limited size. It was designed in the early 1970's and opened in 1979 when the library system only had 10 branches. Now the system has 22, still far short of where we need to be based on national comparisons. She described it as a system whose heart is barely pumping. Arnold asked about the status of the proposed location. Rife said that the current site of the Green Water

Treatment facility along First Street is the preferred site but that is dependent in part upon the opening of a new water treatment facility that is still being negotiated. There are a number of other locations being considered in the immediate area. In all likelihood, the project will not begin until 2008. It might not be a freestanding library as it may be incorporated into a cultural center. When asked about the future of the Faulk Central Library, she noted that the Austin History Center, which has also outgrown its space, will expand into Faulk. For more information, go to www.librariesforaustin.com.

Committee Reports

Zoning Committee:

Tollett advised that nothing was pending though the coming months would be busy as variance requests to the new residential ordinances were filed.

Infrastructure Committee

Two items were presented for discussion.

Brackenridge Tract:

The University of Texas Board of Regents has appointed a task force to discuss the future of the remaining portions of the Brackenridge Tract, which happen to lie entirely in the WANG area along Lake Austin Boulevard and including Municipal Golf Course. Larry Temple, a long time west Austin resident, has been asked by the Regents to chair the Task Force. Harris has spoken with Mr. Temple and is currently scheduling meetings with City staff. ExComm is trying to get the neighborhood planning process advanced in light of this recent development as any planning should be done with UT's plans for the tract in mind.

Arnold provided some background on the Brackenridge Tract as well as Muni Golf Course. She had participated in the 1989 study. Stan Freeman was president of WANG at the time. She had been on the Golf Advisory Board which she noted was not a City designated board. An agreement was reached between the City and the University that provided for rent escalation every 5 years for a leaser of 30 years. This was part of the compromise reached in 1989. Golf rounds have been going down for the last several years in part because of the increasing number of courses in the metro area.

Consequently there is great concern about future rent increases. The City hasn't offered to subsidize the course nor has it structured a purchase. She said that development standards had been established for other parts of the Brackenridge Tract such as the Gables Apartments on Lake Austin Boulevard and for the development of Stratford Drive across Lake Austin. There are development limitations on the remaining tracts but she had to review the agreement for specifics. Larry Gilbert, the UT biologist in charge of the University's field lab located on the Lake Austin side of the tract, is anxious to keep the field lab at its current location. The University's Housing Services are also keenly interested in the tract for student housing needs.

She provided additional background. The Lions Club approached the University in 1922 about building a golf course. In the 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps worked on the course. A 50 year lease was set up and Ambassador Ed Clark said that the land should never be sold per the Brackenridge grant to the University. The lease was allowed to run to 1987 though Regent Frank Erwin declared the lease null and void. The new agreement was drafted at that time that included significant rent along with the 5 year escalation provisions. Tracy Watson was the City staffer at the time and is still around though retired. She noted that Ben Crenshaw has been a good supporter of Muni. Dealy Herndon has been involved in the process as well. She said that there is some indication that the brick used in the clubhouse was from the University's Old Main Building. The City has certainly invested money in the course over the decades. Arnold will go back and spend some additional time reviewing the document. In a prior meeting the issue of the WANG boundary was raised as it was incorrectly noted recently by the City. Tollett advised that he still hadn't heard back from City staff.

Trees: Jewiss said that since so many tree related issues have arisen, she has asked Basciano, with the assistance of Sylvia Benini and Chris Alguire, to form a Tree Subcommittee. There is concern over enforcement or lack thereof and that people not be rewarded for cutting down trees illegally. There also has been some resurgence

in Oak Wilt in the area that must be contained without delay. Basciano said that there was a case in Travis Heights in 2004 where oak wilt (which affects both live oaks and red oaks) had jumped the trench dug in 1996 to keep it from spreading. Approximately 85% of the trees in the affected area were privately owned while the remaining 15% were in the City right of way. Travis Heights was able to get some financial and in-kind assistance from the Texas Forestry Service and the City to mitigate the spread of and replace public trees killed by the disease. Basciano will speak to Chris Dolan, City of Austin Oak Wilt Specialist to see if we could get at least some funding for mitigation purposes from the Texas Forestry Service and the CoA. The discussion migrated to the Chupik Construction site at Pecos and Greenlee where Oak Wilt has been identified. Chupik is trenching and there is a discussion of a secondary trench to be dug as well. It will need to be done in accordance with Texas Forestry Service requirements. Tollett recommended that it be done immediately but Texas Forestry Service must sign off on the project. Basciano wants to obtain the oak wilt map so that sites can be identified and neighbors notified without delay. She strongly recommended that we discuss tree replanting and diversification of the urban canopy so that the possible loss of so many oaks would be offset by other unaffected trees.

A neighbor reported on the damage to a significant tree at 2008 Robinhood. She has been monitoring work around the tree since last December. There were 6 protectable trees on the lot. No provision was made for erosion control nor for tree protection. The City finally instructed the builder to treat the trees. Black Forestry Tree Service was on the job but they are known for removal, not treatment, and appeared to be improperly pruning the trees. Subsequently, the builder trenched right through a critical root area possibly significantly damaging the trees. Nothing was properly treated afterwards. Arnold suggested that they speak at the City's budget hearings to stress the need for more staff arborists. Basciano stressed that the City is failing to enforce and that fines, when enforced, are negligible. A suggestion was made to essentially deputize citi-

zens to cite violations. Given tight budgets and time frames, the City is currently slow to respond. A brief followup on tree inventories was held. A recommendation was made that a tree inventory be required before a demolition permit was issued.

Transportation Committee:

Harris reported briefly on his independent effort (not WANG initiated or endorsed) to establish residential parking only districts for the blocks immediately adjacent to Urban Roadways and Core Transit Corridors in the new commercial design guidelines. City Council is reviewing the proposal as an addendum.

Pfluger reported that his sidewalks proposal continues to gain traction. The City Manager supports the proposal. It is scheduled to come up for a vote at the Code and Ordinances subcommittee of the Planning Commission on August 15.

Treasurers Report:

Treasurer Falk in ausencia reported that we now have \$1,200 in the Oak Wilt Account. At this point we have \$251.65 in the operating account and \$3,157.40 in savings.

There being no further new business, Jewiss adjourned the meeting.

New Sidewalk Regulations Proposed

By Ken Pfluger

On Sharon Lane just north of Bridle Path there is a sidewalk that dead ends directly into a rock wall. One could argue that such a sidewalk is not only useless but a safety hazard as well. It's a "Sidewalk to Nowhere". Now through the efforts of WANG these sidewalks to nowhere may be replaced with "Sensible Sidewalks".

Sidewalks like this are the result of a requirement that sidewalks be built whenever a subdivision is done. Most subdivisions in our neighborhood are small in scale. What happens most often is a single larger lot is subdivided into two,

three or a few more smaller lots that are still buildable lots. When the sidewalks are built they only extend as far as the subdivision itself leaving a sidewalk to nowhere. The theory is that these sidewalks will someday connect up to a complete network of sidewalks but could literally take hundreds of years if not longer—if it ever happened at all.

By contrast there is an unpaved "cow-path" sidewalk along the west side of Exposition a little south of Enfield. There are also gaps in some sidewalks along arterial street in our area. If sidewalks are to be built at all they should be built along busy main roads where they are needed and where they make sense.

WANG has proposed that instead of building sidewalks to nowhere at the site of a subdivision, the funds that would have built the sidewalk be placed in a sidewalk fund and used to build planned, sensible sidewalks that the neighborhood needs in a location that makes sense, such as along Exposition. Our proposal has gained the interest of the city manager and is now expected to come before the Planning Commission and City Council for action.

In addition the Planning Commission is considering a second ordinance that would require a sidewalk to be built whenever a new house is built or remodeled. This is not a WANG initiated proposal but it would affect our neighborhood. Fortunately this requirement would also allow for the home builder to put funds in the sidewalk fund rather than actually building the sidewalk. We would like to know what you think of this sidewalk requirement. You can always email the executive committee or come to our monthly meeting to let us know.

Sara Madera
Realtor®, ABR, CRS, GRI, SRES, Broker



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