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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Howson Branch Library
Thursday, December 6th, 2004, 7:00 pm

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."*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Cannatti
President

Erik Cary
President-Elect

Susan Pascoe
Past-President

Gwen Jewiss
Vice-President

Selina Serna
Treasurer

Jim Girardeau
Secretary

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Joyce Basciano
Joseph Bennett
Linda Neavel Dickens
George Edwards
Michael Falk
Stephen Griffith
Hal Katz
Ken Pflugger
Blake Tollett

HONORARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mary Arnold
Sinclair Black
Hon. Lloyd Doggett
Hon. Will Wynn

THE NEIGHBOR

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

December, 2004

President's Message
December 2004

If you live around Tarrytown Park (sometimes called Triangle Park), you may have been awakened by the crow of a rooster on the morning of October 23, 2004. The rooster was attending WANG's annual meeting as a participant in the kid's petting zoo. The meeting, although it followed a big storm the night before, was a success and heralds the upcoming year. I hope you were able to attend. With it comes a new year for WANG and its new president, little old me. First, let me introduce myself. My name is Erik Cary. My wife of nearly 13 years, Katherine Minter Cary, was raised in Austin. I was raised in California, but as a teenager, as the bumper sticker says, I moved to Austin, Texas "as soon as I could." Missy and I have two children, Everett Cary and Katie Cary, who both attend Hyde Park Baptist Schools. I also serve on the Child Development Center's Board at Hyde Park. I am an attorney with the law firm, Minter, Joseph & Thornhill. I also serve on the week-ends and evenings as a substitute Municipal Court Judge down at the jail. I love living in this neighborhood and am honored to serve as your president. Feel free to call me if you have questions or concerns about WANG or if you would like to talk about the neighborhood.

AUSTIN STATE SCHOOL

Under a legislative study called the "Rider 55 Study," State officials are in the process of considering which state school properties should be closed, including possibly the Austin State School located at the corner of 35th Street and Exposition. The Legislature may then be asked to adopt the recommendations of the study when it returns in January of 2005. If our neighborhood would like to be involved in the decision of whether the Austin State School should be closed and/or the type of resulting development if it is closed, we need to act as a neighborhood. To that end, our infrastructure committee has prepared a survey, which has been included in the newsletter. Survey results will be used in shaping our input to the Rider 55 Study and in the longer-term planning process for this part of the neighborhood. Please complete the survey and return it to us as soon as possible. Further information can be found at

www.hhsc.state.tx.us/news/announce/060404_Rider55_HB1.html

**MOPAC CORRIDOR AND
SOUND WALLS**

Last month, Mayor Wynn announced that the Texas Department of Transportation ("TxDoT") would be moving forward with the study of noise patterns and, once funding and plans were formalized, the building of sound walls along the MoPac corridor. Several neighbors have voiced concerns about the plans for sound walls. The primary concerns seem to be: 1) that the sound walls, although reducing the sound in close proximity of MoPac, might actually increase the reflected sound out into the neighborhood, 2) that the walls might not be aesthetically pleasing, and 3) that the City / TexDot might be moving forward with plans for sound walls in order to increase traffic by way of commuter rail and/or toll lanes.

Certainly, we will not all agree on everything. However, for many residents living next to MoPac, the noise has become unbearable. Many engineers and sound experts believe that the sound walls will substantially cut down on the noise into the neighborhood. Sound walls would have the additional benefit of establishing an outside barrier to additional lanes and encroachment into our neighborhood. As for the issue of traffic, in case you haven't noticed, the traffic on MoPac is increasing and will continue to do so. The projections for I-35 by the year 2025 are staggering. Experts say that I-35 will need 18 lanes to keep up with current traffic increases. Obviously, this kind of a highway through West Austin would be devastating. Stay tuned to the issue and we'll see what develops.

MEMBERSHIP

One of my top priorities this year is to increase our membership. Over the past few years, our membership numbers have dropped. It looks like we will have several important issues on our agenda that may affect the entire neighborhood, so membership is important. Over the next few months, you may spot one of WANG's Executive Committee members with a WANG sign. Please stop by, re-up your membership, and urge your neighbors to do so also.

Erik Everett Cary
478-1075 or ecary@mjtpc.com

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

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

The meeting was called to order by President Erik Cary at 6:10 pm. In attendance were Hal Katz, Michael Falk, Joe Bennett, Ken Pfluger, Joyce Basciano, Gwen Jewiss, Mike Cannatti, Susan Pascoe, George Edwards, Blake Tollett and Happy Harris. Excused absentees were Selina Serna and Jim Girardeau.

MONTHLY BUSINESS

Past President Mike C began the meeting with a report/update on the State School issue. The State of Texas held a hearing and the meeting was basically between those who oppose institutionalization and those who are being served by the facility. The emotions ran high on both sides, and Mike C did not make public any comments from WANG. He feels the ExComm does need to send in after-meeting comments on the proposed closure and sale/long term lease of the facility—pretty much a foregone conclusion—and the impact this would have on the neighborhood. General discussion ensued. Because of State budgetary concerns, and because this state school is currently underutilized and the patients can be facilitated on other state campuses in the city, we must work on the assumption that the school will be closed. We need to get ahead of the curve now. Discussion of the Triangle project and the need to get WANG recognized as one of the neighborhood representatives at the table. WANG, in conjunction with nearby neighborhood associations (Bryker Woods NA and Highland Park West-Balcones Woods NA to name two), needs to somehow survey neighbors and come up with some idea of what we want the redevelopment project to look like. Residential use, commercial use, or a mixed use will all have an impact on the neighborhood's infrastructure—traffic flow, schools, emergency services, water and wastewater capacity, etc. Discussion of the proximity to Mo-Pac and the future light rail/commuter rail system. The State School Project is going to be the most important challenge for WANG this upcoming year. The State will have a final report on the school and its recommendations by the end of January 2005. A committee of Mike C, Mike F, Hal K and Happy H was formed. Mike C is Chair.

Blake T presented a variance request (C15-04-133) from 32 Marganita Crescent. After discussion, it was unanimously voted to oppose the request. See the monthly Board of Adjustment report and resulting commentary for more details.

OFFICER POSITIONS

The following officers were proposed, discussed and agreed upon:

President—Erik Cary
Past President—Michael Cannatti
President Elect—Gwen Jewiss
Treasurer—Selina Serna
Secretary—Happy Harris
Assistant Secretary—Blake Tollett

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

After receiving unsolicited assurances of support from those assembled, and provided that the task can be accomplished on a Macintosh Operating System, Ken Pfluger has agreed to take on the position.

GOALS FOR NEXT YEAR

Erik—Membership. Let's get the numbers up. General discussion of various ways to achieve his goal of 400 members.

Hal—What is our role as a neighborhood association? Do we need outside help to focus us? We need to have a message and be consistent with that message. We need to keep in mind the changing political climate in the neighborhood and the pressure exerted on us by the desire of more people to live close to downtown.

Joe—He wants to continue in mapping out the neighborhood historically but needs some help.

Joyce—As President of Bryker Woods NA she is the liaison to the WANG board. Her Vice-President Edward Tasch is concerned with traffic in Bryker Woods and Joyce voiced concern about over development. A common goal of WANG and Bryker Woods could be getting the long anticipated sound walls on Mo-Pac.

Gwen—She voiced a goal of bringing together people to create an historical fabric of the neighborhood.

Michael C—He is going to work on the State School Project. He requested that each ExComm member truly think about the possibilities and email him with their vision of what might go there.

Susan Pascoe—As current President of the Austin Neighborhood Council, one of WANG's outstanding Past Presidents and as unofficial liaison from Pemberton NA, she has a lot on her plate, but does want to work with Joyce on Mo-Pac issues. One project that ANC is working on that can use input from member NA is the Integrity Project, a compilation of

documented cases of City staff failures in zoning and development review.

George Edwards—George, as President of Windsor-Exposition Neighborhood Group (WENG) is going to document the seemingly absurd value of the Moffett Street vacation granted to the Church of the Good Shepherd for the Integrity Project. He is also interested in disseminating information about "smart green" landscaping.

Jim Girardeau—Jim wants to work on neighborhood beautification projects. In addition, he is assigned the task of co-ordinating the proposal that WANG take a more active part in organizing the annual Tarrytown Fourth Of July Parade.

Happy Harris—Happy's focus will be on the State School Project and transportation issues.

Michael Falk—Michael will work on the State School Project and transportation issues. He will also take a financial look at the City budget and see if there are any potential benefits to the neighborhood that are being overlooked. One example is the equitable appraisal of property for taxing purposes.

Selina Serna—Selina will continue to act as Treasurer and keep the mailing list updated. Her focus will continue to be sidewalks.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Communications:

Ken Pfluger, Chair; Blake, Hal and Gwen, members

Bylaws:

Dormant

Infrastructure:

Hal Katz, chair; Jim, Happy, Mike F, Mike C, Susan and Joyce, members

Historic:

Joe Bennett, chair; Gwen and Mike c, members

Nominating:

Gwen Jewiss, Chair; Erik, Mike C and two others not on the ExComm (and to be named later), members

Zoning:

Blake Tollett, Chair; Mike F, Joe and Joyce, members

Liaison:

Erik Cary will be Chair and WANG repre-

sentative to the ANC, George, as President of WENG, will be the ANC alternate; Joyce as President of Bryker Woods NA and Susan as President of the ANC will be members

Transportation:

August "Happy" Harris will be Chair; Selina, Mike F, Joyce and Susan will be members

OTHER BUSINESS

The issue of whether WANG should change its policy of not approving or supporting variance requests before the Board of Adjustment was brought up, but due to the lateness of the hour, discussion was deferred to a later time.

No other business at hand, the meeting was adjourned around 9:15 pm.

Blake Tollett, Assistant Secretary

November 2004

Dear Neighbors,

A choice in high-speed Internet, local and long-distance telephone and cable television service is coming to West Austin. And Grande Communications, is proud to be bringing it to you.

The availability of our bundled broadband services to West Austin residents is still several months away in many parts of this community, but we would like to inform you now that our crews are currently in the neighborhood during the construction phase of our new network build-out.

Grande hopes to complete our state-of-the-art network and provide service to most of West Austin by the end of 2005. In the meantime, we have met with your neighborhood association's leadership to give them an overview of our company, our engineering and construction schedule and our notification process.

While we will try our hardest to keep any short-term disruptions to a minimum, we appreciate you or your neighbors may have concerns, questions or comments. That's why Grande would also like to hear from you.

In you have specific questions related to your property, we invite you to contact Shannon Powers, Construction Community Liaison, at 220-4888 (select option 1) or shannon.powers@corp.grandecom.com. You may also visit our Web site at www.grandecom.com/About/construction.jsp. There you will find a link to our construction FAQs.

Part of our Value System states that Grande will be easy to do business with. We are committed to working with the West Austin community to be a welcome and positive part of the community and we look forward to serving you soon.

Sincerely,

Scot Burris, Vice President and General Manager, Austin Grande Communications,

Libby Malone,
Director of Community Relations,
Grande Communications

Austin, Texas, Then and Now

Jeff Kerr, a West Austin neighbor, has just published a new historical book about Austin. *Austin, Texas, Then and Now* includes a remarkable collection of historical photographs of early Austin paired with contemporary photographs by the author taken from precisely the same spot as the original.

Kerr devotes a full chapter of the book to West Austin. West Austin has its roots in the antebellum Pease plantation, which occupied the land west of the steep banks of Shoal Creek. After the Civil War, ex-slaves settled Clarksville. Further development accelerated following World War I when the old Pease plantation was subdivided. Thus from its beginnings, the West Austin neighborhood has been a place with expensive mansions and modest bungalows.

Austin restoration architect Gregory Free wrote the foreword to this book, and maps were provided by Ricardo Puente. The views in the book date to 1860. Kerr has lived in Austin 13 years and reports that he first started thinking about what sites of present-day Austin may have been like when he learned that Mirabeau Lamar, then Vice-President of the Republic of Texas, shot a gigantic buffalo at what is now the intersection of 8th Street and Congress. Kerr hopes his book will help others appreciate the history of Austin as well as the historical buildings.

More information about the book and author can be found at <http://www.austinthenandnow.com>.

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