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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
 Howson Branch Library
 December 2nd, 2002, 7:00 pm

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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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THE NEIGHBOR

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

November, 2002

President's Message November 2002

Since this is my first President's newsletter, this seems like a good opportunity to introduce myself and the newest members of the Board, and to describe some of the projects we plan to pursue this year. But before doing that, I want to be sure to thank Susan Pascoe for all of her hard work this past year as President of WANG. Susan has done a great job in guiding our organization, and I look forward to consulting with her and the other illustrious past-presidents (Hal Katz and Blake Tollett) as we go forward. I also want to thank all of the Board members from the past year for their work on behalf of our neighborhood. Special thanks also go to Selina Serna (for her work in pursuing additional sidewalks for our neighborhood), Linda Dickens (for shepherding the newsletter) and Joe Bennett (for pushing the historic district's designation process forward). We will certainly miss the contributions of Irwin Spear (who passed away this year), Ian Inglis (who served as Treasurer and monitored the Mopac developments), Balie Griffith (who is taking some well deserved time off) and Emily Covich (who moved away). New additions to the Board include Ken Pfluger, Stephen Griffith and Michael Falk. These gentlemen are all fine fellows with deep Austin roots, and we are happy to have their help.

Introduction: Having grown up in Austin (and spent my formative teen years carousing around Tarrytown), I suppose I bring the perspective of a long-time Austinite to the Board. This means that I fondly remember many stories about the people and places here, but probably also means that I still call the grocery stores by their earlier names (like Rylander's instead of Tom Thumb). Having served a short stint in that urban and anonymous 'burb called

Dallas before returning to West Austin to raise our family, I have a "born again" passion for our neighborhood. It truly is a treat to live in a place where you see people at the store who you grew up with as a child, or where your kid's classmate's parents were your own classmates as a child. For me, this neighborhood has a sense of connectedness and community that I think is incredibly valuable, and that I am passionate about protecting.

WANG Objectives: To guide our work this year, the Executive Committee will be holding a retreat on December 2, 2002, to discuss goals and objectives for our group. If you have any ideas about issues that deserve attention, please contact me at mike@hamiltonterriale.com.

My own view about WANG's objectives is that this group should work to "preserve, protect and defend" our neighborhood. While this sounds like something Superman might say, I believe it actually reflects our mission to hold onto where we live and what we love. While both conservatives and liberals live in our neighborhood, we all can come together to preserve, protect and defend our part of town.

Our work to preserve the neighborhood includes the ongoing project to qualify the neighborhood (or parts of the neighborhood) for historical designation protection. We will soon need additional help with this process to compile the required documentation, so please stay tuned. In addition, one of the long-term goals for the group is to prepare a neighborhood plan in accordance with the city's neighborhood planning efforts.

When I think of protecting our neighborhood, I want to make sure that we are not losing the people or the parts of our neighborhood that make our neighborhood special. One of our significant efforts to protect our neighbors is the work to have additional sidewalks built in

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

continued from cover

the neighborhood for the safety of pedestrians. There is increasingly a need for additional bike lanes, as more of us ride bikes or mopeds around the neighborhood. A related safety issue is the increasing amount of traffic through our neighborhood. While the rush hour traffic on Exposition is heavy now, it would only get worse during the construction phase if MoPac is ever expanded. Another issue that we should monitor to protect our neighborhood is status of the Lions Municipal Golf Course and Camp Mabry, both of which are an important part of West Austin.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our efforts to defend the neighborhood include actively participating in the various zoning issues for our neighborhood. With increasing property values, there is more pressure to build oversized houses. When these buildings exceed the zoning limitations, the resulting structure may no longer fit within the rest of the neighborhood, but can also cause physical damage to other neighbors (such as in the form of increased water flow). Our Board is committed to upholding the existing zoning requirements whenever possible, and we are lucky to have the experience and energy of Blake Tollett who heads our Zoning Committee.

Again, please let us know if there are any issues we should address at the Executive Committee retreat. In the meantime, now that the mosquitoes and oppressive heat are gone, I encourage you to go outside, talk to your neighbors, and enjoy our neighborhood during this beautiful time of the year.

Michael Rocco Cannatti
338-9100
mike@hamiltonterriale.com

WANG Executive Committee Meeting Minutes November 4, 2002

Attending Board Members: Michael Cannatti, Joe Bennett, Erik Cary, Michael Falk, Gwen Jewiss, Susan Pascoe, Kenneth Pfluger, Selina Serna and Blake Tollett

Guests: John Magnuson, Paula Martin, Sara Madera, and Pete Wassdorf.

Report from Windsor-Exposition Neighbors: Ron Magnuson, with the newly formed Windsor Exposition Neighborhood Group (WENG)-- set up by neighbors in the immediate area to be the negotiating group to deal with the planned expansion of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church -- gave a status report. According to Mr. Magnuson, because many of the neighbors have reservations with the Church's plans, they have hired a traffic engineer to analyze the parking and traffic situation in preparation for a meeting with the Church in the next two weeks. Mr. Magnuson also reported that the Church may be negotiating with the owner of the Tarrytown Shopping Center for up to 150 additional parking spaces.

Board of Adjustment Cases B 3201 Gilbert Street (near the intersection of Hopi Trail, Stephenson Avenue): Paula Martin appeared to discuss the situation with her requested variance. Ms. Martin indicated that she had hired a contractor to build a covered porch over the entry of her house. The city red tagged her construction because she needed to obtain a variance with regard to the setback requirements. The executive committee discussed the situation and tentatively decided to not oppose the variance unless there is neighbor opposition to the variance.

2305 Quarry Road (near Kent Lane): Pete Wassdorf (and his two sons) appeared to discuss his planned building project. Mr. Wassdorf plans to build a two story guest-house upon the general footprint of his existing garage for his teen-age sons. Because he does not want to remove two existing trees, he is requesting a variance of the side setback requirements from five feet to three feet. He is also requesting that the rear-setback be varied from 25 feet to 15 feet to facilitate a larger structure. Mr. Wassdorf indicated that even though he is required to request a variance in the rear set back, the structure will still be 25 feet from the street pavement because of a ten foot easement strip of property owned by the City. Mr. Wassdorf noted that the set back will also correspond to the set back of adjacent properties on the two blocks on either side of him. After discussion by the executive committee, it was tentatively decided that no opposition to the plans would be made unless neighbor opposition arose.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from last month's meeting were approved.

Austin's Community Gardens

This Spring, I undertook a study of Austin's community gardens for my Master's Degree in Community and Regional Planning at UT-Austin. The study included background research on community gardens, site visits, and surveys of gardeners, university students, and attendees at neighborhood association meetings in neighborhoods with community gardens, including the West Austin Neighborhood Group.

I discovered that Austin has a varied network of community gardens that provide gardeners with food, recreation, social interaction, and contact with nature. However, the condition of the gardens varies greatly. Some gardens, such as the Deep Eddy and Mayfield Gardens, are thriving while others are struggling. Neighborhood residents appreciate having a community garden nearby when it adds beauty to the neighborhood and provides opportunities for interaction among residents, but most of the people who completed surveys at neighborhood meetings do not use the community gardens themselves. Time constraints prevent many people, especially undergraduate students, from using community gardens.

The fallow condition of several community gardens in East Austin and the interviews with activists at these gardens suggest that residents in the area do not have adequate time or money for gardening even though they stand to gain the most from it. Several of East Austin's gardens have received support from the Sustainable Food Center in the recent years in the form of plants, tools, and training, but, in a few cases, this support has not resulted in self-sufficiency.

In order to create and maintain a thriving garden, it is essential to involve diverse people from the community, require only manageable amounts of volunteer labor, and create an orderly and permanent-looking garden space of which gardeners and neighbors alike can be proud. Such a garden will promote itself through pass-by traffic, generating new gardeners as others move away. Gardeners should also get involved with neighborhood associations and other local groups to create awareness of the gardens and the benefits that they offer to the neighborhood and its residents. By cultivating a positive image in the mind of the public, the gardens will increase their value in the community, improving their ability to maintain the interest and support of a growing, or at least stable, number of gardeners and neighbors who will work to keep the gardens productive and beautiful.

Thank you to all those who participated in this research for sharing their thoughts and giving their time.

—Jackie Brown

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