



Mar-Apr
2016

Walnut Creek Neighborhood News

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association

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So How Do You Feel About The Rush-Hour Cut-Through Traffic In The 'Hood?

The General Meeting of the WCNA Will Focus on Traffic Issues

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, April 5th at 6:30 p.m.

by WCNA President Robert Meadows

The Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association (WCNA) will hold its annual General Meeting at the Lawshae Building on the grounds of St. Mark United Methodist Church, 601 W. Braker Lane. An agenda will be posted on social media prior to the meeting. Light refreshments will be served.

Thank you to St. Mark for hosting us again. Please bring a nonperishable food item for the church's food pantry. The church is within easy walking and biking distance, but does provide ample parking around in the back.

Besides publication of the newsletter, hosting the several social media sites and working to protect the integrity of the neighborhood, WCNA plans, sponsors and holds, in whole or part, the National Night Out Party, the annual neighborhood garage sale, the Christmas Caroling, the July 4th parade, and the Walnut Bluffs Park workdays and neighborhood cleanup parties. Please support the WCNA with your attendance at the annual General Meeting and with your dues, and **do not** underestimate the importance of your attendance.

Regular business will be brief at this meeting. There will be no board member elections this year because the entire board stood for election or re-election in 2015 and the term of board service is two years. (On the other hand, if you would like to serve on the Board please consider coming forward and placing your name in nomination; We can use a few more hands.) Issues which have been handled since last year's meeting will be briefly enumerated along with any other reports of interest.

Now to traffic. The City of Austin will be sending representatives from the Departments of Transportation and Public Works to educate the neighborhood about our options with regard to traffic control. We can make this neighborhood a model for dealing with traffic, but education about the options and procedures is a must. We also will have at least one representative from our District 7 council representative, Leslie Pool, at the meeting.

To start with, think about what the issues for your street are and what you want to see done. Send me those thoughts and I will forward them to the speakers prior to the meeting. Would you like to see speed bumps? How about closing a street, or making a street one way? How about traffic circles? Let me know. And remember, the neighborhood will decide these issues, not the WCNA. Typically the City requires teams to be set up on each street and requires a certain percentage of owners on the street to buy in. Come to the General Meeting and let's start setting up those teams. Certainly Scurry, Caddo, Covington, and Hornsby will want teams. Don't hang back. Everyone's opinion is valued here in the neighborhood, or at least by me and the Board, because we seek a collegial consensus. And not every idea will be a good idea, or will be supported by the group, but no idea should go unvoiced. Respect is the watchword here.

On 15 March 2016 I will be taking a tour of the Walnut Crossing development with the developer, Mr. Larry Peel (<http://larrypeel.com/future-properties/>). I hope to get a better handle on when Walnut Park Crossing (formerly known as Dillingham Lane) will finally be cut through to N. Lamar, and I will report on this at the General Meeting (refer to the previous two issues of the newsletter for details of the project).

Your attendance at the General Meeting legitimizes the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association in the eyes of the local political entities, such as the City of Austin and Travis County. Good attendance at the General Meeting means that the Association's voice will be taken more seriously when an important need arises (such as when the City - in response in part to objections from the WCNA - decided not to put a parking lot at the Walnut Bluffs Trailhead, or when WCNA was able to stop a used car lot on the empty lot at Georgian and Braker next to the Korean church).

Good News from our city council rep Leslie Pool: Capital Metro-collected tax money was distributed to the ten districts recently, and as a result we are scheduled to have a sidewalk built from Braker to Scurry, in front of the old Albertson's, the ATT switching station and the old computer store. Obviously some drainage issues will have to be solved for this to happen, but it seems the neighborhood could receive some actual improvement from the city.

FREE SEMINAR – REMODEL SOLUTIONS FOR WALNUT CREEK

Wednesday March 30th, 6:30pm at Santorini's Café

Come learn about remodeling trends, challenges, & solutions specific to our Walnut Creek Homes. Visit with remodel experts & interior designers as they discuss how to make the most of your improvements and to plan for any remodel project. It is a great time to visit & hear from neighbors who have successfully navigated through WCN remodel projects.

Questions? Contact Jill Leberknight – jill@agentjill.com

Canopy Comments: Caring for our Live Oaks by Sharon Porter

The heritage live oaks in our neighborhood add value to individual properties, reduce heat, enhance the neighborhood, and create enjoyment in our lives.

Oak wilt: Chris Dolan, COA arborist for oak wilt mapping, will survey the Walnut Creek Neighborhood for evidence of new oak wilt after the leaf exchange, likely some time in April. If you have specific trees you think he should survey, notify him at chris.Dolan@austintexas.gov. Findings from the survey will be published in the next newsletter, and on neighborhood social media sites. We are a known historic oak wilt site, recently assessed as quiescent. Chris is very familiar with the neighborhood.

Trimming live oaks: We are now at a time in the year when trimming live oaks increases the risk of development of oak wilt, because of increased activity on the part of the vector that spreads the disease. As a general rule of thumb, August is the next period of reduced risk. When in doubt, consult a CoA arborist.

Canopy replacement: We are beyond the time of year optimal for planting trees to allow for root development during the cold months when they are dormant. While it is too late to plant trees now, it is not too late to plan for planting next fall. Usually October is considered a good month to plant trees for restoring lost canopy.

Parrots in the neighborhood.

The Quaker (or Monk) parrot (or parakeet) comes from central South America. It's a small parrot which is unique among parrots in its homebuilding: It lives in colonies ("apartments") that it constructs from sticks and twigs. There was an established colony on Town Lake in the 70s which was released when the breeder couldn't keep snakes and rodents from invading and destroying birds and eggs. Some of the birds have managed to survive the colder winters from those days, and if you ever looked up at the tall light poles on the north side of the lake, especially around the baseball fields there, you could have wondered what those big piles of sticks were doing up there. Over the years the number has increased and the parrots have spread in all directions. In the last twenty years they started showing up on the light poles at the UT intramural fields between 45th and 51st. Now if you know what to listen for you can hear them flying low over the neighborhood, and sometimes in the trees. Their sound - a continuous chatter - is distinctive, and like most parrots they're always talking, even while flying. Also like all parrots they fly in straight lines at high speed, so you have to look fast when you hear them to see them pass over. Their bodies form a cross shape, with the wings straight out from the body. Based on sightings in some of our trees several times recently they soon may build apartments in some of our taller ones.



Barbara (Babs)Warren, Gone But Not Forgotten



The neighborhood lost another colorful long-time resident in February. Babs lived in the house on the one-acre lot behind the high chain-link fence on north Tedford. This is one of the oldest houses in the neighborhood, built by her uncle in 1950 when the area to the north was part of a dairy, according to old timers. She was born in Austin in 1933 to Curtis Kelly and Era Cade McClish, graduated from Austin High, attended UT Austin, married to C. Dee Warren and moved to and lived many years in California working in the aerospace industry, according to her obituary in the Austin American Statesman.

Babs was an extrovert who frequently wore colorful clothes and a conspicuous hat and was ready to tell you about how to be healthy and to extoll her staunch libertarianism. She engaged in almost all neighborhood events and lobbied WCNA and the city about issues she felt strongly about. In other words, she was a real neighborhood character who will be missed. You can check out her obit at <http://goo.gl/fUoSd4>.

The Great Horned Owl Incident: A Lesson in Wildlife Management

If you follow the Nextdoor neighborhood listserver (see the first page), you probably saw the message about a large owl being stuck in a chimney the last week of February. As it turned out, it was unable to extricate itself from electronic wires connecting weather sensors on the roof - using the chimney as a conduit - to displays inside the home. This kind of misadventure is fairly common, especially this time of the year when large birds are looking to establish nests for the breeding / laying / chick-raising season. Many large birds use hollows in trees for their nests, and some chimneys look like a good surrogate. Of course some small birds do the same, the

Chimney Swift being the most obvious example, so some people like to leave their chimneys open to provide habitat for Swifts and similar birds (especially since we don't need the chimneys much anymore). If you do this you must expect to see an occasional bird or climbing critter in the house or stuck in the flue like this owl was. Otherwise it's a good idea to cover the opening with a screen, preferably one made for the purpose.

This young male Great Horned Owl shown in the picture probably was looking for a nesting site. He was in the chimney for about three days before being rescued, and he was exhausted from thrashing and bashing his wings on the sides of the chimney. It was in the evening of the third day before the rescuer, Greg Pitt, got to the home and managed to pull the bird up the chimney by tying towels on the end of a rope dropped by the homeowner from the top of the chimney to below the level where it was stuck. The rope had knots in it to try to help the owl climb out, but he was too entangled to do so (according to Ed Sones, a volunteer wildlife rehabilitator who has many years of experience with such situations, this "rope ladder" approach can work in some instances). Greg pulled the wad of towels up under the bird to the top of the chimney and then disentangled him from the wire, whence it managed to slip his grip and "fly"/glide away to another yard. Thus Greg had to chase the bird over a couple of fences and, he says, "catch it when it ran out of energy a few seconds before I did".

The young male bird is shown in the picture, held by Ed (notice use of thick gloves re the large talons). Owls tend to use their talons for self protection and rarely bite, thus Ed was feeling comfortable here holding the bird against his chest. A grown female Great Horned (the "horns" don't show well here) likely would be significantly larger than this boy,



Ed Sones holds the owl injured while trapped in a chimney in a nearby neighborhood. Note the color around the pupils is not accurate: It's generally a striking yellow/gold.

though he is probably about as large as he will get. Ed says his injuries appear not extremely serious, so he may not be in rehab very long before being released in his home territory.

Ed volunteered at Wildlife Rescue for many years, and then joined in founding Austin Area Wildlife Rehabilitation, Inc: <http://www.austinareawildliferehab.org/>. This site is the first place to look if you find one of most of the common wildlife species in this area in difficulty. There are instructions for how to treat such animals from babies to adults, and when it's appropriate to call them or Wildlife Rescue. It is a purely voluntary organization which depends solely on private donations. You can make such donations and/or join the organization through the website or information thereon. This is truly a worthy cause and operation.



Great Horned Owl in flight

And about owls: Remember that Mark and Lyndon in Quail Hollow still have their Owl Cam set up to follow the continuing saga of Ollie and Olivia the Screech Owls, in their effort to raise families in the area. The OwlCam is at <http://goo.gl/aVDLmi>, and you can log in as guest1, using the same term as the password. An owl is staying in the new "Owl Shack" at the time this is being written, but no sign of eggs yet. If you visit this site, please remember that it is set up for the neighborhoods adjacent to Quail Hollow, and the bandwidth employed wouldn't support a wider audience much of the time. So please don't spread the login information to the world.

(Bad news can travel around the world while) Good News Puts on its Shoes.

It's easy these days to develop a bad attitude, given the mutual bashing of candidates in this election year and the tendency of the headlines and lead stories to concentrate the most spectacular bad news that can be found. So it was refreshing when the news over a few days included some promising events and situations.

For example:

It's reported likely that **we'll still get the effects of the El Nino** in the Pacific over the late Spring/early Summer months. I.e., we should see above average rainfall and reasonable temperatures through May (OK, so we've learned not to put too much stock in long-range - more than three days - weather reports, but nevertheless...). Maybe we can get whatever survives the recent mini-drought going again and have flowers and green plants and yards this year.

The number of Monarch butterflies making it to their wintering hibernation habitat in Mexico the last two seasons is FOUR TIMES the number of years prior! It's still less than a quarter of what it was 20 years ago, but this big increase comes at great relief to naturalists and the World Wildlife Fund, who have been watching as the number has dwindled steadily over past years due to loss of habitat from illegal cutting of forests, use of herbicides and pesticides along their routes, drought and other erratic weather, and loss of the milkweed which both feeds and supports egg-laying.

The 2500-mile trip between summer (Canada) and winter (Mexico) habitats tends to center a bit to the west of us, but we get many of these gorgeous insects in our area, and anyone who has the garden or yard space can contribute to the massive movement to plant milkweed to help the recovery process; More than 250,000 acres were added last year. Before buying and planting, visit <http://www.wildflower.org/feature/?id=135> to make sure you get the correct species for our area (also available at The Natural Gardener on Old Bee Caves Road).

The state legislature has allocated **almost nine times the funding for state parks** for the next biennium as for the previous one. The money mostly comes from the source designated for this purpose but not used in this way for years: the tax revenue from sporting goods sales. Local parks McKinney Falls, Bastrop, Pedernales Falls and Inks Lake State Parks will benefit, allowing such things as repair of flood-damaged facilities, new bathrooms and re-opening the visitor center at McKinney Falls. Until the last session of the legislature these taxes mostly were spent through the general fund, but the "windfall" of tax money from the oil and gas boom allowed passage of the bill to use these funds as originally intended. Unfortunately the (predictable) downturn in oil drilling/production now in progress may work to reverse the process, but at least some of these long-needed tasks will get done.

Our water-source lakes, **Travis and Buchanan, are close to 90% full**, so even though we may remain under the Stage 2 Drought regime we won't have to feel guilty about using a bit more water this summer. In fact, even the rice farmers will probably get all the water they need this year.

India has declared sixteen "no-selfie" zones across the country. Maybe there's hope for us!? Of course their action was in response to 19 "selfie-deaths" in the past two years. Don't know how that number compares to ours, but I'd stack our "driving-while-texting" death rate against theirs anytime.

Sunglasses that counteract much of the effects of red-green color blindness have been developed and are coming onto the market. About 8% of the population suffer from color blindness of this form, which has some significant negative effects (about 99% of these are male, as the deficiency is sex-linked, passed from mothers to sons). Of course recognizing red from green traffic lights immediately comes to mind, but this is minor since position of the lights usually gives the same information. But the trait disqualifies from some jobs, such as police officer, firefighter and airline pilot. Wearing specific different colored lenses on each eye has been used for years to reduce the effect, but these sunglasses look like regular ones. The drawback at this stage of development is cost, as the going price currently is about \$350.

Recent elections in Iran clearly indicate the direction in which the great majority of Iranians want to go: toward a more "normal" society with good relations with the rest of the world. Unfortunately the political structure of the authoritarian state will make this a very slow process, but the results of the election provide reason for hope.

A Google driverless car was involved in an accident with a bus in California, and it appears to be the fault of the car for the first time in all previous such accidents. The fact that the car was moving only at about 2 mph and the bus at 15 mph doesn't negate this demonstration of the kind of driver-to-driver interaction that such vehicles will have to "learn" to be completely safe. So perhaps arrival of the age of the driverless car is slowed a bit. Isn't this a good thing?

Let's thank Joel Beard, who pointed us to a KXAN report on changes by the Austin Watershed Protection Department in how our drainage fee assessment is being calculated. The thrust of the report is that newer technology now allows computing the ratio of impervious cover to permeable cover on our properties using aerial photograph overlays on digital maps. Square footage of impervious cover and the ratio of that to total lot area are used to produce a drainage fee for each property. This method allows that ratio to be accurately computed, obviating use of the flat fee method applied until now. The downside is that it has increased the average fee by about \$1, to about \$10.86 per month, but at least now we can feel like it's a fair process. You can check your own fee computation using the tool at <http://www.austintexas.gov/GIS/DrainageCharge/>.



Joel Beard, Tim Entress, Matt Ehlers, Robert Meadows and Paul Birdsall take a break during the city-wide volunteer park work day.

Another Superb Day in the Park: It's My Park Work Day

A large and energetic group of volunteers gathered at our Walnut Bluffs Trailhead on the morning of the city's "It's My Park" Work Day, on Saturday, March 5th. On a beautiful springlike day at least 20 people - along with Tasha Bowser who organized the project - showed up to mulch, weed and remove invasive plants such as Ligustrum and briar from our local park. Among the volunteers were Gary and Margaret Ann Brewer, Dorsey Twidwell, Sharon Porter, Robert Meadows, Paul Birdsall, Elizabeth Switek and son Adam, Tim Entress, Matt Ehlers, Joel Beard, Mendy Marshall, Jim Letchworth, John McGhee, Josh Flanagan and daughters Moira & Eliza, Daniel Vick, and Rudy Calderon and Isabel Segura from TCEQ. This probably was a record for a park work day: Thanks to you intrepid neighbors and friends! Hope you also had fun!



Josh Flanagan and his daughters Eliza and Moira work near the entrance.

Keep Abreast of Our Weather

Our local "Personal Weather Station" (PWS, Eubank Acres KTXAUSTI123, <https://goo.gl/pffQXi>), is owned and maintained by Scott Messec and Wendy Hodges on Oakwood. It provides instantaneous local current weather conditions and historical records at the site since its installation in 2009 (<https://www.wunderground.com>). It's generally available any time you want to check it, and applications that allow viewing on your portable device are available for most brands. The station reports we've had two measurable showers totaling about 2.1 inches in the first two months of the year, about the same as Camp Mabry. This has been sufficient to maintain our status:

There is no burn ban in effect until further notice.

Nevertheless we will remain under Stage 2 indefinitely.

For residences, Stage 2 means **use of hose-end sprinklers only between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m., on Sundays for houses with even-numbered addresses and on Saturdays for odd-numbered addresses.**

For automatic systems: **before 5:00 a.m. and after 7:00 p.m., on Thursday (even) and Wednesday (odd addresses).** Hand and drip watering can be done anytime.

For more explanation, see <http://austintexas.gov/department/stage-2-watering-restrictions>

RESIDENTIAL		COMMERCIAL		PUBLIC SCHOOLS	
Hose-End Sprinklers	Automatic Irrigation	Hose-End Sprinklers	Automatic Irrigation	Hose-End Sprinklers	Automatic Irrigation
BEFORE 10 AM or AFTER 7 PM	BEFORE 5 AM or AFTER 7 PM	BEFORE 10 AM or AFTER 7 PM	BEFORE 5 AM or AFTER 7 PM	BEFORE 10 AM or AFTER 7 PM	BEFORE 5 AM or AFTER 7 PM
Even Address	Even Address	Even Address	Even Address	Even Address	Even Address
Sunday	Thursday	Tuesday	Tuesday	Monday	Monday
Odd Address	Odd Address	Odd Address	Odd Address		
Saturday	Wednesday	Friday	Friday		

STAGE 2 WATER RESTRICTIONS
WATERING ONE DAY PER WEEK



Thanks to Tasha Bowser for suggesting the use of these "kid alerts" to place on our primary cut-through street, Covington, to try to reduce the speed - and we hope even some of the intensity - of the traffic that invades our neighborhood during rush hours. Tasha procured and set up these signs in the yards of Theresa Jones at the west end and Donna Estes at the east end of Covington.

Also thank **Sharon** Porter for taking the initiative to get the owner of the property at Covington and IH35 to clean up the trash and mow the grass / ground cover. That entrance into the neighborhood now matches our aspirations much better, as does the one at Lamar and Caddo which Sharon routinely cleans up.

Also note the address at **Walnut Bluffs Trailhead**: This was assigned months ago and now it has been marked at the entrance. When calling 311 or 911 this is the address to report: **11938 Oakbrook**.

Mar	9 Wed	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container
	11-20	SXSW 11-15 Interactive; 11-19 Film Conf & Festival; 15-20 Music Conf & Festival
	13	Daylight Savings Time begins: You lose one hour!
	14-18	Large Brush Pickup: Starts Monday the 14th and stops when all is picked up.
	19	Texas Democratic Precinct & County Convention; Hyatt Regency Hotel, 10:00 a.m.
	23 Wed	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container
	30	Eeyore's Birthday Party
	30-2 April	Texas Relays
Apr	1	April Fool's Day
	5	WCNA Annual General Meeting: St. Mark UMC, 6:30
	6 Wed	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container
	9-10	Spring Native Plant Sale, Wildflower Center; www.wildflower.org
	10	Capitol 10K; Last starting time 8:45 a.m.
	17	East Austin Urban Farm Tour
	20 Wed	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container
May	4 Wed	Curbside Recycle Pickup - Big Blue Container

Austin City Council

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EMERGENCY: Police, Fire, EMS, Animal Control: **Call 911**

City of Austin: All services, codes & code violations, animal reports:
Call 311

Get the smart phone 311 App:
<http://austintexas.gov/departments/311/smart-phone-app>

Adam Soliz, APD District Rep
(512) 974 8143
adam.soliz@austintexas.gov

Adan Ballesteros, County Constable, Pct 2 (512) 854-9697
Adan.Ballesteros@co.travis.tx.us

Austin Police Department Animal Cruelty Unit Tip Hot Line:
(512) 978-0523

North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods Newsletter is now a blog site, following a wide range of general city as well as neighborhood issues and events.

Read and Comment:
<http://www.lovenorthaustin.com/>

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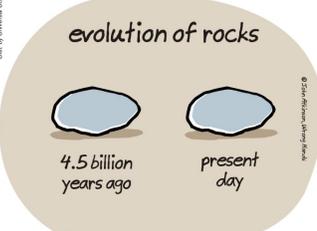
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Spiderwort and Irises
mark Spring on Covington

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This Mountain Laurel on Oakwood can't decide whether it's supposed to be purple or white!

About WCNA and the newsletter

Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association membership is open to any resident (owner or renter) or property owner within the boundaries, including perimeters, of the association.

Membership dues are \$15 per household for a calendar year. Send a check to: WCNA ; PO Box 82746; Austin, TX 78708-2746

Dues notices and payment envelopes are included in the Nov-Dec and Jan-Feb newsletters each year.

Payment also may be made using PayPal: <http://goo.gl/5iQlk>

WCNA News is sent to all members and every household within the boundaries represented by the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association: Braker Lane, North Lamar, I-35, and Yager Lane.

To contribute content to the newsletter, send contributions via email to wcna.contact@gmail.com or contact Pat Pitt, 512 837-6620.

The opinions expressed in articles printed in this newsletter are the explicit opinions of the writer(s) and, unless explicitly stated, are not to be implied as the opinions of either the editor or the Board of Directors of the Walnut Creek Neighborhood Association, Inc.



This "kid" on Covington is a message to slow down, or even take another route if you're a cut-through driver.