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# Willow Meadows News

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February 1996

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## March Meeting

The next meeting of the Willow Meadows Civic Club is Tuesday, March 5, 7:30 p.m. at the Willow Meadows Baptist Church. Please come and join us.

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## From The President

You may be a little overwhelmed by two newsletters within one month. My apologies especially to the Section Leaders and Block Captains who have to hand deliver almost 900 newsletters. I promise you this won't be a habit, but we felt it was necessary to catch up on old news with our January letter. Generally, newsletters will only be once a quarter, unless there is a particularly important event that needs everyone's urgent attention.

I welcome everyone to come to our first meeting of 1996, indicated above. We promise to keep these meetings as concise as possible, but it is also a forum to express your ideas and for us to present any news of importance affecting our subdivision and surrounding areas.

Our dues collection has gotten off to a strong start and I wish to thank everyone that managed to sift through their holiday bills and send in their payment. If you haven't sent in your dues yet, please don't delay and don't forget to request your security stickers for the house and cars.

As I said in the last newsletter, I am proud of this neighborhood and enthusiastic about the future of this area. It was a pleasure to read from some of the returned surveys that many of you share this enthusiasm. Many people feel reasonably secure in this neighborhood, and support our efforts on security and maintenance. Many added extra comments that they want everyone to pitch in a little more and keep up their own home appearance. These people recognize that we all must contribute to improving the neighborhood and keeping up our property values. I hope we all share this view.

We still need some volunteers. The position of Vice President remains vacant, and we really must fill this position. If you are curious what this position entails or if you have anyone to recommend, please let me know.

I look forward to seeing you at the March civic club meeting.

Sincerely

### Current Willow Meadows Civic Club Officers and Executive Board

President:	Chris Brouwer (723-9235)	Security:	Jane Leslie (729-4918)
Vice President	vacant	Maintenance:	vacant
Treasurer:	Joanne Gore	Deed Restrictions:	Doug Koy (723-0067)
Secretary:	Veronica McKenzie (729-3696)	Architecture:	Rob Chase (723-4878)
		Beautification:	Randall Doe (297-5648)

## SURVEY RESULTS

At the end of January, we had already received 204 surveys from our dues paying neighbors. We feel that is a fairly good sample from our neighborhood of 822 homes, so here are some preliminary results.

### HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU LIVED IN WILLOW MEADOWS?

0-3 years:	17.2%
4-7 years:	15.7%
8-10 years:	7.4%
11-19 years:	11.8%
20-29 years:	16.7%
30+ years:	31.4%

This shows there is a large group, almost one-third, who have been here since the subdivision was first built, and apparently they feel strongly enough about the neighborhood to stay here and continue to contribute to the civic club. Meanwhile, there is a new generation of families starting to move in that appreciate the value and location of this area. That's quite impressive when you consider that almost one out of every six homes has been bought within the last 3 years, and many of those have then gone through extensive remodeling.

DO YOU THINK THE SECURITY PATROL SHOULD BE CONTINUED? 99% responded **YES**. Typical responses were "yes!!!", "absolutely yes", "yes, a MUST", "we'll move if it stops". Some people commented that they don't think the constables are as visible recently. Your civic club board is concerned about this also and we are working on this situation. We pay too much not to see them more regularly.

DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD CONTINUE MAINTAINING THE ESPLANADE ALONG WEST BELLFORT? 87% responded **YES**. Less than 3% said no, while 5% questioned why the City didn't do it. We would like to clarify that the Meyer Park Center pays to maintain the esplanade from the Willow waterhole to South Post Oak, while the

Willow Meadows Civic Club pays to maintain the esplanade from Willow waterhole to the train tracks. We also pay for the southern sidewalk strip across from Meyer Park, but we are requesting the Meyer Park Center to take responsibility for this narrow strip since it only makes sense to do it simultaneously with their weekly mowing. There is no response from them at this point. We will consider the City taking responsibility for the remainder of the esplanade, but previous experience has shown their service to be irregular and not particularly careful around all the trees we have paid to install on the esplanade. Some "no's" came from people who live in the northern section of the subdivision and don't often come down to the West Bellfort esplanade. We appreciate that they don't benefit from the regular maintenance along this middle section of our neighborhood.

SHOULD WE CONTINUE MOSQUITO FOGGING DURING THE SUMMER? 92% responded **YES**. 3% responded "no", while another 3% questioned the effectiveness of the spraying. We have some serious concerns whether we got what we paid for last year. Many people doubt they saw weekly spraying, and the heavy mosquito population didn't help dispel our doubts. Before we sign a contract for 1996, we want to establish better accountability of the spraying and we want to discuss if they can spray more effectively, perhaps focusing along the bayou and utility easements, which appear to be the breeding areas for mosquitoes.

We find the returned questionnaires to be full of good suggestions and comments. If you haven't returned your questionnaire yet, please don't hesitate. Your opinion does count. We will publish additional results in the next newsletter.

## ESPLANADE NEWS

Since our last newsletter, you may have noticed temporary barricades installed on one cut-through of West Bellfort near South Post Oak across from the Meyer Park Center. We understand this is the first step necessary before construction of a dedicated left turn lane into the North Colonial Center (old Wyatts location). The City of Houston will monitor any significant complaints from anyone seriously affected

by the blocking of that cut-through before proceeding to permanently change the traffic flow.

## NEIGHBORHOODS TO STANDARD

We were very pleased to be announced as a new member of the Neighborhoods to Standard Program for 1996. This is a program sponsored by the City of Houston for a limited number of subdivisions which the City recognizes have strong potential but may require extra assistance and muscle from the City to retain their neighborhood integrity and appreciate in value. I incorrectly stated last month that this is a 5-year program. The program is theoretically forever, with the City committed to review the neighborhood status on a routine basis. Nevertheless, the majority of changes should be visible within the coming year.

What exactly can we expect? First the City reviewed all of our infrastructure, which included driving through every street with Public Works and other city officials. Then there is the sewer system cleaning, which is primarily due to the efforts of some residents who have experienced flooding and sewer problems, but we believe our councilperson also helped finally get some action. Probably in March or April, we should see all of the streets in Willow Meadows get resurfaced. The few streets resurfaced last year were by accident. We have been assured all streets will be done this spring.

Street signs is another issue; we can't expect to get all sorts of speed limit signs and "children at play" signs throughout the neighborhood, but we should at least be able to get stop signs where they are so notably absent at some critical intersections. Street lighting will also get reviewed and more lighting will be available to us at no charge.

You can help. If you have a recommended location for a street light or street sign that you think is easily justified, please call us. You are welcome to contact City Hall directly also. The person to call is our neighborhood representative, Todd Cooper, at 654-6180, or Judy Butler, head of the Neighborhoods to Standard program, at 247-2666. Please be sure to remind them you are calling from Willow Meadows subdivision and that we are part of the Neighborhoods to Standard program. That should make things happen a little faster!

## TREASURER'S REPORT

The following report indicates the collection of dues in the amount of \$46,825, which is \$933 greater than we collected through the same period last year. The number of households that have paid to date is 338, or 41.1% of the total households in Willow Meadows. Those households that are paying partial payments please remember to send the balance to Willow Meadows Civic Club, P.O. Box 35551, Houston, TX 77235, and save us the postage sending you reminders.. We are off to a good start in dues collections, but we need everyone to pay their share, so please mail in those dues as soon as possible.

Category/Description	Jan. 1, 1996-Jan. 31, 1996
<b>REVENUES</b>	
Dues	\$46,825.00
Interest checking	\$00.00
Interest savings	\$ 184.74
Advertising	\$00.00
Other Income	\$00.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$47,009.74</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	
Bank charge	\$00.00
Miscellaneous	\$100.00
Mowing	\$00.00
Pest control	\$00.00
Postage	\$100.00
Printing	\$640.78
Security	\$4,812.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,774.47</b>
<b>SURPLUS</b>	<b>\$41,235.27</b>

Please don't be misled by the large surplus. We collect a majority of the dues in January and February, while our expenses grow through the summer months.

## **DEED RESTRICTION OR ARE THEY BREAKING THE LAW?**

Many people who responded to our survey indicated some concern about the condition of some homes, as well as other problems that they considered detrimental to the neighborhood. Some things we cannot legislate, while some of the concerns were outright violation of city ordinances, violation of which could result in fines. That is why we want to take this opportunity to publish some important city laws.

### **Section 45-111. Parking for certain purposes prohibited.**

No person shall park a vehicle upon any roadway for the principal purpose of: (1) Displaying such vehicle for sale, (2) Washing, greasing, or repairing such vehicle, except repairs necessitated by an emergency.

### **Section 45-120. Parking in excess of 24 hours.**

It shall be unlawful for any person to knowingly leave parked or standing in any public street, alley or other public place any vehicle for a longer continuous period of time than 24 hours.

### **Section 45-123.**

It shall be unlawful for any person to leave, stand or park a trailer, semi-trailer, pole trailer, house trailer, either attached or unattached to a motor vehicle, on the public streets of the city for a period of time in excess of two hours.

### **Section 45-124. Parking of commercial vehicles prohibited between certain hours.**

It shall be unlawful for any person to park or stand any commercial vehicle on the streets between the hours of 2 and 6:00 a.m. except during the act of loading or unloading as provided for in this article.

## **NEWS ARTICLES WELCOME**

We will always welcome any ideas or news you may have for the Willow Meadows newsletter. We believe this should be a tool for communicating

anything of interest to our neighborhood. Please contact Chris Brouwer if you want to contribute a news item.

## **STOP SIGNS**

Did anyone notice the new stopsigns on the feeder roads at the Greenwillow intersections? There have been numerous accidents and near-accidents due to people speeding down the feeder roads and ignoring the stopsigns. Thanks to your complaints and some action by the Texas Highway Department, we have two signs on either side of the feeder roads, and they are BIG! While this is no guarantee that everyone will stop, they should have no excuses about not seeing them! Please remember, though, to use caution at all intersections. Not everyone is as conscientious a driver as you.

So how about other stop signs? As mentioned in the Neighborhoods to Standard program, we will work with the City of Houston to get stop signs installed at numerous intersections within the subdivision which are currently lacking. Bureaucracy is incredible in its ability to delay everything, but we are confident to get some critical signs installed.

## **CIVIC CLUB DUES**

At the end of December/early January, you should have received the Civic Club Dues notice, along with a return envelope and letter. If you haven't sent in your dues, please do so as soon as possible. We have a strong majority of people that participate, but they also don't understand why we have approximately 30% of households that don't pay dues, yet continue to benefit from our increased security, deed restriction enforcement, as well as local esplanade maintenance. Look at your dues as an investment in your house. If you rent your home, we still encourage your participation, but if you can't bring yourself to pay the dues, please ask your landlord to contribute since our civic club is here to protect their investment. Even if you have misplaced the original Dues notice, you can mail your check, payable to Willow Meadows Civic Club, to P.O. Box 35551, Houston, 77235. Don't forget to indicate how many security stickers you would like to receive for your home and cars. Please

remember the questionnaire that was included on the back of your January dues letter, if you still have it. We welcome your comments and suggestions regarding Willow Meadows.

### **SECURITY REPORT**

Following a very quiet month in December we have had a rather serious incident. On January 13, a resident who was jogging on Willowgrove was confronted by two males who pulled up in front of him. They jumped out of their car, hit him over the head with an unknown object and stole his wallet. This happened near the corner of Willowgrove and Nenana at about 9 p.m. on a Saturday. Houston Police were called to the scene however the suspects were not found.

Later in the month the Constable responded to a suspicious person call at a home in the 4800 block of Hazelton in the Willowbend subdivision. Deputy Perez found a black male in the process of breaking into a side window at the residence and made an arrest. While this was not really inside the boundaries of Willow Meadows it was on the first street south of us.

Deputy Perez also has learned from Houston officers that the subdivisions of Willowbrook and Post Oak Manor on the south side of Willowbend Blvd. are experiencing a problem with home burglaries. These subdivisions are not a part of the contract program with Precinct 7. We hope that the presence of marked patrol units in our area will deter these thieves from moving north.

Please note that if you call 911 for a police emergency the Houston Police will respond. You should also call the Constable at 748-8900. The city and the county are on different radio frequencies so even though a constable unit may be in close proximity to you, they will not know of your situation unless it is called into their dispatcher. We also want the Constable to be aware of any criminal activity in the neighborhood even if HPD has handled a call.

In the recent survey many of you completed, quite a few residents expressed concern over the visibility

of our contract officers. Part of this problem may be that in the past, Precinct 7 had several reserve officers that were required to volunteer a certain amount of their time in order to keep their commissions. There has been a change in the requirements and they no longer have to do this volunteer service. Consequently we have lost what were actually free, extra patrols. We are working with our regular patrols on increasing their presence in the neighborhood.

Finally, the Constable reminds us that with the Spring season approaching, we usually see an increase in criminal activity. Remember not to leave garage doors open, toys and lawn equipment out, and windows or doors unlocked. The influx of various types of service persons provides an excellent cover for someone with a criminal intent. You are encouraged to call the Constable if you see anything suspicious. You might also get into the habit of jotting down a license plate number or noting the description of a vehicle and/or person whose presence in the area strikes you as questionable.

### **SLOW DOWN!!!!!!**

That's what many of our neighbors want everyone to do. The questionnaire resulted in many comments about speeding, and we can't disagree with them. Notorious raceways are Cliffwood, Greenwillow and Willowgrove, but people speed even on the sidestreets. Did you know that racing down Cliffwood from West Bellfort to Loop 610 at 50 mph will save you only 20 seconds compared to going the speed limit? Is that 20 seconds so important compared to the results if you might hit someone's pet, a car backing out of a driveway, or worse...a pedestrian out for a walk or jog??? Think about it next time you go racing down the street and ask yourself if you would appreciate someone racing past your house at that same speed.

What can we do? We can apply for speed bumps, and that has been mentioned by many neighbors. We can have the constables issue more tickets, but you would also be surprised by the remarks they

get from neighbors when they issue tickets! The best solution is keep it slow in our neighborhood and if you are late to work or an appointment, do your speeding elsewhere!

### **DEED RESTRICTIONS**

Since the beginning of the year, there have been no formal complaints of deed restriction violations. We are currently investigating some complaints of parking of large commercial vehicles in our neighborhood, which fall under City ordinances.

If you have any questions about our deed restrictions, please contact Doug Koy.

### **STRAY ANIMALS**

If you have a problem with stray animals on your property, you can call the City of Houston Health and Human Services Department at 547-9400. They will want to know if the animal is a neighbor's pet or an unclaimed stray. If you know the animal is a neighbor's pet, you should provide the Health Department with address of the owner and they will send someone to talk with the pet owner to resolve the problem. All pets in the City of Houston, including cats, are supposed to be contained or kept on a leash. If the animal is a stray, the Health Department will send someone to catch the animals.

For hard to catch animals, you can borrow a cruelty-free trap for a \$55 deposit which is refunded when you return the trap. If you trap a stray, the Health Department will retrieve the animal and reset the trap.

Please also see a related article on Spaying or Neutering of pets in this Newsletter.

### **RED PRESCHOOL OPEN HOUSE**

Red Preschool, located at Red Elementary at 4520 Tonawanda, is excited to announced their 1996-1997 school year registration. Parents and future students are welcome to attend the Open House and Registration on Saturday, March 2nd from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in Red Elementary. Registration is open to the public and accepted on a

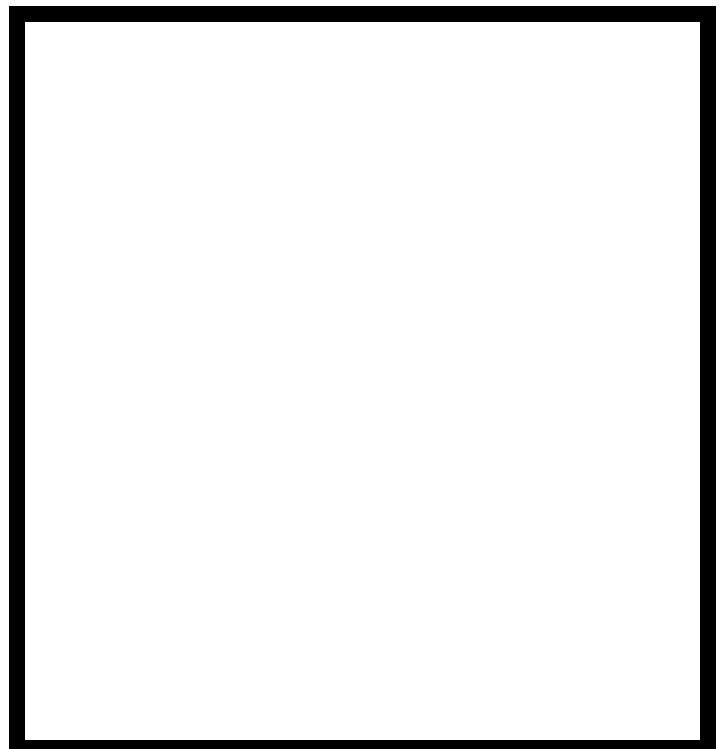
first come/first serve basis. Further information is available by calling the preschool at 728-4704.

### **YARD OF THE MONTH**

We will start up the Yard of the Month program again this year. Randall Doe encourages us to start thinking about spring clean-up and plantings to beautify your home. Attractive landscaping increases property values. As an added encouragement, Yard of the Month winners will receive gift certificates from Wolfe's Nursery. Randall plans to start the awards in April.

### **ROYALTY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD?**

It was Mardi Gras season again (yes, even in Houston) and there were many Mardi Gras celebrations in the Houston area, complete with all the pomp and circumstance that accompanies these royal affairs . We happen to know we had some winners from our neighborhood. Congratulations!





## RECYCLING REPORT

The schedule for recycling in the coming months is as follows:

March 5 & 19, April 2, 16 & 30, May 14 & 29.

The green recycling bins are the property of the City of Houston, and there is one bin allocated to each house in our neighborhood. As we indicated last month, if you are missing a bin and wish to replace it, you can call the City of Houston Recycling Hotline at 865-4201. You can also contact Henrietta Bell at 660-0309, because she has a small stockpile of bins since working so hard to get our neighborhood into the recycling program.

Don't forget: Heavy trash pick-up is the fourth Wednesday of every month. It is a violation of City ordinance to put heavy trash out for pick-up earlier than the weekend preceding scheduled collection. The schedule for the coming months is: February 28, March 27, April 24, and May 22.

Many of you might change your motor oil and wonder where to discard it. Don't pour it down a storm drain, since one quart of oil spoils 250,000 gallons of drinking water. There are many convenient places to recycle your used motor oil, including these neighborhood locations:

AUTOZONE: 5320 West Bellfort

EXXON: 4660 North Braeswood at Loop 610

SHELL: 10801 South Post Oak at Willowbend

If you care about your neighborhood as much as we do, lend a hand to keep up the appearances of the neighborhood. That includes not putting your trash out days in advance of pick-up (that is also a violation of City ordinance). The trashmen are not always so neat, or maybe you overloaded a bag which then split open. Don't leave it for the rest of your neighbors to look at. Please pick it up and bag it for the next pick-up. If you are out walking and picked up one piece of garbage or one forgotten sign, that is one less eyesore that is littering our neighborhood. Together with minimal effort, we can make Willow Meadows a more beautiful neighborhood.

## USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

PRECINCT 7 CONSTABLES: **748-8900**

EMERGENCY: **911**

POISON CONTROL: **654-1701**

MAYOR'S OFFICE: **247-1888**

MARTHA WONG, DIST. C: **247-2004**

CITY SWITCHBOARD: **247-1000**

WATER/SEWER REPAIRS: **939-5811**

STREET REPAIRS: **751-5437**

TRAFFIC LIGHT/SIGN REPAIRS: **865-4020**

## 1996 CIVIC CLUB MEETINGS

MARCH 5

JUNE 4

SEPTEMBER 10

DECEMBER 3

(Anybody up for a neighborhood holiday party at this meeting?)

### REAL ESTATE UPDATE...HOW ARE WE DOING?

The market is starting its usual seasonal increase in activity. The forecasted increase in new jobs in the Houston area of more than 20,000, the lowest mortgage rates in years (currently below 7%), and the unusually low inventory of homes on the Houston Multiple Listing Service (approximately 28,000) should make home sales increase and set up more of a seller's market. We will continue to have competition from other close-in neighborhoods in addition to the expansion in the master-planned suburban communities.

How did Willow Meadows do in 1995? The price range was greater than in previous years, because in 1995 we saw sales of some homes that were in very poor condition, as well as sales of updated and expanded custom homes. Here are the results for our subdivision in 1995:

<b>Average Sale Price:</b>	<b>\$120,918</b>
<b>Number of Sales:</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Average Price per square foot:</b>	<b>\$55.84 (\$53.92 in 1994)</b>
<b>Price Range of Sales:</b>	<b>\$46,000 - 185,000</b>
<b>Number of Current Active Listings:</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Current Pending Sales:</b>	<b>6</b>

Keep in mind what goes into determining market values:

- **Location**
- **market condition**
- **SOLD, not unsold comparables**
- **exposure to prospective buyers**
- **terms of the sale**
- **property condition**

Let's hope for continued interest in our neighborhood and escalating values!

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**DEED RESTRICTIONS**

All deed restriction complaints are reviewed and appropriate steps taken for enforcement. Complainants are advised in writing of the Board's actions on their complaints. Please use the form below to report suspected violations.

**REMEMBER**, Willow Meadows is a residential subdivision of single family dwellings.

**WILLOW MEADOWS CIVIC CLUB  
P.O. BOX 35551  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77235  
DEED RESTRICTIONS COMPLAINT FORM**

NAME OF  
COMPLAINANT \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
—

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE  
# \_\_\_\_\_

NATURE OF COMPLAINT: (Please be specific - Give Names, Addresses, Dates, Details)

If legal action would be required, are you willing to be a complainant and appear in court as a witness if absolutely necessary? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know of any other residents in your section of Willow Meadows who will also appear in court if necessary? \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE DO NOT TELEPHONE COMPLAINTS TO THE OFFICERS OF THE CLUB IF YOU ARE NOT PREPARED TO SUBMIT A WRITTEN COMPLAINT. The Civic Club cannot take action without a written complaint.

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Please mail your completed form to the address above. Your name will not be divulged unless you are a complainant in a lawsuit.

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