
Willow Meadows News

May 1996

June Meeting

The next meeting of the Willow Meadows Civic Club is Tuesday, June 4, 7:30 p.m. at the Willow Meadows Baptist Church. Please come and join us.

From The President

Once again, it is time for a neighborhood update and an invitation to join us at the next civic club meeting indicated above. There has been a lot of activity in and around our neighborhood recently, so we will do our best to update you in this newsletter. Most significant is the street resurfacing which has been confirmed and is in the beginning stages throughout the Willow Meadows subdivision. Other small improvements are becoming obvious, such as a few sorely needed stop signs, and more sewer repairs. Businesses around us continue to change, with the announcement of the upcoming departure of Media Play from Meyer Park and the Houston area, while we see continued business interest in our area as evidenced by the new Blockbuster Video and Casa Ole on South Post Oak.

For those of you who missed the March meeting, it was one of the biggest meetings in recent history, with more than 60 neighbors. Lots of politicians showed up also, as it was just prior to a primary election. During the meeting, there was lots of discussion regarding some of the responsibilities of the civic club. We welcome all viewpoints and all constructive comments to help the civic club fulfill your needs, and we will continue to operate on democratic principles of the majority. We also had 3 candidates for Vice President at the meeting, one of the few times we have had a choice, and we are pleased to announce the election of Charles Rusciano as Vice President.

Our June meeting will include a short presentation by the Harris Galveston Coastal Subsidence District. The presentation is in conjunction with a study that is presently being conducted in our area concerning subsidence. This presentation will start off our meeting, so please be prompt.

Please pay special attention to two sections in this newsletter. In the Esplanade section, please note the call for volunteers for a clean-up work party. Our new maintenance chairman, Harry Boswell, has some great ideas and he envisions big things for our common green areas. In the Deed Restrictions section, Doug Koy confirms what we have talked about for years - it is about time to get serious if we are going to update our very old deed restrictions and we will need everyone's input.

I look forward to seeing you at the June 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	Charles Rusciano (721-3136)	Maintenance:	Harry Boswell (728-5208)

Treasurer: Joanne Gore
Secretary: Veronica McKenzie (729-3696)

Deed Restrictions: Doug Koy (723-0067)
Architecture: Rob Chase (723-4878)
Beautification: Randall Doe (297-5648)

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following report indicates the collection of dues in the amount of \$72,325 since the beginning of the year, which is \$7,365, or 11%, greater than we collected through the same period last year. The number of households that have paid to date is 522, or 63.5% 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 more than pleased with the dues collections and we hope to break the 70% participation rate this year, but we still wonder about the remaining 30%. We need everyone to pay their share, so please mail in those dues as soon as possible.

Category/Description	Jan. 1, 1996-April 30, 1996
REVENUES	
Dues	\$72,325.00
Interest checking	\$00.00
Interest savings	\$ 967.94
Advertising	\$00.00
Other Income	\$00.00
Total	\$73,292.94
EXPENDITURES	
Bank charge	\$ 3.00
Miscellaneous	\$565.00
Mowing	\$1,200.00
Pest control	\$00.00
Postage	\$260.00
Printing	\$640.78
Security	\$19,250.28
Supplies	\$134.10
Total	\$22,203.16
SURPLUS	\$51,089.78

Please don't be misled by the large surplus. We collect a majority of the dues early in the year, while

our expenses grow through the summer months. **Beginning in April, our expenditures exceeded our revenues.** The 1996 budget indicates our total expenditures as follows:

SECURITY	\$ 57,750
MOWING	\$ 4,000
MOSQUITO SPRAYING	\$ 2,700
SECURITY STICKERS	\$ 641
POSTAGE	\$ 345
OTHER	\$ 1,000

SEWER REPAIRS

Some of you may wonder what all the activity has been along Cliffwood south of Loop 610 at the end of April and early May. That section has been plagued by flooding, but also sewage overflow through the manhole covers following even a small rain. The storm sewers were cleaned in late 1995 and early 1996 followed by camera surveillance for trouble spots. Unfortunately, that didn't completely solve the problem, and finally the City located lots of areas of crushed sanitary sewer lines along Cliffwood and some cross connecting streets. The recent activity was quite major, involving lots of digging to replace bad piping along Cliffwood, followed by a special form of slip-lining, where a special type of plastic pipe was expanded into the existing sewer lines to form a new coating. We understand this technique is very effective, but it sure made for quite a mess and a lot of noise late into the night where they were installing this pipe. Now we can only hope for rain to see if they fixed the problem and to help the dug up lawns grow back!

NEW ARTICLES WELCOME

We will always welcome any ideas or news you may have for the Willow Meadows newsletter. We believe this newsletter should be used for communicating anything of interest to our neighborhood. Please contact Chris Brouwer if you want to contribute a news item.

SECURITY REPORT

Since our last Newsletter came out in February, our Constables have handled many calls including false home alarms, nuisance calls, disturbance calls, reports of suspicious persons, general information calls, requests for resident assistance, they have helped look for lost children and handled other family crisis situations. The more serious cases of criminal activity of interest to all residents are:

February 21: A pickup truck parked in front of a residence in the 4800 block of McDermed was stolen during the daytime.

February 29: There was a burglary at Willow Meadows Baptist . Property stolen included the church van.

March 3: The rear windows were shot out of two vehicles parked in driveway on Sarong. Similar cases were observed in the Knollwood subdivision around same time. A Precinct 7 Constable arrested a suspect in Knollwood a couple of weeks later.

April: There were several complaints from around the neighborhood of persons stealing from curbside recycling bins. Please note that stealing from these bins is a criminal offense and anyone who observes such activity should try to get a description of the persons and vehicle including a license plate number and should call the Constable and HPD to report it.

May 2: A car parked on Meyerwood was broken into and items stolen.

May 11: An intruder was discovered in the early dawn in a house on O'Meara. The homeowner turned on lights which scared away the intruder, but not before he took some money.

Remember that if you call 911 for a police emergency, HPD will respond. Please also follow up with a call to the Precinct 7 dispatcher at 748-8900. You may get a faster response and even if HPD should handle the call, our Constable will be aware of the incident.

With the school year coming to an end, the Constable warns that we may see an increase in both criminal and nuisance type activity. Please continue to report anything suspicious that you may observe to the Constable for investigation. Patrolling can become monotonous for our deputies so checking out a situation, even if nothing comes of the call, actually helps keep them alert. We encourage interaction between our Constable deputies and residents. Please do not hesitate to call them even if you just want them to stop by and introduce themselves or to ask them a question because they are very willing to comply.

With the summer season upon us, don't forget that we often invite crime by offering opportunity. Did you know that many burglars find access to a home through an unlocked door or open window? Many of us leave garage doors open while we tend to chores in the back yard, and it only takes seconds for a passing thief to see an opportunity to steal your lawnmower. Bikes left in the front yard are also very easy targets. Don't let yourself be a victim; take responsibility for your possessions. If you have an alarm system, don't forget to use it.

While car theft is not a big problem in Willow Meadows, it is always a problem anywhere in Houston. The most often stolen vehicles are the Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme, the Honda Accord and the Toyota Camry. Most often, these cars are stripped for parts. In Houston, pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles are also target theft vehicles. The Chevrolet Suburban is close to the top of the list. Keep this in mind, and don't leave keys in the ignition and if you leave these vehicles on the street or in your driveway, please lock the doors.

We recently renewed the Constable's contract through the end of the year. This is only a seven month extension, as Precinct 7 is trying to get all contracts on a January-to-December basis. There was no increase in the monthly charge, and we do retain a 30-day cancellation clause in this contract. If you would like more information about the contract, please contact Jane Leslie.



Finally, **National Neighborhood Night Out** is coming up on Tuesday, August 6th from 7p.m.-9p.m.. Please mark your calendars. This is an evening where neighbors are encouraged to come outside, meet new neighbors and catch up with old neighbors that you may not have talked with in a while. The goal of this evening is to increase neighborhood awareness. It can be as simple as sitting outside and chatting with neighbors after dinner or it can be a block party where food and beverages are served and may even include activities for the kids. Precinct 7 will have cars in the area visiting the different streets and parties. In the past there has been some activity in Willow Meadows on this evening but we hope to increase participation this year by publicizing it early for those interested in organizing the events. More information will be provided later.

COUNTY SERVICES

Many of you may not be aware that many services are available to citizens at the Chimney Rock Courthouse Annex, which can save you a trip downtown. The annex offices were established to allow citizens to file or obtain documentation without going to the main courtroom. The Chimney Rock Annex is at 6000 Chimney Rock, at the intersection with Gulfton, and office hours are normally Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.. Services provided include:

- Marriage Licenses
- Assumed Names (Doing Business As) filings
- Releases of Real Estate Liens (Recorded downtown)
- Filing of Subpoenas for County Civil Court-at-law
- Certified and non-certified copies of:
 - Assumed Names
 - Real Property Records
 - Marriage Licenses
 - County Court Documents
 - Limited Probate Documents
 - List of Indexes
 - Birth and Death Certificates

If you need any of the services above, County Clerk Beverly Kaufman recommends you call 660-7902 prior to coming to the office to determine if they can handle your special requirements and to get information on fees for the above services.



NEIGHBORHOODS TO STANDARD

As we have indicated previously, as participants in the City of Houston's Neighborhoods to Standards, Willow Meadows is getting a little extra attention this year. That includes review of our subdivision infrastructure, additional street lighting where necessary, updating of street signs and resurfacing of our streets.

In regards to street signs, we requested some specific stop signs during the City's review. We succeeded to get an important stop sign at Greenwillow and O'Meara, as well as two additional stop signs on O'Meara. We had hoped for more signs, but the City prefers less over more and they only put stop signs where traffic count warrants it. We can be thankful for what we got, but we don't expect too many more signs. Let us know if you have a critical intersection near you that is missing a stop sign.

We also requested additional signs at the Willow Park. The Parks Department replied that upon review, they thought we had plenty of signs, including park hours, prohibition of alcohol, etc.. We have since reminded them that many of these signs are old and faded and face the wrong direction, so we are waiting their further action. We also requested they repair the sidewalks around the park which are heaved by the tree roots, but we haven't received a response as of yet.

The street resurfacing is already awarded as a project and the resurfacing with asphalt should occur very shortly. While we were pleased the City was going to put some money back into our neighborhood, we also later realized that some people were not pleased to hear of the resurfacing. Metro (the main contractor for the City) met with some neighbors and talked to others who expressed displeasure with this project. The bottom line is that the City owns the streets, and they can do with them as they wish. As a civic club, we were pleased they invited us to learn more about the project and give us the opportunity to spread some information to the neighborhood. Please remember that the resurfacing was never a choice given to the civic club. In general, we believe the majority of residents look forward to smooth streets, but we fully

appreciate that not everyone is in agreement. Engineers have since informed us that while certain streets may seem to be in good condition, they are all approximately 40 years old, and in short time, as small cracks appear and the smooth surface is finally worn off, the concrete will deteriorate much more rapidly. They insist that the asphalt surfacing will preserve the concrete below and extend our street life considerably. Its somewhat like a coat of paint over wood; the asphalt will need resurfacing from time to time, but the concrete underneath can't remain unprotected forever. The City reminded us that if the resurfacing doesn't take place now, while we are participants in the Neighborhoods to Standard program, we may not see any street improvements for another 10-15 years.

SPEED BUMPS?

Now that we will have smoother streets, there is the downside, which is faster streets. We already have too many speeders, and new surfacing will only add to the problem. We have already had two serious accidents on Cliffwood since it was resurfaced south of West Bellfort. In one accident, a teenager was lucky not to be killed when his speeding car went out of control and he hit a telephone pole near O'Meara. Later, another car went out of control in the same area, careened across a yard to hit a neighbor's new car, then into the next yard where they hit the light pole, before continuing on.

Such speeding cannot be easily solved, but the Civic Club is considering applying for speed bumps in the neighborhood. While some people have indicated a desire for speed bumps on almost every street, the City of Houston has very firm guidelines on where they will consider speed bumps. Streets must have a certain minimum amount of daily traffic, with a certain amount definitely in excess of the speed limit.

We are considering applying for a group of streets together, and we have targeted the main traffic streets of Greenwillow, Cliffwood, Willowgrove and Nenana (from West Bellfort to Willowgrove). For each street, we will have to submit a resident as the City's contact person to follow through on the process. Our applications must be submitted by the end of June, and the process may take until January

of next year before we see any speed bumps. If you have any opinions on the speed bumps, pro or con, please contact a Civic Club board member

DEED RESTRICTION OR ARE THEY BREAKING THE LAW?

Its the time of year when yard sales become ever popular in our neighborhood. Garage sales give us a chance to clean out our closets, attics and garages and make a bit of money out of items we longer need or want. You may not realize, though, that surrounding areas, such as Westbury and Meyerland, prohibit yard sales and even take strict action against such sales. Willow Meadows has never considered such actions, but everyone needs to keep in mind that your garage sale affects your neighbors and there are certain laws regarding yard sales that you must obey.

Two sales a year are the most a resident may have. The Texas Comptroller's office requires a Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certificate beyond that. They consider that you are conducting a business and must collect sales tax. And **conducting a business is a violation of Willow Meadows deed restrictions.**

City of Houston Ordinances Section 28-38 and Section 28-39 clearly state that it is unlawful to place any advertising sign on curbs, sidewalks, utility poles, trees, street signs and esplanades. We all know the city has better things to do than chase after people who place these signs, but be aware that the fine from the city ranges from \$150 to \$200. The Houston Police Department could issue a ticket for as much as \$500! At the least, please pick up your signs when your sale is finished.

Be considerate of your neighbors. Garage sales pose traffic problems when people park on both sides of the streets and sometimes block driveways. Garage sales also invite strangers to your home, who may be casing your home for burglary or other crimes. Be alert and be considerate; is that too much to ask?

NEWS AROUND YOU

During the month of April, considerable activity went on around the Southern Pacific Railroad bridge which

crosses Brays Bayou near our subdivision on Braeswood. After many years of discussion, the project finally got going, and at the end of April, with minimal disruption, a new concrete structure was installed to replace the old wooden trestle bridge. Many of our local politicians, including Martha Wong and Scott Hochberg, as well as our neighbors (special thanks to Hugh Rafferty) who participate in the Brays Bayou Association, fought hard to get this bridge replaced, as it has been well known that the old trestle trapped lots of debris during heavy rains and backed water up into our subdivision.

Nearby, the Link Valley area on the east side of Stella Link at Loop 610 was once referred to as "Death Valley". Abandoned apartment building became hangouts for gangs and drug dealers. Lots of publicity and lots of grass roots effort cleared the area of many problems six years ago, and many buildings were subsequently removed, but the area remains blighted. We are happy to note that the City of Houston passed an Action Request in March of this year which has led to the further demolition of 7 more abandoned apartment buildings on Link Valley. Asbestos was removed, the buildings were gutted, torn down and then hauled away at the end of April and early May. Thanks to Councilmember Orlando Sanchez for following that action for us.

The Meyer group has their hands full around us. As we have indicated before, they are planning to install a turn lane from West Bellfort westbound into the shopping center which originally housed Wyatts cafeteria. Nothing happens too fast when city approvals are necessary, but we understand this project is still go. Meanwhile, we have reviewed the landscaping plans for the esplanades in front of the Meyer Park center, and if they do all of what is indicated, you will be pleased with the number of trees along the esplanade. The current Willow Meadows sign will be destroyed for the new turn lane, but the new sign will look more congruous with the Meyer Park architecture.

In addition, you may have noticed the southern most building of the MC Management & Development group has a new tenant, with Casa Ole moving over from Bellaire, and the whole center has received a

facelift. We hope the new parking lot improves the drainage problems around there. Meanwhile, the north building (ex-Wyatts) will probably wait for the new turn lane before they can confirm a tenant and any remodeling plans. Blockbuster Video has moved into the original Book Stop location. Meanwhile, almost as quickly as they appeared, Media Play has pulled out of Houston, leaving a vacancy in the Meyer Park center.

CIVIC CLUB DUES

At the end of April, you may have received a notice indicating that you hadn't paid your dues. We cannot overemphasize that this is money well spent towards security, maintenance, mosquito control and general upkeep of the standards we expect in Willow Meadows. Yes, we are running a surplus this year, making up for 3 years where we operated in the negative, but that doesn't mean 70% of your neighbors enjoy carrying your weight. Please consider how much you can give. With our surplus, we retain a reserve for any unforeseen legal action, but we now can consider some real visible projects, such as cleaning up the entrance from the south end of Greenwillow and the entrance from Braeswood. Your money won't go to waste; it will be put to good use in your own neighborhood.

You can mail your dues to Willow Meadows Civic Club, PO Box 35551, Houston TX 77235.

DEED RESTRICTIONS

In the last few months, we have addressed 7 deed restrictions complaints, ranging from illegally parked commercial vehicles to construction of a wall. If you have any questions about our deed restrictions, please contact Doug Koy.

There have been several suggestions in recent months that our deed restrictions need to be revised to allow for two story homes. What is your opinion? Should we update our deed restrictions which date from the 1950's? If so, what else would you like to see changed?

At the last Executive Board meeting, we voted to take the initial steps to review and revise the deed restrictions. This project would be very time consuming. Would you be able to volunteer any of your time?

There would be a cost for an experienced attorney to assist the subdivision in revising the deed restrictions. Would you vote for the Civic Club to pay for such services? The total cost could range from hundreds of dollars to thousands of dollars, depending on how significant the changes and the time required. The more volunteer help we get from you, the less legal hours we will have to pay.

At this point, we are just starting to ask all the important questions, as a result of some of your queries. No action would be taken without a vote of the residents, and deed restrictions can't be changed without a majority in favor. Come to the general meeting June 4 and express your opinion.

YARD OF THE MONTH

The Yard of the Month awards started again in April. We missed the azalea season, when many areas homes had spectacular displays, but we will try to get started earlier next year. Congratulations to the following homes who have put in a lot of hard work to create beautiful yards:

April: 10114 Willowgrove

May: 9214 Greenwillow Court

Randall Doe reminds us all that a well-kept and colorful front yard helps increase all area home values and certainly gives us something pleasant to look at.

Additional tips for your summer yard:

1. Especially due to this very dry spring, don't cut your lawn too short. "Scalping" your yard will only burn the grass and require more water to revive it. Most yard experts recommend a cutting height of 3" during the summer months.
2. Leave your grass clippings on the lawn. Not only do you save our landfill areas from unnecessary

rubbish, but the clippings create mulch which reduces water evaporation and return nutrients to the soil.

3. When you water, it is better to water an area heavily but not so frequently. This is to encourage the grass roots to grow deeper. Frequent shallow waterings don't promote healthy root systems.

RECYCLING REPORT

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

May 29 (Wednesday), June 11 & 25, July 9 & 23, August 6 & 20 .

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:

May 22, June 26, July 24, August 28.

SPECIAL NOTE: Remember that due to the Memorial Day holiday, all city services are closed on Monday, May 27, and our normal trash pick-up is rescheduled to Wednesday, May 29 instead of Tuesday.

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.

Please read the ESPLANADE NEWS section if you are interested in other ways to help us beautify Willow Meadows.

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: **754-0600**

STREET REPAIRS: **751-5437**

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

1996 CIVIC CLUB MEETINGS

MARCH 5

JUNE 4

SEPTEMBER 10

DECEMBER 3

(Still not too late for a holiday party to meet your neighbors)

ESPLANADE NEWS

The answer is: QUALITY. The question is: What makes something what it is? Many Willow Meadows residents have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to maintaining a high degree of beauty in their home landscaping, as well as our common areas. A recent Houston Chronicle newspaper article indicates the Willow Meadows property values increased 1.5% in 1995, no doubt due to our maintaining our neighborhood in an excellent manner. But we can do better.

As part of continuing our commitment to maintaining our greenbelt areas, I am asking capable residents to volunteer 3-4 hours per year as part of a “work party” to be held in different sections of the neighborhood. Such work parties have been very successful in surrounding neighborhoods such as Willowbend, Woodside, Woodshire and Marilyn Estates, just to name a few. If we can get volunteers to “adopt” an area in our subdivision and pitch in once per quarter under supervision of the Maintenance Chairman, we can have a neighborhood that demonstrates our pride throughout and helps increase our property values. We have done it before in Willow Meadows, when in 1994, a group of neighbors rebuilt the McDermed/South Post Oak entrance, rebuilding the entrance walls and planting new shrubs at minimal expense.

The next planned project will be the trimming and clean-up of the trees and shrubs along West Bellfort from Willow Water Hole to the railroad tracks. During this kick off party, we will also explore ideas for enhancing the greenbelt and the area around the bayou. The next **WORK PARTY** will be: **JUNE 8, SATURDAY, 9 a.m.**

Please meet at the intersection of Greenwillow and West Bellfort in the church parking lot. Bring assorted tools (clippers, gloves, garbage bags, twine, etc.). If you have other suggestions for future work parties, please call Harry Boswell at 728-5208.

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.

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