
Willow Meadows News

February 1998

March Meeting

The next meeting of the Willow Meadows Civic Club is Tuesday, March 3, 7:30 p.m. at the Willow Meadows Baptist Church. Please come and take part in what is going on in your neighborhood.

From The President

Greetings to all of you in Willow Meadows:

In this first newsletter of 1998, let me state that my message will be about volunteerism. We have a voluntary, unpaid, civic club board, which serves the interests of all residents. From my experience over the past two years as Vice-President, I can tell you that there is no glory in service. There is merely an abundance of work to do. Gratification lies in knowing that we keep threads of connection and communication alive and well amongst neighbors. As you may (or may not) know, we are in need of help on the board. Dean Gore will continue at the Treasurer's post only through the end of February. The bulk of the start-up work for a new year includes the initial surge of dues collections and budgeting for the fiscal year. Dean has been doing that for us and will continue for a short time; but we do need a replacement--SOON! Please contact me if you would be willing to handle 3/4 of a term as treasurer. A familiarity with Excel computer software is almost necessary. Please help see us through calendar year 1998.

There is another position we must fill--Beautification and Maintenance. While I am drafting this letter, calls are being made. Hopefully, I can round up a few volunteers to take care of this position. Do not be afraid to call, just in case no volunteer has come forward.

As to other matters, let me assure you that deed restriction efforts have continued in a steady fashion. The final draft is with our legal counsel, ready for comment and an opinion letter. I believe the efforts of all deed restriction committee members and all of you who took the time to make comment and vote on the initial draft should be applauded.

Let me state, once again, that the new, proposed deed restrictions revision has not gone through final vote. We anticipate the final draft to be delivered to you very soon, and then your response will probably be the most important thing you will have done since moving into your house and becoming a part of this community.

Most sincerely,

Charles D. Rusciano

1998 Willow Meadows Civic Club Officers and Executive Board

President:	Charles Rusciano (721-3136)	Security:	Mac Leichtman (723-4492)
Vice President	Chris Brouwer (723-9235)	Maintenance:	To be confirmed
Treasurer:	Dean Gore (729-7935)	Deed Restrictions:	Doug Koy (723-0067)
Secretary:	John Kirtley (728-3057)	Architecture:	Rob Chase (723-4878)

TREASURER'S REPORT

This report summarizes the 1997 end of year figures relative to our 1997 budget. Further below, you will see the latest 1998 figures and our 1998 budget. As you know, our primary source of revenue is your dues, so please submit your annual dues of \$150 as soon as possible to: Willow Meadows Civic Club, P.O. Box 35551, Houston, TX 77235.

Category/Description	Jan. 1-Dec 31, '97	1997 Budget
REVENUES		
Dues	\$78,250.00	\$81,000.00
Interest checking	0.00	0.00
Interest savings	4,231.36	2,800.00
Advertising	515.00	400.00
Other Income	0.00	0.00
Total	\$82,996.36	\$84,200.00
EXPENDITURES		
Bank charge	\$ 81.31	\$ 0.00
Donations	500.00	500.00
Miscellaneous	725.61	1,000.00
Mowing	4,220.00	4,400.00
Pest control	3,644.38	3,500.00
Postage	925.41	550.00
Printing	1,378.78	600.00
Security	61,346.02	61,400.00
Supplies	0.00	150.00
Legal Services	2,327.87	5,000.00
Total	\$ 75,149.38	\$77,100.00
SURPLUS	\$ 7,846.98	\$ 7,100.00

NEWS 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.

Please note below our income statement through January 1998, as well as our budget for the full year 1998.

Category/Description	Jan. 1-Jan. 31, '98	1998 Budget
REVENUES		
Dues	\$ 51,060.00	\$81,000.00
Interest checking	0.00	0.00
Interest savings	0.00	4,000.00
Advertising	75.00	500.00
Other Income	0.00	0.00
Total	\$ 51,135.00	\$85,500.00
EXPENDITURES		
Bank charge	\$ 0.00	\$ 50.00
Donations	0.00	500.00
Miscellaneous	0.00	1,000.00
Mowing	791.66	4,400.00
Pest control	0.00	4,200.00
Postage	285.00	800.00
Printing	0.00	1,500.00
Security	5,233.62	62,803.44
Supplies	51.56	150.00
Legal Services	0.00	3,000.00
Total	\$ 6,361.84	\$78,353.44
SURPLUS	\$ 44,773.16	\$7,146.56

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As always, we never seem to have enough volunteers, yet we get plenty of suggestions on things we should do in the neighborhood. Currently, we desperately need volunteers for the Civic Club Board. Our treasurer will be resigning his position due to relocation, and even if you are not inclined as an accountant, we could use anyone with a basic working knowledge of Excel software and a little time each month to prepare the financial reports. In addition, we are looking for someone to coordinate the maintenance activities, which includes occasional contact with our esplanade contractor, selection and posting of the Yard of the Month, as well as organizing an occasional area clean-up party. No prior civic club experience

required! Expert training provided! Please call a civic club officer if you want more information.

THANK YOU!

As you know, elections for the 1998 Civic Club officers were held at the December meeting. Unfortunately, with few volunteers for the positions, there wasn't much of a debate over new officers. The President and Vice President will return for another year, though switching each other's roles. We are happy to welcome some new blood, with John Kirtley taking over as Secretary. Mac Leichtman joins us to help as Security chairman, while Doug Koy and Rob Chase return as Deed Restrictions and Architectural chairmen respectively. Dean Gore was gracious enough to remain on as Treasurer during the busy dues collections in January, but he is relocating and must vacate his position at the end of February.

We wish to extend a very big THANK YOU to our departing board members, Ruth Tynes, Jane Leslie, and Harry Boswell, who all did an outstanding job for the Civic Club.

THANK YOU, TOO!

You should have received your Dues Notice in the mail during the first week of January. The quick payment of dues is very important to an efficient use of our funds and proper budgeting. We are very pleased by the early response, with more than 44% of the neighborhood sending in their dues within the first month. Thank you very much!

You may also appreciate that it is quite a job to handle the Dues Notice mailing, and we were fortunate to have many volunteers to help us with this arduous task. Special thanks to Stan Leachman who takes care of the mailing labels, the inserts, the post office and all the expertise on how to put the whole mailing together. Another big thanks to our volunteers who sat around the table before New Year's Day, sorting, stuffing, sticking, and stamping more than 800 mail outs; we couldn't have done it without Ray, Don and Chris.

CHILD HIT BY CAR!

We are terribly saddened to report that a 7 year-old neighborhood boy was struck and injured by a speeding car on Cliffwood near Willow Park. It was only a matter of time before the combination of speed and traffic congestion caused someone to suffer injuries. Many of you may be opposed to speed humps, but we have had a rash of calls from neighbors along Cliffwood who are willing to pay for their own speed humps due to this unfortunate incident. The City of Houston is not opposed to this. While many of you may obey the speed limits, the statistics along Cliffwood and Greenwillow indicate there is speeding, as well as a huge traffic count for a residential neighborhood. Did you know more than 1600 car trips are recorded per day along each of those two streets? The neighborhood schools certainly contribute to the traffic count, but all of us must take responsibility for our speeds. While this boy only suffered a broken arm and cuts and bruise, we must consider how close he came to getting killed. We are a residential neighborhood, full of young and old alike, not a thoroughfare. **THE SPEED LIMIT IS 30 mph.** Do us all a favor and don't speed, or you will eventually cause us all to face the humps.

We have informed you in previous newsletters that four sections of Willow Meadows streets that were applied for did qualify for speed humps based on traffic counts and excessive speeding. Three sections remain eligible for funding following last year's installation on Greenwillow between Loop 610 and the Willow Meadows Baptist Church. The three sections which were not funded during this round will automatically be reconsidered during the next funding cycle.

AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Many neighbors have expressed concern about the house at the corner of McDermed and Greenwillow which burned last year. The lot was finally cleared completely at the end of January, and the previous homeowner is going to build a beautiful new home on the same lot. We are so pleased to see that this neighbor liked our neighborhood well enough to rebuild, when it would have been so easy just to move to another neighborhood.

."NO!" TO APARTMENTS

In previous newsletters, you have read about the proposed Willow Trails Apartments in the area of Willowbend, Stella Link and South Main. Many area residents, from this subdivision, as well as neighboring Westwood, Willowbend, and Post Oak Manor, fought hard to oppose any subsidies for the project which would have made it more attractive to the developers. We fought hard against grants, making our voice heard all the way up in Austin to get that funding refused. Nevertheless, as we reported in November, the developers then applied for a special tax exemption from Harris County! Many of us attended meetings to object to this exemption, and you would have been impressed by the heartfelt arguments from area community leaders. Sadly, it seems like our stories fell on deaf ears, and the board gave their tentative approval for this special exemption. Nobody took this sitting down, though, and we marched downtown to a Commissioners Court meeting to voice our objections at the final approval stage. In an absolutely unprecedented move, the Commissioners Court rejected the special exemption, going against the board's recommendations. There will be no special tax treatments to give these apartments an advantage, and we hope this may have removed the last incentive to build the apartments! Please note that Judge Eckels and Commissioner Radack were instrumental in turning the tables in our favor on this issue, as well as Councilmembers Wong and Sanchez and your State Representative Scott Hochberg.

OTHER NEWS AROUND YOU

Just in case you have not been out and about the neighborhood, here are some of the things going on in our immediate area:

The Stella Link project to rebuild the street and infrastructure is proceeding at a fairly good pace. The major portion of street from Willowbend to South Braeswood may be finished by the time you get this newsletter, and it comes none to soon for our cars' shock absorbers! This rebuilding has encouraged the retail development in the area. If you hadn't noticed, the Stella Link Center, purchased last year by Center America, received the facelift they promised us, including a new parking lot, better lighting and a pleasant facade. Davis Food City will be in their new

store soon, and look for other new businesses, including Chip Smart (a computer store) and a restaurant.

Up the street, the vacant space of Apple Tree was filled by Sellers Brothers, a grocery chain with more than 8 stores in the Houston area. Along with this new grocery store, the whole center is also getting a much needed face lift, with resurfaced parking and an attractive facade.

On the Meyerland side of our neighborhood, you should have noticed the new Outback Steakhouse, as we hinted at in previous newsletters, as well as the imminent completion of the Escalante Mexican Restaurant adjacent to the new La Madeleine Restaurant. Jos A. Banks is setting up a new store adjacent to those two restaurants. Antone's has added a new location adjacent to Wraps, and a new bank is under construction on one of the last remaining pad sites in the busy Meyerland Plaza.

Perhaps you saw the story in the Houston Chronicle (Jan. 13) regarding the "pingpong paradise" almost in our backyard. We were unaware that the Houston Table Tennis Center is located just behind Kroger and the veterinarian clinic on West Bellfort. It is possibly the nation's largest such facility, and it is open to visitors for hourly play, as well as monthly memberships. If you are into the sport, please note that the U.S. Open Table Tennis Championships will be in Houston this coming July.



DEED RESTRICTIONS

The Deed Restriction Modernization Project continues! While the holidays slowed us down, the many good comments and ideas from our residents have been incorporated into the final proposal, which went to the lawyers for review and comments in January. The FINAL deed restrictions will be individually mailed to residents in the next few weeks. We encourage you to read them very carefully and we hope you will sign them as a sign of your acceptance.

It would be really great to bring these neighborhood standards up to the present, and to finally have a united neighborhood with a common set of restrictions.

There is new item that will be addressed in the new deed restrictions. Some of you reminded us how important Mrs. Wagner's and Trafton Academy were for our neighborhood, and we did research the files to find that forty years ago, the three lots where those schools are located were amended to allow for a church to be built. Our new deed restrictions will make a specific allowance for those same three lots to be used for religious, medical or school activity.

If you have any other questions regarding the deed restriction project, or if you have some time to help us in the final steps of this project, please feel free to call any of the Civic Club board members.

Some people were under the impression that this neighborhood did not currently have deed restrictions. This is not true. Our neighborhood has always had deed restrictions since the first homes were built. While we continuously remind you of our deed restrictions and enforcement procedures, one neighbor apparently misunderstood and undertook a project which involved an addition to their home which crossed the setback limits and violated the original deed restrictions. The City of Houston has notified this neighbor of this serious infraction and will be pursuing further actions.

We addressed another complaint regarding a children's playhouse built very near to the back property line. Please note that there are so many outbuildings in the neighborhood, we have been advised that it is difficult to fight an outbuilding if it falls in the category of "temporary" and is easily moved. A "temporary" structure is less than 120 square feet and does not have any plumbing, electricity, etc. which would be subject to city permits. The City of Houston does not consider such buildings subject to setback limitations.

A Deed Restriction Complaint Form is included in this newsletter so that you can indicate any suspected infractions of deed restrictions. Please remember that the Civic Club board members are not searching the neighborhood looking for infractions, but if you report

anything, we will investigate and take appropriate actions.

RECYCLING SCHEDULE

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

February 17, March 3, 17 & 31, April 14 & 28, May 12 & 27 (Wednesday following Memorial Day).

Acceptable materials for curbside recycling include aluminum and tin cans, #1 and #2 plastics, glass bottles and jars, telephone books, newspapers, magazines and used motor oil.

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 25, March 25, April 22, May 28 (Thursday following Memorial Day).

CIVIC CLUB DUES

This is a reminder that Civic Club Dues are payable at the first of each year. We are off to a great start, with more than 44% of all households paying within the first month. This is in line with last year at this time, but in the end, we finished 1997 with only 67% of neighbors paying, compared to 70% in 1996. How about the rest of you? You too benefit from the constable patrol, as well as the mosquito spraying, the esplanade maintenance, and this newsletter, as well as all the behind-the-scenes work by your volunteers.

IF you haven't paid your dues yet, or if you misplaced your dues notice, please make your check for \$150 payable to Willow Meadows Civic Club, and mail it to P.O. Box 35551, Houston, TX 77235. Don't forget to indicate how many security stickers you would like.

For your information, here are the percentages of dues paying members by street through January. How is your street doing?

Breakwood: 37%	O'Meara: 46%
Cheena: 58%	Osby: 47%
Cliffwood: 41%	Piermain: 36%

Firestone: 59%
Greenwillow: 49%
Knickerbocker: 55%
Lemac: 42%
Lymbar: 70%
McDermed: 45%
Meyerwood: 29%
Nenana: 46%

Sarong: 52%
Silverwood: 53%
Waynesboro: 32%
Wigton: 37%
Willowgrove: 51%
Willowisp: 20%
Woodvalley: 26%

and other easily stolen items out and unattended. We will also probably see a lot of garage sale activity soon. Garage sales are a great way for families to make a little cash while disposing of stuff they no longer want. The down side of garage sales is that they bring a lot of traffic into the neighborhood. Please be aware of the activities of strangers in the area visiting spring garage sales. If you note suspicious behavior please call the Constable.

Criminal activity seems to be relatively low in recent months. Here are the more serious incidents that were reported since our last newsletter:

10200 block of Cliffwood: report of youths disturbing the peace on November 5.

9200 block of Greenwillow: items stolen from the front yard on November 6.

4300 block of McDermed: report of vandalism on November 15.

4400 block of Woodvalley: lawn mower stolen on December 18.

4600 block of O'Meara: attempted burglary on January 20.

4300 block of Meyerwood: vehicle reported stolen on January 26.

Please remember to call the Constables and report any incident, as well as any suspicious characters in our area.



November: 4327 Silverwood
December: 4726 O'Meara

Recipients of Yard of the Month will receive a sign for the month plus a gift certificate for use at Wolfe's Nursery presented by Morgan Personette Properties. Our December winners were judged on holiday decorations during the weekend of December 13, and the judges really had a difficult time selecting the winner from so many well decorated homes. We gave second place to 10114 Willowgrove, third place to 4319 Osby, and there were some equally deserving Honorable Mentions.

SECURITY REPORT

Please note that Mac Leichtman has graciously taken over the position of Security chairperson from Jane Leslie. Mac would like your feedback on how often you see the constables during their patrol hours, and he will focus on good reporting from the constables. With spring around the corner, Sergeant Cerda reminds us to be watchful of individuals in the neighborhood mowing yards. Driving around the area with a lawnmower in the back of a car or truck provides an excellent cover to someone with a criminal intent. Also remember to keep your garage doors shut and not to leave lawn equipment, bicycles

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

PRECINCT 7 CONSTABLES: **643-6602**

EMERGENCY: **911**

POISON CONTROL: **654-1701**

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

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

ODOR HOTLINE: **783-4348**

WATER/SEWER REPAIRS: **754-0600**

NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION: **525-2525**

TRAFFIC LIGHT/SIGN REPAIRS: **865-4000**

WILLOW MEADOWS DEED RESTRICTION COMPLAINT FORM

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 mail in the form below to report suspected violations.

**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? _____

REAL ESTATE CORNER

The real estate market is great! We have strong demand for houses in our area, but less than average sales last year due to less available houses. There are only 6 listings in our area, much less than normal, but with ambitious prices. Here's the breakdown of the 1997 figures:

- 6 Current Active Listings: \$129 - \$189,000, average listing \$158,500
- 1997 Sales: 25 Houses, from \$110 to \$305,000, average sale price was \$150,800. This compares to 1996 Sales: 31 Houses from \$75 - \$190,000, average sale price \$129,500
- 1997 Average: \$61/ft², compared to 1996 Average \$58/ft²
- Average Days on Market: 85 Days compared to 101 Days in 1996

Note that the above figures are from the MLS and while deemed reliable may not be guaranteed.

FRIENDLY REMINDER

Your neighbors who use the sidewalks greatly appreciate those of you who keep the sidewalks clear for strollers and wheelchairs. We know it is difficult when you have a driveway full of cars, but your efforts to keep them parked tight and off the sidewalks, especially on the weekends, is greatly encouraged. Sidewalks are so important to safety that the City of Houston is considering new sidewalks along the Loop 610 feeder roads, between the street and the sound walls, to provide a safe walking zone. We will keep you advised as this project advances.

1998 CIVIC CLUB MEETINGS

MARCH 3

JUNE 2

SEPTEMBER 1

DECEMBER 1