

## City Council Update

On October 28, the City Council voted to appoint **Brian Plunkett** to fill City Council Place 2 which was previously held by Taylor Holcomb who resigned in September to move to Houston. Brian is a retired IT executive who has lived in West Lake Hills since 2001. He has previously served on the City's Zoning and Planning Commission and was very helpful with the recent expansion of the City's wastewater system in the Hull Circle neighborhood. Welcome, Brian!

## Zoning & Planning and Wastewater Commissions

The City Council recently appointed **Sarah Swanson** to serve on the City's ZAPCO advisory board. With Brian Plunkett's appointment to the City Council, another volunteer will be needed to fill his place on ZAPCO. The City's Wastewater Commission is also looking for another commercial member. If you're interested in serving, download a Volunteer Application at [www.westlakehills.org](http://www.westlakehills.org).



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# Transportation Improvements Coming Soon

Significant progress has been made in recent months on a variety of initiatives to improve safety and reduce traffic congestion throughout West Lake Hills:

¶ City officials expect to complete the right-of-way acquisition process

Cave Road in preparation for the expansion. Principal construction by the TXDOT-selected contractor will begin by March of 2016 and is expected to last approximately 30 months. The construction project will be managed entirely by TXDOT

officers contracted from several local agencies directing traffic at the intersection for roughly a dozen days in October. The City Council engaged graduate students from the University of Texas Engineering School to observe and measure traffic



*The City Council reviews options for improving traffic flow on Westlake Drive at Redbud Trail during a specially held public forum on July 2. Panoramic photo by Gibbons Burke.*

for the Bee Cave Road expansion project by late November, if not sooner. Over forty right-of-way parcels and temporary construction easements will have been acquired by negotiated purchase, donated by the property owners outright or in exchange for certain development rights, or in a very few cases, by use of the city's power of eminent domain. The collaborative approach used to negotiate many of these acquisitions over the past four years is estimated to have saved taxpayers well over \$1 million. Austin Energy crews have already begun cutting trees and relocating power poles along Bee

and they have assured city leaders that they and their contractor will work diligently to minimize the impact to both businesses and residents.  
 ¶ Over the past few months, the City Council has considered various options for reducing traffic congestion at the intersection of Westlake Drive and Redbud Trail, including longer or additional turn lanes, a traffic signal, a traffic circle, and the use of a police officer to direct traffic during the afternoon rush hours. A pilot project for the last option was conducted during the last few weeks of October with

flow. At its December 9 meeting, the City Council will receive their report as well as the results of an online survey conducted shortly after the pilot project ended. Discussions on how to improve this intersection will resume at that time.  
 ¶ In September, the Council approved the city's FY2015-2016 budget which includes funding to improve Camp Craft Road from Eanes Creek to Bee Cave Road, including the possibility of a center turn lane, sidewalks and perhaps improvements to the low-water crossing which is closed whenever there are heavy rains. Engineering and design will

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## City Wins Prestigious TML Award

The City was recently awarded the Texas Municipal League's 2015 Municipal Excellence Award in Public Safety. The Texas Municipal League is a voluntary association of more than 1,140 Texas cities.

The award recognizes the City's work with the City of Austin, Travis County, Water District 10, and the Westlake Fire Department to address the risk of wildfire that is inherent in the beautiful urban forest of West Lake Hills. That work included dead brush pick-ups, planning for improvements to the water system, an enhanced or super burn ban, changes to city ordinances, and the installation of a network of sensors to detect wildfires.

At the ceremony conducted during the annual TML Conference in San Antonio, Mayor Claunch noted, "It is a privilege and an honor to be recognized by TML for the creative thinking and hard work of our elected officials and dedicated staff."



*Police Chief Scott Gerdes, City Manager Robert Wood, City Attorney Alan Bojorquez, Mayor Dave Claunch, Councilmember Jim O'Connor, and City Secretary Lacie Hale accept the TML Municipal Excellence Award on behalf of the City Council.*

## Short-Term Rentals Under Review

Municipal regulation of short-term rental properties has been in the news quite a lot lately as cities across the nation struggle with how to balance short-term rental property owners' rights with the interests of their surrounding neighbors.

The West Lake Hills City Council has heard from several residents who've expressed noise, traffic and safety concerns with both owner-occupied and non-owner-occupied rental properties. They reported that some of these properties have been rented on occasion to hearty revelers who have blatantly disrupted otherwise tranquil neighborhoods with loud music, obnoxious behavior and even illegal fireworks.

Some communities like Rollingwood have banned short-term rentals outright. Other cities like

Austin have enacted a permitting and regulatory process and are continuing to work through the challenges of enforcing those regulations. Still other cities have decided not to regulate these rentals at all, choosing instead to strictly enforce existing noise and nuisance regulations.

After much consideration, the West Lake Hills City Council recently appointed a subcommittee to study the issue and report back with recommendations to the whole City Council later this year or in early 2016.

Council members Stan Graham and Darin Walker will work with the appointed residents Robbie Davis, Brenda Smith and Rhonda McCullough.

Thank you to these volunteers for their time and energy working on this important issue!

## Transportation Improvements (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

begin soon, followed by formal consideration at future City Council meetings.

¶ In recent years, the Council has heard from residents of several neighborhoods who have been concerned about both the volume and the speed of cut-through traffic which is expected to get worse during the Bee Cave Road expansion project. After many months of study and multiple public hearings, the Council voted to install traffic calming measures along several streets including Rocky River Road,

Forest Trail, and Buckeye Trail. The Council is currently considering a similar request from the residents of McConnell Drive, Westhaven Drive and West Spring. These residents conducted an online poll of their neighbors to gauge support for various measures under consideration including lowering the speed limit from 30 to 20 or 25 MPH, painting the speed limit on the street surface, installing radar speed signs, placing speed humps along the roadways and adding stop signs at specific intersections.

## West Lake Hills honored as a "Scenic City"

West Lake Hills was recently awarded Recognized Scenic City Certification by Scenic Texas. West Lake Hills is one of only 52 cities in Texas to earn this honor which recognizes cities with strong scenic infrastructure standards.

The Scenic City Certification Program evaluates cities based on a comprehensive set of model standards for design and development of public roadways and public space.

Mayor Claunch remarked, "We should all be very proud of this award as it recognizes our city's strong commitment for many decades to protecting and preserving our unique urban forest environment."

A city must initially meet three criteria including having a strictly regulated and enforced sign code, a ban on new billboards, and a landscaping and a tree planting program. Then,

a city's existing standards are assessed and scored based on seventy different criteria including strong litter enforcement laws, outdoor lighting standards, and commercial landscaping regulations among others.

In granting the city its certification, Scenic Texas took note of West Lake Hills' strong tree protection measures, unity of sign design requirements, and prohibition of digital signs.

## City Staff Update: Working to serve our community

City staff have been hard at work increasing their skills and professional knowledge to better serve our residents. The following is a short summary of the work and recognition they have received for their efforts:

¶ City Secretary **Lacie Hale** recently received a scholarship from the Texas Municipal Clerks Association to help offset some of the costs of pursuing full certification from that organization.

¶ Court Clerk **Robert Martinez** recently completed Level Two of the Texas Municipal Court Clerks Certification Program. Earning the certification required 40 hours of classroom training, many hours of personal study and that Robert pass a rigorous exam on court procedures and technical knowledge.

¶ Police Chief **Scott Gerdes** recently completed the New Chief Development Program, the

required training for all new police chiefs in Texas. Chief Gerdes has updated the department's General orders (policies and procedures), hired new officers and a detective, conducted a major overhaul of the department's evidence room and case files, and implemented officer training in crime scene processing, search and seizure, CPR, AED use,

and explosive ordinance protocols.

¶ City Administrator **Robert Wood** recently lead a well-attended session on municipal regulation of outdoor lighting at the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association's annual conference along with Anjali Naini, a planner with City Attorney Alan Bojorquez's office.



*Police Chief Gerdes and Sgt. Gangstad accept a hand-made flag covered with words of appreciation from area children presented to the police department on September 11, 2015.*