

Bee Cave Road Projects on the Horizon

City is working with TxDOT to improve safety and traffic flow

At the City's request in early 2009, the Capital Area Metro Planning Organization (CAMPO) allocated \$6.3 million in TxDOT funds to construct improvements to Bee Cave Road to enhance safety and relieve traffic congestion. The project scope includes a center turn lane along as much of the road as funding would allow, along with sidewalks along the south side of Bee Cave Road from Camp Craft Road to Walsh Tarlton Drive and along the north side of the road from Buckeye Trail to Reveille Road. For the past twelve months, TxDOT has made only modest progress toward one portion of the two-phased project: the installation of a center turn lane at Redbud Trail.

The City recently learned that the funding for both phases is now uncertain because TxDOT is running low on cash. Unlike most of us – who set aside money in our bank account when we write a check to pay a bill – TxDOT doesn't set aside funding (in our case, the \$6.3 million) when they commit to doing a project. Instead, they wait until it's time to go out to bid for the project, then they look in their bank account and see if they have the money.

In the past, this approach has always worked because they've had plenty of cash on hand. But as TxDOT's revenues have plummeted over the past few years, their cash has dwindled. Now there's not enough to do many of the projects

that had been approved by the various Metropolitan Planning Organizations like CAMPO. To add insult to injury, TxDOT only recently informed CAMPO that many of its projects may be left high and dry. CAMPO is in the difficult spot of having to explain this mess to all the municipalities (like West Lake Hills) who have been waiting for their projects to begin.

In a recent meeting with TxDOT, they indicated that they may be willing to use some internal funds to construct the center turn lane on Bee Cave Road at Redbud Trail. The design process for that section of the road should be completed by the fall of 2010 with construction starting in early 2011 if the funding is available.

As for the sidewalks and the center turn lane along the rest of Bee Cave Road, there is both bad news and good. The bad news is that TxDOT's timeline for designing the project stretches out to late 2012, at which time the project will theoretically be ready to bid. The good news is that TxDOT's funding shortage is expected to be remedied by that time, with sufficient cash flows available to fund more projects throughout the state. So there's a chance that the larger Bee Cave Road project will proceed as planned – assuming that TxDOT's financial projections are accurate. Keep your fingers crossed!

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MARCH 2010

Newly amended Tree Ordinance protects our Master Plan and is easier to read

The City of West Lake Hills is a unique, wooded oasis in the center of a dense suburban community. Part of what makes our community so special is our long-standing commitment to protecting the trees and vegetation which create the rural environment that we all cherish.

The City has always had very strong regulations governing the removal of vegetation and requiring replacement vegetation when new buildings are constructed. But our residents have not always been aware of the various regulations and requirements which, in turn, has often lead to a lot of heartache when a resident unintentionally violates the ordinance. Part of the problem has been a lack of educational outreach and part of the problem has been the complexity of our rules. Throw into the mix a very small handful of unscrupulous developers and tree contractors who may have knowingly violated the spirit of our ordinances, but not necessarily the letter of the law, and you can begin to see the importance of tackling the problem.

With all of those factors in mind, the City Council recently undertook a massive overhaul of the City's tree ordinance in order to clarify it and make

it easier to understand and follow. The revised ordinance was adopted unanimously on February 10, 2010 after six months of work, a half-dozen public hearings, and more than sixteen draft versions.

The new ordinance clearly explains what requires a permit and what does not. It explains the process for a resident or contractor to request the permit (which is free in most cases) and when it is necessary

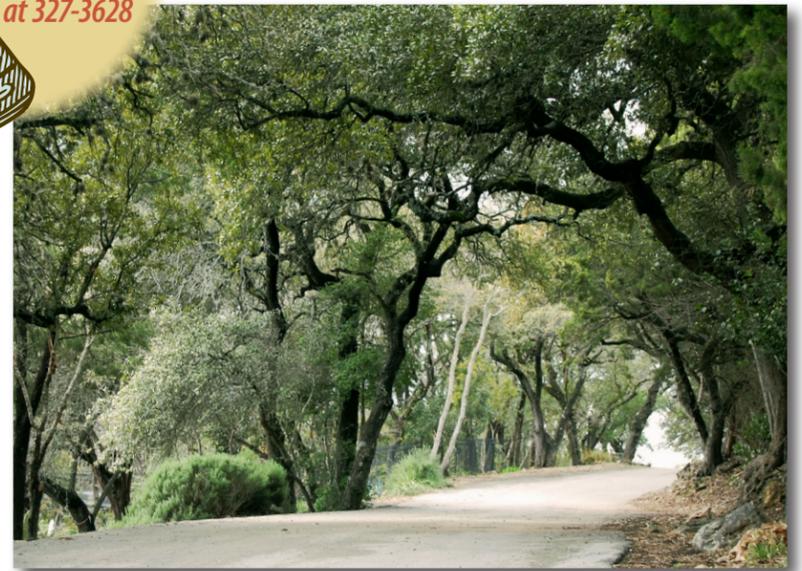
to plant replacement trees. It provides special provisions for the removal and replacement

of diseased, dying or dead trees. It simplifies the process of calculating how many replacement inches are required and it greatly expands the list of acceptable species and sizes that can be used as replacements.

To help address the education aspect of the issue, the City has produced a one-page "Tree Facts" flyer that is included in this issue of the newsletter. It is also available online and will be distributed to every tree contractor we can identify. This flyer provides a high-level explanation of the City's goals and regulations for the protection of our most precious community asset: our unique rural environment.

Questions?

Call our Arborist,
Christy Shull
at 327-3628



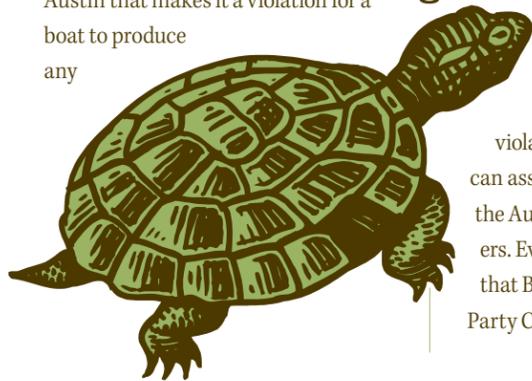
The tree canopies on Live Oak Circle create a beautiful scenic drive.

Lake Austin Noise Ordinance

Restoring the peace and quiet to West Lake Hills

For many years, unwelcomed noise on Lake Austin from oversized boat motors and blaring speakers has been a big problem for residents living in the Nob Hill and Hull Circle areas. Since the lake is not in our City's jurisdiction, the West Lake Hills Police Department has been unable to combat this audible nuisance. Even the Austin Lake Police were unable to address the problem until last fall, when the Austin City Council adopted a new noise ordinance for Lake Austin that makes it a violation for a boat to produce any

Shhhhhhh!



noise that is audible from one hundred feet away.

In anticipation of the upcoming boating season, we've worked with the Austin Police Department to establish a protocol for our residents to report violations of Austin's new noise ban. First, dial 311 and report the violation to the Austin police dispatcher. Next call the West Lake Hills non-emergency police dispatch number (327-1196) to inform them as well. Be sure to explain that the noise is coming from the lake and, if you witness the problem boat(s) first-hand, try to describe them to the dispatchers. Although our officers can't issue a citation for violating Austin's ordinances, they can assist from the shore by helping the Austin officers identify the offenders. Eventually, word will get around that Bee Creek Cove is no longer Party Central for the noisy boat crowd.

Wastewater System Update:

The City Council, Wastewater Commission, and City Staff are actively exploring options for the City to purchase the wastewater system from the LCRA. Such a purchase could save our wastewater system millions of dollars in debt costs, maintenance fees, and LCRA markups. System savings translate into lower rates for everyone on the system!

At this point, the City leadership is focused on two key elements of the purchase price: the cost to defease (pay off) the bonds for our project and the LCRA's insistence that they receive all of the profits that would be due to them over the life of our existing contract. Meanwhile, the City's application to receive low-interest financing from the Texas Water Development Board which would be used to pay off the LCRA and possibly expand the system's service area is still pending. We hope to have good news on both fronts later this year.

Take a walk down Reveille Road...

The long awaited Reveille walking trail is finally complete! Reveille Road now offers a great opportunity in West Lake Hills to safely connect area residents with our commercial businesses by means of a dedicated walking trail.

At the requests of residents, the City Council began exploring the options in 2007. After two surveys of the residents, five public hearings and countless discussions, the project got the green light in August of 2009. Construction was completed just a few weeks ago. The total cost of the project was \$98,000.

Additionally, two radar-based speed signs which display drivers' speeds will be installed on Reveille Road. The signs will remind drivers to slow down to keep our pedestrians safe. The signs are not much larger than a regular speed limit sign and will be the first of their kind in West Lake Hills. Similar signs have been used around the country to make drivers aware of their speed. If the results are good, they may be considered for other locations around town.



Matt Probst and Miles Corona stroll down the Reveille Road walking trail to get some tacos.

May 8th election information:

The May 8th election has been cancelled because none of the three open positions are contested. Dave Claunch will begin his second term as mayor in May. City Council member Andrew Schwartz will begin his second term as well. New City Council member Jean Goehring will replace outgoing Council member Cindy Probst. For more information, please call City Secretary Janet Rogers at (512) 327-3628.

Stand up and be counted!

U.S. Census forms are being mailed out across the nation in March. All West Lake Hills households should take the time to complete and return the simple questionnaire. The results of the 2010 Census will be used to allocate federal funding for schools, roads, hospitals, and many of the other programs that are important to our community. The Census results also determine our representation in Congress and for many other government, non-profit, and private sector organizations.

Single-stream recycling?

West Lake Hills is one of the few communities in Texas to provide free garbage and recycling services to its residents. On Wednesday, April 28 at 7:00pm, the City Council will consider implementing "single stream" recycling using 90-gallon carts which will allow residents to recycle many more materials than currently allowed. To offset the additional cost of that service, the Council may consider switching to once-weekly garbage collection. Come share your thoughts at the public hearing – we want to hear from you!

Getting to know your city staff...

City Inspector Christy Shull completes her arborist certification



"The best thing about my job are the West Lake Hills residents. I spend most of my day visiting with them and helping them with their tree issues and more. West Lake Hills is a beautiful city and our trees make it one of the best places to live and work."

Christy Shull was born and raised in Ft. Worth, Texas. She began her career with West Lake Hills in May of 2006. She is a graduate of the University of Texas at Arlington with a bachelors degree in Biology. Christy is both a city inspector focusing on septic systems and our city arborist. She is a registered Sanitarian with the Texas Department of State Health Services. Additionally, Christy is registered with the TCEQ as a Site Evaluator and Designated Representative. We are proud to announce that Christy has recently completed her certification as an Arborist with the International Society of Arboriculture.

Is your pool fenced?

Prevent a tragedy. Please fence your pool by July 1, 2010

Many people are aware that building codes require new pools to be fenced so that children and animals are less likely to wander too close and fall in. Likewise, many people may believe that pools constructed before a certain date are "grandfathered" indefinitely, and are not legally required to be fenced. But that is not correct. Both new and existing pools are required by the West Lake Hills City Code to be fenced and have been for many years.

For years, the City has not actively enforced this law. But on January 13, 2010, the City Council voted unanimously to instruct staff to begin notifying homeowners who do not have proper fences around their pools starting July 1, 2010.

The City Council wanted to provide as much notice as possible so that property owners have plenty of time

to install the proper fencing. As a reminder, fence installation requires a free permit from the city and is subject to Section 14-201 of the City Code.

If your pool or yard is already fenced but the fencing material does not conform to Section 14-201 of the City Code, then you have what is referred to as a "legal, non-conforming use." For instance, chain link fences are currently prohibited for new construction in the City, but if you already have a chain link fence around your pool, then it is a legal, non-conforming use and you are not required to replace it with a different fencing material.

For more information about the city's fence regulations, the specific requirements for pool fences, or to secure the proper permit for installing a pool fence, contact City Inspector Bob Rogers at 327-3628.

A Brief Overview of the City's Tree & Vegetation Ordinance

After many months of work with area residents and arborists, the West Lake Hills City Council enacted an extensive update to the City's tree ordinance in order to make it stronger, clearer, and easier for residents and contractors alike to understand and follow.

The revised ordinance can be found online (see instructions on the other side of this page) and is available at City Hall at 911 Westlake Drive. For a complete and thorough understanding of the complex rules and regulations governing the removal, maintenance and replacement of trees and vegetation, please consult the full-length ordinance.

This document is intended to provide a brief overview of the general provisions of the ordinance. It is not meant to be a replacement for the actual code. Anyone wishing to undertake any alteration to existing trees or vegetation is strongly encouraged to contact the City for more information about the applicable regulations.

Summary of Our Goals

- To promote and enhance the environment, rural character, air quality and ecologic balance of our City;
- To maintain property values and ensure the maximum retention of wooded areas and understory vegetation;

- To retain as many trees and as much vegetation as possible consistent with reasonable economic enjoyment of private property.

General Policies

- Landscape shall be preserved in, or restored to, its natural state to the greatest extent possible.
- Vegetative screening shall be maintained to the greatest extent possible, especially along the perimeter of all properties in order to maximize the screening of structures from adjacent properties.
- In order to reduce the risk of fire on all properties, dead trees and brush piles must be cleared and removed.

The City of West Lake Hills is a unique, wooded oasis in the center of a dense suburban community. Part of what makes our community so special is our long-standing commitment to protecting the trees and vegetation which create the rural environment that we all cherish.

Please call before you cut! We will meet you on site to explain the rules and discuss your options: 327-3628

A Free Permit Is Required...

- To remove any tree, including cedars
- To prune multiple live trees
- To remove understory vegetation
- To establish a fire safety buffer zone around your home
- To remove diseased, dying or dead trees subject to the approval of the city inspector
- To remove trees or vegetation for new construction and must be issued in conjunction with a building permit.

A Permit is Not Required...

- For common household gardening or ground care such as mowing
- To remove dead branches
- To prune a single live tree (note that pruning multiple trees does require a free permit to ensure that only appropriate pruning is performed.)
- To remove existing piles of dead brush, limbs or leaves.

A Few Important Notes

Removing a tree without a permit can incur a fine of up to \$2,000. Failure to replace trees that have been removed can incur a fine of up to \$2,000 per day. Removing trees to allow for new construction requires a survey of all the trees on the property.

Replacement Trees

When you remove a tree with a permit as allowed by the City's tree ordinance, it must be replaced if the removed tree has a trunk diameter of 6 inches or greater (as measured at a point 54 inches above the natural grade). Replacement requirements are lowered – but still exist – for trees that are diseased, dying or dead. In certain circumstances where replacement is not reasonably possible, a property owner may pay into the City's Landscape Fund in lieu of planting replacement trees at a rate of \$150 per inch.

Maintaining Your Trees and Vegetation

We encourage residents to reduce the risk of wildfire in our community by removing all dead branches and brush. Routine maintenance of trees is also encouraged, but please remember that a permit is required to prune more than a single tree at a time. Also remember to disinfect all pruning tools thoroughly before use and apply pruning seal to all fresh cuts to help

prevent the spread of oak wilt disease. A brochure on oak wilt is available at City Hall.

Preserving Understory Vegetation

Many people understand the importance of protecting trees in our community, but may not realize that understory is just as important. Understory – the ground-level vegetation and brush under the canopy of larger trees – is an essential part of our ecosystem and rural appearance. City regulations strictly govern the removal of understory vegetation so that the unique rural feel of our community is not replaced by manicured lawns or vast expanses of St. Augustine grass.

Replacement Species

The City has recently expanded the list of tree species that may be used as replacement trees. The list is quite exhaustive and focuses on native

species that are known to thrive in our climate and environment.

Free Training for Contractors and Residents

If you're an arborist or a tree contractor – or a resident who wants to maintain your own property – call us for a free training session. We'll explain all of the City's rules and regulations regarding tree and vegetation maintenance, removal and replacement. Just call our City Arborist, Christy Shull at 327-3628 for more info.



Consult the Full Tree Ordinance Online

The City's full tree ordinance is available at www.westlakehills.org. Click on "Code of Ordinances" on the left side of the screen and then consult Chapter 14, Article III, Division 8. The relevant regulations are in Section 14-315 to Section 14-319. The list of replacement tree species is included with those regulations.



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