

City Council Election

Early voting begins on April 27th and ends on May 5th and Election Day is May 9th for three West Lake Hills City Council places. The candidates will appear on the ballot as follows:

For City Council Place 1:

- Alejandra Fernandez
- Linda Anthony (Incumbent)

For City Council Place 3:

- Kathy Wirt
- Stan Graham (Incumbent)

For City Council Place 5:

- Jim O'Connor (Unopposed)

Residents can vote at any Travis County polling location during early voting and on Election Day. Polling locations are available at www.traviscountyclerk.org.



THE CITY OF WEST LAKE HILLS
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Mayor: Dave Claunch, x 823 mayor@westlakehills.org	City Administrator: Robert Wood, x 825 cityadmin@westlakehills.org
Mayor Pro Tem, Council Place 3: Stan Graham wlhc3@westlakehills.org	City Planner: Ashby Grundman, x 838 planner@westlakehills.org
City Council Place 1: Linda Anthony wlhc1@westlakehills.org	Police Chief: Scott Gerdes, (512) 327-1195 chief@westlakehills.org
City Council Place 2: Taylor Holcomb wlhc2@westlakehills.org	ZAPCO Chairman: Robert Meisel wlhczp15@westlakehills.org
City Council Place 4: Darin Walker wlhc4@westlakehills.org	Wastewater Commission Chairman: Steve Hudson wcc3@westlakehills.org
City Council Place 5: Jim O'Connor wlhc5@westlakehills.org	Wastewater Coordinator: Wendy Bates, x 848 wbates@westlakehills.org



Transportation improvements coming soon

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

After more than two years of advocacy efforts by city leaders, property owners, residents and many others, the Texas Transportation Commission approved \$5 million of additional funding in February for the Bee Cave Road expansion project.

The project, which will add a center turn lane, sidewalks and other facilities along the entire stretch of Bee Cave Road through West Lake Hills, is now fully funded. Utility relocation is expected to begin this summer, with TXDOT letting the project out for bids in late summer or early fall. If all goes as planned, construction should begin in early 2016 and is expected to last approximately 24 months.

City leaders are continuing to work diligently to acquire the last few right-of-way parcels along Bee Cave Road that are necessary for the roadway expansion. Although these remaining parcels are among the more complicated and time-consuming acquisitions to negotiate, the city expects to complete the

acquisition process by early summer.

Of the 29 parcels acquired over the past few years, 11 were donated by the property owners in exchange for redevelopment rights approved by the City Council; 16 were

businesses is retained at all times and that cut-through commuter traffic is prevented – or at least minimized.

The Council has engaged engineering firms to study and make recommendations for a



The City Council hired Officer Grimes and purchased a new police vehicle to increase enforcement traffic laws on residential streets and help reduce speeding and discourage cut-through traffic.

acquired by negotiated purchase; and two were acquired by eminent domain – a last resort when a negotiated purchase isn't achievable.

Meanwhile, the City Council has begun to focus on how best to minimize the impact of this major construction project on the business owners and residents in the adjoining neighborhoods. The Council is working closely with TXDOT to ensure that access to homes and

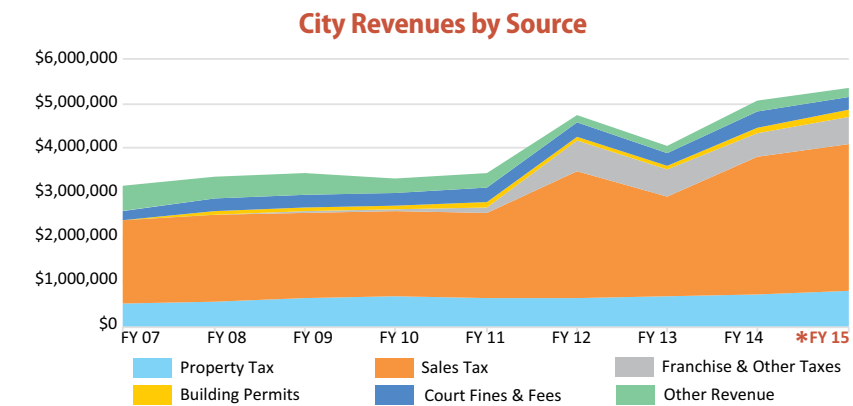
variety of improvements to the city's transportation infrastructure, including:

- Possible changes to Camp Craft Road, Westlake Drive and Westbank Drive where these roadways approach and intersect Bee Cave Road;
- Traffic calming measures and safety improvements in several neighborhoods including Forest View Drive/Rocky River Road and Ridgewood Drive;

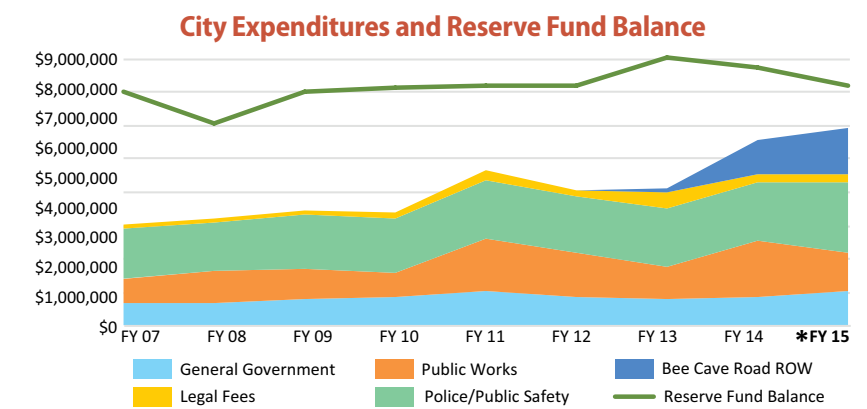
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Spotlight on city finances

Auditors recently reported that the city's finances are in excellent shape, with a very healthy reserve fund and one of the lowest property tax rates in Texas. Sales tax revenues have exceeded budget projections for the past seven years and are currently up 9.7% over last fiscal year. Franchise fee revenues are up and municipal court revenues have increased as well as our court system has become more streamlined and productive with fewer staff.



Spending on public safety has increased in recent years as the City Council has hired additional patrol officers and invested in more modern equipment. Legal fees have increased moderately as the city has tackled complex problems, including the purchase and expansion of the city's wastewater system, efforts to encourage Water District 10 to address low fire flows in parts of the city and, most recently, the legally-complex task of acquiring right-of-way for the expansion of Bee Cave Road.



Since 2013, the City Council has authorized expenditures totaling over \$2.4 million to acquire right-of-way along Bee Cave Road with several expensive parcels remaining to be acquired in the coming months. As discussed last August during the Council's budget hearings, these expenditures will create a rare budget deficit this year as we pull from the Reserve Fund to pay for these critical investments.

**Note that both the revenues and expenditures for FY2015 are projections based on current revenue or spending rates with the exception of the Bee Cave Road ROW expenditures which do not include future projections because those costs are not yet known.*

New ordinance takes aim at distracted driving

A new law banning the use of hand-held cell phones and other portable electronic devices while driving in West Lake Hills took effect after the City Council adopted a new ordinance at its March 25, 2015 meeting. City police officers will issue warnings for violating the new law until June 1. Fines of up to \$250 will be determined by the city judge.

The law is patterned after one adopted in Austin that took effect in January, and is aimed at reducing accidents caused by distracted driving that results from using a hand-held device to place or receive a call, send a text message, check email or play a game while driving. Unlike Austin's hands-free law, the West Lake Hills ordinance does not allow motorists to use hand-held electronic devices while stopped in a lane of traffic; they must be pulled off the roadway.

Drivers are allowed to use electronic devices in hands-free mode except in an active school zone, where state law prohibits any phone use regardless of mode. The use of GPS devices affixed to the vehicle that give directions audibly are permitted, as is the use of a phone to call 911.

Several other Texas cities have adopted similar measures in recent years, including Austin, San Antonio, and Corpus Christi. Lakeway and Pflugerville are currently considering adoption of similar hands-free driving ordinances.



NEW COUNCIL MEMBER PROFILE: Jim O'Connor

Jim O'Connor is the newest West Lake Hills city councilmember, having been appointed to fill the Place 5 vacancy on March 11, 2015.

He has been a resident of West Lake Hills for nearly 25 years and is a civil engineering professor at the University of

Texas. Jim's academic specialty is capital projects and their effective management. As a council member he looks forward to applying these skills toward the betterment of the city's infrastructure projects, including drainage and traffic improvements.

Jim has served on numerous national technical committees and was president of the local civil engineering society. His lecturing has taken him to nearly two dozen countries, most recently to Brazil, Russia, Malaysia, and the Middle East.

Jim has served on the West Lake Hills Zoning and Planning Commission for nearly two years. He looks forward to hearing all sides of council discussions and helping to find fair and balanced solutions to our municipal challenges. Jim's wife Catherine is a landscape architect and their two teenage children attend Westlake High School.



Police Chief Gerdes reports for duty

Following the retirement of long-time Police Chief Cliff Spratlan, the City of West Lake Hills is proud to welcome Scott Gerdes as the newest leader of the West Lake Hills Police Department. Scott Gerdes took over the duties as Police Chief on March 16.

Scott served for over 25 years as a police officer with the Dallas Police Department. In 2011, he retired from there as a Lieutenant, after working in many departments and divisions (including internal affairs, in-service and firearms training, crime scene response, technology and technical support, patrol, auto pound, and communications) where he managed and organized large work groups, budgets, personnel recruitment, training, investigations, and community involvement. While with the Dallas Police Department, Scott received commendations for professionalism, assistance to citizens, outstanding effort, leadership and initiative, and dedication to duty. He

also was awarded multiple Certificates of Merit.

He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Nebraska in Political Science and is a Certified Master Peace Officer. He also attended the Law Enforcement Management College at Caruth Police Institution, and the Police Supervision School, at the Southwestern Legal Foundation.



"I am very excited to be the new Police Chief for the City of West Lake Hills. I have only been here for a short time, but I am impressed with the professionalism and dedication I have seen from officers in this Department. I look forward to working with them and the community to keep West Lake Hills a great place to live and work."

Transportation improvements (continued)...

■ Possible improvements to the intersection of Westlake Drive and Redbud Trail ranging from additional lanes to a traffic circle.

Traffic enforcement will continue to be a top priority for our police department with the addition of a new patrol officer and vehicle assigned to that specific duty. Officer Grimes will be on patrol in the high-traffic neighborhoods during

morning and evening weekday rush hours, enforcing traffic laws and discouraging cut-through traffic.

The Council welcomes your ideas for improving the city's roadways. Sign up on the city's website at www.westlakehills.org for automatic notifications about future Council meetings where these and many other important transportation issues will be discussed.

Tree ordinance changes help reduce wildfire risk

As residents living in West Lake Hills, we are all aware of not only the unique, forested beauty of our environment but also the inherent risk of wildfire. Numerous amateurs and experts alike have noted, "it's not a matter of if, but when." The threat is real and must be considered from multiple perspectives.

As part of that consideration, it's important to realize that we live in what's known as a "wildland/urban interface" environment. Essentially, that means that protection of the urban features (the homes) is as critical to fire protection as the surrounding vegetation. Although some homes in West Lake Hills are fairly isolated on large lots several hundred feet away from their nearest neighbor, our community is becoming more densely developed, increasing the risk of a major fire event.

Fire brands (embers) from a nearby fire are responsible for starting approximately 80% of structure fires with some experts stating that embers can ignite structures up to a mile away under the right conditions. Looking at a typical home located in the heart of West Lake Hills, there are more than 100 other properties within a quarter mile. That's a lot of homes that could be affected by embers from a wildfire or structure fire anywhere else in the city.

Late last year and with significant

input from numerous experts and citizens, the city council updated the city's tree removal ordinance to improve fire protection by allowing property owners to remove more high-risk vegetation from their properties. The key element in that change was a far more effective Fire Safety Buffer Zone (FSBZ). Residents can now remove, with a free permit from the city inspector, any tree less than 12 inches in diameter and/or understory vegetation within 30

feet of habitable structures. The FSBZ can be increased to 100 feet to allow the removal of cedars on downslopes greater than 25%.

Additionally, property owners can now remove

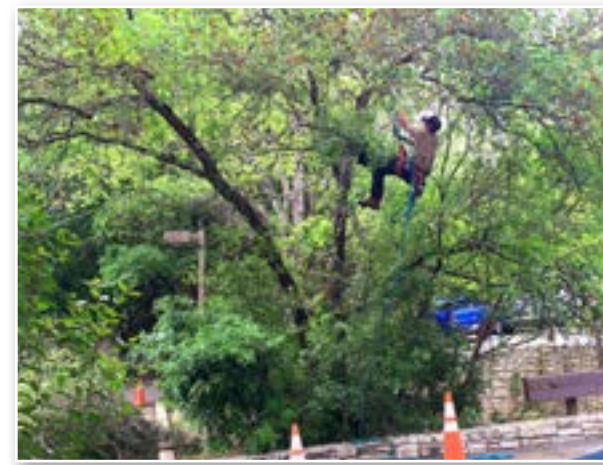
(limb up) dead or living limbs to reduce the fuel (fire) ladder effect. Trees that are 15 feet or higher may be limbed up to 9 feet. Trees that are 20 feet or higher may be limbed up to 12 feet if they are within 30 feet of a habitable structure. In all cases, no more than 25% of a tree's live foliage may be removed per year in order to maintain the tree's health.

Non-native invasive species such as Chinaberry, Ligustrum and Chinese Tallow that are less than

14 inches in diameter can now be removed with a free permit from the city's tree inspector, Christy Shull.

All of this information can be found in the city's Code of Ordinances, Sections 22.03.301 to 22.04.305 available on the city's website at www.westlakehills.org. Contact City Arborist/Inspector Christy Shull for details and to request a free permit for all vegetation removal if required.

Those changes to the city's Code



Crews prune trees and remove non-native invasive species (Ligustrums) at City Hall.

are only one part of a two-part approach suggested by the experts. The second and perhaps more important aspect of minimizing the risk of fire on your property is the concept of "structure hardening." In most of the available literature (such as the Firewise guidelines and the Austin and Travis County Community Wildfire Protection Plan), an equal amount of emphasis is placed on the actions individual

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Tree ordinance (continued)...

homeowners should take to prevent the loss of their home.

It may sound like a cliché but it's true: a structure won't burn if it won't ignite. There are many things you can do to protect your home from wildfire, including installing fire code compliant screens over all attic vents, keeping your gutters free of leaves and debris, moving piles of firewood away from your home and removing dead brush and leaves. Another great resource available to all of us is the Westlake Fire Department who will conduct a free Wildfire Home Assessment of your property. Contact them at (512) 539-3400 or visit www.westlakefd.org.

Even with the early detection capabilities of our new FireWatch automated camera system and the rapid deployment of local fire fighting resources, a wildfire could start anywhere at anytime and quickly get out of hand. Every resident in our city should be familiar with the "Ready, Set, Go" program which provides guidance on preparing for a wildfire. It's available on the city's website and is a must-read for those who live in high-risk areas. And don't forget to register with the city's reverse-911, mass notification system to receive instructions on which direction to go, which roads to take or not take, and other pertinent information during a major fire event. Look for the Citizen Alert button on the city's home page.

Drainage study starting soon

Residents will soon be asked to provide input to the city regarding local storm drainage performance. The City Council recently voted to hire the local engineering firm K. Friese & Associates to conduct a city-wide assessment of the city's public drainage facilities as a first step toward identifying and prioritizing necessary upgrades to our aging public drainage infrastructure.

The information gathering and

public input process is expected to happen over the summer, with more information about the process and public hearing dates coming in the next few months.

Once the drainage study is complete, the City Council will conduct public hearings to prioritize the problem areas identified by the study and decide which ones can be addressed given the city's limited budget.

City staff achieve notable honors

City Secretary **Lacie Hale** was elected by her peers in December to serve as the treasurer for the Capital Chapter of City Secretaries. This group consists of 68 members that are a City Secretary, Assistant City Secretary, retired City Secretary or Assistant City Clerk in the central Texas area.

Court Clerk **Bobby Martinez** recently earned the Level Two Municipal Court Clerk Certification with the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center. The certification requires 40 hours of classroom work and a passing grade on an intensive exam that covers advanced topics such as court technology, finances and administration. Currently in Texas, there are only 527

Court Clerks that are Level One certified, 408 that are Level Two certified, and 61 that are Court Clerk Three certified.



City Administrator Robert Wood and City Attorney Alan Bojorquez speak on a panel about Outdoor Lighting at the UT Land Use Conference in March.

City Administrator **Robert Wood** has earned the International City and County Management Association's Credentialed

Manager designation. Qualification for the certification include a combination of significant experience and education, a commitment to 40 hours of professional development each year, and successful completion of an evaluation with the ICMA, to gauge his knowledge as a city manager. There are only 72 other city and county managers in Texas that are credentialed with ICMA and just 1,300 internationally. Thanks for making us proud!