

City Council Place 4 Open

The City Council is accepting applications from citizens who are interested in being appointed to fill Council Place 4, which was vacated in October when Jean Goehring resigned.

The Council is expected to make the appointment in early 2014. The new Councilmember will serve until May of 2014 when the position comes up for election. Interested in serving your community? Contact the City Secretary at 512-327-3628.

Special thanks to former Council member Andrew Schwartz who has accepted the Council's invitation to serve on the Board of Adjustment until the City Council appointment is made.



THE CITY OF WEST LAKE HILLS

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City Council Place 1:

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City Council Place 4:

Open

Wastewater Commission Chairman:

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City Council Place 5:

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Wastewater Coordinator:

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The City of West Lake Hills
911 Westlake Drive
West Lake Hills, Texas 78746



New Firewatch Camera System Comes Online

After months of evaluation, consideration and negotiation with both the German manufacturer and the City of Austin, we're pleased to announce that West Lake Hills' new Firewatch automated fire detection camera system is up and running.

The camera system operates 24 hours-a-day, continuously scanning West Lake Hills and the surrounding areas – up to 10 miles away – for the telltale signs of smoke and fire. The system automatically alerts the operator who can then locate and zoom in on the suspected fire to determine whether or not to notify the relevant fire departments.

The camera is mounted to a communications tower owned by the



The Firewatch camera system is mounted to a City of Austin communications tower on Mount Larsen, just north of West Lake Hills. Camera images are relayed to our dispatch center using wireless radio signals.

City of Austin, who graciously agreed to allow us access to their tower at no charge. Images from the camera are transmitted via wireless radio signal to the West Lake Hills Police Department dispatch center.

In recent weeks, City staff have been working with the system manufacturer to configure the system and train our dispatchers on how to use it. Several tweaks have been made to the system to adapt it to the specific needs of our urban-wildland interface community.

"It's a powerful system with many features that allow us to pinpoint the location of a fire event," says West Lake Hills dispatch department supervisor Ben Van Dyke.

Those capabilities would have been quite helpful in locating the source of smoke reported by many residents in when a home on Spillar Lane caught fire late August. Callers to the City's 911 service were only able to identify the general location of the fire and time was lost while police and fire



Operators in the City's Police Dispatch office will monitor the Firewatch camera system remotely, zooming in on the specific location when the system alerts them to a possible fire event.

crews patrolled the area looking for the source. Unfortunately, the Firewatch camera system was not yet operational at that time.

The City will work with the Westlake and Austin Fire Departments in the coming months to set a series of controlled burns to test the system's ability to identify fires in a variety of conditions. The City has one year to evaluate the system and return it for an 80% refund if it's determined that the system does not function as well as expected.

Preliminary signs are positive and all parties agree that the system has the potential to vastly improve our ability to identify and respond to a fire event before it becomes a major wildfire that threatens us all.

NEW COUNCIL MEMBER PROFILE: Linda Anthony

Linda Anthony is the newest West Lake Hills City Council Member having been sworn in on May 22, 2013, but Linda is not new to West Lake Hills or West Lake Hills government. She has lived in West Lake Hills off and on since the 1970's and continuously since 1986. She worked for the *Austin American Statesman* for fourteen years as a reporter and city editor.



Linda served as a Zoning and Planning Commissioner in the early 1990's and again starting in 2009. She stayed on the Zoning and Planning Commission until the spring of this year when she ran for City Council.

She is interested in protecting the rural character of West Lake Hills. In that spirit, Linda has already helped craft proposed revisions to the City's exterior lighting requirements, supported new rules for development on Bee Cave Road that are currently being discussed, and started a discussion about limiting the size of new homes for fire safety and to limit environmental and ecological damage. "Given our fragile environment, I think we should be looking for more ways to shrink our footprint on the planet," said Linda.

Fire Hydrants Scrutinized

City leaders remain committed to preventing a catastrophic wildfire in the Westbank area. Plans are being made for another dead brush collection project in 2014, enforcement of the law requiring dead brush to be removed from properties continues, and all property owners are being encouraged to establish fire safety buffer zones around their homes as allowed by City Code. But the biggest focus right now is on the City's water supply to ensure that the Westlake Fire Department has enough water to be able to keep a house fire from becoming a major wildfire event.

Over the past twenty four months, the City has been encouraging Water District 10, the local water supplier, to test, repair and maintain its fire hydrants. Fire flow tests conducted at the City's expense in 2011 yielded questionable results, so the City Council voted recently to hire a new contractor to retest the Water District's hydrants. Those tests are currently underway. The results and a map showing the locations of the low-flowing fire hydrants should be published on the City's website by the time you read this.

Once the City has an accurate understanding of the fire hydrant flow rates throughout the City, the City Council will work with Water District 10 to establish a minimum standard fire flow rate.

Water District 10 will then begin making upgrades to their water system in areas where the fire hydrants don't meet the minimum standard. Those upgrades may include new pumps, tanks or transmission lines and could cost millions of dollars.

Meanwhile, a temporary moratorium remains in place on building permits in areas where fire flows are deficient so that new construction does not increase risks for the surrounding properties.

A joint meeting between the City Council and the Water District 10 Board of Directors is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 4 at City Hall to discuss the issue.

The #1 Job in West Lake Hills

The City's volunteer Wastewater Commission advises the City Council on policies, procedures and proposed expansions of the city's centralized wastewater collection system. Seven Commissioners representing residential and commercial property owners meet monthly. There's an opening on the Commission for a residential member. If you're interested, please contact our wastewater coordinator, Robbie Davis at 512-327-3628, extension 830.

Bee Cave Road Expansion Moves Forward

In September, the City Council voted to authorize the mayor to begin acquiring the necessary right-of-way to expand Bee Cave Road to include a center turn lane and sidewalks from Walsh Tarlton Lane to the western entrance of Eanes Elementary.

The acquisition process is expected to last until mid-2014, as City leaders work with property owners to negotiate the purchase price and related issues.

Some property owners have chosen to take advantage of a set of redevelopment incentives offered by the City in exchange for donating the needed right-of-way. Those incentives include increased allowances for impervious cover, the preservation of the existing front building setback line, and an allowance for relocating any existing signage.

Other property owners prefer to be paid for the value of the right-of-way parcel. In cases where the City and the property owner can't agree on a purchase price, the City will exercise its power of eminent domain to acquire the property at fair market value as determined through the administrative and/or judicial condemnation process.

Once all of the right-of-way has been acquired, crews will begin relocating the various utilities – aerial electric and cable TV lines and underground water, gas and phone lines, to the outer edge of the

right-of-way as required by the Texas Department of Transportation. That process is expected to take a year, after which construction of the center turn lane and sidewalks will begin and take up to two years.

Efforts are still underway to extend the center turn lane westward

beyond Eanes Elementary, hopefully to connect to the center turn lane recently installed at the intersection with Redbud Trail. There are several design and funding challenges that need to be overcome before progress can be made in that segment, but rest assured that it remains a top priority.

Wastewater Loan Repaid Early

Since 2008, the City Council has twice voted to approve a total of \$3,364,349 in loans to the City's wastewater fund: first to help finance Phase 2 construction to extend service to properties along Bee Cave Road and again in 2012 to help fund the system's purchase from the LCRA.

The loans were to be paid back by the wastewater fund to the general fund with interest after the revenue bonds that were sold to finance the purchase were paid off (approximately 20 years) or sooner if possible.

Thanks to careful fiscal management and overly conservative revenue projections, the wastewater

fund recently accumulated a small surplus. In February, the City Council voted to pay down \$1.15 million of the loans early.

The wastewater system remains in strong financial shape. Funds have been set aside to construct a new service line to Hull Circle and the northern section of Westlake Drive, which is expected to start in 2014. The new service line along the southern end of Buckeye Trail will be operational in the near future.

Special thanks to our volunteer Wastewater Commission for their excellent management of our wastewater collection system.

Wonderfest!

Fun for the entire family!
Games • Food • Fun
Train Rides • Choir Performance
Bouncy House • Santa's Village
Plus a visit from Santa himself!

Sunday, December 8
2:00pm to 4:00pm
Northstar Bank
Westlake Drive at
Bee Cave Road

Sponsored by the Westlake Chamber of Commerce, Northstar Bank, the City of West Lake Hills and many local businesses.