

Westcreek Neighborhood

ASSOCIATION

September, 2004 — Published Quarterly for our Westcreek Neighbors

Log on at westcreekna.org

Westcreek and Southwest Austin will be first to pay tolls

Westcreek and Southwest Austin residents using any of the 1.45-miles of construction at William Cannon Drive and Loop 1 will be the first to pay user-taxes under a toll-road plan mandated by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) earlier this summer.

The Loop 1 stretch of roadway, scheduled for completion in March, will be the first part of a massive toll-road scheme for Austin backed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA), and development and road-building interests.

The CTRMA will administer the tollways and had not set the price to be paid by the users of the Loop 1 at William Cannon roadway at the time this story was written, although a use-tax of 50 cents was suggested at some early citizen information meetings.

Despite heavy opposition to inclusion of the William Cannon construction in the plan, TxDOT lobbied heavily for all the toll roads, claiming they were the only way to solve Austin's mobility problems.

The CAMPO Transportation Policy Board vote for the controversial plan was 16-7. Many of the votes favoring the tollway plan came from CAMPO representatives from outside Austin. However, several officials whose constituency includes Southwest Austin also voted for the toll roads. They are Travis County Judge Sam Biscoe, Austin Mayor Will Wynn, City Council Member Brewster McCracken and City Council Member Danny Thomas.

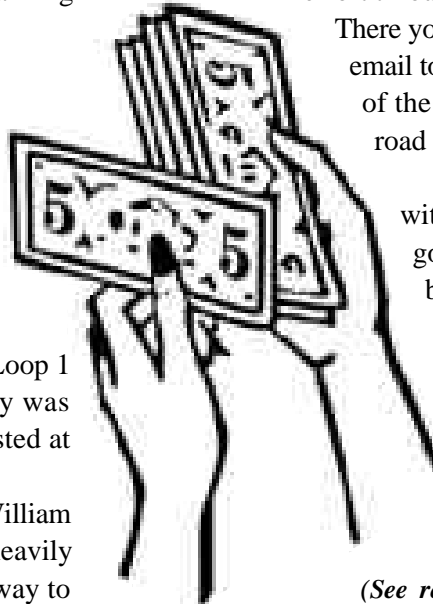
Two policy board members who represent Southwest Austin, State Representative Terry Keel and County Commissioner Gerald Daugherty, took an active roll arguing against adoption of the tollway scheme. Daugherty had a three-foot stack of email messages opposing the William Cannon toll road section. According to the Austin Business Journal, some in the business community may seek retaliation against Keel and Daugherty for opposing toll roads.

A group seeking the recall of Mayor Wynn, Council Member McCracken and Council Member Thomas has been formed. The Austin Toll Party is coordinating the effort through a web site: austintollparty.com.

There you can print recall petitions and send email to state officials asking for the repeal of the law which created our Austin toll road scheme.

Regional tollway authorities, with heavy backing from the governor's office, were approved by the last session of the state legislature. The plan was designed to offer a way to meet critical transportation needs in the state's urban areas while providing political cover for elected officials wanting to avoid tax increases.

(See related story inside — Why We Lost The Tollway Battle)

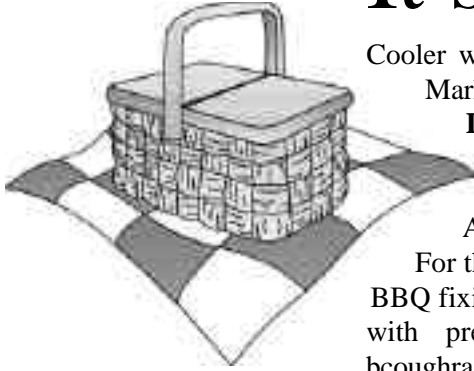


WNA QUARTERLY MEETING NOTICE

The next Quarterly Meeting
for Westcreek residents
will be held on Monday, Sept. 20
at the Will Hampton Library,
5125 Convict Hill Road,
from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m.

As always, a door prize will be given away!

It's Almost Picnic Time!



Cooler weather is right around the corner, and so is our annual WNA picnic!

Mark your calendars now for **Sunday, October 3rd, 2004, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at**

Dick Nichols Park, 8011 Beckett Lane. The WNA is working to make this

our best one yet. We'll have contests with prizes, games, a moonwalk for the kids, lots of good food, and the most important thing, FUN!

As always, we encourage you to bring your favorite side dish or dessert.

For the fourth year in a row, Randalls has generously offered to donate all the BBQ fixings, plates, cups, condiments, etc. If you would like to volunteer to help with preparations, please call Ben Coughran at 892-5364, or email: bcoughra@ev1.net. See you there!

Why we lost the tollway battle

By Bob Shrader

I was among hundreds of opponents overflowing into three additional rooms at the Thompson Conference Center July 12 when CAMPO approved the massive toll road plan. As I listened to discussion of a laundry list of amendments being discussed, my thoughts turned to why we were about to lose.

The last time we had a major transportation issue directly impacting Westcreek — the effort to get an entrance ramp near Westcreek Drive added to the U.S. 290 expansion — we won the battle. Why did we and the remainder of Southwest Austin lose this time? Our opposition to the William Cannon bridge toll was perceived as a NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) position. In retrospect, I believe we would have received a fairer hearing if our opposition had been to the entire toll road plan. **We failed to build bridges to interest groups in other parts of the city.** There wasn't much time to do this on the tollway question, but we haven't done this on other issues either. Toll roads had the backing of major business groups, all of which wield significant influence at Austin city hall.

The influence of Central Austin neighborhoods. While Central Austin was quiet during the public debate over the merits of the plan, major amendments — to temporarily exclude Loop 360 and to use some of the taxes from toll roads to help pay for purchase of railroad right-of-way, HOV lanes and sound mitigation will benefit Central Austin.

Voter participation. Historically Southwest Austin voter participation has been lower than that in Central Austin and some other parts of the city.

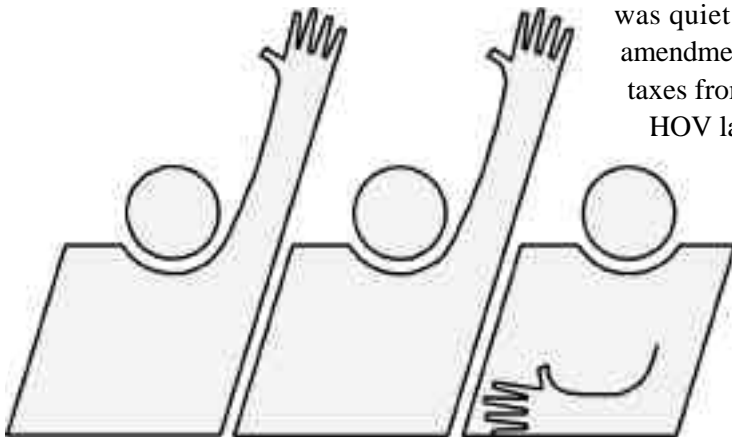
Redistricting. During our fight to get the braided ramp, we were aided significantly by our state senator — Gonzalo Barrientos, who also chaired CAMPO. We are no longer in the district of Barrientos, but he remains chair of CAMPO.

At-large representation on the City Council. Leaders in

Southwest Austin have long fought for single-member districts, which would force council members to be more sensitive to regional issues within the city. Opposition to single-member districts has come from business and Central Austin groups.

The concept of fairness to all parts of Austin. At least one member of the CAMPO policy board felt that part of the city west of the interstate should share the toll burden with the users of Loop 130, being built through East Austin.

There's no guarantee that had the conditions I have cited been different, we would have won our battle. At the least, however, the vote would have been closer. *And that's where our individual votes are important.* To have more influence at city hall, we must first communicate with our council members and then go to the polls at election time and VOTE.



Westcreek Neighbors Surprised by Wandering Turtle

By Bryson Read, Westcreek resident

Scores of Westcreek neighbors and passerby did a double take on Tuesday, July 13th when a giant 60-pound turtle was spotted leisurely crawling down the sidewalk in the 5100 block of Summerset Trail.



Nobody could figure out where the turtle was going or where it had come from, and many residents remarked that it was about the strangest thing to come down a Westcreek sidewalk in quite some time.

First on the scene were Westcreek neighbor **Amy Wissel**, who lives on Honey Dew Court, and **Susan Walters** from Yellow Rose Trail, who were on the way to a Boy Scout meeting with their kids when they happened to drive by the turtle. "I was really worried for the turtle to be out there all alone like that when normally it must be a house pet," said Amy.

At that point the turtle, which had been heading east on Summerset Trail, did an about-face and began heading west. New Westcreek residents **Bruce and Clara Oliver** came outside with their digital movie camera as the turtle came by their house. The turtle continued its journey down Summerset Trail when finally, in the 5300 block, a crowd of neighbors and passerby congregated, trying to figure out how to help the turtle. A traffic bottleneck began to occur at the intersection of Smith Oak and Summerset Trail as cars started slowing down to see what was going on and people began pulling over to view the turtle in more detail.

Finally, Westcreek neighbors **Bill and Mona Crum** (who live at the corner of Smith Oak and Summerset Trail) volunteered to pick up the turtle and take it to their backyard for refuge until the owners could be located. "Be careful, it might be a snapper!" the crowd yelled at Bill as he carried the turtle across the street. Once safely in their backyard, the turtle began eating grass and wading in a small kiddie pool that had been set up. "Yes, he seemed kind of hungry...so we fed him carrots, apples, and he even ate a whole sliced cucumber," said Bill. Meanwhile, a search party had been formed to go out and find the turtle's owners. **Andrew and Sheri James** and their two sons **Nicholas and Christopher** set out up Smith Oak Trail asking the neighbors along the way if they might know where the turtle lived. "We had to do something because we all knew that turtle soup was out of the question," joked Sheri.

At last, success! On Morning Dew Drive, they knocked on the door of **Erik and Becky Swansiger**, who were relieved to hear that their missing turtle had been located. "We had some people constructing a new deck and apparently the gate had been left open—and I guess he thought that this was his one chance to go and see the world," said Becky.

The Swansigers have had the turtle, whose name is "**Barton**"; for about 10 years. He is an African Spur Thigh Turtle, a species that can live to be 100 years old. The couple found Barton when he was just a baby turtle on the Barton Creek Hike and Bike Trail—and that's why they decided that Barton would be a fitting name. "Apparently he had been either lost or abandoned near the bike trail because obviously they're not a species that is native to Texas," speculated Becky. Erik said that turtles such as Barton make great pets because they don't bark. Another plus is that they never have to mow their back yard, because Barton keeps the lawn nicely trimmed year 'round. He even has his own turtle house in the backyard with a heat lamp to keep him warm in the winter.

"In addition to the grass, we just give him all our left-over vegetables, which he loves," said Erik. Becky added, "We really want to thank all the Westcreek residents who helped to return Barton and keep him safe."



Erik, Becky, & Holden Swansiger with their pet turtle, Barton, who is still oblivious to his newly-found celebrity status in the neighborhood.

A Farewell To Art

In June, Art Wheelless retired from over 18 years of duty as the mailman for Westcreek.

In honor of his faithful service, Art was presented with a plaque at the June Westcreek Neighborhood Quarterly Meeting. Art and his wife, Pat, accepted the award.

We are including here a wonderful letter that Art sent to Westcreek, thanking us for everything. We think it should be the other way around.

Thank you, Art. We'll miss you.



An Official Apology from WNA Editor

Yes, your newsletter editor messed up. In your June WNA newsletter, there was a center spread with photographs of violations. These photographs were not taken during the April Sweep, but taken in the middle of May, right before the newsletter was put together.

Unfortunately, one of the photographs was from a resident who had recently taken her RV out of storage for a trip, and this photo was included as a violator. This was NOT the case, and it is this newsletter editor's job to correctly identify true violators before publishing them.

This is my official apology to Carolyn Brown, who has taken great strides to make sure she is not one of the people who lets the neighborhood look "junky". She pays to have her RV stored correctly. I regret not checking the facts before publishing the photo.

June 15, 2004

Subj: A Carrier's Farewell

Dear Westcreek Friends,

Yes, I believe that after 18 plus years as your letter carrier it would be more proper to greet you as friends and not customers. My retirement from the US Postal Service, is a joyous occasion. A time to enjoy the "good life" and live the "life of Riley" (for those old enough to remember the TV show). However, this is also a time to reflect upon the days which will be greatly missed, the people who have made an impact on my life, and the treasured moments of being a "mailman".

I do want to thank each and every one of you for the wonderful blessings of cards and kindness you have demonstrated since my last day of work. I shall never forget the large poster on Smith Oak Trail instructing me, "Good morning Art, have a wonderful last day at work!", then the balloons and marvelous gifts. The Astney's gave me a copy of the "Finding Nemo" DVD. Pat and I began watching it one evening with some skepticism, but that tiny animated fish begins to grow on you and eventually steals your heart. I highly recommend it.

You'll need to train your new carrier, whom will arrive in about another four to six weeks as I write this. He/She will need to learn to the little things like sending your mail to Alaska each summer when you travel on vacation, blowing the horn twice while passing your house, carrying the newspaper to the door while delivering a package, placing the trash container in its proper place when you are away, and calling the carrier at home to hold the mail or check on a missing item. But then... there are rewards. All the cookies, pastries, candies, beverages, cards, and many, many fine smiles and gestures. Most of all, I shall miss the children who I have watched grow to be fine ladies and gentlemen. I shall miss you all.

My prayer is that God will shower you with His blessings.

Sincerely Yours,

Art Wheelless, the mailman

Update on Southwest Marketplace

Plans for Southwest Marketplace are moving ahead! The proposed zoning change for the new high-end development at the Southwest corner of Mopac and William Cannon was unanimously approved by the City Environmental Board in July and the City Zoning and Platting Commission on August 3, 2004. The City Council voted on and approved the proposal August 26 and September 2, 2004, with Brewster McCracken the only no vote. Council-member McCracken stated that he had campaigned against "big box" development and felt the proposal for Southwest Marketplace went against his campaign promise. Further updates on the site plan approval process will be given in subsequent newsletters and via the neighborhood eGroups. To sign up for the eGroups, you must be a paying member of the Neighborhood Association. You will find a membership form in this newsletter. Thank you for supporting the WNA.

Membership to be asked to approve bylaw changes

The agenda for the September general membership meeting of the WNA will include submission of several proposed changes to our bylaws. These include:

- Changing the term of office of the Immediate Past President from the current one year to two years. This would make the term for that office coincide with term lengths for the other executive committee positions.
- Replacing the ANC representative executive committee member and the OHAN representative executive committee member with two more at-large members (bringing the number of at-large members to three) and giving the executive committee the authority to designate responsibilities of these at-large members. This change would provide more flexibility in meeting pressing needs of the neighborhood association.
- Giving the President of WNA the authority to appoint a substitute to attend outside meetings and clarifying the President's authority for writing checks.

The Executive Committee approved these amendments along with several housekeeping changes in the bylaws at its July meeting. To become effective, the three bylaw amendments must be submitted in writing to the general membership at a regular meeting (in this case, the September meeting), and then must be approved by at least a two-thirds majority at the next general membership meeting (December). Copies of the bylaws with amendments will be distributed at the September Quarterly meeting. The proposed changes are also available at the WNA website, westcreekna.org.

The housekeeping item changes do not require approval of the general membership but are being included in the bylaw changes document.

Yards of the Month

by Ben Coughran, WNA Enhancement Committee Chairman



The Westcreek Neighborhood Association Enhancement Committee selected the yard of Karen and Jack Sperry as the Yard of the Month for June. The Sperrys live at 6505 Fair Valley Trail and have done a superb job of redecorating over the last year and a half, and what they have done works beautifully. If you want to see a really neat Westcreek yard and home, drive by the Sperry's and take a look.

The July Yard of the Month was 4616 Yellow Rose Trail, the home of Carl and Cindy Floto. The Flotos have quite a display of Texas native plants to admire. Take the time to drive by and see it for yourself. It is a lovely home.

The August YOM winners were Saadat and Mansour Sharif, at 6415 Steer Trail. The Sharif's yard is manicured

to perfection with a virtual orchard of various fruit trees that are arranged very tastefully throughout the property. A beautiful wrought iron fence and a grapevine arbor add to the charm of this lovely home.

The Sperrys, Flotos and Sharifs all received a \$50.00 gift certificate from Emerald Garden and a \$25.00 gift card from Randalls. Congratulations to the winners!

By the way, the Enhancement Committee does not consider any home and yard for the Yard of the Month program if the garbage cart or the recycling cart is stored on the driveway. The Committee believes that keeping your garbage and/or recyclables stored in front of your home does not enhance Westcreek.

National Night Out In Westcreek

Although there were many fewer parties in the neighborhood than in past years, the few residents that held celebrations had great turnouts. Lots of great food and conversation were found at the four parties this newsletter editor encountered. Many of your neighbors are pictured on these two pages — see who you can spot. And a special thanks goes to Austin's finest... our police, fire department and constables, who took the time to come to Westcreek and fascinate both young and old alike!



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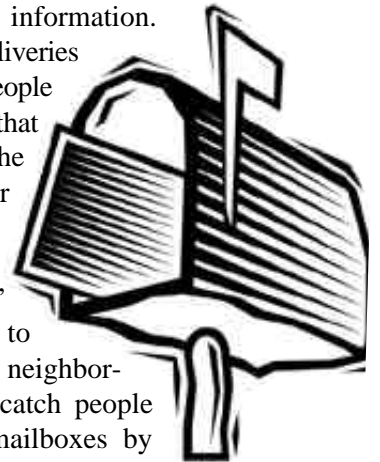
by Alicia Ortiz

I have been a resident of Westcreek for 22 years. I am also a mail carrier out of the Mockingbird Station. Recently I was alarmed by an article that I read in the *Austin American-Statesman*, dated August 5, 2004: "7 accused of being part of an identity theft ring". The following is an excerpt of that article: "A federal grand jury in Austin has indicted 7 people accused of being part of an identity theft ring that pillaged mailboxes in Northwest Austin and used the personal information they found to create fake checks. The leader of the group, Sandra Dee Madrid, was charged with aggravated identity theft, which carries a maximum sentence of two years. Court documents allege that Madrid used a computer program to print checks using information she and other members of the ring obtained by stealing mail from cars and mailboxes. In February, Madrid let police officers search her apartment, where they found 360 pieces of mail belonging to 180 people, a computer, and check-making software. The indictment charges that Madrid printed checks using the stolen bank information and cashed the checks at local supermarkets."

As a mail carrier, it is common to see many people fail to check their mailboxes on a daily basis. All too often, very important mail is left in boxes for days. Do not allow your mail to be left unchecked. It is an invitation for people

to gain access to vital information.

Especially vulnerable are deliveries we call "curbside". Many people order items via the internet that are either delivered by the U.S. Postal Service or other delivery services that have a waiver instructing us to "Leave if no response." These are all invitations to people who prey on our neighborhoods. We also strive to catch people who place handbills in mailboxes by contacting them and letting them know this is illegal to do without the homeowner's consent or permission. When you are planning on being out of town, have your mail put on hold, or have a neighbor gather it. The USPS will gladly hold your mail and resume delivery upon your return. You can do this quite simply: fill out one of our forms, write on a piece of paper the dates you will be gone and when you will return and leave and return, or go to www.usps.com and request a hold on your mail. These are just a few tips to safeguard your privacy and protect you, your mail and your identity.



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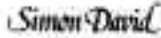
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Newsletter Editor.....899-1292
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CLASSIFIED ADS

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_____ I (we) want to be added to the WNA Yahoo eGroup list
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