

## September 2010 General Meeting

The next General Meeting of the Willow Meadows Civic Club will be held at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 14, in the Chapel of Willow Meadows Baptist Church. Our speaker will be Leo Vasquez, Harris County Tax Assessor. Please join us.

# Willow Meadows News

[www.willowmeadows.org](http://www.willowmeadows.org)

## September 2010

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WM Neighborhood  
Picnic scheduled for  
October 3 as part of  
National Night Out.

## The President's Letter

Dear Neighbor,

Our spate of weather pushing 100 degrees has made me glad that autumn is coming soon. I hope you're faring well in this August heat!

Our September General Meeting brings us two important opportunities as a civic club: 1) to nominate our 2011 Officers and 2) to see and discuss the draft of our 2011 Budget. I hope you will plan to attend.

Since several of you have expressed a strong desire to restore our traditional neighborhood picnic, which was cancelled last year for lack of both volunteers and funds, your Board of Directors asked Member-at-Large John Mooney to come up with a way to do so, and you can read about it here on pages 5-6.

If you or someone you know would like to be considered for one of our 12 board offices in 2011, please come to the meeting prepared to offer to serve or to place a neighbor's name in nomination—with their prior permission, of course.

Your Board of Directors devoted most of its August meeting to discussing how to maintain a balanced budget in 2011, and you will see the tentative budget your Budget Planning Committee is studying elsewhere in this newsletter. If you have suggestions, please bring them to our September General Meeting or share them with the chairman.

Occasionally, a neighbor calls with a complaint about an apparent deed restriction violation, and I put them in touch with the chairman of your Deed Restriction Enforcement Committee. The most direct way to voice such complaints is to submit the Deed Restriction Violation form available on the willowmeadows.org website.

Hurricane season has been quiet so far, and here's hoping the season's storms continue to bypass us in 2011. See you come September!

Sincerely,

*Emory Glover, President*

**Willow Meadows Civic Club, Inc.**

P. O. Box 35551, Houston, Texas 77235

**2010 Board of Directors**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>E-Mail</b>
President	Emory Glover	(713) 729-0445	<a href="mailto:President@willowmeadows.org">President@willowmeadows.org</a>
Vice President	Erich Wolz	(713) 797-4645	<a href="mailto:Vicepresident@willowmeadows.org">Vicepresident@willowmeadows.org</a>
Treasurer	Robert Szafranski	(713) 721-4971	<a href="mailto:Treasurer@willowmeadows.org">Treasurer@willowmeadows.org</a>
Secretary	Cynthia Mora	(713) 723-1788	<a href="mailto:Secretary@willowmeadows.org">Secretary@willowmeadows.org</a>
At-Large Position 1	Stephen Polnaszek	(713) 721-8425	<a href="mailto:At-Large-1@willowmeadows.org">At-Large-1@willowmeadows.org</a>
At-Large Position 2	Jonathan Roach	(713) 623-4531	<a href="mailto:At-Large-2@willowmeadows.org">At-Large-2@willowmeadows.org</a>
At-Large Position 3	Graham Hildebrand	(713) 458-7373	<a href="mailto:At-Large-3@willowmeadows.org">At-Large-3@willowmeadows.org</a>
At-Large Position 4	John Mooney	(713) 721-6523	<a href="mailto:At-Large-4@willowmeadows.org">At-Large-4@willowmeadows.org</a>
At-Large Position 5	Garry Weisman	(713) 721-1250	<a href="mailto:At-Large-5@willowmeadows.org">At-Large-5@willowmeadows.org</a>
At-Large Position 6	Joey Canahuati	(713) 723-4522	<a href="mailto:At-Large-6@willowmeadows.org">At-Large-6@willowmeadows.org</a>
At-Large Position 7	Howard Lindsay	(713) 729-7808	<a href="mailto:At-Large-7@willowmeadows.org">At-Large-7@willowmeadows.org</a>
At-Large Position 8	Brett Triola	(713) 539-3889	<a href="mailto:At-Large-8@willowmeadows.org">At-Large-8@willowmeadows.org</a>

**2010 Standing Committee Chairs**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
Architectural Control	Garry Weisman	(713) 721-1250	<a href="mailto:Architecture@willowmeadows.org">Architecture@willowmeadows.org</a>
Deed Restrictions Enforcement	Jonathan Roach	(713) 623-4531	<a href="mailto:Deed@willowmeadows.org">Deed@willowmeadows.org</a>
Maintenance & Beautification	Joey Canahuati	(713) 723-4522	<a href="mailto:Beautification@willowmeadows.org">Beautification@willowmeadows.org</a>
Newsletter Editor	Howard Lindsay	(713) 729-7808	<a href="mailto:Editor@willowmeadows.org">Editor@willowmeadows.org</a>
Security	Stephen Polnaszek	(713) 721-8425	<a href="mailto:Security@willowmeadows.org">Security@willowmeadows.org</a>
Webmaster	Howard Lindsay	(713) 729-7808	<a href="mailto:Webmaster@willowmeadows.org">Webmaster@willowmeadows.org</a>

**Political Directory**

These are the phone numbers of the elected officials most frequently contacted about state and local government issues:

**County Commissioners:**

Precinct 1, El Franco Lee  
(Outside the Loop) (713) 755-6111

Precinct 3, Steve Radack  
(Inside the Loop) (713) 755-6306

**Houston City Council:**

Mayor Annise Parker (713) 837-0311  
Anne Clutterbuck, District C (832) 393-3004

**Texas State Representative**

Al Edwards, District 146 (512) 463-0518

**Texas State Senator**

Rodney Ellis, District 13 (512) 463-0113  
(713) 236-0306

**HISD Board of Education**

(713) 556-6121

Paula Harris, Red ES  
Michael Lunceford, Johnston MS  
Lawrence Marshall, Westbury HS  
Michael Lunceford, Bellaire HS

**Useful Contact Information**

Imminent Threat 911  
HPD Dispatch (713) 884-3131  
WM Security Patrol (713) 447-0200



[www.willowmeadows.org](http://www.willowmeadows.org)

Houston Service Helpline 311

Call 311 for all non-emergency city service needs, such as problems with Garbage and Heavy Trash Pickup, Water/Sewer Repairs, Weeds Blocking View, Street Sign or Street Light Maintenance, Odor Hotline, or Dead Animals.

City of Houston Online [www.houstontx.gov](http://www.houstontx.gov)



Use this website to report all city service needs, as described above. Click the 311 emblem (shown, left) on the Homepage to access an online form.

Animal Control (713) 238-9600

Harris County Flood Control (713) 684-4197

By Robert Szafranski

## Willow Meadows Civic Club Inc.

## Actuals vs. Budget

	<u>Actual as of</u> <u>August 14, 2010</u> <u>Approved Budget</u>	
<b>Income</b>		
Advertising(Includes Prior Year)	1,020.00	2,000
Annual Dues		
Prior Year Assessments	4,611.96	1,200
FY10 Assessments	131,881.00	191,800
<b>Total Annual Dues</b>	<b>\$ 136,492.96</b>	<b>\$ 193,000</b>
Late Fees	655.87	1,000
Legal Settlement	175.00	0
Transfer / Refinance fees	2,900.00	3,500
Security Fund Donations	0.00	0
Interest Income	251.91	700
Other Income	1,195.87	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 142,691.61</b>	<b>\$ 200,200</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Accounting/Bookkeeping Services	787.25	5,200
Archit Control Com Misc	0.00	100
Bank Service Charges	0.00	200
Braes Bayou Association	0.00	200
Deed Restriction Support Services	3,964.10	8,500
General Meeting Marketing	100.00	200
General Printing	1,796.85	5,000
Insurance for Board	1,214.00	1,000
Legal Services/Filing Fees	620.00	5,000
Mail/Postage Expense	611.08	2,700
Maintenance & Beautification Com	5,368.66	12,950
Office Supplies	34.69	600
PO Box Rental	70.00	85
Red Elementry PTO	0.00	300
Storage/Office Rent	617.00	1,100
United Orthodox Synagogue	0.00	300
Website/Technology	119.40	1,100
Willow Meadows Baptist Church	0.00	500
WMCC - Other	16.29	1,000
WMCC Stickers	0.00	500
<b>Total Non-Security Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 15,319.32</b>	<b>\$ 46,535</b>
<b>Security</b>		
Security Committee Misc	219.80	500
Security Insurance Costs		
Commercial Auto Ins Security	6,768.17	8,000
Security Liability Insurance	5,504.00	7,500
Workers Comp Insurance	6,996.00	5,973
<b>Total Security Insurance Costs</b>	<b>\$ 19,268.17</b>	<b>\$ 21,473</b>
Vehicle		
Patrol Car Fuel Expenses	3,737.69	9,076
Patrol Car, Vehicle Registration	55.30	230
Security Answ Service	418.00	660
Security Cell Phone	931.98	1,560
Vehicle Maintenance	3,893.62	4,740
<b>Total Vehicle</b>	<b>\$ 9,036.59</b>	<b>\$ 16,266</b>
<b>Total Wages, Taxes &amp; Fees</b>	<b>71,937.65</b>	<b>114,016</b>
<b>Total Security</b>	<b>\$ 100,462.21</b>	<b>\$ 152,255</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 115,781.53</b>	<b>\$ 198,790</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 26,910.08</b>	<b>\$ 1,410</b>

**Willow Meadows Civic Club Inc.**  
**Balance Sheet**  
**As of August 14, 2010**

	<b>Total</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Bank Accounts</b>	
Beal Bank CD - 6568/07/27/10	0.00
Beal Bank CD-7734 4/25/11	30,741.53
Chase (formerly Washington Mutual)	0.00
JP Morgan Chase - Checking	9,587.51
JP Morgan Chase - MoneyMarket	118,768.08
<b>Total Bank Accounts</b>	<b>\$ 159,097.12</b>
Accounts Receivable	-3,296.00
Other Current Assets	18.28
Undeposited Funds	0.00
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 155,819.40</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	
3 Drawer Filing Cabinet	300.00
Capitol Exp - New Car	10,634.20
GPS System	2,000.00
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>\$ 12,934.20</b>
Deferment Account	8,184.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 176,937.60</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	
Payroll Liabilities	0.00
Security Officer General Security Fund	50,764.04
Security Officer Holiday Bonus Fund	4,245.00
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 55,009.04</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 55,009.04</b>
<b>Equity</b>	
Retained Earnings	95,018.48
Net Income	26,910.08
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>\$ 121,928.56</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	<b>\$ 176,937.60</b>



## Plans for the Willow Meadows Neighborhood Picnic Are Full Steam Ahead

By John Mooney

Board Member, At-Large Position 4

The Willow Meadows Civic Club is pleased to announce the continuation of a tradition within the Willow Meadows Community. This year, in conjunction with the Texas National Night Out activities scheduled for October, the WMCC will be hosting a Neighborhood Picnic for all residents of the Willow Meadows. This picnic is scheduled for Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 at Willow Park. The picnic will start at 1:00pm and end at 5:00pm.

There will be many new and fun activities for everyone. There will be an Exhibit Gallery for commercial businesses to bring information about goods and services to our residents. We will also have a neighborhood bazaar – this is an opportunity for our neighbors to show off with an informal arts and crafts show. At center stage in the Gazebo, neighborhood bands will have an opportunity to be discovered. The park features a new playground for the kids, and there are tennis courts and volley ball courts for everyone's enjoyment. Of course, there will be horseshoes, lots of games, and conversation. This year, picnic goers are encouraged pack their own picnic lunch with their favorite foods and join in the fun. We will also have a food vendor available for burgers, hot dogs, and soft drinks.

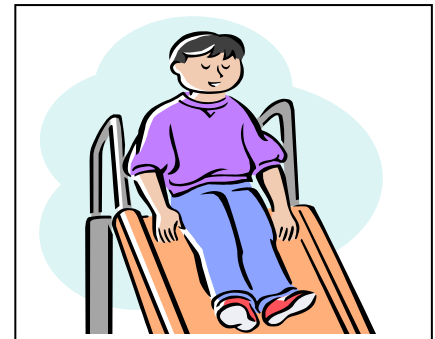
**Commercial Exhibit Gallery:** Each vendor will have an opportunity to purchase exhibit space so that they may set up and display services or products that might be important to our residential community. We will have limited space available and expect to “sell out” the space. Imagine being able to reach out to over 800 residences in a matter of a couple of hours. Whether you are offering a home improvement service, household goods and services, personal services, or professional services, this opportunity is something that should not be overlooked. If you are interested in further developing a relationship with the residents of Willow Meadows, you should consider participating. For complete details and to sign up for this unique event, please request the Commercial Exhibit Gallery registration package from [picnic@willowmeadows.org](mailto:picnic@willowmeadows.org). We hope that you choose to participate in this wonderful event and we hope to see you at the picnic.

**Arts and Crafts Bazaar** - Also new this year will be an informal arts and crafts show for residents of Willow Meadows. If you are involved with creating or selling arts and crafts, you will be able to purchase a space for this grand opportunity to bring your products to your neighbors. Whether you are buying or selling, October is a great time to find those one of a kind arts and crafts that make such interesting holiday gifts. What a wonderful opportunity to share your talents with your neighbors, and have some fun. If you would like to participate in the Arts and Crafts Bazaar, please request the Arts and Crafts Bazaar registration package from [picnic@willowmeadows.org](mailto:picnic@willowmeadows.org).

**Willow Meadows Has Talent!** - America's Got Talent - We know that. And so does Willow Meadows - Do you want to be the next super-star to be discovered! It all has to start somewhere. Come share with us your special talents. Singers, bands, comedians, and dancers are all welcome at the first-ever Willow Meadows Has Talent Show. Perform for your neighbors and hear the applause. If you would like to register your performance, please request the Entertainment Reservation package from [picnic@willowmeadows.org](mailto:picnic@willowmeadows.org).

**Fun and Games** - OK- so not all of us can sing and dance or play musical instruments. There will be plenty of opportunity to demonstrate your skills in pitching horseshoes, or simply sitting under a shade tree for a game of checkers. Willow Park features a couple of tennis courts and a volley ball court - Organize a team and take on all comers. For the kids, we plan to have a "Moon Walk" or other similar playground. Let us know what you want to do at [picnic@willowmeadows.org](mailto:picnic@willowmeadows.org) and we will help to make it happen.

**Food and Drinks** - What is a picnic without food - The best food at a picnic is the food you prepare and bring from home in the picnic basket - We invite you to bring your favorite foods to the picnic. Please remember that the park has a strict rule of "No Alcoholic Beverages" . Bring a blanket and spread out under one of the beautiful oak trees at the park, or bring your own table and chairs. There are also a few picnic tables at the park. Forgot something at home, there will be a food vendor at the park cooking up burgers, hot dogs, and tacos, along with cold drinks and sweets.



## 2011 Budget Considerations

By Scott Stjernstrom, Budget Planning Committee Chairman

Below is a listing of the 2010 approved budget, which has been adjusted to reflect the income based on a \$200 per year dues assessment. The approved budget was based on dues increasing to \$275 but, when the vote to increase the dues failed, the Board of Directors reduced the Security budget accordingly in order to meet the Budget Planning Committee's recommendation that we live within our means and that no funds be taken from the cash reserve as had been done in previous years. This working budget is the starting point for generating the 2011 budget:

### 2010 Approved Budget

(Income and Security Costs Adjusted for \$200 Dues)

#### Income

Advertising (Includes Prior Year)	\$2,000.00
Annual Dues	
Fiscal Yr Assessments	\$150,470.00
Prior Years Collections	\$1,200.00
<b>Total Annual Dues</b>	<b>\$151,670.00</b>
Late Fees	\$1,000.00
Transfer / Refinance fees	\$3,500.00
Interest Income	\$700.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$158,870.00</b>

#### Expenses

Accounting/Bookkeeping Services	\$5,200.00
Architectural Control Com Misc	\$100.00
Bank Service Charges	\$200.00
Braes Bayou Association	\$200.00
Deed Restriction Support Services	\$8,500.00
General Meeting Marketing	\$200.00
General Printing	\$5,000.00
Insurance for Board	\$1,000.00
Legal Services/Filing Fees	\$5,000.00
Mail/Postage Expense	\$2,700.00
Maintenance & Beautification Com	\$12,950.00
Office Supplies	\$600.00
PO Box Rental	\$85.00
Red Elementary PTO	\$300.00
Storage/Office Rent	\$1,100.00
United Orthodox Synagogue	\$300.00
Website/Technology	\$1,100.00
Willow Meadows Baptist Church	\$500.00

<b>WMCC - Other</b>	\$1,000.00
<b>WMCC Stickers</b>	\$500.00
<b>Total Non-Security Expenses</b>	<b>\$46,535.00</b>
<b>Security</b>	
<b>Security Committee Misc</b>	\$500.00
<b>Security Insurance Costs</b>	
<b>Commercial Auto Ins Security</b>	\$8,000.00
<b>Security Liability Insurance</b>	\$7,500.00
<b>Workers Comp Insurance</b>	\$4,117.00
<b>Total Security Insurance Costs</b>	<b>\$19,617.00</b>
<b>Vehicle</b>	
<b>Patrol Car Fuel Expenses</b>	\$5,956.00
<b>Patrol Car, Vehicle Registration</b>	\$230.00
<b>Security Answ Service</b>	\$660.00
<b>Security Cell Phone &amp; Data</b>	\$1,560.00
<b>Vehicle Maintenance</b>	\$4,740.00
<b>Total Vehicle</b>	<b>\$13,146.00</b>
<b>Total Wages, Taxes &amp; Fees</b>	\$79,854.00
<b>Total Security</b>	<b>\$113,117.00</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$159,652.00</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b><u><u>-\$782.00</u></u></b>

Work on the preliminary 2011 budget is still not complete but I can pass along some of the changes that are being considered so there won't be any surprises when the 2011 budget is presented.

First of all, it is likely that a dues increase of \$20 will be recommended to the Board. It has been three years since the one-and-only dues increase in Willow Meadows history took the dues from \$150 to \$200 per year. Last year's vote on a dues increase made it evident that there is not sufficient support for another substantial dues increase (although over 60% of those who voted were in favor of going to \$275). Nevertheless, costs naturally increase every year and so a minimal increase is needed occasionally just to keep from falling further behind. Raising next year's dues to \$220 is equivalent to having raised the dues 3% per year over the last three years. So it's essentially like a cost of living type increase.

Second, the traditional Willow Meadows community picnic has been a prominent issue. There are no funds in the budget for a picnic this year but several residents have said that the picnic is very important for promoting a sense of community in our neighborhood. The struggle is to find a way to fund the picnic while not taking away from other budget items, particularly security, which has already been cut significantly. Another more basic question is how much support there is for the picnic from the neighborhood as a whole. Fortunately, the treasurer has informed the Board that careful spending will bring some items in the current budget in below projections so that we can expect to have sufficient funds left over at the end of the year to fund next year's picnic without reducing other budget items or reducing the current cash reserve. Hence, the budget ballot in December may include a separate item seeking approval for using leftover funds from 2010 to fund the picnic in 2011. This will provide a means not only to fund the picnic, but also to confirm that the majority of residents are in favor of again budgeting the picnic in the future.

Another item being considered for 2011 is to update the resident directory. It has been several years since the last edition was printed. Other minor adjustments to the budget will be made such as the addition of a \$500 mail-out contingency in case a vote on revising deed restrictions is necessary in 2011. A few other items will likely be adjusted slightly up or down based on how the actual vs. budget numbers are looking. But in general, the 2011 budget will look for the most part like the 2010 budget. Hopefully we will have slightly more to work with if a \$20 dues increase is implemented, along with the possibility for a budgeted neighborhood picnic to return in 2011.

## Security Report, August 2010

by Stephen Polnaszek, Security Committee Chair

### Recent Willow Meadows Crime Statistics

Here is the crime incident list for the last six months. Following the table are 30-day crime maps downloaded on August 3<sup>rd</sup> for thefts (including burglaries of motor vehicles) and then burglaries of homes/garages/ apartments/businesses.

<b>Willow Meadows Crime Statistics: March through July 2010</b>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Offense</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>Street Name</b>
3/8/2010	1705	Family violence*	4300	Waynesboro
3/8-9/2010	2300(8)-0700(9)	Burglary of a motor vehicle	4700	McDermed
3/9/2010	1200	Forgery*	4800	Waynesboro
3/12/2010	0830-1105	Attempted burglary of a habitation	4300	Waynesboro
3/22/2010	1100	Possession of a controlled substance, etc.	9600	Greenwillow
3/29/2010	2200	Theft (BMV?)	4400	Sarong
3/30/2010	0200-1200	Burglary of a motor vehicle	9900	Greenwillow
3/31/2010	?-0640	Burglary of a motor vehicle	4400	Sarong
4/2/2010		Forgery*	4400	Osby
4/5/2010	1000-1100	Theft	10400	Cliffwood
4/16-19/2010	1530(16)-2030(19)	Theft	10300	Willowgrove
4/23/2010	1200-1400	Burglary of a garage	4800	O'Meara
4/25-26/2010	2120(25)-0720(26)	Theft from Vehicle	10400	Willowgrove
4/25-26/2010	2030(25)-0745(26)	Theft from Vehicle	10400	Willowisp
4/30/2010	2100	Harassment*	10400	Cliffwood
5/2/2010	1942	Possession of Marijuana	4300	Lemac
5/5-6/2010	2000(5)-0930(6)	Burglary of a motor vehicle	4300	McDermed
5/13-15/2010	0730(13)-1830(15)	Theft	4300	Cheena
6/1-2/2010	2130(1)-0845(2)	Burglary of a motor vehicle	4400	Osby
6/2/2010	0355-0404	Burglary of a motor vehicle	4300	Wigton
6/9/2010	0830-1540	Burglary of a habitation	9400	Greenwillow
6/30/2010	0030	Possession of controlled substances	10400	Cliffwood
7/5/2010	0050	Criminal mischief	9200	Greenwillow
7/17/2010	----	Forgery*	4400	Sarong
7/14/2010	1115/1230	Theft	4400	Wigton
7/17/2010	2200	Attempted burglary of a habitation	4300	Breakwood
7/24/2010	1015	Interference with child custody*	4400	Lemac
7/25-26/2010	1700(25)-0900(26)	Burglary of a habitation	9000	Cliffwood
7/28/2010	2145	Criminal mischief	4800	McDermed
*: Incidents deemed not preventable by Willow Meadows Security Patrol				

### Thefts during July in and around Willow Meadows in HPD's Beechnut Division



### Burglaries during July in and around Willow Meadows in HPD's Beechnut Division



We are fortunate in that the seasonal uptick in crime seen during most summers seems to have been avoided this year in WM and the whole Beechnut HPD Division. It is interesting to note that the two burglary incidents in July occurred outside of the daytime window where they have historically been most frequent and where our coverage is heaviest. The two serious crime incidents in mid-January and mid-February also took place outside of the usual time window

exceptions. These four incidents point to the desirability of having broader Security Patrol coverage than our current reduced circumstances allow. Further to that issue of non-daytime shifts, during our token late night shift, Officer Duran made a drug party bust in Willow Park in late June; and on one of our token weekend shifts, in early May Officer Ham collared a marijuana salesman after being notified by a resident. Great work guys!

### **Important Security Phone Numbers**

In case of an imminent threat, call **911** first. For a non-threatening/routine call to HPD, please phone **HPD Dispatch at (713) 884-3131**. Then call the **Willow Meadows Security Patrol at (713) 447-0200**. Don't forget to inform us and use our "Vacation Watch" program when you plan to be out of town, even if only for a short period of time.

### **The Proposed 2011 Budget, Security Fund Donations, and Reduced WM Security Patrols**

**The worse news:** If the 2011 dues stay at \$200 and 2011 donations to the Security Fund are around the same as this year (always a tricky assumption for planning purposes), an additional three to four 4-hour Security Patrol shifts will need to be cut. I had proposed to the Security Committee that we needed about a \$50 dues increase to stay at this year's patrol levels if residents donated to the Security Fund as generously in 2011 as they did this year.

**The merely bad news:** Instead the committee voted to propose the easier to achieve 10% (\$20) dues increase for 2011. If (1) the Board agrees with that proposal, (2) the residents approve that 10% dues increase, and (3) contributions to the Security Fund stay at the same level in 2011 as they were in 2010, then we will only have to cut back by two 4-hour Security patrol shifts down to 57 hours/week from the current 65.

**The seemingly impossible dream:** To keep our patrol levels the same for next year we would need to raise the dues to \$245 (along with maintaining \$25,000 in donations) or raise them to the easier to approve \$220 and increase donations by 60% to \$40,000. These alternatives and some others are more clearly shown in the table below.

Year	Dues Rate	Security Fund Donations/Carryover	Net Security Patrol Hours/Week
2010	\$200/yr	\$25,000 d & \$25,000 c/o	65 hr/wk
2011	\$200/yr	0	38 hr/wk
2011	\$200/yr	\$25,000 donations	50.5 hr/wk
2011	\$220/yr	0	44.5 hr/wk
2011	\$220/yr	\$25,000 donations	57 hr/wk
2011	\$250/yr	\$25,000 donations	67 hr/wk
2011	\$220/yr	\$40,000 donations	65 hr/wk

These are the choices that I have been pondering before and after the Security Committee vote. If you would like no more cutbacks in Security Patrols, there are ways to achieve this. What do you think? Last year I desperately wished that we would be able to keep the ~80 hours/week that we had in 2008 and 2009, hoping for better times down the road. Now a neighborhood of the quality of Willow Meadows will struggle to maintain next year the level of coverage that we have had in 2010, when many resident calls went without an on-site response from our patrol personnel.

## Don't "Top" Your Crapes!

*Recommendations from your Maintenance and Beautification Committee*



### Stop the Crape Murder

Summer brings with it what foresters refer to as "Crape Murder" season. Crape murder refers to the brutal pruning assault on one of our area's most common trees—the crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*). This practice, more commonly referred to as "topping," removes most of the top part of a tree, leaving it looking something like a hat rack.

#### **If it's so bad, why does everyone do it?**

It's a "copy cat" crime. Tree topping is a misused tree care technique that has been copied, repeated, and perpetuated more than any other one. Homeowners and residents new to the area see what the "landscape" companies do and assume it represents proper care for crape myrtle. Landscape companies often do little more than perpetuate this incorrect and often damaging pruning practice. The more people copy it, the more commonplace and legitimate it appears. The original basis for topping was the belief that it increases blooming and also removes potentially hazardous branches. Actually, the opposite is true. Unaware, homeowners copy what they see tree companies doing. The widespread use of topping by tree "professionals" makes it much harder to inform the public of the truth: that tree topping is damaging to your trees and serves no useful purpose.

#### **Why is topping so damaging?**

Trees can be complex, especially because you can't really see what is going on in there. But to put it in human terms: if a tree were a person, topping would be the equivalent to removing half the stomach. Because a tree uses its leaves to provide food for itself, the removal of too many leaves will result in starvation—especially for larger trees. For crape myrtle, topping not only destroys the natural beauty and form of the tree, it also makes the resulting growth weak and more susceptible to breakage. Topping also invites decay and infestation by insects.

#### **The crape myrtle: bush or tree?**

The crape myrtle is a wonderful blooming landscape tree for the Central Texas area. And yes, it is a *tree*, capable of growing 25-30 feet tall. Though not native, they were introduced in the U.S. more than a century and a half ago, are well adapted to our area where we love them for their spectacular blooming color, lovely autumn leaf shades, and picturesque trunks. If a smaller crape myrtle is what is desired, there are dwarf varieties available.

### **So why do people top the poor crape myrtle?**

Most people top crape myrtle to increase the quantity of blooms. While it is true that topping will encourage flowering, it is a drastic and damaging practice. Also, most modern crape myrtle varieties have been cultivated specifically for glorious blooming. Simply pruning the tips of the branches to remove old flower clusters will do more to promote abundant flowers, and is much better for the overall health of the tree. Rest assured, crape myrtle will bloom well with no topping at all.

### **Now that you know what *not* to do...**

Crape myrtle are not fussy trees and will flourish with minimal care. They like full sun, do well in most soils, and are fairly problem-free except for the tendency to get aphids, mildew, and suckers at the ground. Keep in mind, you will only get those magnificent blooms if the tree receives full sun. A sunny, slightly elevated site with good drainage is an ideal spot for your crape myrtle. Mildew can be controlled by watering near the base of the tree at ground level during hot months and avoid spraying the bark and leaves (by the way, this is good advice for all trees). Like any tree, it is important to make sure you have the right species for the site. Make sure you know what the size of the tree will be at maturity before you buy it. Also, there are a variety of colors available: red, pink, lavender, and white to name a few. When pruning remember, crape myrtle are trees, not shrubs. The most prudent pruning procedure is to remove old flower clusters and thin out small twiggy growth. Remove broken or diseased branches as well as those damaged by storms or insects. Remove the weaker of any two limbs that are crossing and rubbing on each other.

Winter can be a frustrating time for gardeners. But during this seemingly "down time" in the yard, consider **preparing your gardening beds for spring, plant some new trees, learn proper tree pruning, even go** skiing, but don't top your crape myrtles! Let's all be crime fighters and eliminate crepe murder from our community. What can you do? Spread the word among your friends and neighbors, lead by example—using proper pruning techniques on your own trees, or if you need hire a landscaping company, use only quality professional companies that do not top trees. Your trees will thank you by providing beautiful blooms!

## **Do You Want to Run for Office?**

**By Robert Garza**

There is an old Texas saying that in order to get something done we must cure our "TEXAS RHEUMATISM". Or as some people may say that it's time to get the lead out! Yes, while a lot of us will complain about everything our civic club board does or doesn't do, now is our chance to do something about the status of our neighborhood. Like the U.S. Marines who are looking for a few good men, I'm sure there are a few good women in our neighborhood who can contribute to the job, as well. While several of the current board members have decided to run again, but a little friendly competition can be fun and interesting! It is time to look for eager neighbors who can lead our organization for next year. Will you please consider running for one of the offices or at-large directorships for next year? Please let me know by the next general meeting, email me at [Robert.garza@centerpointenergy.com](mailto:Robert.garza@centerpointenergy.com) or call at 713-207-6554 if you would like to be nominated or have a neighbor who is willing to be nominated.

## Newsletter Advertising Rates

Just like nearly everything else the Willow Meadows Civic Club does, the *Willow Meadows News* is produced and distributed by volunteers. The only cost to the Civic Club is printing, which costs several hundred dollars per issue. Since we publish four issues per year in early March, June, September and December – just before each general meeting – the total cost of printing is more than \$1,000 per year. The *News* accepts advertising for two reasons: as a service to our residents and to help pay for printing.

Our advertising rates are \$40 for a quarter page, \$75 for a half page, and \$150 for a full page, all per issue. Each issue is distributed to the 825 homes in the neighborhood and is posted to the Civic Club's website, [www.willowmeadows.org](http://www.willowmeadows.org) shortly after publication. The Treasurer mails invoices to advertisers shortly after each issue is published or will accept payment in advance if an advertiser prefers.

The deadline for sending new ads or changes in ads to the editor for each issue is the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the month preceding the month of publication (February 7 for the March issue, May 7 for the June issue, August 7 for the September issue and November 7 for the December issue). The *News* is only printed with black ink so any color graphics or pictures in ads sent to us will be printed in black or gray, but those graphics or pictures will be reproduced in color when the issue is posted to the website.

Since the *News* is produced by volunteers and our advertising rates are modest, we do not provide the level of service that commercial advertising outlets such as newspapers, radio and television stations provide to their customers. We will assist advertisers in arranging simple ads, but we do not provide a graphic design service to create elaborate ads. We also expect advertisers to notify the editor if they want to stop or change their ads before the deadline for each issue; otherwise we will repeat each ad in each following issue until told not to. As an exception to this, if an advertiser specifies in advance that he or she wants to place an ad in a specific number of issues, we will place the ad that many times then stop it. The content of ads sent to us has not been a problem in recent years, but the editor does reserve the right to reject advertisements which would not be a service to our residents or would offend our residents.




Advertising inquiries should be made to the editor. The editor prepares the *News* in Microsoft Word software so advertisers should send ads to the editor by email. Most formats that MS Word can handle are fine. Advertisers should include their mailing addresses and telephone numbers in their email messages with ads to facilitate invoicing by the Treasurer and any contacts by the editor which may be required.

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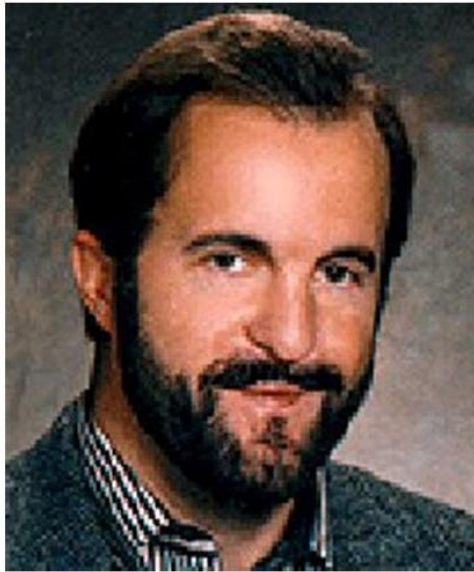
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