

BARTON HILLS NEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter

January 2011

FATE OF BARTON HILLS, ZILKER ELEMENTARIES UNCERTAIN

Jennifer Cook, Editor

By the time this issue is printed, two citywide meetings Jan. 12 and 13 will have been held to address an AISD taskforce's proposal to close both Barton Hills Elementary (BHE) and Zilker Elementary. Up-to-date info is always available to neighborhood association members on the listserv. A Facebook page with current information is at www.facebook.com/pages/Keep-Barton-Hills-Elementary-School-Open/187364934622978

Speaking to Fox 7 news, BHE PTA President Kelly Tagle stated, "We feel very strongly that we have a highly efficient highly successful campus at Barton Hills and I hope they take into consideration that a closure of even a small campus devastates a community, this is the heart of our community."

AISD budget problems led to the hiring of a consulting firm (and construction company), DeJong Richter. After analyzing building age, number of portables, renovation needs and student population (not counting transfers), DeJong Richter has recommended closing BHE and Zilker and having students attend Becker and Dawson. BHE and Zilker are both full schools when transfer students are counted. Barton Hills and Zilker are both exemplary, high performing schools. Vertical alignment also could be affected; students who now would attend Austin High might attend Travis.

DeJong Richter noted, however, that closure "is a short-term solution that would disrupt many and...would result in overcrowding in fewer than five years." There is no word on voter reaction given recent bond improvements to BHE. In addition, DeJong Richter seems to be using 10-year-old census data, which do not reflect the recent influx of young families in to the neighborhood.

According to the University of Washington, such taskforces should use consistent criteria that start with student performance. Academics must be the first priority. Criteria considered by the AISD taskforce do not include transportation costs (busing children across the busy thoroughfare of S. Lamar), potential AISD income lost if property values drop, or even academic achievement.

Zilker is on of just five AISD schools (out of 79) to be nationally recognized as a Blue Ribbon school. Six of the eight schools

NEXT MEETING TUESDAY, JAN. 25 6-8 pm

Join us at St. Mark's Church (corner of Barton Skyway & Barton Hills Dr.). All are welcome! Social hour 6 pm. Italian dinner \$7.



AGENDA

- 7:00 Call to Order/Welcoming
- 7:05 Introduction of New Officers
- 7:10 Recognition of Retiring Officers
- 7:15 Treasurer's Report, Minutes
- 7:16 Chris Dolan, Austin Oak Wilt
- 7:30 Discussion on Proposed Closure of BH Elementary
- 8:00 Neighborhood Watch, Greenbelt Guardians, Area Development, ANC
- 8:30 Call for neighborhood improvement projects
- 8:45 Adjourn

slated for closure received the highest state rating, Exemplary. Only 37% of AISD elementaries received that rating.

BHE spokesperson Jason Sabo noted that the recommendation has a larger impact: "It is not just about BHE and Zilker, this is about the concept of neighborhood schools. Are we a city that believes in neighborhoods? In walking to school? In parents being involved in the school that's just down the street?" Parents and residents are fighting back via a Facebook page and an online petition that currently has over 900 signatures.

www.facebook.com/pages/Keep-Barton-Hills-Elementary-School-Open/187364934622978

www.ipetitions.com/petition/savebartonhillselementary/

Demographic survey:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/BHE_Survey

AISD trustees: trustees@austinisd.org

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi Neighbors –

I am proud to be the president of the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association for 2011. I want to work and have fun with all of you to keep Barton Hills one of the best neighborhoods in Austin and, well, the world.

We are privileged to live in an enclave bordered by urban Austin on one side and Zilker Park and the Barton Creek Greenbelt on the other. This gives us immediate access to both the buzz of the city and the hum of nature. It is a favored spot but, of course, there are some problems that go with living on such a faultline. I believe that the BHNA can be the mechanism for addressing and resolving those problems by consensus and protecting our neighborhood as a showpiece for the entire region.

And I believe that Barton Hills should play a role in planning for the future of the Austin area. As a director of the Barton Springs Edwards Aquifer Conservation District and, until this year, a director of the regional planning organization Envision Central Texas, I learned that every neighborhood is affected by the decisions made outside of its borders. The best way to control those decisions is by diving into the process and trying to affect the outcome so that our neighborhood can achieve the future results we want.

We are a congenial bunch of folks who enjoy getting together on occasion, such as the 4th of July, to be in each other's company, catch up on family and friends, sing songs, and have fun. And we enjoy recreating in the Park, the Greenbelt, and the Barton Hills playground. I want to make it our neighborhood goal this year to be even more light-hearted.

My day job is as an Assistant Travis County Attorney. I am a 17-year Barton Hills resident, and my wife Mary Ann Neely was active in the neighborhood even before we met. I want to make our neighborhood better and get to know all of you.

Craig Smith

1908 Barton Parkway
442-3414

www.bartonhills.org

Neighborhood Watch info, links to crime data, legislators, schools, parks, road closures, and city offices.

2011 EVENTS CALENDAR

- Jan. 25** Neighborhood meeting
- Jan. 29** Greenbelt Guardians Work Day
- Feb. 18** BH Elementary student/staff holiday
- Feb. 21** BH Elementary conference day
- Mar. 5** It's My Park Day
- Mar. 14-18** Spring Break
- Mar. 11-20** SXSW Festival

Do you have a neighborhood event that you would like to see included in the newsletter? Send it to jenncook@austin.rr.com at least one month before the next general meeting

Barton Hills News

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association newsletter is published quarterly and supported by advertisers. It is distributed to homes in the Barton Hills neighborhood of Austin, TX in January, April, July, and October. For more information on membership or neighborhood affairs, contact the appropriate person below.

2011 Executive Committee

- President** - Craig Smith
(512) 442-3414 (ccraigsmith@austin.rr.com)
- Vice President** - Melissa Hawthorne
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Committee Chairs

- Committee on Area Development** - Peter Hess
(phess@mail.utexas.edu)
- Greenbelt Guardians** - Glee Ingram
(gleeful@earthlink.net)
- Neighborhood Watch** - John Luther
(jluther@austin.rr.com)
- Beautification Ad Hoc Committee** - Jennifer Mathis-Volk
(jenvolk@gmail.com)

Learn more about us at www.bartonhills.org!

This newsletter was printed on 100% recycled paper.



NEIGHBORHOOD HEROES

Jennifer Cook, Editor

Two of our neighbors have been in the news lately for their efforts to fight crime. John Luther, chair of our Neighborhood Watch Program, was awarded Outstanding Crime Prevention Citizen of the Year by the Central Texas Crime Prevention Association. He has worked tirelessly in our neighborhood as well as supporting neighborhood watch programs throughout the city. Neighborhood crime has decreased substantially since John began this group in response to rising property crimes. He worked with the Austin Police Department on the initial training of his volunteers. He rides with trainees before they are turned loose to patrol on their own. The BHNA Neighborhood Watch program has become a model for other neighborhoods. John is also the 2011 president of the Citizen Led Austin Safety Partnership (CLASP).

Our other brave neighbor is 16-year-old Emma Strub. December 16, two men knocked repeatedly on the front door and then the side door of her house on Westworth Circle. She did not answer the door, and the men drove away. She wisely called her mother and then the police. She gave the police a description of the men and the car. Two hours later, the men returned and backed their car into the carport. Emma hid in a closet and called 911. While she whispered on the phone, the intruders kicked in the door and ransacked the house. Then one of the men opened the closet door and was face to face with Emma. She described how his eyes got wide and he fled. Her mother, Ginger Berryhill, described how the intruder “ran right into an officer who pulled his gun... and then tackled him in the house.” Because of Emma’s call earlier about the men’s suspicious behavior, police were already in the area looking for the car. Eventually both suspects were apprehended: Daniel Rodriguez at the scene and Samuel Vega days later. Emma’s terrifying story made the evening news. For more, go to www.myfoxaustin.com and search for “teen hides during home invasion.”

Ginger Berryhill later noted in a post to the neighborhood listserv, “If you have anything of value or something that is dear to you, get it out of your dresser drawers. Those are the first places that they tore apart. They were in the house about 3-4 minutes and it looked like a bomb went off.”

Also, criminals aren’t likely to return for a break-in if they think you’re at home. If you don’t want to answer

the door, you can shout that you’re on the phone. Or answer the door with your phone in hand.

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

John Luther, Chair, Barton Hills Neighborhood Watch Program

Another year has passed and our highly effective Neighborhood Watch Patrol program remains very active and effective. During 2010, BHNA Neighborhood Watch has received two awards: one from the Austin Police Department (APD) and one from the Central Texas Crime Prevention Association. These awards were presented to us because of the large impact our patrol program has had in reducing criminal activity in our neighborhood. A handful of dedicated neighbors have committed just one hour per week to patrol our neighborhood streets watching out for criminal activity, suspicious persons or vehicles, and lost pets and, in general, ensuring a safer and more friendly community. Money could not buy what these volunteers give freely. We owe these neighbors a friendly wave and hello every time we see them out there.

The BHNA Neighborhood Watch Patrol program invites you to invest just one hour per week in contributing to the safety and wellbeing of our special neighborhood. Any resident who is home during the day and would like to participate in keeping our neighborhood crime free would be welcome to sign up. Brief orientation and training is provided and includes riding along with a veteran patrol volunteer. This is a safe, non-confrontational program and fully supported by the APD. You can be an essential participant in this effective, neighborhood program and I encourage you to become a part of the solution to removing criminal activity out of Barton Hills.



NEW BHNA OFFICERS

New BHNA **President Craig Smith** takes the helm for 2011. Our new **Austin Neighborhoods Council** delegate is **Jeff Embree**.

Vice President Melissa Hawthorne, the daughter of an Exxon engineer, relocated often as a child. Melissa moved to Austin from Houston in 1984 and has never looked back. She met her husband Glenn scuba diving in Cozumel. He relocated here from Denver when they moved into their home in Barton Hills in 2004. They are very proud to be Deerfoot Denizens.



Melissa works in commercial development and has been an active participant in neighborhood planning and civic committees for the last 20 years. The Hawthornes enjoy scuba diving and motorcycling all over the world

in their leisure time. Quarterly, Melissa enjoys killing invasive vegetation, especially ligustrum, in the greenbelt behind her home.

Thanks to our neighbor, **Wendy Papasan**, for serving as 2010 BHNA president. She managed to sail over some rough waters in the Sea of Art in Public Places. The president's job is time consuming and often thankless. Wendy handled some tough situations with grace and humor. Speaking of good humor, **Penley McQueen**, 2010 vice president, also tackled the job of treasurer. Thanks to both for contributing so much to our neighborhood.

You can meet the 2011 officers at the next meeting, January 25. Also on the agenda will be the status of Barton Hills Elementary. A featured presenter will be our neighbor, Chris Dolan, City of Austin oak wilt manager.

SAVE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

Zilker has similar ipetitions and Facebook pages.

Demographic survey:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BHE_Survey

www.ipetitions.com/petition/savebartonhillselementary/

www.facebook.com/pages/Keep-Barton-Hills-Elementary-School-Open/187364934622978

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COYOTES IN THE HOOD

Jennifer Cook

Recent wildlife sightings have gone beyond the usual raccoons, armadillos, and opossums. Deer reportedly congregate on the grounds of Barton Hills Elementary. One neighbor had a wild turkey in his back yard. I had a pair of endangered Black-Capped Vireos in my hawthorne.

Coyotes have been sighted in the last few months, usually in the early morning. Coyote sightings have been along Rabb, Trailside, and Dexter & Kinney. Coyotes are very adaptable to urban areas and will eat nearly anything. They aren't much of a threat to humans, but can prey on outdoor cats and small dogs. According to the National Wildlife Federation, removing and relocating coyotes isn't particularly effective, especially since they can travel 20 miles in a night.

Apparently urban coyotes are here to stay. So don't feed them. Obey leash laws. Keep pet food indoors. Keep garbage secure. And if you see one, make a racket so they remember that humans are a threat.

NEXT ISSUE: Sasquatch sighting.



GREENBELT GUARDIANS

Synergy at Work on Barton Creek Greenbelt

Glee Ingram

2010 was a great year for the Barton Creek Greenbelt, thanks to initiatives taken by the Austin Parks Foundation (APF), our Greenbelt Guardians, and other greenbelt advocates. In June, APF received a \$105,000 grant from Impact Austin, with a \$110,000 match provided by APF and Hill Country Conservancy. The key concept is to fund a five-member Trail Corps team to work on the greenbelt in 2011, repairing and/or rerouting damaged trail segments and removing large stands of invasive plants, plus other improvement activities determined by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) and stakeholder groups.

The Trails Corps members will be experienced E-Corps crew and management staff, with oversight and coordination by Charlie McCabe as grant project manager. Planning for the priorities to be addressed will be done via a team of stakeholders that Charlie assembled: key Austin PARC staff, E-Corps staff, Hill Country Conservancy staff, plus volunteer stakeholder groups such as Greenbelt Guardians, Austin Ridgeriders, and Central Texas Mountaineers. A key component of this grant is to organize four large volunteer work days on the greenbelt to help accomplish prioritized grant goals.

To add extra hands and energy to this ambitious project, APF also got a \$15,000 grant from REI to help fund APF staff time to organize and oversee E-Corps work on the greenbelt, plus fund up to 25 additional volunteer work days on the greenbelt during 2011. The work will focus on priorities established by the stakeholder planning team.

To enhance the energy windfall to the greenbelt, Charlie and I submitted a \$30,000 grant proposal focused on invasives removal and restoration efforts to Jack and Carolyn Long, which they granted. The money will provide funds to have E-Corps remove 22.5 acres of large invasive plant stands and \$3,000 to APF to fund staff time for oversight of E-Corps work plus organize additional volunteer work days on the greenbelt. Greenbelt Guardians will receive \$3,000 of the funds to set up and maintain ongoing research, monitoring and restoration activities on the 22.5 acres funded for invasives removal within our adopted area of the greenbelt (from the Zilker entry to the Loop 360 entry).

Although the Impact Austin grant doesn't go into effect into 2011, the work has begun. Two large volunteer work days have been conducted on the greenbelt (National Trails Day and National Public Lands Day), hosting two to three hundred volunteers at each event. Sections of the greenbelt already feature more sustainable trails with open, invasive-free canopies.

Charlie has also assembled all of the active stakeholders for three orientation and planning meetings, plus organized two- to four-mile hikes with the stakeholder committee to specifically identify trail repair needs and invasives stands that will require E-Corps interventions along the main trail, from Zilker entry trail to the Hill of Life access trail. All are located via GPS coordinates by PARC's mapping staff member. An Invasives Removal "teach-in" and volunteer work day occurred on December 4 off of Spyglass Trail, continuing the invasives removal work in that area.

The public-private process is alive and blooming, and the Greenbelt is smiling.

Greenbelt Guardians 2011 Work Days

January 29 – At Spyglass/Homedale

March 5 – It's My Park Day

June 4 – National Trails Day

September 24 – National Public Lands Day

Look for details on the BHNA listserv and website: www.bartonhills.org



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WHOLLY COW BURGERS

P. Tyson Midkiff

A new contender for the much-claimed title of “Best Burger in Town” has dropped into the Barton Hills neighborhood at South Lamar in the Star Grill Food Mart. Wholly Cow, formerly Flippin’ Grazin’, opened in December as a source for Central Texas produced, hormone-free, grass-fed beef burgers as well as free-range chicken sandwiches. The vegetables are fresh and local. Owner/operator Jeff Woodward is usually around to greet his customers and share his vision for the market, including a farmer’s market section with local produce and a deli case with homemade and locally produced selections. The burgers outshine most competitors’ at a price far lower than I’ve come to expect for grass-fed options. The burgers are two-fisted beauties available in many configurations. For me they scratched an [off the menu] West Coast burger itch: a patty slathered in mustard before grilling, served with cheddar cheese, all the veggies, and Russian dressing. I also enjoy their single cheeseburger with grilled onions and jalepenos. The sweet potato fries are a must with any order: fresh cut and perfectly salted. Their non-burger options please, too. Try the homemade Cajun chicken salad sandwich or Reuben. Current hours are 10:30 am–9:30pm with plans for extended hours Thursday–Saturday. Monday’s special has \$5 burgers, with “fixins” at 39 cents each or 3 for \$1.

PEST MANAGEMENT

Wizzie Brown, the A&M AgriLife Extension

When the weather becomes cooler, many pests start looking for a cozy place to spend the winter. By performing a thorough inspection, you can locate areas where these pests may enter. Inside, look around doors and windows during the day. If you see daylight, there isn’t a good seal. Inspect the attic for chewed holes. Make sure that all attic vents are covered with stainless steel screening to block animals from entering. Outside, inspect the perimeter of the home for cracks and crevices in the foundation.

- Trim back trees and shrubs that touch or overhang the home.
- Seal pipe and wire penetrations with steel wool, sealant or expanding foam.
- Replace weather stripping around doors and windows if there is not a good seal.

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- Repair window screens with holes.
- For homes with brick or stone facades, stuff weep holes with steel wool or copper mesh (steel wool will rust if it gets wet, so do not use on light colored facades).
- Inspect all furniture, boxes, bags, and plants for pests before carrying them into the home.
- Do not store firewood inside the home, against the outside walls or near doors.
- Use sheet metal, hardware cloth or steel wool to seal any areas where animals have chewed to enter the home. Make sure the animal is not in your home or you’ll seal it inside!

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist, (512) 854-9600.
www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com

AUSTIN HIGH BAND IN LONDON PARADE

Karen Loke

Several Austin High School students who live in Barton Hills just returned from London, England, after marching in the London New Year's Day parade. This was Stephen F. Austin High School's first time to perform in the prestigious parade. In all, 80 students and 39 parent chaperones flew across the pond to visit the magnificent city. Much tourism and pounds were spent between their two performances. Both performances are on YouTube (search for New Year's Day Parade Austin High School 2011). The first performance was at Cadogan Hall (www.cadoganhall.com). The parade performance is captured on YouTube, including an unfortunate cameraman being bowled over by a bass drummer.



NEIGHBORS VOLUNTEER

JaNet Barkley-Booher

Barton Hills neighbors delivered 492 wrapped gifts to Austin Travis County Integral Care (formerly Austin Travis County MHMR) mental health consumers for their Consumer Holiday Party. BH folks donated Christmas decorations, gift items, and cash. BH volunteers also helped wrap gifts, decorate the facility, serve food, distribute gifts, and clean up. Good Shepherd Church paid for BBQ, The Flying A's sang, and consumers danced with Santa. So, a lot of people in this neighborhood helped over 425 much-less-fortunate folks have a joyous holiday event and gift. The coming together of neighbors for this worthwhile all-volunteer effort is truly heartwarming.

RESIDENT IS YOUTUBE HIT

With about 500,000 hits on his YouTube videos, this Barton Hills resident has been featured on the Discovery Channel, BBC2, BBC Canada, the Rachel Ray Show, and more. His name is Mick... Mick the Skateboarding Cat. Mick's skateboard is modified by carpet glued to the top.

www.facebook.com/mickthecat



NEW S. LAMAR RESTAURANTS

Chango's has closed, to be replaced by Torchy's Tacos. Papalote taqueria is open. Phil's Icehouse is hopping. Juicebox and the Soup Peddler have also opened in their unique, tiny boxy buildings in the Barton Skway "triangle." Best soup in town is still at Giovanni's in the Valero on Barton Skyway.



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2011 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Join or review your membership in the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association. Annual dues are \$10/household. Make checks payable to BHNA and mail them to **Barton Hills Neighborhood Association, PO Box 2042, Austin TX 78768-2042**. You can pay dues online (with a \$1 PayPal service fee) at www.bartonhills.org/membership.html. If you pay online, send an email to barton_hills-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to be added the list server.

Your Name: _____

Other 18+ members of your household: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

☐ **Sign Me Up!** I/we wish to receive email from the BHNA listserver.

☐ I am interested in getting more involved in neighborhood activities. Please contact me.

HAPPY NEW YEAR: 2011 DUES

Memberships are due every January. If you need to update your email address for the listserv, please let VP Melissa Hawthorne know both new and old email addresses. Over 500 people enjoy the listserv, one of the benefits of membership.

Your \$10 gives you access to a listserv with useful information from your neighbors: babysitters or pet walkers, lost & found pets, free furniture, crime alerts, contractor recommendations, and event tickets. The listserv can send you a daily "batch," which is a single email with all the posts. Dues allow the BHNA to continue to offer benefits such as the parade, breakfast tacos at Greenbelt Guardian work days, updated crime maps via Neighborhood Watch, and copies of minutes and treasurer's reports at meetings. (The newsletter pays for itself through advertising.) The membership form is at www.bhna.net/form.html, or use the paper form above.



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