

Minutes from the Meeting
of the
Highland Park West Balcones Area Neighborhood Association
Monday, February 26, 2007
Yarborough Library
Austin, Texas

The annual meeting of the HPWBANA was called to order at 7:06 pm. Board members attending included: Nadene Morning, Carolyn Robinson, Krista Saeger, Blake Stanford, Toniane Soster. Lurleen Ladd, Chereen Fischer, Sam Haddad.

Community Guests included: Ed Wallace, Frances Allen, Margot Clarke, Findlay and Barbara Shearer, Lawrence Lynne, Andrea Torres, Michele Simpson, Cynthia Merritt, Elizabeth Newton, John Robey, Helen Smith.

Board and community member introductions were made.

A motion to approve the minutes from the annual meeting was made and seconded, and those minutes were approved by the membership.

Community Comments:

1. Flooding Issue on Perry Lane – A very brief overview of the issue was presented. There were no community comments. And no report was made by the special committee formed to address this issue.
2. Montessori School – Please see attached report regarding 4605 Highland Terrace property. At our meeting, Lisa Smith, potential school operator was present. This house is still zoned SF2 with conditional permit use need to operate the school a this property. Given the input from neighbors, the Board stated that it would not support a conditional use permit. Based on the neighbors lack of support for this item. Community members present at the meeting asked questions regarding the safety of the children, traffic volumes, and parking for staff and parents. The Association agreed to notify neighbors if Ms. Smith wanted to sponsor an open house for further discussion.
3. Property Vacated on Perry Lane – No change in status was reported.

Treasurer's Report:

Krista Saeger reported that 250 households had reapplied for membership and paid their dues. Or target for this category is 325 households. Five business have paid their business membership dues with a target of eleven businesses. Keeping services constant, the Association should operate in the black. Carolyn Robinson agreed to help canvas businesses to increase the number of participants.

Beautification and Parks:

1. Perry Park - On February 17, 2007, 45 trees were planted at Perry Park and along Balcones Lane. Approximately 50-60 neighbors assisted in the planting, The Board discussed outreach strategies for future beautification events.
2. Foothill Terrace – A licensing agreement has been executed to maintain this space and the space will be landscaped and irrigation added this spring.

Newsletter Committee:

Articles are due by the fifth of the month. February 2007 was sent out late but the March edition should be on time. Carolyn Robinson made an appeal for content,

Community and Public Relations Committee:

Camp Mabry Muster Day is the second weekend in April 14th, 2007. This year's theme is "Thanking the Neighborhood for Supporting the Troops".

Crime and Safety Committee:

The Board agreed to review the Neighborhood Watch program and identify issues for notification. Frances Allen agreed to help this committee.

Event Committee:

The 2007 lineup of events was discussed. The first event is the Annual Easter Egg Hunt to be held April 7th, 2007. Movie in the Park will be staged on May 19th, 2007. The Fourth of July event will be held in Perry Park. August 1st, 2007 is the National Night Out.

A suggestion was made to showcase local businesses in the neighborhood at the annual meeting.

Planning and Zoning Committee:

1. Occupancy Issue – The Austin City Council requested involvement by the ANC for occupancy issues, and this request was piggybacked on the McMansion issue with student housing and stealth dorms. The City Council will pick final members for the task force. It was noted that 2 of the 12 members on the task force were likely opposed to any proposed changes. Most members on the task force are involved with city planning or have personal experience with student housing issues. The Single Family Regulations report is not on the March 2007 agenda for the Austin City Council. There is opposition, including reservations by city staff over enforcement.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Re., Update on 4605 Highland Terrace

At the January 22nd HPWBANA Board Meeting, Ms. Lisa Smith indicated that she is investigating the purchase of the property at 4605 Highland Terrace, with the intent to open the Hawthorne Montessori School, for infants and toddlers, at this location. Ms. Smith, the owner and operator of the school, is a credentialed Montessori school administrator with 10 years of experience. She would need to apply for a Conditional Use permit from the City of Austin (COA) to operate the school as a Day Care, Commercial Use. Note: This is not a zoning change or variance; this is a conditional use permit. The property would still be zoned as SF-2.

The HPWBANA Board and Ms. Smith believe it is very important to solicit neighborhood input about the Hawthorne Montessori School at this location. From this meeting, the HPWBANA Board drafted a letter, along with Ms. Smith's input, to be distributed to the neighbors' in close proximity to this property.

The following letter (pg. 2) was distributed to 70 homes in the Highland Park subdivision, by neighbors Andrea Torres and Frances Allen during the first two weeks of February. Andrea delivered letters to all homes on Highland Terrace (east of Mopac), Terrain Lane, and ~3-4 homes on Placid Lane that are within the same block as 4605 Highland Terrace. Frances distributed the letters to all homes on Perry Lane (east of Mopac), Village Lane, and a handful of homes on Westfield Drive.

Neighbors were asked to review the information and share their comments and/or questions with Andrea, Frances, Krista Saeger, and/or Lisa Smith. Of the 70 homes to receive the letter, comments were received from 30 households. Of the 30 households, 90% (27 of 30) of these households were strongly opposed (26 of the 30) or mildly opposed (1 of the 30) to the potential school at this location. Two residents were "okay" with the plans, while one was neutral.

There were 5 main concerns expressed by the neighbors: traffic, lack of on-site parking, safety, the potential for further commercial business in the neighborhood, and potential decreases in residents' property value.

The primary concern expressed by the neighbors' was the increased traffic and congestion that the school would bring to already heavily-traveled streets in the neighborhood, not only Highland Terrace (which serves as on the on-ramp to Mopac), but also Perry and Placid Lanes. Lack of on-site parking for Staff and parents of students during drop-off and pick-up, was also cited as a concern, further disrupting traffic flow in the area. Both the increased traffic and on-street parking spur safety concerns at this busy intersection for: 1) current residents whether they be on-foot or in their vehicles, 2) parents parking on the street during drop-off and pick-up, and 3) pets and children that may escape the supervision of parents and caregivers. Residents are worried about the potential for further commercial business entering their neighborhood, should this School be granted its permit. Although this is not a commercial zoning change or variance request, this does not change neighbors' perception of a business (a commercial-type entity) coming into their neighborhood, and the potential for other businesses to follow suit. Lastly, residents were also worried that a business in their residential neighborhood would negatively impact their property values.

The residents' concerns were shared with Ms. Smith and Ms. Ellison (Ms. Smith's business partner) on Feb 22nd, in a meeting with Andrea Torres, Krista Saeger, and Nadene Morning. An update will be given at the Feb 26th HPWBANA Board meeting; however, given the allotted time, it was agreed that it wasn't feasible to fully address these concerns with the Board and community at-large through a Q&A format. As such, Ms. Smith and Ms. Ellison proposed holding an Open House for neighbors within the next 2-3 weeks, to address neighbors' concerns and further promote the School.

BOARD POSITION: At this point in time, the HPWBANA Board does not support Ms. Smith's pursuit of a Conditional Use Permit for a Day Care, Commercial Use at 4605 Highland Terrace, based on a 90% opposition rate from the 30 of 70 respondents who were directly informed of Ms. Smith's Montessori School plans. We do support our neighbors' concerns regarding the Montessori School, which have been identified as: traffic, lack of on-site parking, safety, impact of a commercial business in the neighborhood, and potential decreases in residents' property value. However, Ms. Smith and Ms. Ellison are free to gather additional neighborhood feedback and promote their Montessori School at this Open House, in an effort to sway current neighborhood opposition about their plans. The HPWBANA Board's position will remain firm unless there is positive and measurable support from the neighborhoods' residents.

February 3, 2007

Re., 4605 Highland Terrace

Dear Neighbors,

The Highland Park West Balcones Area Neighborhood Association (HPWBANA) received a recent inquiry from an individual investigating the purchase of the property at 4605 Highland Terrace. The prospective buyer is a Ms. Lisa Smith, who is interested in opening the Hawthorne Montessori School, for infants and toddlers, at this location.

Ms. Smith attended the HPWBANA Board Meeting on January 22nd to share her intentions for the school and the property. Ms. Smith, the owner and operator of the school, is a credentialed Montessori school administrator with 10 years of experience. She would need to apply for a Conditional Use permit from the City Of Austin (COA) to operate the school as a Day Care, Commercial Use.

Per Ms. Smith, the targeted enrollment of the Hawthorne Montessori School would be 30-40 children, ranging in age from 2 months to 3 years of age. The school would operate between the hours of 7am to 6pm, Monday-Friday; the full-day program will provide staggered drop-off and pick-up times, minimizing the impact of traffic flow. She expects minimal changes to the exterior of the current property, and no change to the current footprint and/or square footage. She prefers that there be no signage on the property, as to maintain the residential feel of the property.

Members of the HPWBANA Zoning Committee have contacted the COA regarding the permitted uses for this property, which is in a SF-2 zoned district. There are three classifications for Day Care Use: Limited, General, and Commercial. A Day Care, Limited Use is permitted unconditionally within a SF-2 district; however it is "Limited" – meaning 6 children or less can be enrolled. A Conditional Use permit is required to operate a Day Care, General Use (7-20 children) or a Day Care, Commercial Use (20+ children).

To obtain a Conditional Use permit, the applicant must submit a Conditional Use Site Plan to COA Watershed Protection & Development. The application is reviewed by Site Reviewers, who then make a recommendation to the COA Zoning & Platting Commission. This process requires a public hearing, and the neighborhood association and neighbors within 300' of the property are invited to comment. A Traffic Impact Analysis Determination is made by COA Transportation Planners prior to submittal of the Conditional Use Site Plan. The COA strictly regulates safety, environment, and traffic impact – approval is contingent upon adequate on-site parking for staff and parent access.

Hawthorne Montessori School's commitment to the Highland Park neighborhood includes:

- Maintaining existing circular drive for smooth traffic flow
- Maintaining existing 8 ft. privacy fence, limiting visual and sound distractions for neighbors (small groups of children will play in the backyard)
- Improving curb appeal of house with landscaping and continual maintenance
- Improving area safety by being a positive, visible presence during the day when neighbors are not at home
- Providing much needed quality care for very young children

Given your proximity to 4605 Highland Terrace, Ms. Smith and the HPWBANA Board believe it is very important to solicit neighborhood input about the Hawthorne Montessori School at this location. Please take the time to review this information and share your comments and/or questions with:

Andrea Torres: 302-4294 or andreatorres11@yahoo.com

Frances Allen: 454-2113 or fba100@juno.com

Krista Saeger: 380-9062 or kristasaeger@yahoo.com

Lisa Smith: 344-9459 or lisa@montessorimentors.com

Regards,

Krista Saeger

HPWBANA Board Member