

2014 WMNA News Archives

November

November meeting closes out 2014

More than 60 members and guests shared a Thanksgiving meal on Nov. 20 at the last regular membership meeting of the year. Traditionally, West Meadowbrook reserves this meeting for socializing and sharing. No program is scheduled.



Local Fort Worth Police Department representatives did brief the crowd on extra steps the FWPDP is taking to ensure security around malls and shopping areas. Additional patrols are underway to watch out for shoppers during the holiday season.

President Darin Hoppe announced that a District 8 task force meeting to review bond projects that have been delayed or changed will be held Dec. 8 at Harriet Harvey Peace Center from 6 to 8 on Dec. 8. He encouraged members to attend to ensure East Side projects remain a priority.

December

Firehouse Pottery and Gallery Hosts Inaugural Holiday Reception

West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association hosted its inaugural holiday reception at the Firehouse Pottery and Gallery on Dec. 15. Approximately 50 members and guests mingled and enjoyed the artwork and hors d'oeuvres. Host Keith Thomson will sponsor a Free Little Library installation on the Firehouse property in 2015. The book exchange program encourages the free movement of books among neighbors. WMNA and Eastern Hills High School are expected to add decorated tiles to the library roof.



2015

January

D8 Rep. Kelly Allen Gray Recaps 2014

West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association opened 2015 with a state of the district address by District 8 City Council Member Kelly Allen Gray. She told about 50 members and guests that 2014 was the year that city hall began listening to the East Side.

"The City Council and the Mayor are paying attention to what we are doing," she said. "Keep it up."

Vision East Lancaster chaired by Wanda Conlin has been working with business owners along Lancaster Avenue to bring economic development and beautification to the neighborhood. Gray is a member of the board.



With passage of the 2014 citywide bond package, Lancaster Avenue will undergo a makeover including improved lighting, sidewalks, intersections and traffic signals. Some work will begin now with completion expected in 2016. Gray says the lighting in particular will increase security and visibility.

Additionally, a pilot project with the Arts Council of Fort Worth to wrap three sign marquees on Lancaster Avenue will begin soon. The project is part of the 2015 art plan with \$186,000 allocated to art installations along Lancaster Avenue.



Gray is especially proud of 20 new Habitat for Humanity homes with first-time homeowners who are new to the neighborhood. The project was completed this summer with the help of former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosslyn. She encouraged everyone in the audience to visit the area and greet the new residents.

Gray said there is continual progress cleaning up the neighborhood. She complimented Code Compliance for its work removing derelict properties through the Chapter 125 nuisance abatement ordinance.

Homelessness, she said, has become a huge, citywide conversation. "We had to learn what exactly was happening and how to deal with it," she said. "I personally didn't know that much about homelessness, but I learned quickly."

Every year 5,200 people will be homeless while 2,400 live in homelessness. "Twenty-nine per cent of the homeless are children. Children are living in shelters. It's not acceptable," she said.

In the next five years, Fort Worth wants to add 600 units of permanent supported housing. "Every City Council member understands the need," she said. Recently Lake Worth added 30 housing units with 10 units planned for downtown.

Gray also encouraged residents to visit the Near East Side to see the improvements already accomplished. Businesses in the area have joined forces to clean up the area and prevent homeless residents from sleeping on sidewalks. New businesses have moved into the area, a lawn-mowing service and a construction company, as well as the Fort Worth Can Academy.

"We have developers continuously looking at opportunities along Lancaster. Our newest business in District 8 is Top Golf, an indoor golf arena, which will open at I35 and Fourth Street," she said. "Great things are happening."

February

Fort Worth City Manager David Cooke Sees Managing Growth as Priority

David Cooke, featured speaker at the February meeting of the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association, is taking a cautious approach to change in his first year as city manager. One action he plans is to separate housing and economic development and convert housing to neighborhood services.

"Strong neighborhoods make strong cities," he said. "We need to be closer to neighborhoods so that we understand their needs."



Cooke, who was named Fort Worth's city manager in June of 2014, has extensive experience working with high growth, urban environments.



"Growth is positive, but it must be managed," he said. "It's challenging to balance expansion on the fringes while filling in internally." Fort Worth, he said, has been growing by 20,000 people per year for the last 15 years.

"We have to make good use of vacant lots in neighborhoods. They don't make sense unless they are parks," Cooke said. Cooke has toured every city council district with elected representatives to determine priorities.

In the question-and-answer session, Cooke responded on key issues:

Homelessness

"My experience with homelessness in other jobs is that cities have the best chance at success by centralizing services. It is a very difficult population to serve. Dispersing services is more expensive and less effective.

Signs

"We must take care of blighted areas to be successful. Resources are an ongoing problem. Fort Worth, like other cities, is still recovering from 2008 crash."

8-liner ordinance

"We decided to go way out on our ordinance to test the limits. Currently there is a restraining order in place for a specific number of gaming machines. We knew there would be challenges. The courts will tell us how far we can go. Enforcement is still underway on areas not affected by the restraining order."

Illegal camping

New East Division Captain Steven Carpenter responded to a question regarding criminal activity in homeless camps located throughout the city. He indicated that during his time on the south side of Fort Worth he led a team that

regularly monitored camp sites and effectively dispersed potential campers. He plans to establish the same type of team in east Fort Worth when he has his leadership team in place.



In closing, District 8 Rep. Kelly Allan Gray confirmed that a new centralized health resource center on the near east side will combine existing services by John Peter Smith and the Day Resource Center into a new facility off Lancaster Avenue.

"The center isn't housing, it's a consolidation of social services already in place," she said.

Gray also indicated that the Union Gospel Mission has stopped its clients from sleeping on the sidewalks, "which means something we are doing is having an impact." She also reminded members and guests that a known drug house on Sargent Street has been demolished and that the city manager is putting together a nuisance abatement team to combine code, legal and police efforts in addressing housing that is poorly maintained or a public nuisance. Finally, she said neighborhood resistance stopped a zoning application for a small hotel on Eastchase that was not a good fit for the neighborhood. A final vote by council on the application is due March 28.

March



West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association sponsored a volunteer team for the annual Cowtown Cleanup on March 28. For three hours on Saturday morning, nineteen volunteers removed trash and debris from Oakland Lake Park. Social Chairman Tom Cook organized the cleanup and distributed trash bags, gloves and t-shirts on site. Fort Worth's annual Cowtown Cleanup encourages neighborhoods to pick up trash and spruce up their areas.

Classic Car Show



April

Gray, Mason-Ford Debate District 8 Issues

West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association hosted a District 8 City Council debate on April 20 as part of the monthly membership meeting at Meadowbrook Methodist Church. District 8 City Council Representative Kelly Allen Gray, who was first elected in 2012, debated Sharon Mason-Ford, a political newcomer.

Questions were posed by moderator and WMNA President Darin Hoppe after polling the audience. Each candidate had five minutes to make opening and closing statements after responding to questions.



Subjects explored by the candidates included:

Residency

Gray stated that she was born in District 8 and her family also lives in the district. She also worships at a church within the district. Mason-Ford, who resides in southwest Fort Worth, owns property in east Fort Worth and is a pastor at a church within the district

boundaries. She is also a licensed nurse and a former Fort Worth Independent School District employee.

Game rooms:

Responding to a question regarding game room ordinance enforcement, Mason-Ford said she would follow the issue of game rooms and would be persistent in ensuring the gambling problem was dealt with by the city. She would listen to the community and respond. Gray said the recently passed city ordinance is now in litigation which restricted what she could say about game rooms, but she said she listened and responded to residents who felt so strongly about the need for an ordinance. Prior to the existence of the current ordinance, the city relied on the police, health and code enforcement departments to eliminate nuisance businesses. She feels strongly that the ordinance will be upheld in court.

Differences and Important Issues

Gray said she has been a resident of District 8 her entire life and considers the people she serves her family. Before being elected, she ran a nonprofit that was created to help revitalize the community and increase home ownership. Mason-Ford alluded to controversy surrounding the nonprofit and indicated she would be a representative who is highly responsive and persistent in pursuing problems. Gray challenged the reference to the nonprofit and indicated it was still viable and helping the community.

Nuisance properties

Gray indicated she has worked to re-establish nuisance abatement teams that comprise code enforcement, police officers and attorneys. The economic downturn forced the city to eliminate these teams, but with an economic recovery in full swing, the city is beginning to reinstate these missing “pieces” of the enforcement puzzle. She indicated the city must follow the law regarding private property and cannot demolish homes without completing all legal steps. She noted that a property on Sargent Street that had been a frequent target of code enforcement was recently demolished after months of work. Mason-Ford said she understood the importance of cleaning up neighborhoods and would be responsive to residents’ requests regarding problem properties.

Economic Development

Mason-Ford supported economic development initiatives and said she would devote her time and energy to bringing more desirable businesses to East Fort Worth. She felt more could be done to encourage businesses to relocate or expand in the Lancaster corridor and elsewhere in the city. Gray cited her participation in Vision East Lancaster, a group established after a 2013 summit on economic development in East Fort Worth. She pointed to the new library that will be built with bond money as an accomplishment, indicating the library was not on the list of bond projects when discussions began. Property has now been purchased for the library and construction should begin soon. She also noted the relocation of Fort Worth Can Academy to Lancaster Avenue and the expansion of the Gotcha Covered uniform company into the Parker-Brown historic building. Cheyenne Construction will move into the third floor of the Parker-Brown and the fourth floor will be an event space. Great things are happening along the Lancaster corridor, but development takes time, often decades, to reach critical mass, Gray said.

Water shortages

Year-round water restrictions are now in place in Fort Worth. Gray and Mason-Ford both supported enforcement of water restrictions and encouraged residents to vote May 9 for new Water District representation. Recent plentiful rains have helped replenish lakes, which will be taken into consideration by the city’s water department.

Visual appeal of East Lancaster Avenue

Mason Ford said she totally agreed that code enforcement and signage monitoring needs to be consistent and persistent. Beautification is important to residents of East Fort Worth. She noted that the beauty of downtown and near south Fort Worth is something east Fort Worth residents want as well. She promised to focus on code enforcement in the Lancaster area if elected. Gray complimented the city employees who work on the city's behalf, but she admitted that clearing up problems often feels like the city is "chasing its tail." Citizens must be diligent about letting code enforcement know about problems and turn in complaints. Code enforcement and city council toured the city via bus recently and followed a sign violations list created by two area residents. An additional signage code enforcement person has been hired, bringing the total to two for the entire city. The city continues to build up its ranks to deal with code violations and signage issues, but city employees need residents' help.

Interstate versus City Boulevard

Mason-Ford said the Interstate 80/Lancaster Avenue stalemate can be corrected, but not in her first days in office. She will listen to complaints and try to solve the problem. She is willing to fight to make sure the finger-pointing between the state and the city over the Lancaster corridor is resolved. Gray said the six-mile Lancaster Avenue is owned by the state. The state of Texas attempted to return the corridor to the city with a \$25 million improvements price tag attached. The city cannot afford to accept the street in its current condition, she said. No other city except San Antonio has agreed to the turn back option. Gray said the city is going to improve lighting and ensure the street is drivable for now.

Responsiveness

In January City Manager David Cooke spoke to the neighborhood association and was unable to answer questions regarding several hot-button issues. He was new on the job, but he still hasn't responded to the WMNA's requests, according to Hoppe.

Gray pointed out that Cooke had only been on the job a few months then, but not responding at all is unacceptable. She said she believed the police department and code enforcement have been responsive regarding persistent problems, such as the Eco-Hotel, which was a source of crime. Mason-Ford said that she would not have allowed the questions posed to Cooke to go unanswered and would have followed up with him to ensure they were.

Both candidates encouraged residents to vote early beginning April 27 or go to the polls on May 9.

Following the candidates' forum, graffiti abatement representatives reminded the audience that volunteers will be needed to paint a mural on the Harwood/Purinton underpass near Meadowood Park on May 16. The project has been delayed twice due to bad weather. The city will provide the paint and materials. Artist Eddie Diaz designed the mural based on the Tandy Hills Nature Preserve.

Prairie Fest supporters encouraged residents to attend the April 25 Prairie Fest at Tandy Hills. John Tandy, whose family originally owned the property, said he often hiked there as a child with his grandfather and the untouched prairie is a source of pride for the east side. Hoppe encouraged members to volunteer to work at the Prairie Fest HQ booth this weekend. Jennifer Greathouse is coordinating volunteer hours.

Hoppe also announced that West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association yard signs be for sale at the May 18 annual picnic in Oakland Lake Park.

May (annual picnic, photos only)



June

East Fort Worth Poised for Revitalization

Fernando Costa, assistant city manager, city of Fort Worth, told West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association members and guests on June 15 that east Fort Worth has as much unrealized potential as any neighborhood in Fort Worth. The question, he asked, is when will east Fort Worth get its share of development?

“Neighborhoods grow because they have important components, all of which east Fort Worth possesses great leadership, strong neighborhood association, and solid sense of identity,” he said. One of the 16 designated urban villages targeted for development is at Oakland and Lancaster.



Urban villages, which combine housing, retail and walkability, have been successful in other parts of Fort Worth. He cited Magnolia Street, Seventh Street and upcoming development along South Main and along Race streets, as examples.

“Downtown Fort Worth is the most successful example of what I’m talking about,” he said. “There is no reason that type of development can’t succeed in east Fort Worth.”

Three issues of interest that will encourage development in east Fort Worth were addressed:

*Streets

The city is following a complete street model in its upgrades, he said. Complete streets are designed to accommodate all users –cyclists, pedestrians, cars and public transit. “Rosedale is an excellent example of what can be done to encourage development.”

***Affordable housing**

“The public housing development model has failed,” Costa said. Two existing public housing projects, Butler and Cavile, are being targeted for mixed use development. Fort Worth Housing Authority is seeking to create units where middle- and low-income residents can live together.

***Permanent supported housing**

“The shelter model is sustaining homelessness, not ending it,” he said. Directions Home set a target of ending homelessness in a decade. Permanent supported housing where services are available to those who need help is being created throughout the city. “Let’s be honest. East Fort Worth has shouldered too much of the unwanted development in the city. The city recognizes that this is unfair and future housing will be scattered throughout the city.”

Infrastructure development is a challenge, he said. “Only one-third of the budget is dedicated to streets, libraries and parks,” he said. Debt service has been used to help support improved infrastructure without touching the two-thirds of the budget dedicated to police and fire.

Other options include impact fees from developers, which has been implemented, and a transportation service charge on the water bill, which has not. “If we could add this additional funding, many of the issues we need to address could be paid for.”

On the issue of code compliance and stubborn problems with Lancaster Avenue, Costa said that he is working to change the culture of city government to think more critically about solving problems. “No isn’t an acceptable answer. We need to find a way to get to yes,” he said.

There are three keys to successful revitalization of a neighborhood:

***Making capital improvements**

***Providing economic incentives**

***Correct zoning**





“All of these boxes were checked on Rosedale to create the Rosedale Renaissance development,” he said. “I encourage you to look at what Texas Wesleyan University is doing to revitalize the area around the university.”

Prior to the meeting, State Sen. Nicole Collier updated the group on legislation passed in the last session:

SB1 – Provides property tax relief by increasing the homestead exemption from \$15,000 to \$25,000 per year. This is a reduction in the property taxes assessed by a school district. It also adds protections to those school districts losing revenue as a result of the relief.

SB 11 – Authorizes concealed carry of handguns in public and private institutions of higher education. Private institutions may opt out upon consultation with students, staff

and faculty.

HB 4 – Provides \$130 million in additional funding for full-day pre-K and creates a standard for the pre-K curriculum.

HB 40 – Pre-empts local law, only allowing municipalities to regulate certain activities of oil and gas operations. If it does not override state and federal law, a municipality may regulate aboveground activity and create ordinances that are commercially reasonable. The municipality cannot prohibit operations conducting prudent practices.

HB 910 – Authorizes individuals to obtain a license to openly carry a handgun in all places that allow licensed carrying of a concealed handgun effective Jan. 1, 2016.

Collier provided a comprehensive list of key legislation at the meeting that is available from her office on request.

Sandra Lamm, member and former board member, spoke on the variety of services available free from the Fort Worth Public Library this summer, including the Third Thursday Jazz Series featuring well-known jazz artists and the summer reading program and year-round reading programs for youth.

WMNA is in the process of replacing three board members whose terms have expired. President Darin Hoppe asked anyone interested in serving to contact him or a member of the nominating committee, Tonya Ferguson or Mike Phipps.

August

Mayor Betsy Price Outlines 2016 Budget and Upcoming Improvements in West Meadowbrook

Mayor Betsy Price updated the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association in August about Fort Worth’s progress during her tenure, noting the city’s rise from a community that lost most of its young people to larger communities in Texas to the fastest growing city in the nation in 2015.

“About 18 months ago, we updated our study about how Fort Worth is regarded nationally. We found that our city is among the top 2 destinations in the U.S. for places to live,” she said. “We are growing quickly. Fort Worth is the #1 destination for U-Haul drop-offs.”



Expansion puts pressure on infrastructure and Fort Worth hasn't kept up in the last six to eight years. "In the next budget we have dedicated 1 cent of our levy to street improvements. It's been a source of frustration that we haven't kept up," she indicated.

"We will dedicate \$26 million in funds generated by additional sales and property taxes to a new class of police and fire trainees, staff and facility operations at the new law enforcement training center and creating a new police and

fire division in north Fort Worth. Fort Worth will also give raises to city staff this year with no layoffs and no tax increases," she said.

Fort Worth will also begin work on a capital plan, "something that hasn't been done for years," she added, with a goal to publish the plan by mid-year. Also, Fort Worth is reviewing its thoroughfare plan for the first time since 2009 to ensure all streets in our plan are needed. The public will have several opportunities to review the plan before it's adopted.

With the \$292 million in bonds approved by the voters last year, Price anticipates all of these monies will be allocated and spent within five years. "We have improved software that will allow us to track progress on bond funds and ensure they are being put to use," she said.

The city's web site is being redesigned so that citizens can track the progress of bond fund projects in their neighborhoods. Also, she promised increased transparency about project scheduling and implementation through the city's communication department. In the West Meadowbrook area, sidewalks are being installed along Wilbarger and 287 and improvements to Oakland and I30 will begin in September 2015. Within one-year, new streetlights will be installed along Lancaster Avenue.

"All in all, 14 transportation projects including Lancaster Avenue and 18 park projects including Oakland Lake Park will be underway. Also, development work will continue on the East Side Library to be located on 1.6 acres recently purchased from the Meadowbrook Methodist Church," Price added.

Local business owner Don Boren will lead a new 15-member Homelessness Commission that begins work in October. "I know homelessness is an issue for your community," she said. "We are moving forward with permanent supported housing to be placed throughout the city. The truth is the homeless should be living in situations where they see people who work and contribute."



The .5 cent CCPD sales tax approved for another five years in 2014 will underwrite additional public needs, including equipment and personnel for the police and fire departments. "We are the envy of other cities that lack this source of funding," she said.

Price expects finalists for the Fort Worth Police Department chief's position to be announced in September with an appointment anticipated in October.

President Darin Hoppe closed the meeting with an announcement that the September meeting will be the association's annual school supply drive. Principals at West Meadowbrook schools requested paper and pencils. Hoppe also encouraged WMNA members to review the new WMNA dues increase proposal, a \$6 increase to \$18 in 2016, before a January vote. He noted that WMNA has not had a dues increase in more than 10 years and the association's dues are lower than most other neighboring groups.

September

Educators School WMNA On Progress

At the September meeting, representatives from FWISD schools in Meadowbrook area, educators on the east side talked loud and proud about their progress.



Tobi Jackson, who has served 6 years as a board trustee for the east side, reported on Meadowbrook Elementary's progress. Ms. Jackson reported that the school is coordinating curriculum across science, math and English to improve student learning, and staff and students are actively participating in a nature curriculum "Kids on the Prairie" conducted by the Friends of Tandy Hills. She noted that Principal Terry McGraw's goal is that children will hear one million words before they start school to ensure they are ready for kindergarten. McGraw couldn't attend the meeting.

Jackson also announced that Dr. Kent Paredes Scribner will start as the new FWISD Superintendent October 15. More schools on the east side have met state standards in the past year: Poly and Eastern Hills High Schools, Meadowbrook Middle, Sagamore Hills, William James Middle, and D McRae Elementary have been added

to the list of successful schools. She also noted that the staff at Meadowbrook Elementary is trying to stay on top of the trash situation at the school and they look forward to continue working closely with the neighborhood association. "We have the right principals at the right schools, and we've always had the right kids," Jackson said.

Principal Katrina Smith enthusiastically reported on progress at Meadowbrook Middle School. She mentioned the strong group of teachers and tutoring five days a week as contributing to the school's meeting state standards three years in a row. Smith distributed the TEA 2015 Accountability Summary for the school, showing all four standards met and targets exceeded in all areas of student achievement and progress, closing performance gaps, and postsecondary readiness. She said that visitors will find teachers at the school year-round, voluntarily working to ensure children's success.

She described a curriculum that allows students to take high school courses in algebra, art, biology, English, and Spanish in the eighth grade, allowing them to enter high school as sophomores. Meadowbrook Middle will become a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) academy in the next academic year. Ms. Smith credits a partnership between school and home and encourages the community to come into the school to "see what we're doing."

Chad McCarty, Eastern Hills High School principal, reported giant strides at as well. He said that with all four state standards met with significantly higher scores, discipline referrals down by 70 percent, and attendance at 95 percent, the FWISD administrators wanted to know what new systems McCarty had put in place. He said there is no new system; he has established an environment of saying thank you and rewarding success.



McCarty listens to students and takes their suggestions seriously, such as one student who said the school was not inviting, particularly the cafeteria. The cafeteria has now been redone with newly designed furnishings. That student is now his best ambassador, carrying the message that this school really takes its students seriously. Both students and teachers are making a commitment to the school, he said.

Darin Hoppe, WMNA chair, called for volunteers to fill vacant positions on Advisory Council and announced that Mike Phipps, Tonya Ferguson and Sandra Everett have been appointed to serve as the nominating committee. A slate will be presented at the October meeting, and election of new advisory council members will be at the November meeting. The October meeting will be a potluck meal, and the November meeting is a Thanksgiving social. The Cowtown Cleanup is coming soon – watch for a chance to sign up soon. Darin also mentioned that the Care Closet at Eastern Hills High School can use donations of good clothing.

October

Blue Zones Project Uses Silver Buckshot, not Silver Bullets, to Increase Longevity

At the October meeting of the WMNA, Ricky Cotto, Healthways coordinator, explained Fort Worth's initiative to improve the wellbeing of its citizens by becoming a Blue Zones community.



“There is no silver bullet for achieving the goal, but there may be silver buckshot,” he said, referring to a coordinated strategy that reaches across age groups, interests, income levels, and industry sectors. An environmental approach seeks to create permanent and semi-permanent policy changes that make healthy choices easier.

Cotto explained that the Blue Zones concept is based on 2004 research by Dan Buettner and National Geographic and the world's leading longevity

researchers to find places in the world where people live measurably better, longer and happier. After identifying the areas where people live better lives, researchers studied why this phenomenon occurred, homing in on nine lifestyle characteristics shared by all of the locations. The Blue Zones areas were the island of Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; Loma Linda, California; Ikaria, Greece; and Nicoya, Costa Rica. The research conducted in these longevity hot spots became a best-selling book and a top-selling edition for National Geographic. Could the lessons learned in these areas be applied to life in the United States?

“Nine lifestyle principles, called the Power 9, were shared by these diverse locations,” Cotto said. “Even if you adopt two or three of the principles, you will extend your life.”

The Power 9 principles are:

- Move naturally
- Have a purpose
- Down shift
- 80 percent rule for eating
- Plant-based diets
- Moderate wine consumption
- Belong to a group
- Enjoy family
- Connect with the right tribe

In 2009, Buettner partnered with AARP and the United Health Foundation to apply the Power 9 principles to Albert Lea, Minn. After just one year, participants added 2.9 years to their lifespan while healthcare claims dropped 49 percent. Now, Blue Zones' communities are expanding across the country, including to Fort Worth. In 2014, The Blue Zones Project was brought to Fort Worth through a cooperative agreement with Texas Health Resources and Healthways. The project's goal is to improve the wellbeing of the regional population, thereby lowering healthcare costs, increasing productivity and improving the quality of life for all residents.

Fort Worth is a large city, the first metropolitan area to attempt a Blue Zones project. The project is rolling out neighborhood by neighborhood. To get involved, each person is asked to sign a pledge to learn more about the Blue Zones project, measure success through a survey available on the Blue Zones web site, adopt at least five of the nine principles that increase longevity, and finally participate through volunteering, attending workshops or changing lifestyles.

November

WMNA Closes 2015 With Election of new Officers, Changes to Bylaws

On Nov. 16, WMNA celebrated the holidays and voted in a new advisory council for 2015. About 60 members and guests shared a Thanksgiving feast and approved two changes to the association's bylaws and elected a leadership team. Dace Sultanov, a concert cellist, played for the membership throughout the evening. WMNA's next meeting is Jan.11.

2016

January

Triad of speakers kick off 2016

WMNA's January meeting featured three speakers: Regina Smith, Meadowbrook Middle School educator, Alida Labbe, Fort Worth Arts Council, and Lieutenant Joseph Sparrow, Fort Worth Police Department East Division. Following the cornbread and beans dinner, Tonya Ferguson, 2016 president, greeted members and guests and introduced the series of presentations on key issues.



Smith began the meeting by explaining a fundraising campaign underway at Meadowbrook Middle School for the eighth-grade class. Smith said that the eighth-grade class has shown tremendous improvement since entering middle school as sixth graders and had most recently posted the highest scores of any eighth-grade class on achievement tests. MMS administration decided

to reward the class of 100 with a three-day trip to the San Antonio area, including a visit to Texas A&M University to encourage interest in college. Of the 100 students, only 50 can afford the \$250.33 travel costs. MMS is conducting various fundraising activities on campus, but Smith recently asked for help from area neighborhood associations. WMNA agreed to underwrite the cost of one student with a board vote, but offered members the opportunity to contribute funds for one additional student. During the evening, members donated \$117 of the \$250.33 needed. Smith said she would continue to accept contributions into February. For information on how to help with the trip costs, please contact regina.smith2@fwisd.org.

Labbe followed Smith with a presentation on an arts project called "Wildflowers" planned for the Eastern Regional Library grounds. The winning proposal is an abstract installation mimicking a field of wildflowers with randomly planted, vertical steel pylons featuring inspirational quotes to be suggested by the neighborhood. She explained that the proposal has been undergoing a community review and the final opportunity to suggest changes will be Jan.27 at the library. She encouraged residents to make their thoughts known before the project is finalized. Many questions followed about the cost of the project (\$80,000 provided by Arts Council from the public art fund), colors of the pylons (shown as pink), and the maintenance plan (the city will ensure the project is kept clean and well-maintained. Labbe said the project as planned encourages interaction with the community by inviting visitors to wander through the pylons and stimulates visual interest from the nearby Interstate 820/Interstate 30 intersection with its random, colorful pattern.



Finally, Lieutenant Sparrow updated members and guests on an uptick in crime on the east side. He said robberies and car burglaries were on the rise. In one instance, an Uber driver and rider were robbed near a bar during the early morning hours. He advised everyone to be aware of their surroundings and not travel alone late at night. Sparrow also said residents should be sure to lock car doors if a vehicle is outside and remove all valuable items. "My advice is to clean out the garage and put your car inside," he said. "These are crimes of opportunity. Reduce the chance of being robbed."



Sparrow also answered questions about the new open carry law which allows concealed carry license holders to openly carry weapons. He said the open carry law is not something he supports, but it is the law. "Personally, I don't openly carry because it's too easy for someone to take a gun from you. It's not a situation I would like to be in," he said. Concealed carry license holders may opt to open carry in certain locations and must comply if businesses or organizations post signs forbidding weapons being openly displayed. "We encourage citizens to ask questions and learn the rules regarding open carry," he said. "It's the law and we all will have to learn to live with it." More information on open carry is available in the Meadowlark newsletter and the City of Fort Worth web site.

February

District 8, Code Compliance Review Progress in 2015, Plans for 2016

District 8 City Council Representative Kelley Allen Gray said that after saying for years that improvements are coming, “they’re now happening,” she said. “My charge to you is to create a new wish list of things you want to accomplish.”

New stop lights and streetlights are being installed on Lancaster Avenue. Traffic signal boxes will be wrapped with art submitted to a special committee for review. Deadline for submissions is Feb. 25; 15 finalists will be selected.

“Drive down Lancaster Avenue at night to see just how much better the lighting is,” she suggested. In addition, the Fort Worth Police Department Tactical Operations Building (the old Channel 5) will be undergoing renovations starting this month.



“Oakland Lake Park’s multi-package site project is also approved, and construction is about to begin,” she said. Base bid improvements include demolition and spot removal of existing concrete curb, gutter and site clearing, new ball field lighting, new asphalt overlay on parking lot, wheel stops, spot replacement of curb and gutter and new striping, a new shelter, additional walk access, three picnic tables, two park benches and trash receptacles. A small skate park will be included as an alternated bid item. It is anticipated that construction will begin in February and be completed in July 2016



Security near homeless shelters is much improved, Gray said. “The Union Gospel Mission has joined with other homeless centers to pay for a regular security patrol on the Near East Side. Also, a police storefront is now open with expanded hours in the area. The situation is much better, and the homeless population has decreased.”

The Parker Browne Building, a historic structure on Lancaster Avenue, has been refurbished and is now occupied by Gotcha Covered, a uniform company. The first two floors are GC employees and management, the third floor is occupied by Cheyenne Construction. Gotcha Covered has expanded into two nearby buildings, as well. “Gotcha Covered is a growing business that has roots on Lancaster,” Gray said. Fort Worth Can Academy, also operating on the near East side, has begun an expansion after one year in a former music business building. Top Golf, an indoor golf park, is also planning to open its doors soon in a building on I35.

On Feb.29, the Advisory Committee on Homelessness will meet for the first time to discuss how to coordinate efforts to assist the homeless population.

Gray also reminded members to vote in the March 1 primary and to prepare to vote on May 7 for 11 new charter amendments. She said: “Many of the amendments are technical, but a few are in important changes, such as the increase in pay for City Council members and the Mayor and an increase in the number of City Council members.”

From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on May 14, District 8 will kick-off its Blue Zones project with food demonstrations, exercise routines, mobile food cards filled with fresh fruit and vegetables, at the Hillside Community Center. After the kickoff, events will be held every month in different locations throughout District 8.

Code Compliance Director Brandon Bennett updated the membership on the gaming ordinance legal challenge that is progressing through the courts. Many gaming locations affected by the ordinance filed a temporary

injunction against the ordinance, considered the most stringent in the state, to stay enforcement. Bennett said the ordinance cannot be enforced until a court determines the legitimacy of the law.

"We can't close down game rooms on zoning, but we can close them on other criminal issues," he said. "Code works closely with the PD to find cause to close these illegal operations."

Bennett said there are five broad categories of argument against the ordinance that must be resolved through court hearings. "Once we have a court's decision, we are ready to move on enforcement," he said. He expects to have a resolution by this summer.

Litter and trash were also of concern to the members. "The city has invested in suck trucks and trailers, as well as two street sweepers, to clean up trash along three exits leaving town along both I35 and I30," Bennett said. "We're also working with Presbyterian Night Shelter to hire homeless people to operate the vehicles. If they do well, the city will hire them to continue working for the city." Bennett also said herbicide dispensers will be mounted on the street sweepers to keep weeds down



Illegal dumping, another problem common in the neighborhood, is a crime. "The district attorney has gone all the way on some of the dumping cases we have filed," Bennett said. "Please report any illegal dumping to the police department. It's a crime in progress and will be prosecuted."

Code compliance, in cooperation with the water department, has purchased one million litter bags to distribute to residents for use in cars. "Neighborhood policing does fall in part on the residents to monitor," he said. Bennett encouraged residents to participate in annual clean-ups along the Trinity River and across the city.

March

Meals on Wheels of Tarrant County ready to help those in need; Breakfast Optimist Club of Fort Worth raises money for children

West Meadowbrook residents learned about options to help neighbors confined to their homes and programs to support children who need assistance at the March meeting. More than 60 members and friends attended the meeting at Meadowbrook United Methodist Church in East Fort Worth.



Terry Buckner, Meals on Wheels development representative and a former teacher, noted for her audience that Tarrant County's MOW organization serves more than one million meals per year for \$6 per service at no charge to its clients. "For \$60 per year, you can feed one person," she noted.

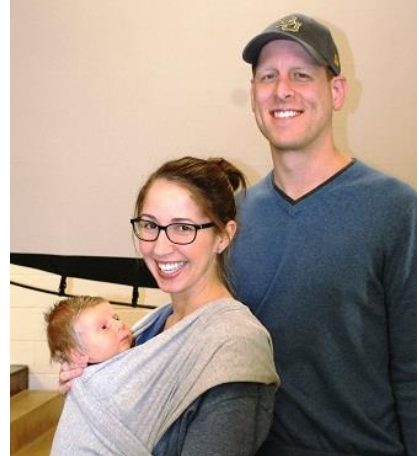
Buckner asked members to think about referring elderly neighbors who are having trouble keeping up with home maintenance to MOW. "Many times, the reason a house or lawn is neglected is because the owner is not able to do the work any longer," she said. "Homebound elderly residents are often not eating at all or eating poorly."

Buckner noted the program does not base its services on income. All meals are free to anyone who is homebound and cannot prepare food. Meals are delivered to clients' doors five times a week and anyone can refer a neighbor, relative or friend who needs service and that person will begin receiving meals within 48 hours.

"We rely on donations (more than 51 percent of the budget) and a steady stream of volunteers to deliver food," Buckner said. MOW just moved into a new 60,000 square foot facility with a 15,000 square foot kitchen. "I say that if you deliver meals to the homebound, you are going to heaven," she said. "We are now positioned to serve a growing older population in Tarrant County." Buckner noted that the county has an inverted age pyramid, meaning there are more older people than young people in the county.

Dietitians and nutritionists supervise meal preparation and volunteers deliver to 8 to 10 homes per day. "Many elderly people in emergency rooms are malnourished because they are not able to cook any longer," she said. "We're also an extra set of eyes on older relatives, which helps caregivers."

The second speaker of the night was Jim McCombs, Breakfast Optimist Club of East Fort Worth, introduced his organization as a service club that focuses on helping young people in the area. The Optimist Club meets weekly for breakfast at a local restaurant on the East Side.



Among the projects the club supports are:

Providing assistance for children and families at Cook Children's Hospital and Ronald McDonald House by making blankets, collecting bears and supporting research to find a cure for cancer,

Sponsoring an oratorical and essay contest each year designed to help children develop writing and critical-thinking skills. Winners receive a \$2,500 scholarship.

Other ongoing projects are a partnership with the East Fort Worth 4H program, Adoption of Lowery Road Elementary School, Jean McClung Middle School, junior Optimist Clubs at East Handley Elementary and Oakridge schools, as well as other projects.

McCombs thanked members and guests who attended a recent Optimist Club Spaghetti Dinner, an annual fundraiser for the organization, and encouraged others to participate in an upcoming golf tournament or subscribe to a Flag Program that places an American flag at more than 400 homes in East Fort Worth on five designated days. All funds raised through these projects returns to the community.

April

FYPD Assistant Chief Forecasts Changes in Patrol Style, Resource Reallocation for Summer

Standing in for Fort Worth Police Department Chief Joel Fitzgerald, Assistant Chief Ken Dean told members at the April meeting that the police department is reorganizing patrol divisions around beats, "a time-honored policing technique", to try to attack the roots of persistent crime.

"Chief Fitzgerald believes in solving the problem that is causing crime. Beat patrol officers will be tasked with getting acquainted with their neighborhood, meeting business owners, and learning about resident, to better

serve their needs, "Dean said. "The transition to beats from zones will be made over time. However, you will be seeing more patrol officers in your area. Beat patrol officers will be available to you 24/7."

He said the teams will be assigned to one neighborhood each and will be visible and accessible.

Summer preparations are also underway, Dean said, which will require a reallocation of resources. "Summer traditionally results in an uptick in crime, and we are preparing for it," he said.

Dean added that the FWPD's West Division headquarters was heavily damaged in recent storms and will be rebuilt over the summer. The renovation of the former Channel 5 building, now the HQ for the Tactical Operations Division, will also begin this summer.

East Division Captain Michael Shedd responded to questions about crime statistics by referring members to the online source, Crime Mapping, available as an app or website, to check for criminal activity. He said all statistics are forwarded directly there for immediate consumption.

"We have a Burglary Action Team, a four-officer unit, that has successfully broken up four rings with some innovative approaches," Shedd said "The team staged an apartment with property from our prop room, positioned cameras throughout the apartment, and tagged the property with trackers. The apartment was burglarized. The team tracked the stolen property to the perpetrators' address, arrested the individuals involved and recovered stolen property from five different robberies."

Shedd said he reports on what his division has done to combat crime every 28 days. "I meet with my boss and explain my actions for the last month," he explained. "We share ideas on how to solve problems and eliminate nagging issues. Please let us know if you have a problem so that we can help you solve it."

WMNA President Tonya Ferguson opened the meeting with an overview of recent actions to curb vagrancy and littering at a site formerly occupied by a restaurant on View Street. Out-of-state property owners gave the city full approval to post no trespassing signs, clean-up and barricade the area, and remove brush that obstructed views. WMNA, District 8 Rep. Kelly Allen Gray, John Tandy and the FWPD collaborated to resolve the situation feeding a recurring crime problem.

WMNA's next meeting will be the annual picnic on Monday, May 16, at Oakland Lake Park pavilion beginning at 6:30 p.m. Live music, food and fun will be on the agenda. No program will be scheduled.

May

Annual Picnic

West Meadowbrook members and guests gathered for the 2016 annual picnic on May 16, a time for fellowship, food and sharing news about upcoming events in the area. Visitors from neighboring associations attended to discuss strategies for preventing a rezoning case from going forward. Food was provided by Destiny's Chicken and generous donors.



June

From Pollinators to Homelessness, Speakers Educate and Inform

WMNA's June meeting featured two speakers, Ricky Linix, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Sonia Singleton, acting director of Directions Home, who talked about growing gardens and understanding.

Linix began the program emphasizing the importance of pollinators, particularly bees. "Although



monarchs are the stars of the pollinators, bees are the most important to our survival," he said. If every bee disappeared from the earth, humans would follow in four years, he said.

Pollinators are essential to the growth of \$3 billion worth of fruits, vegetables and other plant species. Bees, in particular, have been losing ground because of pesticide use. Homeowners should cultivate a diverse group of species as possible to provide fuel to migrating butterflies and bees.

"Monarchs migrate from Central Mexico to Texas every year. They need flowering plants to help them make the trip from Mexico to Texas, then on to Arkansas and other areas," he said. Some species that tolerate Texas heat are Rock Daisy, Snow on the Mountain, Cowpen Daisy, Maximillian Sunflower, Frostweed, and Gayfeather. Linix circulated a list of flowering plants that attract butterflies, hummingbirds, bees and other pollinators.

Sonia Singleton, who assumed acting leadership of Directions Home eight months ago, described the 10-year plan to end homelessness in its eighth year as a work in progress. DH provides funding to organizations that help the homeless. "Our work is often thankless, but necessary to the community," she said.

"In seven years, homelessness has decline from 15.7 to 9.7 per thousand in Fort Worth," Singleton said. "We are currently interviewing everyone involved with the program, from the homeless to staff, in preparation for an Aug. 16 presentation to the City Council."

Program Director Tara Perez said illegal camping is a growing problem because of the lack of affordable housing in Fort Worth. Three outreach teams dealing with social services, mental health services and health services, visit with small groups to try to assess needs.

According to the feedback from these surveys, 97 percent of homeless want housing. Directions Home subscribes to the housing first philosophy – get a homeless person in a home, then wrap services around them to solve ongoing substance abuse, health and mental health issues.

Program Coordinator LaTisha Turner said homelessness is a diverse and complex problem to solve. Currently the Directions Home team is surveying the program to assess its status. She encouraged anyone who knows of a landlord who is willing to take a chance on a homeless person to contact the Directions Home office.

Singleton expressed excitement about the opening of the 40,000 square-foot True Worth Place, which will house services, shower facilities, lockers for belongings, and has the potential to "rescue a lot of people from really desperate circumstances."



As for panhandling, which has increased in the area, Singleton emphasized that panhandlers are not homeless, as a rule, and they are breaking the law. She encouraged anyone who is tempted to give panhandlers money to donate cash or supplies to an organization that serves the homeless for best results.

August

Trinity River Project Hits Full Stride with Gateway Park Project Construction

Matt Oliver, Trinity River Project, says Gateway Park on the east side of Fort Worth is larger than Central Park in New York City and will play a key role in connecting the community with the river through bike and walking trails, special events and sports venues. Oliver spoke to the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association in August.



Explosive population growth in Fort Worth spurred the need for a more modern form of flood control. Levees built in the 1950s are outdated and will be replaced by series of gates to control water level in a bend of the river near downtown. Water from Eagle Mountain and Benbrook lakes will be channeled through the city to create a downtown island.

"We are 45 days away from first developer announcing construction of apartment units on the new Fort Worth town lake area," Oliver said. "An 800-acre area, nearly doubling the size of downtown, will be created when the project is finished in 2023." Three bridges now under construction will provide access, along with 1.5 miles of new bike and walking trails.

Oliver said Fort Worth residents want access to the river for recreational activities. The TRP will create 12 miles of waterfront to begin to push people toward the river, making it the focal point of Fort Worth.

"Currently enough dirt to fill 40 percent of old Dallas Cowboys stadium is being moved to make way for new projects," Oliver said. "That Gateway area project's first phase should be finished in January. Our next phase begins immediately as we move closer to creating connectors and concession areas."

Ultimately Fort Worth will have 72 miles of trails connecting 31 neighborhoods through three to four more projects, he said.

Following Oliver's presentation, the Polytechnic High School Parrots cheer squad announced that they had been invited to attend the Macy's Day Parade, the first high school in this area to ever be invited. In order to go, the squad must raise \$37,000 to pay for transportation and lodging. The squad offered an energetic program encouraging members to support their efforts. To contribute, go to the school's GoFundMe page at <https://www.gofundme.com/2gca03w>. To learn more about their achievement, read this story from Star-Telegram.



September

West Meadowbrook Schools Making Progress, Request Help with Reading, Tutoring, Moral Support

Three West Meadowbrook area school principals touted improvements in their test scores this year, new neighborhood involvement programs and expanding support groups to encourage students to achieve at the September meeting of the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association.



Terri McGuire, principal, Meadowbrook Elementary School, said her school had met eligibility standards for the third year. She encouraged residents to visit and volunteer to read to the students at least one hour per week. "I have worked with Tom Cook, social chair, on arranging tours for interested people," she said. "Anyone who wants to can call the school and arrange to visit. We would be happy to see you."

Meadowbrook Elementary has a computer lab that McGuire says is helping students improve their technology skills. Recently, the school formed a Junior Optimist Youth club and 70 young women have expressed interest in a Girl Scouts chapter. "The success of all schools depends on sending students well-prepared to the next level," she said.

Meadowbrook Middle School will be the site of a Science Technology Engineering and Math Preparatory Academy starting in sixth grade. Ninety-five students have already expressed interest, said Samantha Brittenham, assistant principal. Students in the Academy will feed the I.M. Terrell STEM and Fine Arts School to open this year. MMS also has met its eligibility requirements.

Chad McCarty, principal of Eastern Hills High School, said his school missed passing its eligibility by one point. "Our population did not grow, and mobility remains a problem," he said. An EHHS support group has helped the school pay for a new marquee in the entryway and provided other financial assistance. "Any way you can help us, whether it is with your time, your money or your ideas, we are listening," he said. McCarty, a graduate of EHHS and a resident of Eastern Hills, is the first principal in the history of the school to stay for four years. This year the first seniors will graduate with EMT certification. Other choice programs offered are legal services, fire and law enforcement.



Norma Whitt and Sharon Southard of The Body Shop Fitness Center at Woodhaven Country Club introduced the health club to area residents who might be interested in improving their health. Cost is \$40 per month. A one-month membership was donated as a door prize. East-side businesses visit the WMNA meeting each month to introduce themselves and raise visibility. Whitt runs the Body Shop for Woodhaven, but she is not affiliated with the club.

Updates from the law enforcement personnel in attendance included a positive outlook on crime in the area and acknowledgement of an uptick in car break ins. East Division police conducted a sting operation and arrested 13 people attempting to break-in to a decoy car.

Kelly Allen Gray, District 8 City Council member, announced that the Eastside Library approved in the 2016 bond issue is now ready for input from citizens. She invited the Fort Worth Library to visit the WMNA at the October meeting to solicit feedback from residents and make a presentation. Gray requested that Central Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association also participate to reduce the number of public meetings needed. October will be the only opportunity for input on the library design.

Polytechnic High School's cheer squad visited the membership to update the association on its activities and progress toward its goal of raising money to attend the Macy's Day Parade on Thanksgiving Day. Only eight members will go to New York City because of funding. Additional donations are needed for airfare.

One-half of the evening's 50/50 pot was donated to the three area schools.

October

East Side Library Will Be First Child-Focused Library in Fort Worth

At a joint meeting of all East Fort Worth neighborhood associations in October, Fort Worth Library Director Gleniece Robinson and an array of her system staff members explained the vision for a new library to be constructed on East Lancaster Avenue by 2019.



Robinson explained that the new library supported and promoted by West Meadowbrook and community leaders Don Boren and Wanda Conlin, was able to secure an additional \$2.2 million in funding by delaying construction until now. The library was originally budgeted at \$3.2 million. Additional monies were made available through the gas lease program and general capital fund.

"I'm grateful to you for being patient so that we could ensure we have adequate funding for this special library," she said. She lauded support from Boren and Conlin, who attended or sent representatives to 23 public meetings on the 2016 bond, and the community that ensured the

library would be part of the bond package. Robinson also thanked Boren and Conlin for a \$10,000 donation to the public art project for the library.

The director said the new library will be the first in the city exclusively focused on children. "We will have 8,000 square feet to serve the children in this area," she said. Data collected by the library indicates potential library patrons live within a 9-minute driving time. Optimum driving time for most library users is 12 minutes.

"Fort Worth has the lowest literacy rate in the county, state and nation at three out of 10 students reading at grade level," Robinson said. "We are already collaborating with the Meadowbrook Methodist Church and the Fort Worth ISD on programs we can offer that will help children read at grade level. Our goal is school readiness for all students."

She said the library system is reaching out to area residents before beginning the design phase to try to fine tune the building's programs and construction. "We have made the mistake of seeking input after designing a prototype. We're trying a different approach with this library," Robinson said.

Robinson sought input from the audience on what the library should be to the neighborhood. Many encouraged Robinson to serve more grade levels than pre-k through middle school. Books serving the target audience should be above the users' grade level to encourage progress.

Research materials and other resources will be available online to children for school projects. Adults may have books delivered to the new library for pick-up, but only children and their parents or guardians will be allowed in the library routinely.

Many in the audience requested preliminary signage at the vacant lot on Lancaster to promote the library's arrival. "Signs are in the works," Robinson told the audience. Also, a public nomination process will be established to formally name the library and a maker space to be built in cooperation with a corporate sponsor.

Robinson added: "We will be directing all of our energies toward helping East Fort Worth children succeed."



West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association President Tonya Ferguson announced that a District 8 Task Force meeting will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 27, where the library and a future bond election will be discussed. She encouraged all residents to attend. A light supper will be served.

Ferguson also announced that a slate of officers for 2017 has been developed. A vote on the slate is scheduled for the November membership meeting.

Advisory council board position nominees for 2017 are:

Tonya Ferguson, president

Jo Vitek, vice president, programs

Tom Cook, social chair

Cliff Jensen, treasurer

Tom Cassady, secretary

Betty Briggs, membership

Carol Peters, communications

Mike Phipps, city affairs

Edie Hudson, neighborhood affairs

Tom Hamilton, neighborhood beautification

Lauryl Blossom, John Young, at large members

November

Thanksgiving dinner/no program