

WMNA News Archive 2017-2019

Journey Home Clean Slate Offers Homeless Chance to Hold Jobs

Kirsten Ham, coordinator of the Clean Slate program at Presbyterian Night Shelter, said she is offering homeless clients an opportunity to earn money and ultimately work their way off the street. Ham spoke to the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association in January.



Ham said the PNS asks case managers to screen shelter residents who would be eligible to work jobs with the city removing litter, serving as janitors, or working in a community kitchen. "We have six employees and are looking now for more permanent jobs for these individuals," she said.

The PNS has freed one of two kitchens on site for rent and is looking for more opportunities to expand.

"We are picking up 15 tons of litter working alongside city employees on a gondola," Ham said. Clients are paid \$8 per hour. "The city saves \$40,000 annually and it's a new opportunity to partner with us to end homelessness."

Twenty clients work at the Cutting Edge haunted house facility as parking attendants.

Screening includes tests for drug use, background checks and interviews for jobs. Many have faced obstacles in their lives and have criminal records. "If they show us they want to change and get off the street, we give them an opportunity to work," Ham said.

Councilwoman Gyna Givens, District 5, stood in for District 8 Kelley Allen Gray in January. She said she had requested an estimate from the city staff of what it would take to end homelessness, panhandling and street crime. She expected to hear from them before the next board meeting.

February

FYPD Answers Neighborhood Call for Assistance with New Enforcement Program

At the February meeting, Capt. Michael Shedd, Eastern Division, said the Fort Worth Police Department was initiating a program to manage homelessness, illegal camping, and vagrancy along the Lancaster Avenue and in the area.



"We will employ a blend of empathy and enforcement," he said. "It's not illegal to be homeless, but some behaviors associated with homelessness are illegal."

A new Neighborhood Patrol Officer Travis Ward will be dedicated to Lancaster Avenue businesses and a bike patrol will be circulating through the business district to help encourage homeless residents to use services available to them and to enforce criminal trespass laws.

On Wednesday, Feb.22, the FYPD visited 19 homeless camps and gave warnings to residents that they were criminal trespassing and would be expected to move in 48 hours. All campers were offered information about social services and shelters. FYPD is also working with code enforcement to clean up debris and biohazards left behind in camps.

West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association board member Tom Hamilton was instrumental in bringing the illegal camping and litter problem to the attention of the city and police department. He documented the extent of illegal camping, the existence of criminals in the camps, the dangerous biohazards left behind and the trash that resulted. His presentation at the city council in February caught the attention of the media and the city.

"You as a neighborhood have to consider what you will tolerate from campers," Shedd said. "This initiative isn't a long-term solution."



The City Council and the Task Force for Ending Homelessness will hold a meeting on March 30 at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Fort Worth to discuss their conclusions about ending homelessness. Don Boren, Kwik Kopy owner and local activist, chairs the task force.

March

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April

League of Women Voters Provides Non-Partisan Help to Citizens

Jeane Grisham, a West Meadowbrook resident and League of Women Voters member, spoke at the March meeting of the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association on the importance of casting educated ballots.

The League of Women Voters was formed in 1920 after the 19th amendment awarding women the right to vote was passed. "My grandmother was 32 before she was allowed to vote," Grisham said. "She always insisted that we register to vote as soon as possible and to vote in every election."

Grisham, who joined the League of Women Voters as a young woman, encouraged the audience to visit the League of Women Voters web site, vote11.org, to get candidate information on a personalized ballot. With city, school board, water board and county elections coming up in May, she said it was critical for voters to get to know the candidates.

"Local elections will affect your life more than state and national elections," she warned. "Constituents can call local elected officials to get help with an issue."

A government instructor at Tarrant County Community College, Grisham encourages her students to research what committees elected officials are serving on and how that service correlates with the campaign donations they receive. "Generally, there is a direct link," she added.

She educates students about the suffragists who endured arrests, workhouses, and force feeding during their campaign for the right to vote. "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott organized a women's movement that resulted in protests in front of the White House every day until the 19th amendment was passed," Grisham said.

She concluded by saying that criticism of voters being registered in more than one state is exaggerated because of the difficulty in transferring registration from one state to another. States require multiple sets of identification, including divorce decrees, to prove who you are who you say you are and that you are simply changing your address.

Capt. Michael Shedd also updated the community on the effort to eliminate illegal camps and vagrants from the area. He deemed a new bike patrol a great success and said it would soon expand from four to six officers. The patrol has made 41 arrests in five weeks. He also said that local police were inquiring at the Tarrant County District Attorney's office about securing approval to carry affidavits that allow them to invoke criminal trespassing on vagrants and loiterers, a procedure that is now handled in many cases by Mike Phipps as a proxy for absentee landowners. In addition, prostitution complaints have also been addressed with three arrests. Travis Ward, East Lancaster business corridor NPO, will be the link between businesses and law enforcement.

Shedd said once the homeless camps identified by citizens have been removed and relocated, he plans to meet with business owners on economic development to see what law enforcement can do to improve the profitability of East Lancaster businesses. Crime is down considerably from last year, except around robberies, which has experienced a slight uptick. Compared to last year, robberies have been cut in half.

Kelly Allen Gray, District 8 City Council, also congratulated residents for making enough noise to get the city's attention and create the momentum now in full swing on the Eastside. She encouraged members to attend two meetings – Tarrant County Homeless Coalitions' Report on Homelessness at 4:30 p.m. on March 23 in the City Council chambers and the joint City Council/Task Force on Ending Homelessness meeting at 6:30 p.m. on March 27 at the First Presbyterian Church, 1000 Penn Street. Both will unveil new initiatives for handling homelessness and develop housing for those in need.

April

City Council Candidates Forum Precedes May 6 Elections

Incumbent Kelly Allen Gray and challenger Kevin Johnson responded to questions in three key areas and answer member questions at an April meeting of the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association.

After introductory statements, the candidates responded to questions in three areas identified by the WMNA advisory board as important to the West Meadowbrook community – crime and housing, economic development, and homelessness. Both Gray and Johnson verified that they were both residents of the district.



Crime

With the recent uptick in violent crimes in the District 8 area, do you agree more needs to be done about crime?

Gray

Violence is on the increase everywhere in our city. No one is immune. Gang-related activity and domestic violence are both concerns. We are giving the police department the resources they need to do their job. Everyone should be aware of their surroundings and report what is happening to the police

Johnson

My advice is if you see it, stop it and call police. Don't be embarrassed or worried about what your neighbors think. Build a relationship with the police so that we can stop some of these crimes before they happen.

What plans do you have for economic development in the Meadowbrook area?

Johnson

We have economic development plans, but they haven't been pushed. Were you aware there is TIF money available from 2003 for Lancaster that hasn't been spent? East Berry also has money available. We must start with a cornerstone, build it up, and expand from there. The educational system must be strong. Poor ratings for schools contribute to low-level jobs which results in low pay for residents. Many residents have been displaced by development along Rosedale and Evans. We must be careful about long-term development.



Gray

I must correct the record. TIF money for Lancaster is not available to East Fort Worth. That money is dedicated to West Lancaster. When I was little, my mother and I rode the bus and shopped up and down East Lancaster. It has always been a home for small businesses as it is today. Vision East Lancaster has been working closely with businesses to try to work on improvements. Since 2012 when I was first elected, I have been working hard to shine a light on East Lancaster.

What can we do to eliminate the businesses that prey on the lower-income residents? Tote the note, pawn shops, title loans, etc.

Gray

We can't really get rid of them if they fit the zoning. Arlington has an ordinance forbidding payday loan operations. Regulations can confine them to certain practices. A big component is credit counseling. I've worked on a plan to require anyone who takes out a payday loan to teach them how to do a budget so that they don't come back. A cap on interest rates has been drafted in the Legislature. My suggestion is to talk to your state representative and senator to request they do something about it.

Johnson

My suggestion is don't support them. I've advocated for regulation against them. If you don't want a service, don't support it.

How can the city do a better job of promoting West Meadowbrook?

Johnson

I'm running to represent all of District 8, not just Meadowbrook. My question is why doesn't District 8 look like District 6? My house is okay, but the rest of the neighborhood is burning down. Entire district should be beautiful.

Gray

My job as City Council member is to show everyone the Eastside. We are seeing families from Fairmount moving here because of taxes. What happens in Meadowbrook is important to you, but Meadowbrook is part of a larger picture. Show your friends who live outside the area what the area is like. Most people are surprised.

Housing/homelessness

Gray

I oppose any expansion of the shelter area further into our community. I opposed the Union Gospel Mission expansion, but women and children do need to be together. With men living on one side of a shelter and women on the other, 13-year-old boys were being sent to live with grown men. We don't always know the whole story. These shelters serve a need. Things are happening that should happen these days. The Union Gospel Mission has begun to cooperate with the other shelters about security and cleanliness. We continue to work on transitional housing to help homeless residents find a permanent shelter.

Johnson

He left the forum before it was completed and did not respond to this question.

In closing, Gray encouraged all residents to vote. Early vote began April 24 and continues through May 2. The general election is May 6. Seats are open and competitive on City Council, the Fort Worth Board of Trustees, and the Tarrant Regional Water Board.

Capt. Michael Shedd updated the members on the investigation into the death of a 15-year-old boy at the intersection of Oakland and Lancaster following a gathering. He said they have a suspect in the case, but they have not completed their investigation. The altercation was a gang-related fight between two groups who are not located in East Fort Worth. Teens from two rival gangs were attending a party at a location on Oakland. The police are checking the permit for the building where a party was reportedly happening. Officers are also doing increased traffic stops and searches to turn up evidence

Shedd reported that the department had mapped the location of all known game rooms in the area and found correlating crime hot spots to each location. The division will focus on the areas around game rooms for alcohol

and tobacco stings to try to combat crime. "We're going to make it uncomfortable for them. We'll try to push them out of the city," he said.

May

Annual WMNA Picnic Honors FWPD Actions



West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association hosted its annual picnic on May 15 at Oakland Lake Park. At the potluck dinner for members and guests, Tonya Ferguson, president, presented Fort Worth Police Department's Captain Michael Shedd with a letter of appreciation for his efforts to spearhead the removal of illegal encampments and to focus the department's energies on improving Lancaster Avenue.



June

Concrete Crushing Plant Resistance, Crime Upswing Topics of June Meeting



Linda Fulmer, White Lake Hills, headlined the June meeting of West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association meeting. Fullmer is one of the key players in the resistance to the state application for an air quality permit for a concrete crushing plant on First Street.

Wallace Hall, owner of property near Gateway Park, is attempting for the second time in a year to site a concrete crushing plant on his property which is zoned for other purposes. He was turned down with prejudice by the Fort Worth City Council exactly one year ago today. His path blocked by the city, Hall is seeking statewide approval from the Texas Environmental Quality Commission prior to seeking rezoning.

Fulmer told the audience that a 30-day comment period on the proposed project began June 2 when Hall published an ad announcing his intentions. She warned that the TCEQ permit is a technical process and does not evaluate zoning or land use. "Keep your comments pertinent to the air quality issue," she said while encouraging members to file their thoughts with the TCEQ. Go to <http://www14.tceq.texas.gov/epic/eCommen...> Type in permit application number 146263 and add your comments.

Fulmer said: "This is an important issue for East Fort Worth and the viability of future recreational and economic development along East 1st Street and Randol Mill. We must not allow an undesirable concrete crusher to contaminate public perception of our beautiful new East 1st Street, the expanded amenities coming to Gateway Park East, enhancements to Trinity Trails, or the viability of our Eastside Blossoms programs."

Zoning at the site is multi-family, residential or commercial and has been designated as such since the 1985. A 2013 case in Houston sited a concrete crushing plant over the objections of the city because the zoning set a required distance from other properties after a project was approved. Fort



Worth's zoning is a different form known as Euclidean which places restrictions on how land is used.

State Rep. Nicole Collier has requested an informational meeting by the TCEQ in the coming week at Nolan High School. The City of Fort Worth has passed a resolution against the plant.

Fulmer said, "we can take some comfort from the knowledge that the TCEQ permit does not override city zoning."

Capt. Michael Shedd discussed progress on game rooms despite recent court decisions. The city is now seizing machines rather than mother boards and selling them to an outside vendor. "Machines are expensive, and this is a deterrent," he said. The city has also been cleared to enforce certain areas of the original ordinance under appeal. Tarrant County will also be allowed to regulate game rooms as part of recent legislative action. In game rooms covered by the court case, code compliance is enforcing rules on smaller game rooms.



Shedd has also been working with Haydn Cutler to establish a Public Improvement District that would cover all business in Lancaster Avenue. A tax on businesses would pay for security, landscaping and would give police a single point of contact for vagrancy problems. Security cameras have also been purchased by the city with 35 designated for Stop Six and 25 left unassigned for Shedd to place at his discretion. Capt. Allen Speed said he has informed the owner of TL Food Mart on Lancaster Avenue that the clientele frequenting his store and a vacant lot nearby will not be tolerated. Speed has an upcoming meeting to explain that the neighborhood has had enough

of the illegal activity going on at that location. Speed is also heading up a new flag football program on the Eastside to engage youth.

In other news, an architect has been chosen for the new children's library to be built on Lancaster Avenue. Also, a \$5 million charter school development is planned for the former Sagamore Hill Baptist Church site.

August

Code Compliance Procedures, Beat Changes Announced

Mariana Olivera, commercial code compliance officer, described the make-up of her department and how the public can coordinate with the group to report violations. Olivera spoke to the August membership meeting of the WMNA at Meadowbrook United Methodist Church.

Five commercial health officers and two code officers respond to complaints about zoning, property maintenance, health inspections, and game room violations. Commercial code works closely with other departments in the city to respond to complaints.

"Contact us about any violations you observe, even if you are not sure whether the business is in violation," Olivera said. "It's imperative that complainants have the date, time, location and details of the violation before we are contacted."

She encouraged all members to become Code Rangers to improve understanding of rules. Her contact information is a direct phone line: 817-995-0818.

Capt. Michael Shedd introduced the new East Division Lieutenant Steve Benjamin. Shedd also explained a realignment of new north division. East Division also has been adjusted with new boundaries: Beach to Rosedale, Rosedale to Vaughn, Vaughn to 287, 287 to Arlington.

Shedd said that officers often crisscross the division responding to calls. To make more efficient use of officers' time, Fort Worth Police Department created 16 beats with officers assigned to each area. "Each officer has a distinct geographic area for which he or she is responsible," Shedd said.

Game room enforcement continues to ramp up. Warnings to 70 game room operators about compliance were completed by Aug.4. On Aug.24, a team of fire department, code compliance, and police began enforcing rules regarding tax stamps and comptroller permits. The vice department is working with the courts to confiscate machines.

Twenty-five surveillance cameras have been assigned to the East Division. They will be deployed on Lancaster and other locations. The Fort Worth Library has assigned an architect to the new library on Lancaster Avenue that was approved in the last bond election. Construction will be complete by 2019.

September

Principals Look Forward to 2018 and New Roles

The September meeting of the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association is always a chance for members to hear from leaders of schools in our area. Meadowbrook Elementary, Meadowbrook Middle School, and Eastern Hills High School principals updated the membership on students' progress.

Meadowbrook Elementary Principal Terry McGuire explained the diverse nature of her population –



91 percent free lunch, 24 percent in and out of school, three classes of international students from Vietnam, Venezuela, Somalia, among other nations, and a high percentage of special needs students. McGuire established a book buddy's initiative in second and third grade to help with fluency. She encourages neighbors to visit the school where she conducts history courses regularly and welcomes volunteer readers.

Meadowbrook Middle School Principal Marron McWilliams is new to the school this year. His goal is to re-create the school's mission, vision, and values statements and to cultivate in each student the acknowledgement that they can accomplish goals. He also hopes to empower students to take part in the community. Pride, Honor, Scholarship, Respect and Dedication will be prominently displayed throughout the school campus. He seeks involvement from parents to ensure success. MMS will be a feeder school for the new STEM VA school under construction near downtown Fort Worth.

Katrina Smith, principal, Eastern Hills High School, returned to the high school environment after leading Meadowbrook Middle School. Smith says she will treat every student as her own, but she won't be a "friend." "Excellence is easy if you work at it," she said. She plans to hold teachers accountable for results and to build bridges with parents. "I'm telling them to be nosy," she said. EHHS narrowly missed meeting state standards last year. She replaced 20 teachers this year, hiring up to the day school started. She seeks more stability and consistency in staffing and instruction.

December

Christmas Carols

Daniela Lucera, who is serving in the military, returned home to Fort Worth early from South Carolina. She accompanied the caroling group to her family's home on Meadowbrook Avenue and



delighted her family with a surprise arrival. The volunteer singers organized on social media met in Tandy Park and walked to the Lucera's house. On the pretense of singing a few carols, the group serenaded the Lucera home with Daniela hiding in the crowd. She emerged on Santa's arm after a few carols. Thanks to Mike Phipps for organizing the impromptu caroling group and Cheryl Mills for hot chocolate and cookies afterward.



2018

January

East Division Crime Dips in 2017, Rates Up Citywide

Commander Michael Shedd, filling in for the scheduled January speaker, spoke to West Meadowbrook residents about crime rates in the area at the membership meeting. A spike in violent crime citywide at the end of the year prompted Fort Worth Police Department personnel to increase visibility and patrols.

"We call it Blue Christmas. The result was a reduction in both property and violent crimes in East Division," Shedd said. "Citywide, rates were up slightly. East Division outperformed other divisions." Shedd said the city has 109



surveillance cameras in place with emergency cameras installed on West Seventh. FWPD and Oncor are in negotiations to install additional cameras on utility poles after a dispute arose over the status of a 1983 contract. We are close to resolving this issue and will resume installing cameras soon," he said at a weekly violent crime meeting in January. Shedd said an e-commerce crime occurred in East Division when an online sale went wrong. A seller lost a PlayStation and games to thieves at a designated meeting place.

"The city has designated areas for sales through various online marketplaces," he said. "Exchanging goods and money at these safe areas will prevent these types of outcomes."

Also, an armed robbery at a local game room resulted in gunshots and an injury. "This game room was not on my radar. We hope that the violence does not escalate in other game rooms."

Three game room robberies in recent weeks make closing illegal gambling locations down a priority with the vice department. Two hundred machines have already been removed, but the city has 900 machines identified.

Kelly Allen Gray, District 8 City Council Representative, in a State of the District speech telecast on Facebook Live offered welcome news on improvements to come and resolutions to persistent issues in the district.

The February West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association meeting was held on the heels of the first city library design briefing on the new Children's Library planned for Lancaster Avenue. The library, approved in the 2014 bond election, will be the only children's library in the North Texas area and will feature \$310,000 in public art. The public meeting attracted a large audience enthused by the creative design options provided by designers. The library should be up and running by 2020.

"I was gratified to see so many people in the library briefing audience from the neighborhood," Gray said. "An advisory committee included Tonya Ferguson, president, WMNA, and Greg Hughes, WMNA board member, will oversee the installation of public art. Anything we want to occupy open space near the library must be planned along with the library structure."

She also reminded the WMNA audience that new LED streetlights will be coming to parts of District 8, District 5 and District 4 which will improve visibility and efficiency. The upgrade includes 3,450 lights in Phase 1. "For board member Mike Phipps who has sought street improvements on Carl Road that were not included in an upcoming bond package, Gray said she had arranged for Carl Road to be addressed through the general maintenance fund by 2020, two years ahead of any bonds. A bond election is scheduled for March 6 that includes street improvements to District 8.

"And for everyone who has worked so hard on the continuing issue of T&L Food Mart," Gray said, referring to a problematic property that has been a blight on Lancaster Avenue." The city has filed a Chapter 125 nuisance abatement lawsuit against the corner market."

Freeway light has been a subject of conversation in multiple platforms. City of Fort Worth is taking lead on design and construction documents, but Texas Department of Transportation is responsible for freeway lighting. Highways 820, I30 and 121 will be included in the request.



Union Pacific RR crossing at Miller and Ayers has been a noise issue. As of April 2018, entire East Lancaster corridor will be quiet zones. UP must complete media construction at Handley, then UP will switch to quiet zones. Gray sought members help protecting local control of property taxes. She noted that the city has reduced property rates from 83.54 cents in 2016 to 80.5 cents since 2018. What about tax bill? "Property taxes did not increase; property values went up. The housing boom in Fort Worth is reflected in your property tax bill," Gray said. Highest portion of property tax bill is education. School taxes remain over \$1 no matter what the rest of the tax bill is. She said the Texas Legislature has not fully funded education, creating a need for investment at the city level. "Revenue caps for city taxes are a real concern. IF our tax bill is capped, the city loses services such as code, fire, police, staff, the people who provide needed services," she said. "Engage your reps and senators on this subject if you care about local control and continued services.

Officer Travis Wade has been working with UP about tent camp at Interstate 35 and began in early February cleaning out illegal settlements. She recommended that all members discourage churches from giving tents to the homeless. "The illegal camping problem is everywhere, not just east Fort Worth," she said. Gray responded to a question about public art funding. She emphasized that a percentage of funds spent on major street and water projects to fund public art projects. Rather than have several small art projects scattered throughout district, the money dedicated to East Fort Worth art will be combined to fund art at the library. "No money was taken from other projects to support public art," she said. Whiskey Ranch recently opened in the former Glen Gardens country Club. The highly contested commercial development has redeveloped the property as an event space, distillery, and private golf course. The neighborhood has accepted the development despite widespread opposition.

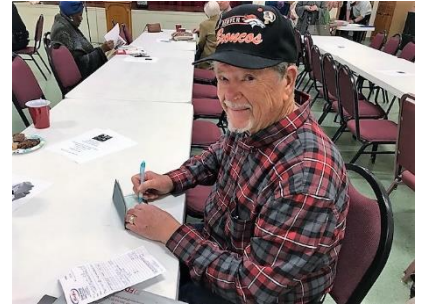


Concrete crushing plant activity as reopened with a request from the owner to establish a temporary concrete crushing operation to remove debris already on the property. An ordinance to allow such temporary activity, which could take at least two years, is in progress. Gray was unaware of the ordinance and did not consider it a good idea.

Finally, Commander Michael Shedd said the city has awarded 77 seized gaming machines. Prosecutor held up sale for 30 days before sale to third-party vendor. Machines will be sold

out of state. The police seized 99 more in raids, but the department has nowhere to store them. "We would like to move faster and with experience we believe we will," he said.

More density is needed in Fort Worth, according to city planners. Neighborhoods that are historically single family will remain single family. "It's a balancing act to create density while maintaining neighborhoods," she said. In response to questions about impact of shelter district on development, Gray said, "the interesting thing in speaking to developers is they are not worried about shelters. They are more concerned about transportation to downtown."



February

Gray offers outlook in 2019

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March

Eastside Family Library Will Be "Fantastic"



At the March 2018 West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association meeting, Fort Worth Library Director Many Shorr explained her vision for the new Lancaster Avenue family library and the expansion of the existing library system.

Shorr, who was most recently director of the District of Columbia library system, expressed her belief that the library now in the design and planning stage would be "fantastic" and a boost to development along Lancaster Avenue. "With the more than \$300,000 in public art funds available to us, we will be able to create a library that is an attraction, not the usual stand-alone utilitarian facility. People like living and working near a property that attracts positive attention," she said.

The library will be approximately 8,000 square feet and will have an attached, enclosed garden. With the garden, library and parking in place, the lot still has an extensive amount of green space. "I'm looking for ideas about how to use this additional green space. I've been talking to the city about a Phase 2 that would involve this area," she added.



On April 2, a public meeting at Shamblee Library will unveil the outlines of the new structure and garden for public comment. She encouraged all in attendance to be there to preview the design and to offer suggestions on how to improve the plan. "I refer to this still unnamed library as a family library, not a children's library, because it is designed to engage the entire family. It will be the only library of its kind in North Texas. Even though the library is focused on children, there will be a meeting room and book exchange area for residents to use," Shorr said. Shorr added that east Fort Worth will have four libraries, East Regional, Shamblee, The Eastside Learning Center, and the new family library within driving distance.

"This is an embarrassment of riches, frankly. There are areas of Fort Worth that have no libraries at all," she said. Her goal is to develop a way to scale libraries from small to large so that they can be integrated into new developments, such as Walsh Ranch in far west Fort Worth. "Libraries located in or near shopping centers are busy because it's easier for families to stop in while doing errands," she said.

Shorr's entire presentation is available on Facebook on the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association page. WMNA is now livestreaming meetings for those who cannot attend to keep up with events.

April

East Lancaster PID, Bond Election and Animal Control Ordinance Discussed in April



Fort Worth Police Department Commander Michael Shedd reported on the status of a Public Improvement District canvassing effort along East Lancaster on April 11, stating that business owners were generally receptive, and commitments increased by more than \$1 million in a single day. To receive a PID, the project must reach \$38.5 million in value.

"Businesses like the idea of having security accessible and paying into a pool of money to support a security force," Shedd said. The PID would encompass properties along East Lancaster between Riverside Drive and Loop 820, an area of approximately five miles. A coalition of East Lancaster property and business owners is supporting the formation of a PID to help support businesses.



The FWPD supports the PID because putting all properties along East Lancaster under the authority of one security umbrella would assist the department's efforts to remove homeless people or vagrants from the corridor. Removing these individuals from East Lancaster with one criminal trespass warning would help businesses thrive and grow by increasing customer traffic.

All property owners within the PID would pay an annual "special" assessment to be billed and collected along with regular Ad Valorem taxes by the Tarrant County Tax Office. The PID assessment rate is to be \$.295 per \$100 of assessed value. The PID would raise approximately \$225,000 annually. Funds collected are to be held and overseen by the City of Fort Worth, but the PID would administer them.

A PID is formed by submitting a petition signed by property owners in the proposed district. The petition must be signed by owners that constitute:

More than 50% of the taxable real Property Values in the proposed PID district AND either of the following:

More than 50% of the Area of all taxable properties in the PID district. Currently the PID has secured \$21 million in value and needs to reach \$38. The PID application is scheduled to be presented June 1 for approval by City Council in September 2018. The first assessment would show up on property owner's tax statement in October 2019. The PID would have funding starting in January 2020.



Roger Venable from the City of Fort Worth spoke on the upcoming \$399.5 million bond election on May 5, a proposal that includes six propositions for improvements to streets and intersections, parks and recreation, public library, fire safety, animal control and shelter, and a police facility. Venable brought bond election educational materials and outlines to circulate and reminded the audience that the city sponsored public meetings were being conducted throughout April on the bond proposals. Questions from the audience centered on a \$7.7 million club house to be constructed on Rockwood Golf Course that is designed to consolidate maintenance and support expanded traffic

at the municipal course.

"Large numbers of people in the city cannot afford to play golf at private courses. The building we're proposing would also be a cart barn and maintenance facility, as well as a clubhouse," he said. Currently the carts and maintenance equipment are housed away from the clubhouse. Renovating the clubhouse is the final investment in the golf course which was renovated with previous bond money. Numbers of rounds played has increased since the course investment and the city hopes to capitalize on higher fees and traffic, Venable said.

Chris Lirette, Fort Worth Code Compliance Supervisor, explained a proposed ordinance that would stiffen leash and animal waste disposal rules, bringing the city's animal control ordinances in line with state regulations. The ordinance has been under discussion for some time and will be voted on by council in early May.

"Animal licenses will be replaced by microchipping. Microchipping is an inexpensive way to help us quickly return animals to their owners. It is currently a part of every shelter's admissions process," he said. "We also plan to tighten our leash law so that owners are required to have animals on a restraint at all times. Two areas, Trinity Trails and Chisholm Trails, will allow animals off lease if they are under voice command.

Dangerous animal designations will also be handled by animal control rather than through the municipal courts, a change that brings Fort Worth in line with the state rules. The proposed ordinance would allow animal control to deem animals dangerous that are threatening or aggressive.

Waste will also be required to be removed by pet owners who are exercising their animals. Currently, Fort Worth does not have a poop scoop rule. Enforcement, the speaker said, is an issue and is still under discussion.

Members asked numerous questions about what the definition of a dangerous dog would be and how animal control will determine whether to remove a dog from a household. Lirette said animal control employees would undergo extensive training to understand how to apply the ordinance and how to decide when it's time to seize an animal.

“Generally, an animal breaking the skin or threatening people would be the criteria,” he said. Voice commands were also explored. Questions centered on how animal control would know if an animal responded to voice commands or not.

May

Annual picnic (no program)

June

Public Improvement District Proponents Promote Project

Robert Sturns, City of Fort Worth, and Dale Uberman, Haydn Cutler, explained the styles and uses of PIDs and progress toward an East Lancaster PID at the June meeting.



Sturns explained the requirements to establish PIDs and their uses. Haydn Cutler is leading the effort to establish an operational PID for East Lancaster, East Lancaster 1, that would support additional security and cameras for the area.

PIDs are supervised by the City Finance Department. The City of Fort Worth initiates the PID, collects the taxes on business owners. Proceeds from taxes are managed by an outside company and a PID board determine how the money collected is spent.

The City offers three types of PIDs – Operational, Commercial and Tourism. East Fort Worth is seeking an operational PID, the most common structure. Money collected by the PID can pay for an array of services, including landscaping, marketing, tourism, security, and other similar services.

PIDs may be initiated by the City Council or through petition. East Lancaster is seeking enough applicants by petition to reach 50 percent of appraised value and 50 percent of business owners along a five-mile stretch of Lancaster Avenue.

Uberman, who has been spearheading the drive to sign up business owners, says the goal of \$38 million is within reach but the remaining business owners have said no repeatedly.

“We are within 70 to 80 percent of our goal, but the holdouts are either national firms that have not responded to our requests or long-term business owners who only see the tax as an additional cost,” he said. Business owners who are attempting to sell property consider the PID a barrier since it adds costs.

Uberman asked for members help contacting holdout companies. He agreed to email a list of participating properties and non-participating properties to West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association to give residents a template.



“If the PID fails this year, it will be extremely difficult to initiate the process again,” Uberman said. “Property owners will be less likely to sign up if they think it does not have momentum.”

By establishing a PID, East Lancaster businesses would benefit from a single security firm operating in their area. The \$220,000 collected would pay for a car, three security guards and cameras. The Fort Worth Police Department is supporting the effort because it would centralize contacts for trespassing or panhandling to one security firm.

August

Conditional use permitting would give Fort Worth more control over property

In August, Jocelyn Murphy, planning manager, explained the 10-year evolution of a proposed conditional use permit that would give the city “more control over businesses that violate rules.”

Currently the city misuses the Planned Development or PD on small properties in need of waivers. The PD is permanent, unlike the proposed conditional use permit. Fort Worth has 1,200 PDs. The city has no ability to revoke base districts for poor behavior, inaction or revert to original zoning. If a PD is granted and the property becomes a detriment, the PD currently cannot be changed or undone and must go through Code or Police.

“PDs were not intended to act as conditional use permits. Now, all citizens can do is call on Code or the police to report bad behavior. We just nibble at them instead of having the ability to pull the waiver,” she said. “Other cities use controlled use permits, and they are highly effective.

Some examples of where the conditional use permit might be used were Panther Island while the bypass is under construction, for a specific site or a limited amount of time, junkyards, bars, auto uses, outside storage, all of which are not allowed by right but typically request a PD.

Adding the conditional use permit to the city’s toolbox would give the city three types of regulation tools: planned development, special exception, and the conditional use. The conditional use permit would require only one meeting before the zoning commission before city council votes following two public hearings for input. Special exception land uses would be permitted under the conditional use permit. Examples of these are day care centers, community centers, bed and breakfasts or inns, drive-in restaurants, junkyards, and car washes.

“The city would benefit greatly from a permit that allows the city to fine or pull a permit if the business is in violation or a nuisance,” she said. “Many times, a permit is approved for one type of business and over time the property changes its purpose or becomes a problem. A conditional use permit would allow the city to force that business to either improve or leave.” The city plans to begin outreach on the proposed permit in May through September to neighborhood associations and other parties. The planning group will present to Fort Worth City Council in work session, followed by a Zoning Commission hearing. Finally, City Council will hold a hearing and vote.

The permit will have several sections – applicability and intention, approval process, amendments, transfer of permits, renewals, revocation, and violations. Conditional use permits would overlay existing zoning.

Murphy said the permit proposal has been erroneously conflated with the concrete crushing plant seeking rezoning of property near 1st Street. At this time, Murphy said, nothing is in the works from the plant owners to use the special permitting process to restart negotiations.

September

Board Trustee Tobi Jackson Touts Steady Progress At FWISD

Tobi Jackson, Fort Worth Independent School District Board Trustee, spoke to the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association in September on the improvements in school performance and the opening of a new science and visual performing arts high school in near East Fort Worth.

Jackson quickly checked off key improvements in district accountability:

Since 2014, cut the number of improvements required schools by half and increased academic achievement across the board.

In the latest evaluations, 42 percent of FWISD schools received letter grades of A or B and 75 percent of FWISD campuses earned a letter grade of A, B or C. Overall, the district received a C.

Five struggling campuses have been reorganized as Leadership Academies – Mitchell Boulevard Elementary, John T. White Elementary, Como Elementary, Logan Elementary and Forest Oak Middle. All had been rated improvement required.

FWISD saw growth at the highest achieving campuses with 10 schools rated A. District saw an increase of 8 percentage points in students passing third grade reading. Merit scholarships and grant offers grew to a record \$102 million in 2018.

“Four FWISD Schools Westcliff, Bonnie Brae, World Languages Institute and the Young Men’s Leadership Academy were among 15 winners nationwide of the 2018 America’s Best Urban Schools Awards,” she said.

Jackson said improved security measures helped minimize an incident at Polytechnic High School involving thieves who entered the building with a firearm. Because of continuous drills and improved security, the school was quickly locked down and students removed. FWISD and the Fort Worth Police Department led a committee to develop standard operating procedures to follow when a violent threat is received. The committee also developed an after-hours response team to address any school-related violent threat occurring in the evening or on weekends.

The record \$750 million bond package approved by voters in November includes numerous improvements for the district, including modern, collaborative work environments at every high school, upgrades to school athletics, fine arts and libraries, modernized air conditioning and plumbing, and an additional \$23 million annually for life cycle, maintenance, and other items with no increase in tax rate.

A push to fill pre-K seats across the district led to the registration of 5,000 four-year-olds for the upcoming school year. FWISD introduced online registration in time for the Pre-K roundup in April, allowing parents to register their children from a mobile phone or tablet.

“The mayor has spoken frequently about the FWISD goal of having all third graders reading on grade level by 2025. The 100x25 program engages parents, grandparents and caregivers, as well as volunteers from the city’s business sector, higher education, nonprofits and the faith-based community,” Jackson said. “Tom Cook of WMNA leads the West Meadowbrook school volunteer outreach.”

East Fort Worth Business Association loaded up the bookshelves at elementary school libraries in this area. New books, purchased with a \$5,400 donation from the association, were selected based on diversity and cultural

relevance. 100x25 is part of the Read Fort Worth Initiative created by Price, BNSF Executive Chairman Matt Rose and FWISD Superintendent Kent Scribner.

Finally, Jackson described the I.M. Terrell Academy for Science Technology Engineering Math and Visual and Performing Arts that opened this fall. The high school, located in near east Fort Worth on the outskirts of downtown, is the “crown jewel” of the 2013 Capital Improvement Program and one of the last projects completed. In 20 months, the historic city landmark has been transformed from an elementary school/office complex and returned to its roots as a secondary high school. Currently 150 students taught by handpicked staff are at the academy studying a STEM curriculum, as well as intensive learning of dance, music, theater, and visual arts.

“If anyone would like to tour the school, please let me or Kelly Allen Gray, District 8 city council representative, know,” she said. “It’s a vibrant, amazing addition to our system.”

October

Still Littering. Seriously?

Brandi Kelp, environmental planner for the City of Fort Worth, introduced an analysis of the litter problem in Fort Worth and suggested ways the city will be addressing the issue at the October meeting of the West Meadowbrook Neighborhood Association. Kelp said the city is raising awareness of what programs are available to combat litter to try to eliminate the problem. The focus is on:

- *Prevention

- *Awareness

- *Volunteerism

Why is litter a problem? “We do know the answer to this question,” Kelp said.

Littering is unsightly, lowers property values, creates negative impressions of neighborhoods, and affects quality of life.

“We have found some very scary things in areas where children may be playing,” she said. “Litter also backs up storm drains causing flooding in our streets. Drains are not trash cans and a lot of people use them that way.”

Litter also affects streams and creeks. “Litter pollutes our waterways. We’ve got some amazing wildlife in Fort Worth, turtles, herons and fish, but our waterways are too polluted to allow catches from those streams,” she said.

Litter causes more litter. When an area has few pieces of litter, more litter accrues. When an area is clean, people assume that the area is taken care of and don’t add litter, she said.

“Litter multiplies the problem,” she said.

Illegal dumping is litter on steroids “The bigger the litter the bigger the problem. We have found sites with furniture, mattresses, and tires. Those tires, when it rains, after it dries up, they become a breeding ground for mosquitoes, so it’s a health risk,” Kelp said. Hazardous materials associated with these items are also a problem.

Environmental crimes unit’s sole job is to investigate dump sites. “They do a pretty good job. They usually get 60 percent of sites clean up and paid for by perpetrators,” Kelp said.

Litter costs over \$8 million annually in Fort Worth right now. "If we have to keep paying for more abatement and more crews to cleanup, if litter continuities to grow, the money it costs to clean it up will continue to grow, at taxpayers' expense," she said.

In a litter survey conducted by the city, 70 percent of participants said they observed litter on a regular basis and 80 percent said they felt the city should be doing something about it. Over half of them admitted to littering in the past month. "We need everyone to be part of the solution," she said.

Proposed solutions will be included in the environmental master plan. There will be an entire chapter on litter. Kelp encouraged public comment on the plan which will be available online.

Kelp is the city coordinator for the Keep Fort Worth Beautiful board and a 15-member external board that she encouraged members to join.

Community appearance events look across the city look for trends in litter. One area of improvement is in Lake Como, where there has been a lot of community involvement in reducing litter and beautification.

The city also inventories trash and recycling bins to learn where they need more bins or managing the system better.

If you find an illegal dump site, call the number on the literature and the city will investigate. "The key is to call 911 if you see illegal dumping in progress. Get a license plate and report the crime. If we catch them in the act, that is the best outcome," she said. "We need the help of citizens." Clean slate is a homeless employment program that helps cleans up areas. Staffers earn a wage, get basic care, and it's been successful. One staffer has transitioned out of homelessness.

The city also has a mowing program. She encouraged citizens to call if they see crews not picking up litter before they mow. "Once the lawn mower hits that cut, it goes from one piece of litter to a hundred. It's a lot of harder to pick up after being hit."

Drop-off stations around town will take electronics, hazardous waste, and tires. Goodwill will take furniture for donation. Brush and clippings are accepted. "If it's available, free mulch at drop off stations," she said.

Cleanups like the Litter Stomp that have a huge impact. The spring Cowtown Cleanup collected 142,000 pounds of litter in one morning with 65,000 volunteers.

Associations could sign a contract to adopt an area and clean it up. It helps residents know an area is being cared for and increases awareness.

"The city is about to launch a cigarette butt program. If you have ever picked up litter, you know how difficult it is to pick up cigarette butts," she said. The city will be adding cigarette butt receptacles around the downtown area to combat this problem. Kelp pointed out that it is against the law to put items in a dumpster that does not belong to you. The person who maintains the dumpster pays for extra pickups. "A lot of people do not know that it is illegal to put litter in a dumpster without permission of the owner," she said.

The city also will be training health inspector to look for litter in parking lots to bring businesses into the anti-litter program. She also encouraged participation in the "Ten on Tuesday" program with the Tarrant County Water District to combat litter on regional basis.

City of Fort Worth will be bringing businesses in to discuss how to combat litter on campuses and property. Street sweepers and vehicles with anti-litter messages will be in the annual Parade of Lights.

What can you do?

- Stop it. Don't litter.
- Report it when you find it.
- When you find it, pick it up
- Set out garbage correctly. Keep your lid on the bin.

- Use drop-off stations.
- Download app to check dates for recycling and garbage pickups.
- Business owners make sure dumpster is screened from public view.
- Report litterers. Go to Don't Mess With Texas. Get license plates, report them, and they will be contacted.

"Social pressure is one of the best weapons we have to combat litter," she said. "All it takes is all of us acting together."