

Whispering Lakes Ranch Newsletter

A Quarterly Update from the Maintenance Association Board of Directors

Volume 2, Number 4

October 2012

NOTICE OF QUARTERLY MEETING

Monday, October 22, 2012

We invite you to join us at the WLR Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting.

Time: 7:00PM CDT

Where: HCMS large conference room
17049 El Camino Real, Houston

The final agenda will be posted at wlrhome.com at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

GOOD WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our primary focus at the October meeting will be to consider the 2013 Budget and to present our research results and recommendations for upgrading our Gated Community Access at the front of the neighborhood.

We envision a staged process in which we will initially construct a new guard shack and relocate the existing keyboard panel there. The existing slow gates would be replaced with high speed slide gates. The new gates will allow us to design two entry points in the current solo entrance, each with its own lane. We will install one gate for homeowners and one gate for non-homeowners.

The homeowner gate will be triggered by an AVI (Automatic Vehicle Identification) system comprised of either a toll tag or an eGo Plus Windshield sticker that will be supplied. The alternate trigger for homeowners will be a card reader at the gate.

Non-homeowners will be required to call the homeowner from the keyboard panel or can "talk" live to a 24 hour monitored camera with two way communication for entry. If entry is not approved the design will allow for a turn left to exit the front entrance prior to the gates.

The second stage of the project will be to implement a CCTV Surveillance System. The new guard shack will allow us to implement a live guard if needed in the future and will create a facility to house all electronics and backup power source associated with the new surveillance system and high speed gates. We will be providing more specific information at the upcoming meeting.

We are planning to pay for the new Gated Community Access / Surveillance System with a one-time assessment (\$400 - \$500) which will be due the first few months of 2013. We will present the plan at the October Meeting and we will vote on the plan at the January Meeting. This one-time assessment requires approval by more than 50% of the homeowners, so we will provide proxies prior to the January meeting to facilitate the vote.

We will also include on the proxy the ability to approve minor changes to the Deed Restrictions that we believe need to be made to bring our document up to date.

We appreciate your support regarding these important projects and look forward to seeing you at the next meeting!

HOA DUES FOR 2013

At our July quarterly meeting, the Board had a lengthy discussion on projected future costs to maintain our common properties. We reached a decision to increase dues by 12%. This means your annual dues for 2013 will be \$1456.

RESERVE STUDY

We'd like to thank a group of neighbors who answered the call to review last year's full reserve study, commissioned to project the major costs WLR is likely to incur over the next 30 years as major repairs or replacements to components of our infrastructure become necessary. That group was:

Jamie Adams
James Brockway
Brad Bonnacaze
Don Connolley
Kai Dominik
Bill Keogh
Kenny Thaxton

The group met in July at the home of Pete Bauer and thoroughly reviewed the study. On balance the group agreed that it was a reasonable estimate of the future costs that would have to come out of our reserve funds.

We will have the reserve study periodically updated to ensure we maintain appropriate funds in our reserve account. Thank you neighbors!

WLR STREETS TO REMAIN PRIVATE

The streets within WLR are privately owned by the Maintenance Association of WLR – "the HOA" – of which all of us WLR homeowners are members. Over the past year or so, a number of homeowners have expressed interest in considering whether or not turning the streets over to city might be in the

How to get help...

For an emergency: 911

Routine LC Police: 281-332-2566

For community maintenance problems:

Call HCMS : 832-864-1200

Or

Email: contact@wlrhome.com

long term interest of WLR. Since well over half of the \$8 million in reserves that we are projected to need over the next 30 years would be earmarked for street repairs, we did indeed investigate.

Three of our Board members (Pete Bauer, Roy Hunter, and Frank Prisco) had an informational meeting with League City officials on August 9, 2012 to learn more about the City's policies and viewpoints on the matter. The city officials who kindly took time to sit down and talk with us were:

David Benson, Chief of Staff
John Baumgartner, Assistant Mngr, Public Works
Tony Allender, Director of Planning & Development
Linc Wright, P.E., Director of Engineering

Here is a summary of what we learned:

- If our streets become public, WLR may not have gates or other barriers to free passage by any and all. There has been some question about this particular issue amongst homeowners, but the City folks were unequivocal that private groups or companies cannot control access to a public street.
- As part of the transfer process, the city would negotiate with the HOA for some portion of our reserve funds to compensate the city for assuming the maintenance of streets that are not new. In other words, the City would expect to collect the

reserve funds we ourselves are saving for future repairs so the City isn't stuck with a large out-of-pocket repair bill when they take over "pre-owned" streets. Mr. Baumgartner had inspected our streets prior to the meeting and described them as being in "fairly decent condition."

- The City would not guarantee the timeliness of permanent concrete patching of street damage, acknowledging that asphalt patching would likely be done as an interim repair.
- The City representatives also expressed concern that the wooden bridge on East Lake Landing might require expensive repairs in the future, so they would likely negotiate reserve funds for that, as well.
- The City would not assume responsibility for existing drainage issues and it is not assured that the City would accept a neighborhood with open storm ditches in the future. Also, they noted that the neighborhood streets simply aren't set up for retro-fitting a sewage system; they are too high. Even if possible, changing either our storm or sanitary sewer arrangement would be prohibitively expensive and the likelihood of that happening regardless of private or public ownership is remote.
- Sidewalks of four foot width are normally required along public streets. The current cost for sidewalk is about \$25/lineal foot. It is likely that the HOA would have to foot that expense prior to, or at, transfer to the city. The City definitely would not pay for them and the only "out" would be to negotiate a neighborhood exception to sidewalks, which is not guaranteed.
- We would have to correct any street signage that wasn't up to code. This would be a small matter because even as a private neighborhood, our traffic signs must comply with signage standards and be approved by the City.
- The city would not assume any issues regarding lake maintenance and/or upkeep. Only the rights of way for streets would be considered for transfer of ownership to the city. The pool, lakes, and drainage easements would remain common property.

- We are required to, and do, have an existing Private Street Agreement with the city. These agreements tend to be pretty standard, as it is understandable that the city and police department wouldn't want to keep track of and enforce a customized set of rules for each private neighborhood. However, we can either opt in, or opt out, of full traffic law enforcement within the community. At this time we are "opt out" meaning that police will not write routine traffic tickets. They will, of course, respond to real time calls.
- WLR has water service from League City, and in fact the Water Department has been very responsive when we have had water main breaks. The water service we now have and pay for in our monthly utility bills would not change.
- Our street lights are actually owned and maintained by Texas-New Mexico Power Company (TNMP). There would be no change in the operation or maintenance of street lights.
- The process to go public would involve a majority vote of all homeowners to petition the City based on a negotiated deal between the City and the HOA, and the passage of a city ordinance to enact the transfer.
- Once the rights of way are transferred to the City, there is no going back. The City would never entertain relinquishing public streets back to private ownership.

The upshot is that we have no expectation that it will be an economically advantageous move for WLR to turn our streets over to the City and make them public. The City is well aware of what it would be taking on and would expect significant sums of money from our reserves, while not guaranteeing any level of service above that we can have with private streets.

The Board is aware that going public would irrevocably change the character of WLR. While there may be some homeowners who might prefer that change, each and every one of us bought our homes in a private neighborhood with no expectation of our streets going public.

Lacking a compelling reason, the Board has no plans to further consider going public. Knowing that our streets will remain private, we are now able to proceed with plans to improve our entry gates and surveillance.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Pete Bauer, Social Committee

If you're new to the neighborhood, you can expect a visit from our Welcome Whisperers

The Social Committee has decided not to hold a pre-Halloween event this year. They're saving it up for a big bash closer to the winter holidays.

Keep your eyes and ears tuned in for more information!

Your Social Committee is:

Heather Monteleone (*Committee & Welcoming
Subcommittee Co-Chair*)

Lisa Heifner (*Committee Co-Chair*)

Cheryl "Dee" Stephens (*Welcoming
Subcommittee Co-Chair*)

Ginny Bergmann

Charlotte Burns

Molly Zolas, MD

DID YOU KNOW?

If you don't take a moment to read these newsletters or occasionally stop by our web site at www.wlrhome.com that you might not be aware of important issues that have a real impact on your home, neighborhood, and quality of life?

KEEP YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS UP TO DATE!

Your email address is a part of the information in your User Profile on the web site. Only one email address per account is supported in the software. If you change your primary email address, please log in and update the information in your user profile.

WEB SITE IS YOUR GO-TO PLACE FOR WLR NEWS

The WLR web site at:

<http://wlrhome.com>

To contact the HOA about community matters, please use the address:

contact@wlrhome.com

If you are having technical troubles with the web site or want to create an account, please contact:

admin@wlrhome.com

Maintenance Association of Whispering Lakes Ranch Board of Directors

Steve Glenn, President

Frank Prisco, Vice President

Peter Bauer, Secretary

Jeff Farmer, Treasurer

Roy Hunter, Director
