



The Nor'westener



Serving Concerned Readers in greater Clark Pines, Cottage Grove, Hidden Lake, Holly Park, Lazybrook, Oak Forest, Shady Acres, Timbergrove Court, Timbergrove Manor, Timbergrove Terrace and Woodcrest.

"To Inform"

Community News Since August, 2002

May 26, 2009

Online Issue

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Neighborhood Watch for Timbergrove West - April Crime Report

From the publicly available HPD Monthly Crime Reports for 2009 for TM-West (Sections 5 - 14). Timbergrove Manor along with the greater Shady Acres, Clark Pines, Lazybrook and Holly Park are in Patrol Beat 2A60. Source HPD monthly crime reports for 2A60 may be accessed at: <http://www.houstontx.gov/police/cs/beatpages/cs2a60.htm> Scroll down on that page to the calendars and select the month for which data is being sought.

4/06/09	Burglary Home	6400 Kury Ln.	5:30 p.m.*
4/16/09	Burglary Home	6200 Queenswood Ln.	1:00 p.m.*
4/22/09	Burglary Vehicle	6200 Kury Ln.	1:00 a.m.*

*Indicates the time the incident was reported. The actual time of occurrence may be different.

The overall TM-West reported crime total for 2009 stands at 16 events which is near the average of the past 7 years. For record-year comparisons; *through April 2006* we had only 4 reported crimes, but *through April 2007* we had 26 reported crimes.

Section 5 neighbors continued to receive the attention of criminals by experiencing another crime event in April, but other activity shifted northward into section 11. Activity through April (and in subsequent community email alerts) continues to be principally focused east of Ella Blvd. (14 of 16 total 2009 reported crimes as of April) in sections 5, 6, 7 and 11. It should be noted that with one exception the burglaries of homes happened Monday through Friday – they rob our homes while we are at work and rob our businesses while we are at home.

Eric Carlson's web site, which displays monthly reported crime locations within 2A60 on a web-based map is available at <http://www.ericcarlson.net/crimestats/2A60.html> Use the zoom feature located on the left of the map to expand a given area. Click on a crime icon for incident details.

If you see a burglary in progress call HPD at **911** and emphasize "crime in progress"! Call **713-884-9191** to report suspicious activity and request an officer to patrol on a more time-available basis. Our HPD Officers at the local Heights storefront 713-803-1151 are *not* staffed to respond to calls for immediate assistance, but they can be called or visited (1127 N. Shepherd - behind Auto Zone on W. 11th at Shepherd Dr.) to file many reports or to discuss concerns. (next page)

The monthly PIP meeting with HPD District 2 officers is this Wednesday evening, May 27, 7 – 8 p.m. at 1600 State St.. District 2's Capt. Holloway is typically in attendance along with Lieutenant(s), Sergeant(s) and officers from patrol division, storefronts and special crime enforcement units. There are always opportunities at these meetings to express concerns to HPD command levels who truly control allocation of officers' workhours. You can interact with officers who actually work in our area and gain perspectives from the comments of others from other neighborhoods.



Tuition Based Pre-Kindergarten coming to Sinclair Elementary

Give your child's education a strong foundation...



TEA Recognized Sinclair Elementary launching an exciting pre-kindergarten program, designed to give neighborhood children a valuable head start on their formal education.



Sinclair's exceptional pre-kindergarten program will offer a comprehensive curriculum that addresses the needs of the 21st Century "whole child." In addition to valuable social and character building experiences, children will have the opportunity to develop fine motor, oral and written communication, reading, math, and technology skills.



Parents interested in exploring Sinclair's outstanding, all-inclusive, early education program are encouraged to contact the school at (713) 867-5160. To reserve a spot for your child ask to speak to Ms. Clark, principal, or Mr. Vogler, magnet coordinator.



Find out more about our programs scheduled for the 2009-2010 school year. Please join us at the Pre-K and Kindergarten Round-up that will be held on May 20th at 8:30 A.M.

Thomas A. Sinclair Elementary School
A Communications Magnet School
Bonnie Clark, Principal
6410 Grovewood, Houston, Texas 77008
Phone: (713) 867-5160

Liquor Stores Permitted Near Schools?

This is an ongoing issue readers may have seen covered in local media reports, but there seems to be more to it all than the coverage this writer has seen. Just for perspective, Spec's Liquors has been establishing many new locations around the Houston area in recent years in a seeming attempt to establish market dominance over the local retail bottled liquor market. As part of that effort Spec's set up a new location on Washington Ave./Westcott St. at the Washington Avenue Round-A-Bout.

Problem is this location is within 1,000 feet of an existing school, Memorial Elementary, and long established local-option law – since 1996 - denies granting liquor store licenses within that 1,000 foot area. Media coverages I am aware of have spun the story that the license for the location was properly applied for and approved at the City and State levels, but go on to say those entities are trying to force Spec's to close the location through license revocation after Spec's reportedly spent some \$250,000 to build out the location. Spec's owner is crying foul claiming someone in government may have made an error in approving the license, but Spec's should not now be penalized by having to close the location.

Oh Really?

Super Neighborhood 22 (SN 22), which collectively represents an amalgam of civic clubs along the Washington Ave. corridor, has been pursuing the issue and on May 11 brought together City Attorney Arturo Michel, assistant county attorney Linda Geffin, Spec's owner John Rydman, State Senator Mario Gallegos and community liaison, Ruben Landa to present their versions of the facts and the law surrounding the issue of the Spec's store on Washington Avenue. Subsequent to that meeting Mayor White issued an email notice to SN 22 neighbors via Citizens Net and a follow-up email directly from the SN22 council was also issued via Citizens Net. The Mayor is clear in his message that the license for the Spec's location was issued on the premise that liquor sales would represent less than 50% of total sales at the location. That criteria is not being met.

Unto Rome that which is Rome's and this is a SN 22 area issue, but the outcome of all this can, as Mayor White cautioned, have potential ramifications for future efforts to establish liquor stores within the 1,000-foot zone around other Houston schools, so it's not all just about SN 22.

Don't think that politics is not being played big time in this Spec's effort. State Senator Gallegos introduced Senate Bill 2268 (copy attached to cover email) in this session of the state legislature to enact a state law "Relating to the issuance of an alcoholic beverage license or permit in good faith reliance on a governmental error" to allow Spec's to keep this location open. Referred to the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce this turkey bill has apparently died in committee.

Rather than rambling on quoting sources I'll direct your attention to the website http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/suprnbhds/TechCntrlInfo/SN_22.htm At the top of that page open the three documents relating to this Spec's location. The conflicting statements between Spec's position and the city and county attorney positions are remarkable. I've also attached copies of the two Citizen's Net messages to this issue's cover email. (combined into one attachment - "Spec's-Citizens Net Messages").

What to do? Take a stand. Email SN 22 at <mailto:superneighborhood22@gmail.com> with your support or arguments why not. Email Mayor White at mayor@cityofhouston.net and offer an opinion based on the facts as presented. From the facts, as I read them, it seems the city might best closely review any process offering any exceptions to liquor store licensing near schools.

Area Park Initiatives Continue

Last issue we spoke of the efforts launched by TM-West neighbor Ileana Desalos to enhance Jaycee Park and it now comes to light that Brian Cannell, another TM-West neighbor, has been involved in upgrades to the Sinclair Elementary Spark Park as well as part of Sinclair's school grounds. Brian's effort has been ongoing for a good part of a year by his report and some smaller items on his list have been attained – some benches and the like.

Both these efforts are worthy of support if you share the belief that parks are a valuable asset to a community and even more worthy if you are a park user, or would be, given appropriate facilities.

Since our last report Ileana has moved forward with COH Parks Department and plans are in the works to plant some 90 new trees in Jaycee Park this winter. Plans are progressing to plant Red Buds and Mexican Plum trees along the walkways and around the border of the park and larger replacement trees in the interior of Jaycee Park for those lost to Ike.

You can reach Ileana at idesalos@yahoo.com or by calling 713-868-5086 and you can reach Brian at brian.cannell_94@sbcglobal.net or 713-864-6732. Both are seeking input – ideas, volunteer hours and of course money - from greater area neighbors within and outside of TM-West who share in their concerns. Give 'em a call or email with words of support and/or to share your ideas.

Around the Statehouse

HB 783 by Representative Pickett, limiting liabilities to utility companies that permit their easements to be used as recreational areas - as was covered in the last issue - has been voted on and approved by both the full House and Senate and the bill is headed to Governor Perry's desk for consideration for signing. You can comment to the Governor pro or con on the web at <http://governor.state.tx.us/contact/assistance.aspx> or call Citizen's Opinion Hotline (800) 252-9600 to leave a recorded comment. Be sure to mention the bill number (HB 783), the author (Pickett) and the bill topic in your messages.

Lawn and Garden

Brown Spot: Received an update from a neighbor with strong leanings toward using more natural processes in lawn care. I'll forward the comment that spreading a good grade of compost lightly (1/4-inch or so) in the Spring or early Summer across the area typically impacted by brown spot will help a great deal in correcting the soil's out-of-balance bacterial activity which is the goal in brown spot prevention. Best commercial compost I've found is from Nature's Way Resources. Wabash Feeds at 5701 Washington Ave. handles a 40 pound bag or so of 3/8 screened (good for spreading on lawns) for about \$11.00.

Virginia Buttonweed: Not real surprised to hear from a few folks grumbling about buttonweed. A couple quick responses. No, mowing St. Augustine close to the ground forcing the St. Augustine to spread will not control buttonweed as the practice will with many other weeds. Buttonweed happily spreads close to the ground. Also, buttonweed grows happily in wet soggy soil and survives in hot dry drought conditions so watering or not won't help. Buttonweed can actually flower and produce seeds underground by one university report so it's a survivor. Atrazine based weed killers work best at the time of seed germination or early shoot growth so that time has passed and there are conflicting reports if it works well on buttonweed at all. Amdro under the Image product line does produce a product specially labeled for Nutsedge control and it

reportedly works pretty well on buttonweed, but multiple applications will probably be needed depending on the severity of the problem. Atrazine and the active ingredient in Image are both very stable however and each lingers in the soil for many months and can impact landscape plants and trees if spread over their root areas and Image can even affect plantings months later so exercise care in their use. I don't recommend either be used, but it is your yard. Just be aware that stable products such as this can tend to wash off your lawn and wind up in our streams, bayous and Galveston Bay. Seems to be pretty extreme stuff just to kill a lawn weed.

Practical Rechargeable Lawn Equipment: Short battery life and equipment with minimal power has made rechargeable lawn equipment an "iffy" investment. Black and Decker may have introduced a game changer when it comes to string trimmers with the 36-volt Ni-Cad powered NST2036. After reading reviews in several chat rooms I purchased one of these units and have been putting it through the paces in my home lawn which has half-a-dozen landscape beds to edge in addition to the traditional sidewalks and driveway edging. A single battery charge gets me through the entire yard and the unit does have some significant power when the speed control switch is fully depressed. But it does a quite reasonable job when operated at half-speed or so which also extends the battery charge. It takes overnight for the battery to recharge is about the only downside, that and the weight of the battery pack brings the unit's weight in at some 11.9 pounds. But there is a shoulder strap supplied with the unit to help if that weight becomes an issue. A replacement battery pack costs close to \$100, but if B&D used anything like current Ni-Cad technology that should not be an issue for quite some time. It comes with a 30-day home trial and can be purchased locally at Home Depot for \$149 – compared to online prices hovering around \$250. This is one you might give a try if you are in the market to get rid of your polluting, noisy, cranky, gas powered trimmer. Let me know how it goes in your trials.

Watering Tip: So you water your pot plants and the water seems to move through the soil and into the saucer fairly quickly, and yet the plant seems to suffer? Chances are the center of the root ball has dried out and the water is passing through channels in the root ball or around the edge of the ball/pot. Find a convenient sized container, fill it with water and set the entire pot in that. Give the plant 4 or 5 minutes soak time, remove and let the excess water drain away. Even drought tolerant plants can accept this type dunking on occasion. If you are preparing to transplant the plant into the landscape, it is a good idea to give this type soaking soon before replanting. If a plant goes into the ground with a dry root ball it is very difficult to get moisture to penetrate the ball as it should once in the landscape.

Written and distributed by your neighbor Ben Crabb, 2502 Haverhill Dr., 713-861-5354, bncrabb@comcast.net To sign up for direct delivery to your email address simply send an email and ask to be added to the distribution.
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