

# Z NEWS

JULY 2009

Newsletter of the  
Zilker  
Neighborhood  
Association

Austin, Texas  
Established 1981

## Hot Water Issues

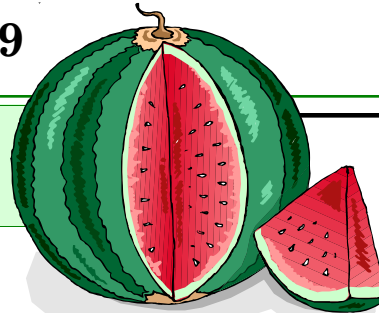
by Lorraine Atherton, ZNA co-president

OVER THE LAST 40 YEARS, Zilker neighbors have been leaders in Austin's environmental and conservation initiatives, focused on the protection of our superb water resources, from public access on the waterfront to water quality at Barton Springs Pool and its source in the Edwards Aquifer. Today, amid a historic heat wave and drought, our water policy suddenly seems stressed to the breaking point.

This edition of *ZNews* touches on four items that have citywide water implications. Austin's weak water conservation goals and the plans for a new water treatment plant are discussed in this article. The new irrigation system in Zilker Park is described on page 2, and planned unit developments (PUDs) within the waterfront overlay of Lady Bird Lake figure in the zoning report on page 6.

### Getting Serious about Saving Water

Although Austin experienced a severe drought last summer, the citizens of Austin reduced our peak day demand to 219 million gallons, well below the previous high of 240 million gallons in 2001. In February, Bill Bunch of the Save Our Springs Alliance (and a Zilker neighbor) briefed a ZNA meeting on the prospects for even greater reductions if Austin would set more *(Continued on page 10)*



## WATERMELON SOCIAL July 27 Monday 6:30- 8:30 PM

Outdoor Learning Center  
Zilker Elementary School  
1900 Bluebonnet



Meet and Greet Social

Eat watermelon, spit seeds

See the latest park  
improvements

Newcomers, old-timers,  
homeowners, renters,  
business neighbors, and pets  
All Welcome



## ZNA Votes, More than Most



IN THE MAY City Council elections, turnout was improved in ZNA's precincts over the pitiful turnout in 2008, but it was still very low. Citywide turnout was 13%. In Zilker, Precinct 332 had 19% and 462 had 9%. Turnout in most of 78704 (the South Central neighborhoods) averaged only 10%. Precinct 332 had the highest percentage turnout in South Central, with 757 voters.

ZNA voted above the citywide average for all the winning candidates except Chris Riley: 71% for Leffingwell, 90% for Martinez, 88% for *(Continued on page 7)*

## ZNA WANTS YOU!

**Volunteer now—get to know your neighbors  
and make a great neighborhood even better.**

The Zilker Neighborhood Association will be nominating officers and committee chairs in September to serve in 2010. Now is the time to think about what leadership role you could fill in ZNA. Call Richard Gravois or any other ZNA officer, or come to the

**Watermelon Social on July 27**  
and sign up for  
**the ZNA of the future.**

## Welcome to Austin's New Front Lawn

WONDERING what's going on at the soccer fields in Zilker Park? They are being transformed into the Great Lawn, thanks to a \$2.5 million donation from C3 Presents, the folks who bring the Austin City Limits Music Festival to the park every year. You can get an up close look at the new lawn by volunteering, through the Austin Parks Foundation, to help mulch trees, weed the volleyball courts, pick up sod strips, and clean up sidewalks and curbs. Volunteer days are Saturdays on July 18 and 25, from 9 to noon.

Everyone who participates from 9 to noon is eligible to win a pair of Austin City Limits Music Festival three-day passes (the passes are now officially sold out, so volunteering may be your last chance to get one). A pair of tickets will be given away at each volunteer day.

There are three steps to be eligible to win:

1. Sign up for the dates you will attend
2. Arrive by 9 AM and be sure to sign in
3. Work until noon and stay for the drawing

Tools, gloves, and jugs of water will be supplied, and C3 Presents will have cool ACL t-shirts for the first 50 volunteers on each day. Sign up at [www.austinparks.org/volunteer.php](http://www.austinparks.org/volunteer.php).

### Steps to a Great Lawn

*Excerpts from the City of Austin Web site, "Zilker Park Improvements"*  
([ci.austin.tx.us/parks/zilkerparkimprove.htm](http://ci.austin.tx.us/parks/zilkerparkimprove.htm))

The 46-acre Great Lawn, the north portion of the park (Lou Neff road), has not received major improvements since its construction in the 1930s. The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) has implemented a project to improve and maintain the turf, conserve potable water, and enhance the overall appearance of the park. These improvements will provide a durable, resilient turf that will serve to create a space that inspires visitors to play, imagine, rest, and interact with nature and each other.

Installation of an irrigation pump station was completed in May, which will provide raw water from Lady Bird Lake to the manual irrigation system. By watering the park with nonpotable water, PARD will be supporting an Austin City

Council resolution to save over 32 million gallons of treated water a day in our peak season.

This major turf improvement program will provide the proper infrastructure to maintain this premier park. On any given day, citizens visit Zilker Park to walk, let their dog run free, fly a kite, throw a Frisbee, and many more recreation activities. The Great Lawn is also home to the annual Trail of Lights festival, the Austin City Limits Music Festival, the longest-running kite festival in the United States, and the summer Blues on the Green concerts.

### Completed improvements include:

- ◆ Regrading of the soil, along with improvements to the drainage to eliminate low spots that collect water.
- ◆ Installation of a curb-to-curb irrigation system that utilizes nonpotable water. This system will include the WeatherTRAK smart evapotranspiration technology. These irrigation controllers automatically adjust irrigation schedules based on landscape needs and local weather conditions. The result is responsible water use and a healthier environment.
- ◆ Replacement of existing common bermuda-grass with an improved variety, Tifway 419, to provide a durable and very resilient turf.
- ◆ Improvements to the existing sand volleyball courts and the addition of one new court.
- ◆ Installation of additional drinking fountains for park users.

The month of July will be devoted to establishing the new turfgrass, which will require 6 to 8 weeks to establish and mature prior to the opening of the park. The park is expected to open for general use sometime in August, before the ACL Festival. Reservations and organized events will not be accepted until October 2009.

### A Gateway Worthy of Zilker

Austin has planned to create a gateway to Zilker Park on Barton Springs Road since 1982, but the reconstruction of the road between South Lamar and Robert E. Lee was not completed until 2003. The decision to build landscaped medians, along

with wide sidewalks and bike lanes, rather than a continuous left turn lane, was controversial, but ZNA supported the vision of a welcoming, green, and pedestrian-oriented entrance to Zilker Park from the beginning. Since its completion, it has proven to be a model streetscape, providing greatly improved access to the park and to Restaurant Row for neighbors and visitors alike. The landscaping, however, is in need of some revitalization, to match the overhaul of the Great Lawn.

In April, the Austin Area Garden Clubs requested that the Parks Department "repair, replant, and maintain this area as an entrance to Zilker Park that reflects the beauty of the park," and the garden clubs have taken the lead in fund-raising for the project. Businesses along Barton Springs Road have already pledged thousands of dollars, and an account has been set up with the Austin Parks Foundation to accept donations.

PARD has taken on the project and will be working to complete much of it before the Austin City Limits Music Festival in October. Parks staff should begin work on the irrigation system this month, and we hope that a planting plan will be available for display at the ZNA Watermelon Social. Look for it on July 27.

**Look for a park workday at Little Zilker Park, next to Zilker Elementary, this fall.** To volunteer for workdays or other park projects, contact [littlezilker@gmail.com](mailto:littlezilker@gmail.com).

**Donate** toward Little Zilker park improvements by sending your contribution made out to the Austin Parks Foundation (write "Zilker Neighborhood Park" in the memo line) at 816 Congress Ave, Ste. 1680, Austin TX 78701.



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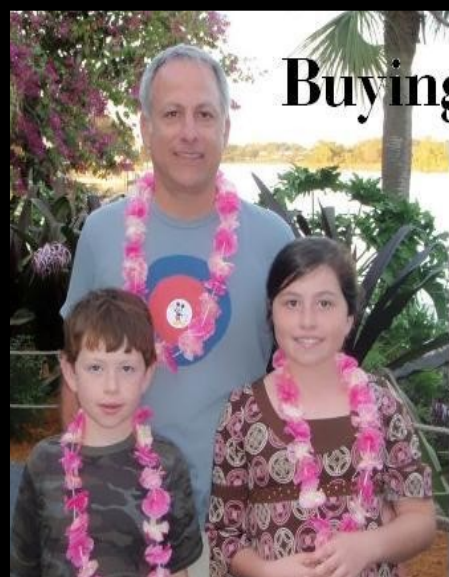
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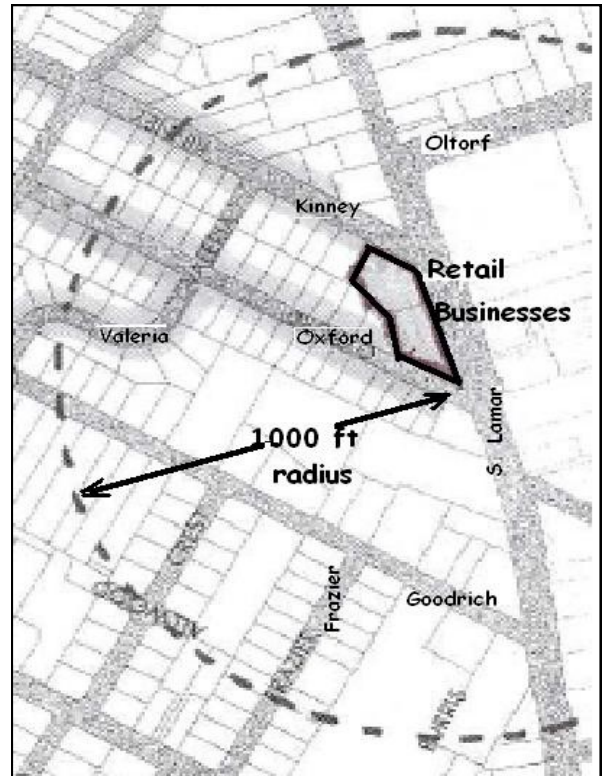
# Neighbors look for relief from parking pinch

by Peggy Pfaff

YOU MAY HAVE noticed the addition of several wonderful businesses along South Lamar Boulevard. Now we can walk or bike to get a haircut, see a movie, buy fresh baked goods, enjoy yummy Mexican food, or get a beer and a burger. Unfortunately, along with the increase in walkable services available to the folks in the Zilker neighborhood has come a burden on parking along the residential streets that are near these businesses.

Sometimes the city of Austin allows a business to get a variance from providing adequate parking. Sometimes the parking that is offered is offsite and requires crossing a major street. Oxford, Kinney, and Valeria streets (south of the light at Oltorf and South Lamar) have had an undue burden of employee and patron parking that has reduced these streets to one lane for much of the day and evening. Walking, driving, and accessing driveways on these streets has become hazardous much of the time.

These streets appear to be eligible for the city's Residential Parking Permit (RPP) program. Residents of these streets, spearheaded by Robert Guillory on Oxford, are interested in applying to the RPP program to limit parking on these streets to residents and their guests during specified hours. Please keep an eye out for Robert, who will be walking a petition to get this program set up. Once signatures are gathered on the target streets (and on other streets that may be affected by overflow parking), the RPP application will be reviewed at a ZNA quarterly meeting.



Possible Residential Parking Permit area, within 1000 feet of the retail strip at Oxford and South Lamar Boulevard, may include parts of Kinney, Goodrich, and Valeria, as well as both blocks of Oxford.

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**Shady Grove parking variance**

AS THIS GOES to press, the Board of Adjustment (BoA) is considering a parking variance for Shady Grove restaurant, at 1624 Barton Springs. Briefly, because of recent changes to the outdoor music permit process, the restaurant requires a change of use to cocktail lounge before its permit can be renewed. The change in land use designation requires 30 more parking spaces, beyond the existing 55 spaces.

The ZNA executive committee talked with the Shady Grove representative at our July 6 meeting. We were told that they will argue that historic pecan trees would have to be removed to provide any additional parking on the site, and that the removal of those trees qualifies as a hardship unique to the property, as defined by the BoA. (Before it can grant any variance, the BoA must find that the property has such a hardship. ZNA has consistently not supported variance requests that do not show a qualifying hardship.)

Parking variances, however, require the BoA to make additional findings. In essence, the applicant

must show that the use of the site will not create more traffic and parking problems. The application states that the daily operations of the property as a restaurant will not change, and the Shady Grove representatives have assured the ZNA executive committee that they will continue to conform to the conditions of restaurant use that would affect traffic and parking, specifically, the 50% limit on revenue from liquor sales and the calculation of seating capacity. ZNA has also asked that the variance limit the hours of events with outdoor amplified music and the number of events per month, based on the restaurant's previous operations, in the range of four to six events per month with a cutoff time of 9 or 10 pm. The ZNA executive committee hopes that including these conditions in the variance will allow the BoA to grant the variance and help to preserve the enjoyable character of Restaurant Row.

*Lorraine Atherton*



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**Zoning Updates**

**Protecting the Waterfront**

by Jeff Jack, Save Town Lake

LONG BEFORE Austin became the Live Music Capital of the World, it was known in Texas as the River City. Lady Bird Johnson led the way in preserving open green spaces and scenic vistas on the shores of Town Lake by creating the great urban park that we have today. It wasn't easy, and in 1986 the community wrote that vision into the city code, in the form of the Waterfront Overlay ordinance, setting caps on building heights and establishing reasonable setbacks and impervious cover limits.

One big exception remains in the code. Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) fall outside the protection of the Waterfront Overlay ordinance, allowing proposed projects to receive development entitlements well beyond the overlay limits. The first real test of the City Council's commitment to protect the lakefront will be on July 23, when the South Shore PUD is up for approval. The developer, Grayco Properties of Houston, has requested an increase of the current Multifamily 3 zoning, with a height limit of 40 feet, to 90 feet and 120 feet. Several tracts in this development are in a Waterfront Overlay subdistrict that would allow buildings to be 60 feet tall only if they provided significant community benefits. This developer, however, is

asking for 90 feet in these areas, a 50% increase over the maximum allowed by the overlay.

In addition, the proposal does not conform to the local neighborhood plan, will increase traffic congestion, and will remove more than 500 affordable housing units. If approved, it will set a disturbing precedent for other developments all around Lady Bird Lake. Such projects are hugely profitable, with the developer standing to make millions on just the added value of the land if the zoning is approved. Some have estimated that if the Grayco project goes forward, the developer stands to gain tens of millions in additional profit. Community benefits are a key component of PUD zoning, but the benefits offered by this project are paltry compared with the increased entitlements requested by the developer.

So if you care about maintaining the open space around Lady Bird Lake, want to ensure that future generations can enjoy the scenic vistas we have today, and just do not want to lose what we have struggled so long to protect, then please tell our City Council that our lakefront, our Lady Bird Lake, should be protected from such intrusive developments. Ask them to vote no on any heights above the Waterfront Overlay limits for the South Shore PUD.

Contact the City Council through the city Web site at [ci.austin.tx.us/council/groupemail.htm](http://ci.austin.tx.us/council/groupemail.htm) or visit [SaveTownLake.org](http://SaveTownLake.org).

Thank you for caring about Lady Bird Lake and for your support of the Waterfront Overlay ordinance.



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**ZNA Zoning Committee**

A rezoning has been requested at 2305 Bluebonnet (next door to the Artz parking lot) to resolve the inconsistencies between the Limited Office district and the current use as multifamily residences. The ZNA executive committee is supporting the rezoning to Multifamily-3 with a conditional overlay limiting the property to 7 units, 200 vehicle trips per day, 50% building coverage, and 65% impervious cover. The intent of the conditional overlay would be to limit development on the site to the existing conditions, while bringing it into compliance with city code, and the executive committee has been working with the owner and the nearest neighbor to achieve that end. As of this writing, the case has not been scheduled for a public hearing at City Council, but it should be on the agenda in July or August.

The zoning committee has also been following a resubdivision at 1303 Robert E. Lee. The applicant had requested a sidewalk variance. We recently learned that city staff has reviewed the application and will deny the request to pay a fee in lieu of building the sidewalk along Melridge and the top of Robert E. Lee, because staff has determined that construction of the sidewalk is feasible.

Land use cases are regularly discussed at monthly meetings of the ZNA Executive Committee. If you are interested in a zoning case or other land use issues, please feel free to attend, the first Monday of the month, 7-9 PM, at Artz Rib House.

*Peggy Pfaff*

*(Continued from page 1)* Cole, and 60% for Riley.

With voter turnout still so low, more city voters are considering the benefits of geographic representation, in the form of single member districts. The Austin Neighborhoods Council passed the following resolution at its June meeting.

Whereas, the city has grown in size and diversity to the point that the present, at-large system is no longer adequate to assure representation of all citizens on the Council; and

Whereas, the "gentlemen's agreement" fails to recognize the shifting ethnic patterns in the city; and

Whereas, the present council structure fails to address shifting geographic patterns; and

Whereas, the present council structure fosters disenfranchisement and voter apathy; and

Whereas the city needs to establish an orderly process for revising geographic boundaries at the publication of each census; and

Whereas, a task force should begin to develop such a process prior to the publication of the 2010 Census,

Therefore, ANC requests that the Council appoint a task force, representative of the diverse and growing Austin city, to develop and recommend a process for redrawing district boundaries at each census and also to recommend a structure and district boundaries pending the publication of the 2010 census.

If you are interested in drawing district boundaries for City Council districts, please contact Lorraine Atherton at [latherton@austin.rr.com](mailto:latherton@austin.rr.com)

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## Zilker Neighborhood Association: Frequently Asked Questions

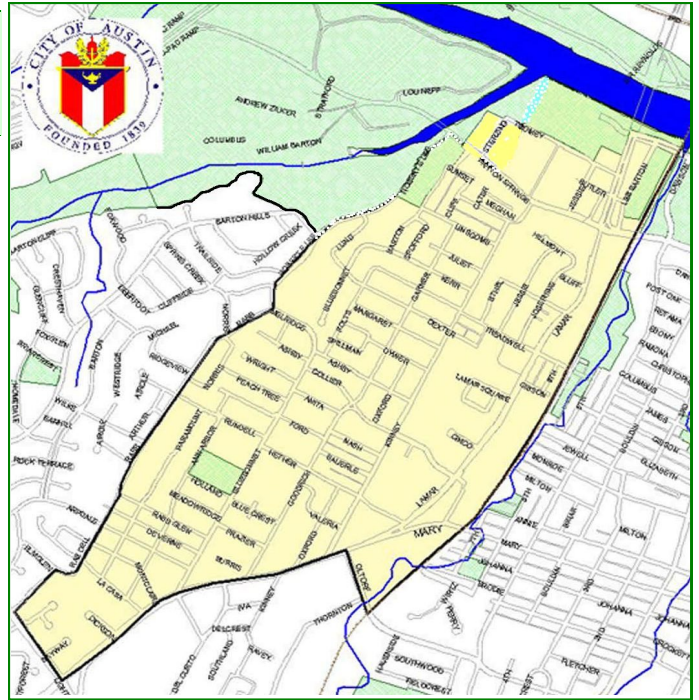
*How often does ZNA meet?* Quarterly, in February, April, July, and October, at Zilker Elementary School. The Executive Committee meets at 7-9 PM the first Monday of each month, usually at Artz Rib House, at South Lamar and Bluebonnet.

*Who does ZNA represent?* Directly: The membership of our association, which is open only to residents within ZNA's boundaries. Indirectly: A larger cross-section through neighbor-to-neighbor discussions and circulation of close to 3000 newsletters.

*How many members does ZNA have?* 145, as of November 2008. The zilker@yahoo.com list serves 560 e-mail addresses, but it is open to all residents, whether they are ZNA members or not.

*How can I contact the association by e-mail?*  
Address e-mail to ZilkerNA@austin.rr.com.

*How does the ZNA Executive Committee arrive at a position on an issue?* The committee considers several factors, beginning with the association's by-laws. Depending on the issue, the committee may consider the ZNA neighborhood planning survey conducted in 2004, the City of Austin neighborhood planning survey conducted in 2005, specific ZNews surveys, input gathered from discussions and resolutions adopted at our quarterly meetings,



*The boundaries of ZNA include Zilker Park on the west and extend to the railroad tracks on the east. The southern boundary is Barton Skyway. The northern boundary is the lake.*

discussion on the list serve and e-mail input from neighbors, and political consultation with board and commission and City Council members.

*For more information, including the association's bylaws, please visit the new ZNA Web site at zilkerneighborhood.org.*

### BECOME A ZNA MEMBER TODAY

Membership is open to Zilker residents (renters or homeowners) 18 years old or older. Annual dues are \$7 per person. Additional contributions are welcome. (Many couples pay \$25.)

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Please make checks payable to Zilker Neighborhood Association and mail with this form to:

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**Business Neighbors**

**OLD FRIENDS**

The Zilker neighborhood is lucky to have so many generous business neighbors that contribute to the community all year round. ZNA would like to express our appreciation of a few of them here:

**Artz Rib House**, 2330 S. Lamar, provides meeting space and supports great music.

**Moonlight Bakery**, 2300 S. Lamar, supplies ZNA meetings and many other community groups with perfect pastries and goodies.

Awad of **Nile Valley Herbs** can be counted on for the best iced tea.

**Sazon**, 1816 S. Lamar, is a great place for breakfast meetings.

**Uncle Billy's** and **Austin Java**, 1530 Barton Springs, donate coffee and other goodies.

And Aaron of **Crazy Aaron** contributes so much time and effort to school and park projects, he must be crazy.

Thanks to everyone who helps out around the 'hood.

**NEW FACES**

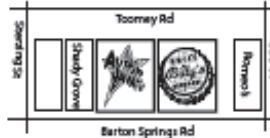
**Lamar Plaza Drug Store**, at 1132 S. Lamar, has new owners, Jim and Dorinda Martin, with 43 years of independent pharmacy ownership between them. The family medical clinic inside the pharmacy welcomes uninsured patients. The new compounding lab provides customized medications. Check out the Web site at [www.lamarplazadrugstore.com](http://www.lamarplazadrugstore.com).

**Flipnotics**, the coffee shop at Kinney and Barton Springs Road, has new owners and a new look. They promise more family events, including craft days, book clubs, and game nights. They are actively seeking neighborhood feedback, so stop by and check out the changes.



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(Continued from page 1) ambitious goals for water conservation. (See the SOS Alliance handout at zilkerneighborhood.org.) And then the rain stopped. By the time Bill made his latest presentation to the Austin Neighborhoods Council, at the end of June, our water future was looking as grim as Death Valley.

Where is Austin on the water consumption scale? We average about 180 gallons per person per day. The national average is around 150. The goal in the Texas Water Plan is to reduce municipal per capita use to below 140. San Antonio, which was using 220 gallons per capita in the 1980s, is already down to 136. Yet Austin's goal is a reduction of only 1% per year.

Bill has compiled a list of measures that

other cities are using to achieve big reductions in water consumption, and a coalition of groups is recommending that Austin set a new goal to reduce our peak water use by 15% immediately. Some examples from the SOS Alliance Web site: "Other cities have shown that a combination of mandatory limits on lawn watering during peak demand periods, peak water pricing, education, and conservation investments can reduce peak demands 20-35%." "We lose 12% of treated water to leaks, breaks, theft, and faulty meters, yet there's no plan to significantly reduce this massive waste of water." "We've barely begun to tap nonpotable reuse water to provide summer irrigation and commercial cooling water." (See page 2, on the Great Lawn in Zilker Park.)

This is an effort that ZNA can support as consistent with our commitment to protect the springs and the aquifer. We need to meet the highest possible standard for water conservation, because we cannot demand that other communities reduce their pumping when we are big water wasters ourselves.


**Planning before We Build WTP4**

This call to get serious about saving water began as a response to plans for a new water treatment plant (known as WTP4). The recent reduction in peak demand pushes the need for the plant many years into the future. City staff has estimated that Austin saves about \$14 million dollars for every year that construction of the plant is postponed.

Considering that Austin is embarking on a new planning process, and water policy is a crucial element in a comprehensive plan, the Austin Neighbor-

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hoods Council will be voting on a resolution at its general meeting on July 22, urging the City Council to postpone any further expenditures on WTP4 until the city can incorporate these new demand figures into the plan. This is consistent with ANC's long-term planning resolution of 2006 and the call for a comprehensive growth management policy in 2007.

Meanwhile, the SOS Alliance is proposing that WTP4 be put on hold for three years while we complete the comprehensive plan. "In the interim," says the SOS Web site, "the Austin Water Utility must focus efforts on conservation, reuse, and reducing system losses." The SOS Alliance urges you to write, e-mail, or phone the mayor and city council and ask that they postpone further spending on WTP4 until the new plan is complete.

As always, in your own home, continue to use water efficiently and to minimize discretionary irrigation during peak summer months.

*For more information, visit the Save Our Springs Alliance Web site at [www.sosalliance.org](http://www.sosalliance.org).*



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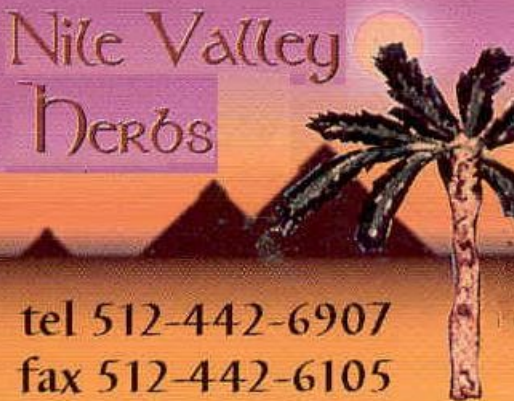


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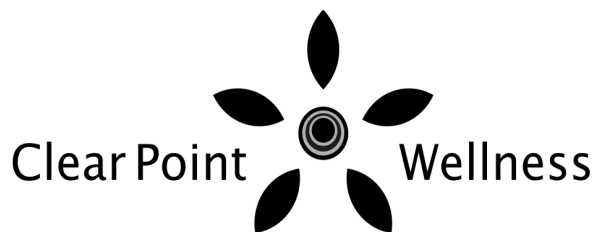
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**2009 Executive Committee of ZNA**

**Elected Officers:**

*Co-Presidents:* Richard Gravois, 441-3430, and Lorraine Atherton  
*1st VP:* Bobby Rigney, 471-3758  
*2nd VP:* Steven Jennings, 382-5805  
*Secretary:* Ryan Stryker, 431-4245  
*Treasurer:* Andy Elder, 428-9180  
*Social Chair:* Greg Shotwell, 797-4376  
*ANC Delegate:* Kurt Koegler, 288-0676  
*ZNews Editor:* Lorraine Atherton, 447-7681

**About the Zilker Neighborhood Association**

ZNA holds general meetings the fourth or fifth Monday of February, April, July, and October, at Zilker Elementary School. The Executive Committee meets at 7 PM the first Monday of each month, usually at Artz Rib House.

**Our Purpose:** To improve the quality of life in the neighborhood in matters of land use, environmental protection, public services, consumer protection, preservation of the historic and unique character of the community; to provide support in other matters of neighborhood concern; and to promote and participate in the civic life of the city.

**Committee Chairs:**

*Holiday Family Program:* Barbara Cossie, 447-4437  
*ZNews Advertising:* Dave Piper, 916-9636  
*Parks and Environment:* Gardner Sumner, 468-6200  
*Zoning:* Peggy Pfaff, 466-5043

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