



Newsletter of the  
Zilker Neighborhood  
Association

OCTOBER 2012

Austin, Texas  
Established 1981

## Beware the Bottomless Ballot

by Lorraine Atherton, ZNews editor

AFTER DECADES OF STUDY, the League of Women Voters and the Austin Neighborhoods Council have both taken a firm stand in favor of reforming Austin's at-large City Council election system, in favor of a minimum of 10 single-member districts, and in favor of an independent commission to draw the district lines. Austin voters can make that reform happen this November, if we will spend a few extra minutes at the voting booth.

The ballot for the November 6 election is a monster for Austin voters. After making our choices among all the candidates in the usual national, state, and judicial races, we will have to select county, school board, and ACC officials, most of whom are running in newly redrawn districts unfamiliar to the voters. And then there's the scary part, a list of charter and bond propositions as long as your arm.

Do not despair. Some of these propositions will have a momentous, direct effect on our quality of life right here in Zilker. Don't leave the (Continued on page 5)

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The Zilker Neighborhood Association  
is excited to host a

### CANDIDATE FORUM

at our next general meeting on  
**Monday, October 29**  
**6:30-8:30 PM**

at a NEW location

**FAITH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
2701 South Lamar Blvd.



### Meet the school board candidates

beginning at 6:45

At-large seat 8

Gina Hinojosa and

Mary Ellen Pietruszynski

District 5

Amber Elenz and Charlie Jackson

### Followed by the County Commissioner

### Precinct 3 candidates

Gerald Daugherty, Pat Dixon,  
and Karen Huber



Also, Holiday Families Program kick-off

Election of 2013 ZNA officers

2012 ACL Festival wrap-up



Newcomers, homeowners, renters,  
business neighbors

❖ ❖ All Welcome ❖ ❖



Early voting is October 22-November 2. This year we can vote early at Lamar Plaza Shopping Center, 1150 S. Lamar, Monday-Saturday 7-7 and Sunday noon-6.

**Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 6**

**Precincts 332 and 340** vote at Zilker School (1900 Bluebonnet) and **Precinct 342** at Barton Hills School (2108 Barton Hills Dr.). You may also vote at any other Travis County polling place on election day, including the new polling place at Lamar Plaza. Check election info at [traviscountyelections.org](http://traviscountyelections.org) or call 238-VOTE

## New Trees for Little Zilker Park

by Kim McKnight and Gina Diehl

THE FRIENDS OF LITTLE ZILKER PARK (FLZP) welcome the community to join us for the Fall Tree Planting and Park TLC Day on Saturday, Nov. 3, 9 AM-1 PM. Join us as we plant trees along our new Ann Arbor sidewalk and weed and mulch our garden beds. Little Zilker Fall TLC Day will be loads of fun for the entire family.

The Austin parks department has approved the FLZP tree planting plan (thank you Aaron Odland for the great work), and the size of the trees has been reduced. The largest trees we will be handling are 5 gallons, so we will be digging the holes as part of the workday. The parks folks will bring trees, mulch, and support posts. There will be 25 trees to plant. We need volunteers!

Please bring your work gloves, shovels, pruning shears, wheelbarrows, and other useful implements. Be sure to wear a hat and bring your own water bottle and coffee mug. And finally, please RSVP to [littlezilker@gmail.com](mailto:littlezilker@gmail.com) so we can send you updates. See you Nov. 3!

### Join the Friends of Little Zilker Park

Thanks to Gina and Kim, FLZP has made great progress over the last year, but they need more members. To join, e-mail [littlezilker@gmail.com](mailto:littlezilker@gmail.com). To make a tax-deductible donation, visit the Austin Parks Foundation Web site ([austinparks.org](http://austinparks.org)), and look for "Little Zilker."

We are cooking up some fun at the Zilker Zamboree on Saturday, October 27th from noon - 4!



Come for a fun-filled afternoon of great local food, a haunted house, plant sale, tie dye booth, barrel train, football toss, cake walk, raffles, games, and much, much more!!



It will be a fantastic time for the whole family - rain or shine



Witch Way to Zilker?  
Zilker Elementary  
1900 Bluebonnet Lane

## On Campus:

### Zilker Elementary News

**Bikes on Bluebonnet:** ZEN (the Zilker Elementary newsletter) reports: "City staff has informed Zilker administration that they soon will begin ticketing drivers who pull into the new bike lanes to park or drop off their students. Bike lanes must remain clear for bicycles. Please adapt driving and parking habits."

**Zilker Sustainability Committee:** Paula McDermott reports: The ZSC meets the first Monday of the month right after drop-off at the picnic tables behind the cafeteria. Join us to add your creative input and leadership in creating a greener



**Take a Peek at What Southpaws Playschool Has to Offer!**

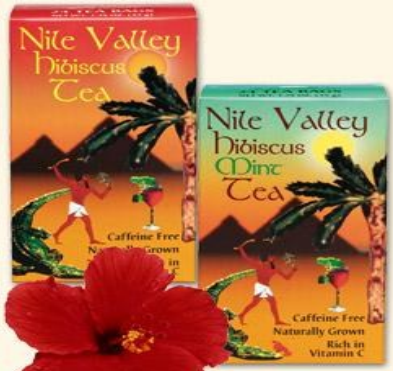

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and more sustainable school, or contact Daniella Sadeh or Paula McDermott with ideas like these:

**Zilker's Urban Orchard**

Thanks to all who came out to our fall workday on October 6. A little maintenance was done on the rain water drip irrigation system, and volunteers weeded and mulched around our beautiful and healthy orchard trees in front of the school. There are plans under way to create a sitting area to enjoy the rain gardens and evolving food forest.

**Fall Veggie Plant Sale at Zamboree**

We will be making healthy garden starts available to the Zilker community to help you grow some of your own food at Zamboree for bargain prices, so get your garden beds and pots ready!

**Pumpkins for Farms**

We are looking into a post-Halloween pumpkin collection day to provide food and compost for local farms. [Editor's note: ZNA has done this on a very small scale by making sure the watermelon rinds from our July Watermelon Social go to our urban chickens.]

**Zilker PTA-Book People Fund-raiser Nov. 9-16:** Support reading, the local economy, and the Zilker PTA by shopping at Book People Nov. 9-16. Book People will donate a percentage of your purchases to our school on these days. Be sure to tell them you're with Zilker!

On Wednesday, Nov. 14, 6-9 PM: Meet us at Book People in your pajamas! Zilker PTA will host a special event where children (and parents) can come to the store in their pj's to shop, enjoy milk and cookies, and listen while Principal Thomson and Zilker teachers read stories.

**Join Zilker PTA:** We want to hear from you! Check out the Web site ZilkerElem.org or contact us at zilkerpta@gmail.com.



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**Walk.  
Bus.  
Cycle.**  
with Wabucy Zilker  
*by Eileen Nehme*



After gathering at Zilker Elementary School, the Wabucy brigade bikes down Hether to celebrate the end of summer with some local ice cream from Lick, at 2032 South Lamar.

WABUCY ZILKER is a new neighborhood activist group dedicated to increasing walking, bus riding, and cycling—and making it safer and easier to do so—in and around Zilker and South Lamar. We're also about getting to know our neighbors, being creative, having fun, and building community. Our approach is light-hearted, supportive, and collaborative—and we aim to get things done! In our first few months, we've focused on social events, including a bus ride to the downtown farmer's market and an all-ages bike ride to Lick Ice Cream. We've got more fun events planned, and we are gearing up for advocacy aimed at businesses and the City of Austin to get street improvements in place.

The easiest way to support our efforts and keep up with what we are doing is to like our Facebook page. Your support makes our collective voice louder! Join us at an event this fall, or come to our next planning meeting. Details will be posted on the Zilker Yahoo Group (zilker@yahoo.com) and the Wabucy Facebook Page.

**Upcoming Wabucy Zilker Events**

Oct. 26, 7:30 PM: S. Lamar Walkabout/Pub Crawl, starts at Gibson Bar

Nov. 10, time TBD: Train ride, downtown to Black Star Brewery Co-op

Nov. 17, time TBD: Pre-Thanksgiving bus ride to Farmer's Market

About two dozen neighbors board the #3 bus on South Lamar at Bluebonnet for the first Wabucy Zilker event, a Saturday trip to the downtown farmers market on August 25.



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(Continued from page 1) voting booth without casting your most important votes at the bottom of the ballot.

Chief among the city propositions is Prop. 3, the charter amendment to elect Austin's City Council from 10 single-member districts, known as 10-1. On the ballot it will read "Shall the city charter be amended to provide for the election of council members from 10 geographical single-member districts, with the mayor to be elected from the city at large, and to provide for an independent citizens redistricting commission?"

There is wide agreement that Austin's at-large council (besides being an embarrassing relic of a racist era) is simply not up to the task of governing a city of Austin's size. ANC summed it up in its initial presentation to the city's charter revision committee in September 2011:

The function of any elected representative is to gauge the political will of the people, to mediate differences among constituencies to form fair and effective public policy, and to ensure that the bureaucracy carries out that policy. In city government, effective representation ranges from determining why a pothole hasn't been repaired to setting long-range priorities for citywide infrastructure improvements. Over the last ten years, as members of ANC have participated in the city's neighborhood and comprehensive planning efforts, it has become clear that the roles of our City Council and city administration have been reversed. The task of gauging the political will of the people has fallen increasingly to city staff, and citizens find that they must negotiate the terms of public policy directly with staff. At the end of the process, city staff presents recommendations to City Council, and there is little opportunity for citizens to communicate directly with an elected representative.

Several years ago, ANC identified



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Austin's at-large election system as a significant factor in this disconnect. Because our at-large City Council members each represent the entire population (almost 800,000 people), none of them can provide effective constituent services. Austin is the largest city in the United States without district representation. If truly representative and participatory, such election systems ensure that district voters' interests are represented, and that each district has equal weight on the council. The cost savings of running district election campaigns (versus citywide campaigns) would foster more grassroots candidates and participants, which in turn makes the electoral process more competitive and increases voter turnout. Geographic districts are not a panacea for all that ails our city; however, they do promise a substantial improvement.

A redistricting commission independent of the City Council is crucial to council election reform. Under the 10-1 plan, the City Council may not change the commission's map, and the commission will be responsible for defending the map in court. The charter amendment requires the commission to adopt boundaries for the 10 districts by December 1, 2013, and thereafter by November 1 after each national census.

The proposition that the Austin City Council put on the ballot to compete with 10-1 has 8 districts and 2 at-large seats (besides the mayor). It does not include an independent commission, or any community input at all. Assuming that the at-large seats will continue to be dominated by the same interests that control the council today, and that the same West Austin precincts will control 3 or 4 single-member districts, the

imbalance of representation between West Austin and everyone else will not change under the 8-2-1 plan.

For effective reform, creating a responsive and accountable city council, the 10-1 plan is our only option on the November ballot. (For more info, visit [lwvaustin.org](http://lwvaustin.org) and [ANCWeb.org](http://ANCWeb.org).)

**Z-Editor's Guide to City Charter Propositions**

Here are my picks from the charter amendments on the November 6 ballot. (The complete wording of the amendments is available on the city Web site, [austintexas.gov/page/charter-propositions](http://austintexas.gov/page/charter-propositions).)

**Prop. 1:** Shall the City Charter be amended to move the City's general election date from May to November?

*No. If you have twice as much fun as I did researching this bottomless ballot, you'll still vote no on this one. ANC rejected this idea.*

**Prop. 2:** Shall the city charter be amended to move the City's general election date from May to November, to provide that council members serve four-year staggered terms, to provide that council elections occur in even-numbered years, and to limit the mayor and council members to two terms?

*No, again. Longer terms reduce council accountability. ANC has rejected changes to the election date and term length.*

**Prop. 3:** Shall the city charter be amended to provide for the election of council members from

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10 geographical single-member districts, with the mayor to be elected from the city at large, and to provide for an independent citizens redistricting commission?

**Yes.** ANC has voted to support 10 geographic districts, with no at-large seats, and to support an independent redistricting commission.

**Prop. 4:** Shall the city charter be amended to provide for the election of council members from eight geographical single-member districts, with the mayor and two additional council members to be elected from the city at large?

**No.** This charter amendment does not provide for any citizen input in the drawing of district boundaries. It has been rejected by ANC and the League of Women Voters.

**Prop. 5:** Shall the city charter be amended to permit the members of the city council and the city council's appointees to hire and manage their own staffs?

**Yes,** council members should have control over their own staffs.

**Prop. 6:** Shall the City Charter be amended to provide that the City Council appoint the City Attorney?

**Yes.** The City Attorney currently answers to the City Manager, not the City Council. ANC has long supported this change.

**Prop. 7:** Shall the city charter be amended to reduce the number of signatures needed for a citizen initiated ordinance or referendum?

**Yes.** This makes the city's requirements consistent with state law.

**Prop. 8:** Shall the city charter be amended to allow council members (Continued on page 10)

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**We're Doin' Good in the Neighborhood**

*Barbara Cossie, ZNA Holiday Families Program Coordinator*

FOR MORE YEARS than I care to remember, and so many families that I can't count them all, Zilker neighbors have generously opened their hearts and pocketbooks to give some of our families in need a happier holiday season. Through donations of money, gifts, food, and time, our Zilker neighbors continue to help their neighbors. The Zilker Neighborhood Association is very proud of this annual program of giving, and this year we are asking again for your help.

As in years past, eight families that need assistance for the holidays will be chosen from Zilker Elementary School. The school counselor gathers their wish lists and passes that information on to the Holiday Families Program. From those lists, items for the families are purchased, wrapped, and delivered to the homes by



our Zilker elves shortly before Christmas. This year, we are happy to announce that two more shopping elves will be added to the team: Connie Temple and Skip Smith.

But the elves cannot do this alone. We need your assistance, too! Your donation of gifts and money will continue to make this neighborhood program the success it has always been. If you can help in any way, please complete the form below and mail it in. You will be contacted when the families' wish lists are ready. You can also sign up at the ZNA meeting on October 29.

The Zilker elves will soon be ready to wrap those presents. By making your gift and monetary donations to the ZNA Holiday Families Program, you can keep our Zilker elves very busy all through December!

For further information, e-mail [barbara@ywcaAustin.org](mailto:barbara@ywcaAustin.org).

Put "ZNA Holiday Families" on the subject line.

**ZNA Holiday Families Program Volunteer Sign Up 2012**

Yes, I want to help make the holidays happier for Zilker families.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like to purchase a gift from a family's gift list. Please contact me when the lists arrive.
- I would like to become a Zilker elf. Please contact me about wrapping presents.
- I would like to donate money to the ZNA Holiday Families Program.
- I have enclosed a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Zilker Neighborhood Association and mail with this form to:  
ZNA Holiday Families Program, 1115 Kinney Ave. #42, Austin, TX 78704

**BECOME A ZNA MEMBER TODAY**

Membership is open to Zilker residents (renters or homeowners) 18 years old or older.

Nonresident property owners are not eligible for membership.

Annual dues are \$7 per person. Please list each member name and e-mail address below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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Questions? Please e-mail: [membership@zilkerneighborhood.org](mailto:membership@zilkerneighborhood.org)



## 2013 ZNA Officer Nominations

ON OCTOBER 29, the Zilker Neighborhood Association will elect new officers to serve from November 1, 2012, through October 2013. ZNA's bylaws allow the executive committee to accept nominations for the eight elected positions up to a week before the fall election meeting, so you have until Monday, October 22, to volunteer to serve or to nominate someone else. Call any of the executive committee members on page 12, or e-mail them through the ZNA Web site [ZilkerNeighborhood.org](http://ZilkerNeighborhood.org).

As this newsletter goes to press, the ZNA executive committee can offer these nominees:

*First VP:* Richard Gravois

*Second VP:* Andy Elder

*Treasurer:* Skip Smith

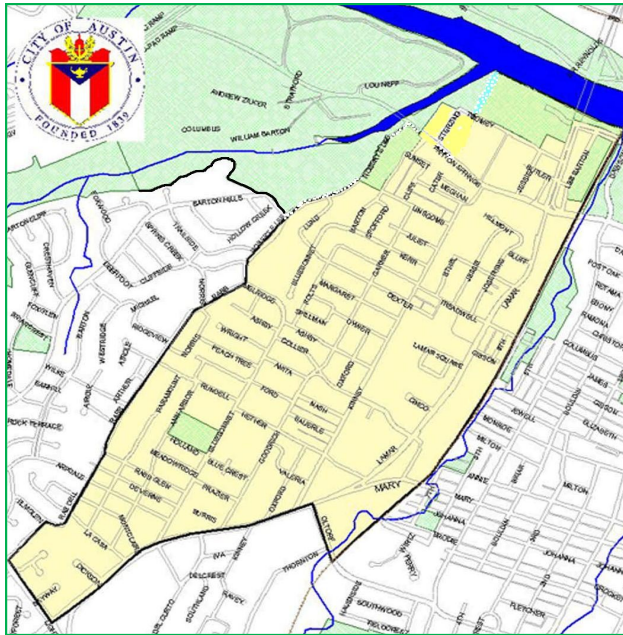
*ZNews Editor:* Lorraine Atherton

The positions of *President, Secretary, Social Chair,* and *ANC Delegate* are still open.

### ZNA Membership and Voting Privileges

All ZNA memberships run from Nov. 1 to Oct. 31. To be eligible to vote at the October election or any other ZNA meeting, you must be a member of ZNA for at least 30 days before the date of the vote. If you were a ZNA member in 2011, you may pay your 2012 dues at the Oct. 29 meeting and still be eligible to vote at that meeting. Your 2012 membership, however, will expire two days later, and you will have to renew your dues to retain voting privileges in 2013. For first-time members, dues paid after Sept. 29 will be credited to the membership year beginning Nov. 1.

*(Continued on page 11)*



ZNA boundaries include Zilker Park and Rabb Road on the west and extend to the railroad tracks on the east. The south boundary is Barton Skyway, and the north limit is Lady Bird Lake. Residents on both sides of boundary streets are eligible for membership.

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(Continued from page 7) to raise political funds for 30 days after an election in which the council member was elected?

**No.** Campaign debt should be much smaller if Prop. 3 (the 10-1 plan) passes.

**Prop. 9:** Shall the city charter be amended to permit the city council to lease parkland to an independent school district for a purpose that the council has found, by a two-thirds majority, is a park purpose?

**No.** ZNA has traditionally opposed exceptions to Article II, §5(a), which prohibits the council from "alienating" dedicated parkland without a special election. If the cause is important, let us vote on it.

**Prop. 10:** Shall the city charter be amended to provide a civil service system for most city employees who are not already covered by a state civil service statute?

**Yes.** This would establish minimum standards that are long overdue in Austin.

**Prop. 11:** Adoption of the emergency medical services personnel civil service law.

**Yes.** Not really a charter change, this places EMS under the same state civil service law as police and fire personnel.

**Bond props 12-18: No.** These bonds can wait till a fair system of geographic representation is established on the City Council. In the absence of reliable council oversight, citizens have no control over how bond money is spent.

### Central Health Tax Ratification Election,

**Prop. 1:** Approving the ad valorem tax rate of \$0.129 per \$100 valuation in Central Health, also known as the Travis County Healthcare District, for the 2013 tax year, a rate that exceeds the district's rollback tax rate. The proposed ad valorem tax rate exceeds the ad valorem tax rate most recently adopted by the district by \$0.05 per \$100 valuation; funds will be used for improved healthcare in Travis County, including support for a new medical school consistent with the mission of Central Health, a site for a new teaching hospital, trauma services, specialty medicine such as cancer care, communitywide health clinics, training for physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals, primary care, behavioral and mental healthcare, prevention and wellness programs, and/or to obtain federal matching funds for healthcare services.

**Yes.** If you vote for only two down-ballot propositions, let them be City Charter Prop. 3 (the 10-1 plan) and Central Health Prop. 1. This is not a bond proposition to pay for construction of a medical school and teaching hospital. It's a tax increase to improve the services provided by our Travis County Healthcare District. South Central Austin has a wealth of progressive health professionals, including midwives, nurse practitioners, clinic doctors, pharmacists, and all the other healthcare workers listed in the ballot

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language for Central Health Prop. 1. Like our schoolteachers, however, their talents are stifled by the backward policies of our current state government. Our investment in the Healthcare District is an investment in these neighbors, and in our own health. It's up to us to make the most of that investment.

*(Continued from page 9)*

**Frequently asked questions:**

*How often does ZNA meet?* Quarterly, on the last Monday in February, April, July, and October, at Faith United Methodist Church, 2701 S. Lamar. The Executive Committee meets at 7-9 PM the first Monday of each month.

*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 of residents through neighbor-to-neighbor discussions and circulation of 2800 newsletters.

*How many members does ZNA have?* As of September, 264 members had paid dues or would be eligible to vote as soon as they renewed.

*Is Zilker@yahoo.com ZNA's official list serve?* No, but the Yahoo group is a vital communication vehicle, with around 900 members. All residents are welcome, whether they are ZNA members or not.

*I want to build something that does not comply with city code. Will ZNA support my request for a variance?* ZNA has a longstanding policy of not supporting variance requests if the applicant does not show a qualifying hardship defined by city code. ZNA encourages all neighbors to comply with city ordinances.



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# **Z** Newsletter of the Zilker Neighborhood **NEWS** Association

[www.zilkerneighborhood.org](http://www.zilkerneighborhood.org)  
2009 Arpdale St., Austin, TX 78704

*E-mail:* ZilkerNA@austin.rr.com

*Editor:* Lorraine Atherton, 447-7681

*Ad Sales:* Dave Piper, 916-9636

*Advertisers:* ZNA reserves this newsletter's limited advertising space for businesses based within the boundaries of the neighborhood association.

## 2012 Executive Committee of ZNA

### *Elected Officers:*

*President:* Andy Elder, 428-9180

*1st VP:* Richard Gravois, 441-3430

*2nd VP:* Open

*Secretary:* Open

*Treasurer:* Skip Smith, 592-8038

*Social Chair:* Open

*ANC Delegate:* Open

*ZNews Editor:* Lorraine Atherton, 447-7681

### About the Zilker Neighborhood Association

ZNA holds general meetings the last Monday of February, April, July, and October, at Faith United Methodist Church, 2701 S. Lamar. The Executive Committee meets at 7 PM the first Monday of each month. Watch the Web site for updates.

**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

*Membership:* Connie Temple, 592-8039

*Parks and Environment:* Gardner Sumner, 468-6200

*Sound:* Bill Neale, bneale15@yahoo.com

*ZNews Advertising:* Dave Piper, 916-9636



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