

# Z NEWS

Newsletter of the  
Zilker  
Neighborhood  
Association

JULY 2011

Austin, Texas  
Established 1981

## Urban Villages Connect Zilker Neighbors

*An Invitation from ZNA President Andrew Elder*

WHEN I WAS A KID, I LOVED THE BBC SHOW *Connections*. It's a documentary series from the late seventies where the host followed a string of events to show how our modern world is built on various and unexpected relationships from the past. The show also features some spectacularly bad disco-era fashion, so it's entertaining on many levels. On a more modern note, if you happen to catch the latest issue of the Austin arts and culture magazine *Tribeza*, you'll see some Zilker neighborhood connections front and center.

There's Zilker resident and city staffer Annick Beaudet, leading the charge for bicycle programs throughout Austin. I'm happy to announce that bicycle funds will bring a new multiuse sidewalk along the west side of Robert E. Lee Boulevard later this summer, helping to connect the neighborhood to Zilker Park. Thanks to the efforts of the ZNA Executive Committee and neighbor/developer Ryan Diepenbrock, we have secured commitments to future sidewalks along the east side as well (see p. 8). Both sidewalks are important because *(Continued on page 11)*

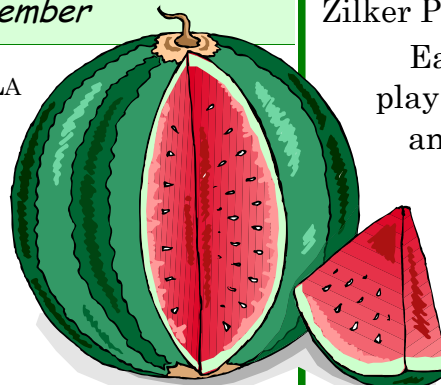
## Public Works coming to a street near you

*Street reconstruction slated for September*

SEVERAL BLOCKS BETWEEN RABB GLEN AND LA CASA streets are likely to be torn up this fall and next year. The affected streets within the Zilker neighborhood are:

- ◆ Ann Arbor from Arpdale to De Verne
- ◆ Arpdale from Paramount to Bluebonnet
- ◆ De Verne from Rae Dell to Paramount
- ◆ Paramount from Rabb Glen to end
- ◆ Rabb Glen from Rae Dell to Ann Arbor

The City of Austin project, called Group 10, is part of the street reconstruction program in the city's 2006 bond package. Slated to begin in September 2011, the work will include water, wastewater, and storm sewer improve- *(Continued on page 3)*



## WATERMELON SOCIAL

July 25

Monday 7-8:30 PM

Zilker Elementary School  
1900 Bluebonnet



Meet your neighbors and

- ◆ Get your child fingerprinted (page 2)
- ◆ Meet Public Works staff in charge of street reconstruction (page 1)
- ◆ Get updates on ACL Fest traffic plan (page 4)
- ◆ Learn about historic church and cemetery on Goodrich (page 5)
- ◆ Volunteer for Little Zilker Park projects (page 8)

Eat watermelon,  
play games, win prizes,  
and celebrate Zilker



Newcomers, old-  
timers, home-  
owners, renters,  
business neighbors

All Welcome



## Get Your Child's Fingerprints, and Watermelon, July 25

CONSTABLE RICHARD MCCAIN, who serves our Travis County Precinct 3, has accepted the invitation of Zilker Neighborhood Watch volunteers to attend the ZNA Watermelon Social on July 25. Besides visiting with neighbors about the role and responsibilities of the constable and his 17 deputies, he will provide child identification kits and fingerprinting for children who attend the social with their parents. Distribution of the kits is one way that the constable's office can help make Zilker a safer place.

Child ID kits provide a convenient place for parents to record vital information about their children, in a form that can be easily turned over to law enforcement officials if a child becomes lost. "The few moments it takes to record this information may prove vital in the recovery and identification of a child should they become lost," McCain explained. These records are not maintained by the constable's office, however, and McCain emphasized the importance of keeping your own child's information: "Please take a few moments to record your child's personal information in the booklet, including their fingerprints and a current photo-



graph. Parents may also wish to include a lock of the child's hair, which can be used for DNA testing. Parents should update the photograph every year. Take photographs as the child normally looks. For children under the age of two, the photo should be updated every four months. Fingerprints should be updated every few years. While a child's fingerprints never change, their fingers become larger as they grow, making fingerprints easier to read.



"Keep a separate record for each of your children. Keep this booklet in a safe location, but one which allows you easy access 24 hours a day should you need it for law enforcement officials. Parents should also make a mental note of what their child is wearing each day."

Constable McCain urges parents to take advantage of this child ID service: "Please help us in our efforts to protect the children of Travis County."

Bring your kids to the new playscape at Little Zilker Park the evening of July 25, 7-8:30 pm, behind the school, and let them get their hands messy with watermelon and fingerprinting ink. ZNA will provide plenty of paper towels and baby wipes.

### *A Happy Place to Learn and Play!*

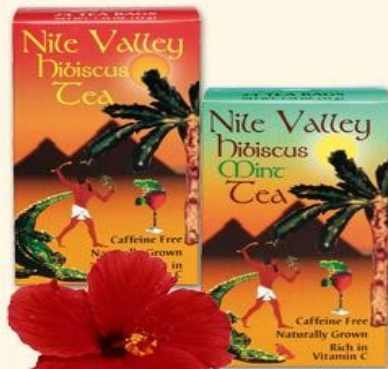


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(Continued from page 1) ments prior to full-depth street reconstruction. Texas Gas Service, however, may need to complete some work first, so the Public Works Department may delay construction on some parts of the city's project. For now, the Group 10 project is scheduled to be complete by March 2013.

The project also includes these streets in the Barton Hills neighborhood (west of Rabb Road):

- ◆ Cliffside from Wildgrove to Spring Creek
- ◆ Ridgeview from Barton Parkway to Micheal
- ◆ Westridge from Ridgeview to end
- ◆ Rockingham from Barton Skyway to Barton Parkway
- ◆ Rock Terrace from Barton Skyway to Barton Parkway

The project manager and contractor have been invited to ZNA's Watermelon Social on Monday, July 25 (behind Zilker Elementary School), to answer any questions or address concerns of residents.

The Group 10 Project manager for Public Works is Rick Colbrunn. He can be reached at rick.colbrunn@ci.austin.tx.us or 974-7089. Visit the Web site cityofaustin.org/publicworks for more information on this and other capital improvement projects citywide.

*Editor's note:* Thanks to Michelle LoRee Frith, Outreach and Marketing Coordinator for Public Works, for supplying ZNews with this information in time for our print deadline.

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## Austin City Limits Traffic Plan

THE AUSTIN CITY LIMITS Music Festival will be September 16-18 this year.

The first of the annual planning meetings between C3 Presents ACL, the nearest neighborhoods, and the City of Austin was held in mid-July, after this newsletter went to press. At the April ZNA meeting, the membership recommended the addition of temporary No Parking zones on Garner, Lund, and Meghan and removal of the barricade with police officer at Linscomb. Those proposals have been submitted to event planners by Steve McGuire on behalf of ZNA. Updates should be available at the ZNA Watermelon Social on July 25.

The festival Web site ([www.aclfestival.com](http://www.aclfestival.com)) continues to encourage people to use Capital Metro or other alternative methods of transportation, especially bicycles, and not to drive and park in the neighborhoods adjacent to Zilker Park. Check the Web site for the latest info.

Expect roads leading into the park to close at midnight on Thursday and reopen midnight on Sunday: Barton Springs Road at Robert E. Lee, MoPac frontage at Columbus Drive, Stratford Drive at Nature Center Drive. Access into the Zilker neighborhood is usually restricted at Kinney and Virginia, at Sunset, and at Lund. A temporary No Parking zone should be in effect on the east side of Kinney from the fire station at Collier north to Virginia.



## We Voted, and How

Thanks to everyone who voted in the City Council Place 3 Runoff Election on June 18, 2011. Citywide, we did not manage to break 10% on voter turnout, but every section of the city turned out more voters than in the May election, a remarkable achievement given the trend of declining interest in Council elections. Altogether, our seven South Central neighborhoods turned out an additional 1046 voters.

Zilker precinct 332 pushed its turnout from 20% to 26%, and precinct 462 went from 11% to almost 15%. The two precincts combined had 924 voters, 217 more than in the May election.

The south end of ZNA votes in the sprawling Barton Hills precinct 342, and they also turned out for the runoff, with 952 votes cast, or 20%. Barton Hills added 233 voters over the May election.

We voted overwhelmingly for Kathie Tovo, 72% in Zilker and 65% in Barton Hills. The average for the South Central neighborhoods was 66% in favor of Tovo.

For a good summary of the citywide turnout and an excellent map, see the *Austin Chronicle* for the week after the election.

Thanks to everyone who helped get out the vote. *Lorraine Atherton, ANC Sector Rep*

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## Help Preserve 150 years of Austin History

ZNA VOLUNTEERS have been working with the Barton Springs Baptist Church Heritage Association for several years on the maintenance of the historic cemetery at 2900 Goodrich. The developer of the property next door, Riverside Homes, has generously stepped forward, with the approval of the Heritage Association, to help protect and preserve the small cinderblock church building. Barton Springs Baptist Church, established in 1865, was a cultural and religious center of the neighborhood for 80 years. The repairs are to consist of replacing the roof, painting, and securing the structure against moisture penetration. Because some of the repairs (the roof, for instance), may be costly, Riverside Homes has proposed a partnership with ZNA to raise funds for the project. To learn more you may contact Riverside Homes at 473-9930. At the ZNA Watermelon Social (behind Zilker Elementary on July 25), volunteers will be on hand to discuss how the community can take part in the care of this important part of neighborhood history.



Barton Springs Baptist Church, February 2010

Several neighbors are also seeking state designation for the cemetery. One of the oldest African-American cemeteries in Central Texas, it was designated a City of Austin landmark in 1993. Neighbors will begin working with the church's Heritage Association to apply for designation as a Historic Texas Cemetery through the Texas Historical Commission. For more information about the state program, visit the commission's Web site at [thc.state.tx.us/cemeteries/cemhtc.shtml](http://thc.state.tx.us/cemeteries/cemhtc.shtml).

To volunteer, contact Mike Meier, [zilkerna@austin.rr.com](mailto:zilkerna@austin.rr.com).

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## Short-term Rental Debate Heats Up at Planning Commission

SHORT-TERM RENTALS (STRs for short) are a fairly new phenomenon in cities like Austin, and beyond the definition of "short-term" as less than 30 days, there is little agreement about what they are, how they affect neighborhoods, and what regulations (if any) are applicable.

Until recently, STRs in Austin tended to be very occasional rentals of true owner-occupied homes (the owner would rent to a friend for two weeks while they were on vacation). Lately, the internet has made it possible for investors to coordinate short-term rentals of several houses, essentially operating hotel networks while avoiding the regulations that apply to bed and breakfasts. A recent audit found that only about 80 of the 200+ properties listed in Austin registered and paid their hotel occupancy tax.

Austin may need more rental options for visitors and for the UT community, such as B&Bs and boarding houses. STRs can be a beneficial part of that mix, but Austin must distinguish between owner-occupied homes that are occasionally rented for less than a month versus purely commercial operations that are avoiding reasonable regulations.

Austin has formed an STR working group to recommend a new ordinance through the Planning Commission. Because Zilker has one of the highest concentrations of STRs in the city, ZNA officers have been active in this working group.

THANKS AGAIN TO ALL the Zilker neighbors who donated to the **Neighborhood Watch Adopt-a-Sign** program. A special thanks to Shudde Fath for the generous donation to purchase and install the eight new signs to be placed at key entry points into the Zilker neighborhood. Now that all of the pledged funds have been received, we are working with the City to secure approvals for the placement of these new signs.

Read about the Adopt-a-Sign project in the April edition of *ZNews*, in the archives at the ZNA Web site, [zilkerneighborhood.org](http://zilkerneighborhood.org).

Among the provisions being considered, ZNA and other members of the Austin Neighborhoods Council are particularly interested in the following:

- ◆ The separation of business (commercial) STRS; that is, rentals of homes that are not owner-occupied may not operate within 1000 feet of another commercial STR.
- ◆ Registration of all STRs.
- ◆ Inspection of business STRs for safety standards and neighborhood compatibility.
- ◆ Conditional use permit process (with a public hearing) for business STRs, similar to that required for B&Bs.

ZNA VP Steven McGuire and president Andy Elder will try to keep updates on this issue posted on the Web site, [zilkerneighborhood.org](http://zilkerneighborhood.org).

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## Neighbors Envision Zilker School Design


STUDENTS, PARENTS, teachers, and neighbors came together for Envision Zilker on Saturday, May 14. The professionally guided design workshop was an enormous success. Sponsored by the Zilker Elementary PTA and Campus Advisory Council, the workshop was facilitated by representatives from the Austin Community Design and Development Center. It focused on facilities and campus growth, providing an opportunity for participants to brainstorm, identify shared values, and lay the groundwork for another 60 years of excellence. As AISD plans for future school bonds and contemplates districtwide facility usage, the workshop provided a forum to develop and document a vision for the beloved campus. Stay tuned for more information on the workshop results and new ideas.

*Amy Spiro and Heather Way  
Zilker Elementary PTA*

Many thanks to **Austin Java** for donating coffee and to **Torchy's Tacos** for donating tacos. Please tell these businesses that you appreciate their support for Zilker.

To read more about the event, look for the story by KXAN News 36 on the Web site [kxan.com](http://kxan.com). Stay in touch with the campaign to Save Zilker Elementary through the PTA site at [zilkerelem.org](http://zilkerelem.org), on Facebook, and on the Save Zilker Yahoo Group email list.

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### Little Zilker Park Needs You

FRIENDS OF LITTLE ZILKER Park is gearing up for an action-packed year and is seeking the help of talented neighbors as we work to make our park a first-class community green space. Upcoming projects include a new playscape near Bluebonnet Lane, a new water fountain on the northwest side of the park, and a new sidewalk along Ann Arbor Street.

Fall and spring workdays bring neighbors together to plant trees, install wildlife-friendly plants, spread mulch, and prune trees and bushes. Past projects include the quarter-mile granite track circling the park, the Ann Arbor playscape, nearly 80 new trees, wildflower and butterfly gardens, and a split-rail fence along the east side of the park.

The latest project to be completed is the lighting of the south side of the playing field, to extend its use in the winter months. Thanks to Little Zilker board member Gina Diehl for shepherding the project, to Charles Vaclavik of the parks department, to the folks at Austin Energy who helped with the underground wiring, and finally to Parks Grounds Manager Joe Diaz, Jr., and the forestry irrigator who made sure the irrigation system and the new plantings survived the trenching.

If you have an interest in sustainable landscaping, public art, event planning, or fundraising, or if you just like public spaces and want to contribute to the community, please consider joining Friends of Little Zilker Park.

### A Sidewalk by Another Name

THE SIDEWALK REQUIRED for the Melridge Terrace development will be built across the street. Although city staff has decided that no funding is available for sidewalk construction, bicycle money will be available to extend the developer's sidewalk from Trailside down the Robert E. Lee hill to Barton Hills Drive. To qualify for bicycle money, the sidewalk must be 8 feet wide and labeled



*Robert E. Lee at Barton Hills Drive. An 8-foot sidewalk will be built in the street in the right lane.*

We welcome your time and/or donations. To join the Little Zilker planning committee, 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."

#### 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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"multi-use trail." Because of steep terrain, trees, and other obstacles, the city's 8-foot sidewalk will have to be built within the existing street space. We have been assured, however, that the 6-foot climbing lane for bicycles will be retained.

Because Robert E. Lee is a heavily used collector street, it should have sidewalks on both sides. To assure us that the west sidewalk will not preclude the future completion of the east sidewalk, Howard Lazarus, director of Public Works, has given the Zilker and Barton Hills neighborhood associations the following statement: "The multi-use trail built on the west side of Robert E. Lee Rd will be moved outside the curb where necessary to allow the future construction of a sidewalk on the east side. When a continuous sidewalk is constructed along the east side of Robert E. Lee Rd from Barton Hills Dr. to the Melridge Terrace development by others, the City will construct the remaining sidewalk on the east side of Robert E. Lee Rd adjacent to the Melridge Terrace property within one year. The goal of this project is to create complete sustainable transportation corridors as per the adopted Sidewalk Master Plan and Bicycle Master Plan." *Lorraine Atherton*



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## Census Shows How Zilker Grows

by Lorraine Atherton

WITH ZILKER IN THE MIDST OF A BABY BOOM, many of us have been baffled by recent news of the decline of our urban schools and the lack of families with children in central Austin neighborhoods. ZNA's planning committee has been gathering 2010 Census data to help us understand Zilker's growth. The data released so far show that Zilker's population has increased everywhere except at the old Stoneridge site near Lamar Square, where 141 affordable apartments were demolished several years ago. Minus that block group, Zilker's population grew by 258, or 6.9%. (Population data are not yet available for the most densely populated part of the neighborhood, between La Casa and Barton Skyway. The small increase in the number of households there would indicate that its population has increased as well.)

Ford Street, mentioned in Andy Elder's page 1 article, is at the heart of Block Group 2, immediately north of Zilker Elementary. This is perhaps the most stable part of the neighborhood. In 2000 it had the highest density of our single-family areas, at 11.5 persons per acre. Its 2010 population is exactly the same as 2000, but there are fewer occupied housing units. The average household size is now over 2, which is high for Austin, indicating that the number of families with children has increased. That appears to be the trend for most of Zilker, but without Census

data for age groups and individual blocks, we can't be sure. What's most disturbing about the Census data is the enormous inventory of vacant housing (399); Zilker added a huge number of units (477), but almost all of it was unoccupied last year. Vacancies were up 265% for the north part of the neighborhood and 117% for the south.

Here's a selection of ZNA Census data.

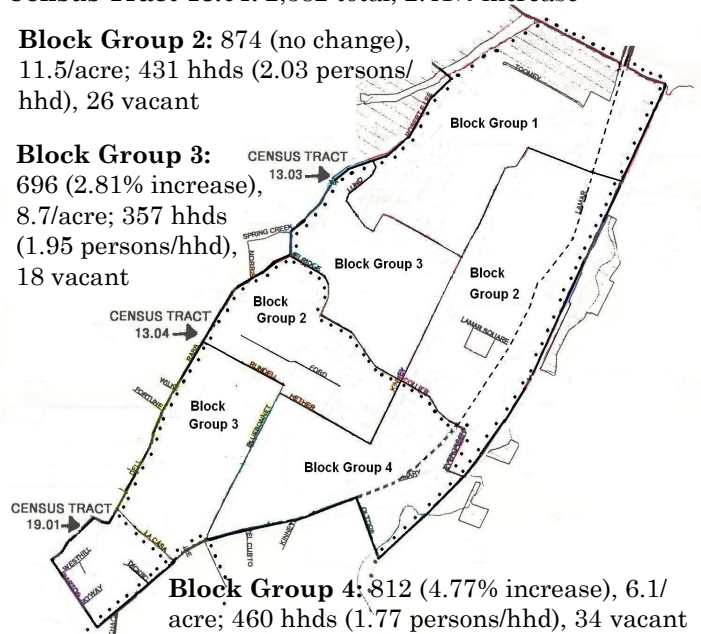
**Census Tract 13.03:** 2,871 total, 5% decrease  
**Block Group 1:** Pop. 882 (23.18% increase), 5.8/acre; 513 households (1.72 persons/hhd), 303 vacant units  
**Block Group 2:** 1,267 (21.79% decrease), 8.5/acre; 755 hhd (1.55 persons/hhd), 62 vacant  
**Block Group 3:** 722 (5.25% increase), 6.3/acre; 343 hhd (2.10 persons/hhd), 18 vacant

**Census Tract 13.04:** 2,382 total, 2.41% increase

**Block Group 2:** 874 (no change), 11.5/acre; 431 hhd (2.03 persons/hhd), 26 vacant

**Block Group 3:** 696 (2.81% increase), 8.7/acre; 357 hhd (1.95 persons/hhd), 18 vacant

**Block Group 4:** 812 (4.77% increase), 6.1/acre; 460 hhd (1.77 persons/hhd), 34 vacant



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(Continued from page 1) Robert E. Lee is not just a pathway to Barton Springs. It is also a primary route through the neighborhood, for quick trips to Bluebonnet Market, for bus and bicycle commuters, and for kids walking to school.

At a time when budget cuts are threatening our school and reporters are asking where all the neighborhood kids have gone (see page 10), we need look no farther than Ford Street to see just how many young families could be using those sidewalks. Ford is notable for having 20 children living in a two-block area. There also happens to be a collective profile of Ford in the new *Tribeza*, including a photo by neighbor Rene Renteria that captures the look and spirit of a 78704 community. The recurring theme from residents young and old is the strong social and virtual connections that tie them all together.

On Zilker's Yahoo group, ZNA VP Richard Gravois has touted another village concept, one developed by AARP to promote community-based support for older residents. The concept involves connecting through a co-op that provides transportation, meals, socializing, and assistance that might otherwise be available only in assisted care facilities. Through shared services, neighbors get to stay in their homes and build stronger community ties.

These stories highlight some of the great people in our neighborhood, but they also have something to say about how we can sustain and improve Zilker for all residents.

The most powerful way for us to support a livable neighborhood for everyone is to build and strengthen the ties that bind all of us as neighbors. All neighbors can join the Zilker Yahoo group to learn about ongoing issues and have virtual

discussions. We invite all residents to become members of the neighborhood association to support our community interests, or better yet, to volunteer with the association and tackle an issue you care about. These are the tools for Zilker to do what Carol Stall has done on Ford: "I know we've made an impact on some of those around us. They now see it's possible for a mere urban street to become a real village. I think it gives others confidence that they can create a special community too."

Our next opportunity to get together in person will be the Watermelon Social on Monday, June 25, at Zilker Elementary's Outdoor Learning Center. We'll be hosting games for kids, prize drawings for adults, plus our Precinct 3 Constable will be there to distribute child ID kits and to fingerprint kids (page 2). We will also be raising money to help with repairs to the Barton Springs Baptist Church and historic cemetery (page 5). Please come help us celebrate our Zilker village.

*Your neighbor, Andy Elder*

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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

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## **2011 Executive Committee of ZNA**

### **Elected Officers:**

*President:* Andy Elder, 428-9180  
*1st VP:* Richard Gravois, 441-3430  
*2nd VP:* Steve McGuire, 447-2928  
*Secretary:* Ryan Stryker, 431-4245  
*Treasurer:* Skip Smith, 592-8038  
*Social Chair:* Matt Ditlow, 590-0929  
*ANC Delegate:* Connie Temple, 592-8039  
*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:**

*ACL Festival:* Steve McGuire  
*Holiday Family Program:* Barbara Cossie, 447-4437  
*Parks and Environment:* Gardner Sumner, 468-6200  
*Sound:* Bill Neale, williamneale@hotmail.com  
*ZNews Advertising:* Dave Piper, 916-9636

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