



P. O. Box 20411 Houston, TX 77225-0411

Westwood Babblers – Sept 2018

Civic Club Meeting September 20th at Corpus Christi Church

Upcoming: Neighborhood Night-Out Tuesday, October 2nd

Westwood - Stakeholder
in Super Neighborhood #38

Website:

westwoodcivicclub.com

E-mail:

westwoodcc@outlook.com

Important dates/locations!

Tree Waste

Pick-up Days:

Sept 18, Nov 20, Jan 15

Heavy Trash

Pick-up Days:

Aug 21, Oct 16, Dec 18

Free COH Heavy Trash Site:

5100 Sunbeam 77033

(near Airport and Cullen)

Westpark Consumer Recycling

Westpark at Fountain View

COH Environmental Serv Cntr

11500 S. Post Oak Rd

Houston, TX 77035

Civic Club Meeting: September 20th

- **LOOK!** Scheduled Speaker: **Martha Castex-Tatum** – our District K City of Houston councilperson.
- Westwood Community Concerns. You gotta tell us what is on your mind. How else will we know?
- Work-In-Progress – what we got going and where we are on it. Inquiring minds will want to know this.

National Night Out: Tuesday Oct. 2

October 2nd – Westwood Park

Hot Dogs! Cookies! Good Folks!

Attire: Picnic casual. Caution: you may get Ketchup on these clothes! Details to follow...

Interested in becoming a mover and a shaker?

- Speak to any board member
- Contact Dan Ballard, my cell phone and email are listed in this Babbler. Please do not divulge to enemy agents!
- Must not have been arrested in the past ten days (okay, we're flexible on this)

Get Connected with Westwood!

Visit our **Website:** <http://westwoodcivicclub.com/>

Like us on **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/westwoodcivicclub/>

Join our Neighborhood on **NextDoor:** <https://westwoodalbiontx.nextdoor.com/login>



From the Westwood Civic Club President: Paul Sobieski

Folks, Paul took another sabbatical to recharge his battery. The immense challenge of charting a course for Westwood has drained his batteries. All we know is that he took his wooden staff and climbed a mountain to get some spiritual insights. We'll see what revelations he has to share with us when he returns. Last we heard, he was climbing down carrying some stone tablets with important information. I'll keep you posted...

Westwood Civic Club: Our current "WIP List" submitted by Bob Weber, VP Westwood CC

- 1) Have the county or city mow (clean) the drainage ditch beside the railroad tracks. Paul and I have visited/talked with the representative from Martha Castex-Tatum's office and they have passed the job to the county, who has tentatively agreed to consider our request. (Ed: Reason why this is so important; half of the Westwood subdivision drains into this ditch—if it gets clogged, the water will back-up on our streets and possibly into our homes. And it requires more than mowing; probably bush-hogging, tree trimming and some hauling-off. Might even benefit from deepening and widening.)
- 2) We still need to make changes to the planters on the esplanade. Volunteers anyone? (Ed: We agreed to put this on the back burner, it's just too darn hot right now.)
- 3) We need to be able to change/update the Westwood website. (Ed: Folks, we are looking for someone to help us here, contact the board as you feel so led.) ←
- 4) We need to find some "Block Captains" for Nenana, Silverwood and Bassoon (on the north side). (Ed: Anybody want to step up and give us a hand?)
- 5) Wanda Weber wants the City to see that all of the reflectors are in place for the fire hydrants. (Some are missing.)
- 6) I have contacted the railroad regarding the "rough" crossing on West Belfort. We are awaiting a reply. (Ed: this is on the eastbound side of West Belfort; one of the concrete components of the RR track has settled at an angle and formed a small, but nasty, ramp that catapults your car into the air.)

Architecural Report: Ken Calvert

- House torn down at 4117 Woodcraft. Waiting for plans to be submitted for what will go up there.
- 4002 Silverwood was granted the variance for setback on Stella Link. Waiting for plans to be revised and re-submitted based on the variance.

- 4113 Lemac has contacted us for information regarding proposed construction. We are waiting for plans to be submitted. Kudos for them in contacting us before getting drawings finalized and getting a Permit. This is the right way to do it.

Volunteer Needed: Susan Pennington

In a previous issue of the babbler editor Dan Ballard explained the steps taken in order for the newsletter to be compiled, printed and delivered. The last step (and definitely not the least) requires a neighbor *to bring it to your doorstep*. Right now, there are two blocks that need a volunteer (better known as a Block Captain) to deliver the babbler: 4001-4081 Silverwood and 9802-9941 Bassoon. Please call Susan Pennington (713-666-19740) or e-mail penn31446@gmail.com if you are able to provide this service.

Ed: Folks, this is a great way to be of service to your neighbors and get a little exercise. It is a proven fact people who deliver Babblers live longer, happier lives than those who don't. Just saying....

What's happening in the Wild, Wild Westwood: Shearn Elementary: *Code Red!*

Excerpted from information sent by Dave Agerton, Weekly YMCA Board Member.

On 8/19/18 Dave Agerton rang my cell and asked if he could submit an article for publication in the Westwood Babbler. When I asked what it was about, his answer hit me like a bucket of hot drilling mud: Shearn Elementary's grade by Children At Risk is "**D minus.**"

By my math, that's one belt notch above "E." Folks, an institution of public education is collapsing right in our backyard. If this were snakes, drug dealers or invaders from outer space, we'd be all over it, torches and pitch forks in hand. As far as I'm concerned, a school struggling with these challenges is no different. It's Code Red time. Read this information and then tell me if you think I'm off-base.

Background: Let's begin with the mission statement of the YMCA: "To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all." In 2015, the YMCA asked the question: "How can we more deeply engage our community in our mission?" The short answer was a plan for a more holistic, integrated approach to outreach—something that aligns with (proven) recommendations by social service thought leaders.

It didn't take long to locate the area of greatest need; the children and families at Shearn and Ashford Santa Fe (ASF) Apartments—located a mere 1.5 miles from our YMCA—are folks living on the edge. 95% of students are disadvantaged, 65% are English language Learners, and 86% are "at-risk." Attendance is below standard. Behavior issues are frequent.

The Challenge: In the Shearn-ASF community, the need required a holistic approach on three areas: 1) academic achievement, 2) social-emotional development, and 3) family engagement. The goal: To improve Shearn's rating to a "B" or better by 2020.

Aware of the difficulties at Shearn Elementary, the Weekley Y established a "Communities in Schools" (CIS) staff at Shearn to coordinate programs and volunteers. Today, they have seventeen (17) programs, involving both volunteers and collaborations with community institutions. Success and impact will be reflected in metrics used by HISD and social-service organizations.

What they need to help accomplish their mission: The good folks at the Weekley Y have done the heavy lifting by first recognizing the need and then setting up a framework of service delivery. But to move forward, they need people to step up and put their shoulders to the wheel. Opportunities exist for Westwood residents and Civic Club leaders to participate as volunteers at Shearn or on the Shearn Community Council being formed with guidance from HISD Wraparound Services. Folks, this is an opportunity to make a difference *within walking distance of where you live!* To look the other way is to ignore the leak in the canoe because it is in the other guy's half of the boat. Just not an option.

You don't have to commit right away, or sell the family farm. All you have to do is to be open to the fact that young people are in need and listen to what the still small voice tells you to do. Most of us will never be able to feed the hungry of the world, or cure a disease, but we can make a difference right where we are. We have a lot of horsepower here in Westwood. Time to quit riding the pine (or lounge chair) and rope this tornado. Who's in?

The core volunteer opportunities are focused on helping children learn to read. Volunteers can register at Shearn with the Community-In-Schools project manager, Katherine Guerra. Further details are available from Dave Agerton on the Weekley YMCA Member Board at 713-873-1318, dagerton@gmail.com. I'll print more details and updates as I receive them.

Sad News for District K: Passing of Donald Perkins, District K Chief of Staff

Many of you may not know who Mr. Perkins was, but he was well known to the Westwood Civic Club as a strong supporter and our "go to" guy for neighborhood challenges requiring some government muscle to get things done. Legend has it that he didn't know how to say the word "No."

Mr. Perkins was also a driving force behind the Super Neighborhood concept and the designated city official assigned to (our) SN #38. His passing leaves some big shoes to be filled in the offices of District K Councilwoman Martha Castex-Tatum. The Westwood Civic Club joins our fellow Houstonians in somber reflection about the fragility of life and the quiet dignity of being of service to others. Godspeed Donald!

Your Number is Up! Judy Mathis; Bounty Hunter, retired. Note: (The following does not apply to Westwood residents who are in the Witness Protection Program. Please ignore.)

But for the rest of us blue collar chumps, who never stashed away any ill-gotten gains and drank champagne on someone else's dollar, listen up! YOU MUST HAVE VISIBLE ADDRESS NUMBERS ON YOUR WESTWOOD RESIDENCE! Do any of you really think that bill collectors and bad guys can't find you because you don't put your address on the front of your house? Really? Are you dreaming? The only people you're fooling are the folks you need to play ball with: your mailperson, the EMTs who come to jump-start your stone cold heart at 2:00 am in the morning and the good souls who *hand-deliver* your Babbler to your front porch. But again, it ain't me, it's that pesky City of Houston requiring this. Here's the ordinance:

C. 10-215. - Specifications for numbers—Noncommercial buildings and residential units.

(a) Each noncommercial building shall have an identifying number posted in a position to be plainly legible and visible from the street, road, common driveway or common parking lot fronting the property. (Ed: Okay, this sentence says it all, those of you who have your street number visible from the street can quit reading right here and pour yourself another Kahlua and Coffee. Those of you who need to put up a house number can—and must—solider on.)

(b) Each identifying residential unit number is to be posted and maintained on or within 18 inches of an entrance to the unit or such greater distance as the fire marshal may approve and shall be:

- 1) Permanently affixed to the outside of the door or on the outside wall of such building or unit.
- 2) Of a color which is in contrast to the background.
- 3) For any noncommercial building built for first occupancy on or before May 22, 1979, at least two inches in height.
- 4) For any noncommercial building built for first occupancy after May 22, 1979, at least three inches in height, except that a residential unit contained in a building where residential unit numbers are posted pursuant to section 10-213.1 of this Code may have residential unit numbers two inches or more in height.
- 5) For each noncommercial building and each residential unit therein for which a building permit was issued after January 1, 2010: (i) of a color that contrasts with the background; (ii) one or more Arabic numerals or alphabet letters; and (iii) a minimum of 4 inches (102 mm) high with a minimum stroke width of 0.5 inches (12.7 mm).
- 6) For any multiunit residential property for which a building permit is issued after January 1, 2010: required to be illuminated. *Let there be light!* (Cont'd on next page)

(Ed: The height of the letters doubles every 31 years. Think you got it bad? Those poor souls in 2072 will have to put up characters that are 16” tall. Let’s be grateful for what we’ve got.)

From the Editor: Dan Ballard

I’m available to speak/meet with neighbors who want to get something off of their chest. I often don’t have a solution, but I will promise to listen. Here’s where you can vent your Westwood concerns: dballardpmp@sbcglobal.net or reach me on my cell at 832-875-3326.

I had a great time at the last Civic Club meeting, where I met with interesting people who wanted to share the following information:

Jorge Martinez, realtor – lives on Sarong and is interested in community. Good guy. He didn’t tell me this, but I got a strong baseball vibe from Jorge. Possibly a beer drinker, too.

Jeff Peters, president SN #38 – what a surprise it was to put a face to the organization. We exchanged cards and as soon as I get my security clearance, Jeff is going to give us super neighborhood updates. Who would of thought, huh?

Jorge Reyna, Houston museum of natural history – Jorge wanted me to tell everyone that he is available to help anyone in Westwood who has a small electrical problem, *free of charge!* Got a sparking receptacle? A popping switch? Give Jorge a call at: 281-865-1165. If I have time, I’ll come with him and hold his tools. And I’d be honored to do so.

Alicia Harris, flutist – Also known as the “Siren of Bassoon” Alicia has mentioned that she plays in an orchestra that provides *free concerts!* Details are forthcoming. I just love using the “F” word!

Joy Lindsey, ESL teacher and fan of Houston gardening – suggests encouraging more of our neighbors to grow more of their own food by mentioning what can be planted at the time the Babbler comes out. Unfortunately, August is the worst month of all for planting. About the only thing that can be planted in this heat is cucumbers and maybe summer squash.

However.., beginning in September, we can plant cucumbers again and more zucchini. For *expert* advice on what works in Houston gardens and when, check out the Urban Harvest website.

Mackenzie Hill, a Westwood neighbor, shared her sorrow on Nextdoor when her cat was killed by a speeding truck. Losing an animal friend is a sorrow I would not wish on anyone. Folks, you have to slow down in a residential neighborhood. This is not a request.

If this sampling is representative of the folks residing in our fair glen—and I think it is—then I’m tempted to say that we’ve got some real players here. These are the kinds of folks who know life’s great secret: that which is given away, always returns to you in greater measure.

Folks, it's time to clean up this town! Dan Ballard / Yosemite Sam



“My wife is always trying to get rid of me. The other day she told me to put the garbage out. I said to her I already did. She told me to go and keep an eye on it.”

Rodney Dangerfield

Folks, now that we've mastered putting our garbage cans away, it's time to move on to some more advanced community improvements. This time, we're going to focus on what the City of Houston has to say about letting go of large items, which may have served us well in the past, but have now reached their expiration date.

The first thing we need to know is that property owners must not store materials out in the open. Materials include: dead trees, tires, refuse, glass, building materials, appliances, inoperable boats, and junk vehicles. Pretty much anything made of molecules... Additionally, junk, trash, litter and rubbish cannot be deposited or allowed to accumulate on a lot street. This includes junked auto parts, appliances, furniture, building materials, tires, discarded paper, tree trimmings, cardboard, plastics, fallen tree limbs and other offensive or objectionable materials.

Now for the granddaddy of 20th century junk: **Junk Cars**. Here's the Texas law (Texas Transportation Code, §683.071) governing junk cars.

A junk motor vehicle is any vehicle, visible from a public place or public right-of-way, that is:

- wrecked, dismantled, discarded, or
- is inoperable and remains inoperable for a continuous period of more than 30 days on private property, and;
- displays an expired license plate or does not display a license plate.

Any such vehicle must be screened by completely enclosing the vehicle in a building. Car covers, tarps, bamboo shades and other types of materials are not acceptable screening.

To avoid fines: Remove, repair, or properly store any such vehicle that cannot move under its own power, or is wrecked, dismantled, discarded, or remains continuously inoperable for 30 days.

Here's the bad news:

The fines for not following these simple guidelines are between: \$200 – \$2,000. That's folding money, folks. Nobody has this kind of change to throw away. These are sensible rules and

we should be able to get into complete compliance. If you're having a problem and need some help, call the Civic Club. No guarantees, but if the job can be done by senior citizens with kind hearts, then we'll help. Again, no assurances about completion, either. We're just helpers. If it's your mess, so you're the project manager responsible for getting the job done. Capiche?

Oh yeah, I almost forgot... **Parking on the Lawn!** The following is excerpted from **Texas Law:**

Offense: If you park on a surface that is not improved (paved) in the front or side of a single family residence you are in violation of Texas law. Okay, this law is mostly for city folks; not for our country cousins having a crawfish boil. But here in Westwood we live in the *big city*, so it applies to us.

Penalty: While not a Capital Offense, it is still a misdemeanor to go off-roading in the front yard. If you get caught parking your mud wagon next to the pink flamingos, you can be fined up to \$150. Now, in the real world (where I live), there are exceptions. We understand that. But on a clear rain-free night, your car should be parked either in your garage, on your driveway (not blocking a sidewalk), or in the street approximately 6-3/8" from the curb, but no more than 18 inches (which is also a violation). We're issuing rulers to all Civic Club personnel. You were warned! (Ed: just messing with you about the 6-3/8" curb measurement..., but not the 18 inches! That one is straight from the regulations.)

In town get-away: The Rothko Chapel

Okay, all these rules and regulation got you upset? Need some tranquility? Maybe a wheelbarrow full of "AUMMM's? You have two options: the first is to go to India and walk through the Himalayas until you find a cave with kind monk who will allow you to meditate with him and maybe even share his smoked Yak jerky with you. This option is both pricey and uncertain of success. And you just might get a bad case of frostbitten feet for your efforts.

Option two is to go to the Rothko Chapel and sit quietly inside walls that have been made holy by decades of heartfelt prayer. Many will say that a Chapel can't compare to the majesty of a church, but I know different. The Rothko Chapel is the real deal.

The Chapel, commissioned in 1964, was a gift to Houston from John and Dominique de Menil. Their vision was to provide a reflective space for both artwork and meditation. Remember, this was back in straight laced 1964, when Barry Goldwater ran for president and John Glenn rode a corrugated garbage can named "Friendship 7" around the earth. But the Beatles showed up in February of this year, so you know the times they were a changin'.

To help create this ahead-of-its-time concept the de Menils envisioned, they enlisted the help of the artist Mark Rothko, who painted the fourteen (really large) murals which now cover the

interior walls of the chapel. Having seen these murals up close, I can tell you they are both subtle and very powerful. If God were in need of a lounge chair, this is where he/she would choose to rest.

The chapel is an irregular shaped octagon (meaning that not all the building's eight walls are the same size) and was designed exclusively to house Mark Rothko's murals. Word on the street was that Rothko and the building's architects often clashed when it came to the first priority: was it the building or the paintings? While the discussions in the construction trailer may not have been pretty; the completed project has exceeded expectations. The Rothko Chapel is now recognized all over the world as one of the world's first truly ecumenical worship spaces. Don't believe me? Ask one of the 55,000 folks who visit the chapel each year. If you attune yourself to the Rothko vibe, you will be able to sense their presence imprinted on the murals. No fooling.

The month of September: Time to bid adieu to summer... "Au revoir, my friend!"

The name of the ninth month of the year – September – comes from the old Roman word "**septem**", meaning "seven", because in the Roman calendar it was the seventh month. September is the ninth month and the only month with the same number of letters (9) in its name in English as the number of the month. Again, the Roman influence...

- The Romans believed that the month of September was looked after by the god of the fire and forge – **Vulcan**. Therefore, they expected fires, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions in this month. This resonates with me: anybody who has ever mowed their lawn between 12 and 3 has felt the heat from Vulcan's forge.
- In many parts of the world, September is the first month of **autumn** and it is associated with the beginning of **school**.

Interesting fact: June is often considered a "summer month", whereas September is not. This is despite the fact that September has twice as many summer days as June.

September is one of the warmest months in the Southern United States. Northern states have warm September days, but the nights get much cooler. It is also harvest time for crops. And, in Switzerland, it's called Harvest Month.

The **autumnal equinox**—also called the **September or fall equinox**—is the astronomical start of Fall in the Northern Hemisphere and Spring in the Southern Hemisphere. In 2018, the Autumnal Equinox will occur on Saturday, September 22nd. On this day, daytime and nighttime are approximately the same duration. The word is derived from the Latin *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night). Get it? Equal–nox?

How this fits into our human experience: To many ancient people, the waning of the light signaled death. For example, in Welsh mythology, this is the day of the year when the God of Darkness, Goronwy, defeats the God of Light, Llew, and takes his place as King of the world.

To this day in Japan, the equinox is celebrated by visits to the graves of family members, at which time offerings of flowers and food are made and incense is burned. The three days preceding and following the equinox are called "higan," or the "Other side of the River of Death."

Harvest Moon is the full moon closest to the fall equinox. Pay attention now and follow this... The Harvest Moon was thus named because it rises within a half-hour of when the sun sets. In earlier days, when farmers had no tractors (with headlights?), it was essential that they work by the light of the moon to bring in the harvest.

This moon is the fullest moon of the year. When you gaze at it, it looks very large and gives a lot of light throughout the entire night. No other lunar spectacle is as awesome as the Harvest Moon. According the Harvest Moon calendar, we should witness four Harvest Moons on August 25-28th. For you folks on the West side of Bassoon, it's time to bring in the Marijuana crop. What? You thought we didn't know?

Best Fall Observation: Folks, Winter's hit man is on his way. We may not know the exact date, but we know he's coming...

"But when fall comes, kicking summer out on its treacherous ass as it always does one day sometime after the midpoint of September, it stays awhile like an old friend that you have missed. It settles in the way an old friend will settle into your favorite chair and take out his pipe and light it and then fill the afternoon with stories of places he has been and things he has done since last he saw you."

Stephen King "Salem's Lot"

Sound off! Submitted by Mary Hinojosa, "Known Rabble-Rouser"

Question: Why?

Why did you move to Westwood?

Why THIS community of neighbors/homes?

Be really HONEST about your answer.

Question: Why have you STAYED in Westwood?

Location?

Schools?

Security?

Feeling of community; neighbors helping neighbors?

For all of your PERSONAL REASONS and more, your CIVIC CLUB officers NEED you to step up and help us KEEP OUR neighborhood secure and thriving. Your CIVIC CLUB is YOUR VOICE with Houston City Council and all the various departments. Your CIVIC CLUB is your VOICE with:

Harris County Officials

Houston City Council

Houston City Planning Department

Houston Fire Department

Houston Police Department

Your Super Neighborhood

It was a CIVIC CLUB officer who worked to have our name (Westwood) for new streets and corresponding infrastructure (gas, water, drainage and street lights) placed on a long waiting list that finally got us the improvements that you now take for granted! That engineering project completed some (?) fourteen years ago helped save all of Westwood from the catastrophic flooding hurricane Harvey caused across our city/region, one year ago, this August. Westwood volunteers worked for a silent zone to have the trains stop blowing their horns for the railroad crossings. This significantly reduced the noise level in the neighborhood.

We need younger residents of Westwood to step UP! Your Westwood Civic Club cannot continue without our younger member's involvement! HELP US KEEP OUR Westwood Civic Club an ACTIVE FORCE for the good of our ENTIRE community.

(Ed: Well, this says it all. The call has gone out. Thanks Mary.)

“We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men.”

– Herman Melville (American writer, 1819-1891)

The Westwood Civic Club Board Here is *your* WCC board:

President: Paul Sobieski
Vice President: Bob Weber
Recording Secretary: Alice Kuchera
Corresponding Secretary: Dan Ballard
Treasurer: Rose Michalec
Section 1 Representative: Ken Calvert
Section 2 Representative: Linford Herschberger
Section 4 Representative: Bill Pennington
Section 5 Representative: Omar Hinojosa
Law & Order Sheriff: Yosemite Sam (still on loan from Looney Tunes – a good fit for the Westwood Board and works cheap)

Membership Report – Up 19% – Bob Weber

According to my numbers we have 187 paid members with 70 of those being seniors. This is about 30 more than what we had the previous 2 years (158 members). I think this is a step in the right direction. Thanks for all of the support.

Membership Form

Make checks payable to: Westwood Civic Club (or put in a bottle and throw it into the Gulf)
Mail to: Westwood CC -- Dues, P.O. Box 20411, Houston TX 77225

Names of residents who live in home: _____

Name of Landlord (if applicable): _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____ E-mail address: _____

Dues are **\$50.00** per household (no matter when you pay them) OR **\$20.00** per household for seniors (65 and over)

Enclosed is my membership and additional funds (optional) for 2018 Membership

Dues \$ _____

Additional \$ _____ (circle your choice): Esplanade * C.O.P. * Babbler * Membership * Other _____

Total \$ _____