

Complying with Codes

Recently, in the Dawson neighborhood, three variance applications were submitted to the City Board of Adjustments (BOA). If it is necessary to go to the BOA, it’s because property improvements or plans, don’t comply with city codes.

The Applications:

- 1. for a commercially zoned property that proposes to reduce the setback buffer distance to the property line adjacent to a single family property.
- 2. for encroachment into setback distance between two single family properties where a renovation/addition being built too close to property lines.
- 3. The third is on a single family property for the increased height of a fence is that required to be maximum 6ft and for encroachment of an accessory building into the rear yard setback.

When codes are not adhered to, a city code enforcement inspector may issue a “cease and desist” type notice until the case is heard by The BOA. Valid justification must be presented to and accepted by the BOA, and if not acceptable, the property must be changed to comply with the code. The DNPCT will not support a variance unless there is a valid justification and hardship.

Peter Davis, Chair DNPCT, (512) 296 4906

MOTHER PECAN WINS HERITAGE TREE OF THE YEAR 2011!

The Austin Heritage Tree Foundation announced that Mother Pecan won the Heritage Tree of the year award 2011. AHTF submitted the application on behalf of the Barton Springs Pool Community. This was AHTF friend and poet Susan Bright's favorite tree.

The award ceremony was October 29th. Many AHTF’s friends attended, such as SOS, Sierra Club, Save Barton Creek Association, NWF Habitat Stewards, Texas Forest Service, City Arborist Office, and City's Climate Protection Office as well as the Mayor and Council Members.

The community had the honor of Margaret Houffman's attendance. She enjoyed the speeches and visited with all and Mother Pecan. Margaret lead the effort to approve the Tree Protection ordinance in 1975 while she was a Council Member. She also led the effort to compile Austin's tree registry, 1976. Thousands of trees have been saved due to Margaret.

Dr. Michael Benedikt, well known UT professor in the Architectural School-Urban Design, spoke of the beauty and irreplaceable characteristics of trees, of how they are such important elements of design, how we could be captivated by the shadows they make and how they change patterns of light, rain, and wind.

Susan's poem "Legend", especially written for Mother Pecan and all of the BSP trees, was read by World Poet Thom Woodruff. Bill Oliver, Mr. Habitat, folk singer, played the 1000 year old tree song. What an inspirational song, especially in light of the threats to the Heritage Tree Ordinance:

"You can plant a thousand seedlings, you can plant a thousand trees, but you have to wait a thousand years for a thousand year old tree...you can plant a brand new forest, new needles and new leaves, but there's nothing like the old ones if you're seeking true releaf”.

A beautiful plaque on a limestone block was installed by Mother Pecan. It fits Barton Springs very well.

http://www.austinheritagetreefoundation.com/Arbor_Day_AHTY.html

Dawson Neighborhood Association Meeting (DNA) Draft Minutes - April 9, 2012

Minutes from the February 13th meeting were approved.
Old Business: a. Euclid-Wilson Drainage – No one was present to provide an update on this item.
New Business: **a.** Creek Cleanup – Clean up of the creek will again be part of Keep Austin Beautiful (KAB) on Saturday, April 14th from 8:30 – 11:30 am. Interested volunteers are to meet in the park for sign-in, safety information, and handing out of supplies. **b.** The neighborhood received 3rd place in the Habitat Challenge and received a kayak/canoe tour of Lady Bird Lake. Attempts were made to donate it to Dawson Elementary, but logistics did not work out. Suggestions were made as to how to best utilize the prize and included donation to a boy or girl scout troupe, incentive for new membership in the DNA, or perhaps for those attending the creek cleanup on April 14th.
Issues in the neighborhood: **a.** Discussion was held regarding problems related to drug dealers, vagrancy, and prostitution. Unwanted activity has been seen under the Havana bridge, in the parking lot of the Motor Lodge at Havana and South Congress and the neighboring convenience store. Everyone is encouraged to call the police department with all sightings of related activity and perhaps the creation of a phone tree for the area so that numbers of people can call in on issues at the same time. Calling Commander Steve Deaton were suggested as well. It was noted that a house on Wilson has been abandoned for about 3 months. It now has very high weeds in areas, a collapsed tree on the fence, and other nuisance issues. Several calls have been made to the City’s Code Enforcement Department, but these calls have not been returned. It was suggested that calls be made to the Health Department in lieu of City Code Enforcement, as they seem to have a better response. Complaints were also made about a house at Dunlap and Watford, which is now rented out to someone from driving a maroon Grand Prix with outdated Oklahoma license plates (#0107) and registration. The driver has a green mohawk. This vehicle may be the same one seen selling drugs in the Motor Lodge parking lot. **b.** Concerns were also raised regarding people walking their dogs and not scooping the poop. Yard signs can be obtained from the City’s Parks and Recreation Department.

Dawson Neighborhood Planning Contact Team (DNPCT) Draft Minutes – April 9, 2012

Donna in charge of the meeting, Julie Woods taking notes as secretary
Minutes: Sandy moved to accept the minutes, Myron seconded, motion passed to accept the minutes as written.
New Business: Justin Golbabai from the city’s Plan Development Review Section talked about the implementation team for the neighborhood plans. He explained that he city wants the DNPCT list our top 5 items for Capital Improvement Projects, which will update our list last created in 2009. The result of the vote listed our priorities from the city’s list: 70j, 70f, 70h, 70a, 70g
Membership report: no new members; first meeting where we move people into inactive status under the new bylaws.
Other New Business: discussion of the variance application for 3900 block of Wadford, which sought to reduce the compatibility setback on the West and North side of the block; West side is zoned as commercial but currently used as residential; N. side is SF-3; the case with the board of adjustment has been postponed at the last two meetings until June 11; B of A hearing remains pending; Myron Smith described the location of the lot: between Reyna and Dunlap on Wadford, near P. Terrys. Mr. Sanchez, owner of property on N side opposes the variance, which would reduce the setback to 2.5 feet; B of A doesn’t have to get advice from the Plan Team.
Old Business: **a.** Myron Smith raised the issue of Ft. Magruder Street, which now has curbs on the rehab hospital side and so the street has become even narrower; concerned about whether the city has been maintaining the street properly, should do a traffic study, plus a survey of residents; now it’s not wide enough for 2 cars to pass. Also, there is no plan to remove any speed cushions in the neighborhood unless there is a hazard; some concern re. Post Road and Wilson Street after construction; needs to be addressed street-by-street. Donna reported after attending a traffic calming seminar held by the city; an individual within a ½ mile area of the relevant area can apply to the city; after city staff analyze the issue, discuss with the nearby neighbors, proposed change will be sent through the usual approval process; submission process must be conducted on paper, instead of online.