

# The Estates of Shady Hollow



[www.eshhoa.org](http://www.eshhoa.org)

June 2005

## Aqua Texas Rate Increase

As you know, AquaTexas has proposed a significant increase in our water rates. And because current regulations allow the utility to apply the increase even while waiting for approval, it's already showing up in your monthly water bills. Unfortunately, the rate case doesn't go to trial until early January. So it will be some time we know whether or not we can expect some relief.

Thanks to the expertise and hard work of Victoria Harkins, though, a lot has been done already to maximize the potential for a reduction in the proposed rates. First, our HOA was granted party status formally protesting the rate increase application filed with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) on March 1, 2005. This was critical. Without this, we would only be able to watch at the rate trial next January. With party status, we will be able to present our case for lower rates.

*Continued on Page 3*

## Meet April Schweighart, 2005 Board Secretary

April and husband, Warren Grobman, moved to the Estates of Shady Hollow in June 1993 when they both got jobs with Motorola in Austin. They had previously worked for IBM in New York. Both retired from what is now Freescale in 2004.

April and Warren have two wonderful children, both married, and two adorable grandchildren. You can see April and Warren regularly walking the Estates of Shady Hollow for exercise.

April is the Chair of the Visiting Committee on Advanced Technology (VCAT) for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), part of the Commerce Department. She also keeps busy baking, traveling, learning to play golf, and spending time with family and friends.

## Celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> – Have Fun, But Be Safe and Courteous

The 4th of July is a uniquely American holiday that includes family, friends, food, and fireworks. And last year, there were some fantastic fireworks right here in the Estates. Unfortunately there were also some problems.

Please keep in mind that the fireworks you shoot off affect your neighbors. Last year, many of the fireworks were much more powerful than in past years, resulting in shaking windows and frightened pets. There also were reports of many unexploded or partially exploded fireworks found in neighbors' yards days after the 4<sup>th</sup>. These, of course, are a danger, particularly for kids and pets.

There's an old saying that "my right to swing my fist stops at your nose." The same applies here. So if you're going to shoot off fireworks this year:

- Please check with your neighbors first and take steps to help everyone have a great 4<sup>th</sup>.
- Make sure you understand the safe handling of explosive material, including the damage that can result, so that your family and your neighbors' families stay safe.
- And when you're cleaning up your own yard after your grand finale, clean up the street and your neighbors' yards as well.

**Have a great 4<sup>th</sup> of July!**

## Money Matters

Year-to-date we are about 2% behind on income due to a small number of unpaid assessments. This is offset somewhat by expenses which have also been below budget (by about 1%). For the year, however, we expect expenses to be greater than budgeted due to the cost of fighting the Aqua Texas rate increase.

## How Long is Too Long??

For grass, that is, not your hair! The subject of acceptable grass length is a hot topic occasionally, and since grass mowing season is here, this seems to be a reasonable time to discuss it.

There is no maximum grass height explicitly specified in the CC&R's. Yard maintenance is governed by CC&R Article VII, Section 11 – Maintenance of Building Sites and Improvements. Among other things, this Section requires that landscaping on a tract be in a "... well maintained, ... and attractive condition at all times."

The phrases "well maintained" and "attractive condition" are obviously subject to interpretation. To make sure that this is interpreted consistently from year-to-year and does not depend on who is on the Board or the ACC, we rely on our property manager, Carl Gamble, to make the decision about when there is a violation. He uses the following guidelines:

1. An acceptable length is about 4"; however, the type of grass and "attractiveness" of the property is taken into consideration.
2. If 90% of the homes appear to have a certain maintenance level for their lawns (which is the case in the Estates), then that is considered the standard for the neighborhood.
3. If a lawn appears to need maintenance compared to the 90%, then the owner gets a letter about yard maintenance.

These standards are based on Carl's 30 years of real estate and HOA experience as well as the experience of the management company for which he works. Your Board has reviewed these guidelines with Carl and is in full agreement with them.

If you have any questions or comments, please get in touch with one of your Board members. Our contact information is on the last page. And if you should get a violation notice sometime and have questions on it, please feel free to touch base with Carl.

## Newsletter Publication Schedule

The newsletter is scheduled for publication quarterly. Our goal is to have it in your mailbox the first week in March, June, September and December.

## Meet Victoria Harkins, 2005 Board Member-at-Large

Victoria and her husband David moved to the Estates of Shady Hollow in April of 2003. Both David and Victoria are professional civil engineers for a civil engineering firm in Austin, Texas.

Victoria and David have two young children, Christian and Christyn. Victoria and David both coach their children's baseball and basketball teams. You will often see many young children running their property before and after practice in their back yard.

Victoria enjoys camping, hiking, swimming, reading, playing with her kids and football. If you see her and her family walking or riding bicycles through the streets of Estates of Shady Hollow, stop and say hello.

## Recycling Update

Both of the waste collection companies serving the Estates (IESI and TDS) provide recycling services, and both programs are similar:

<u>Items Accepted</u>	<u>Items Not Accepted</u>
Newspapers	Cardboard or mixed paper
Magazines	Window panes
Clear plastic (includes milk jugs)	Dishes
Aluminum	Colored plastic (such as detergent bottles)
Steel cans	Styrofoam (including egg cartons)
Clear and brown glass	Aluminum foil (including pie pans)

Cardboard and mixed paper can be recycled at the Manchaca Fire Hall, Manchaca Baptist Church and behind Bailey Middle School.

## Our Summer Home

Bailey Middle School, our usual home for Board meetings, is not available to us during the summer. Instead, we will be meeting on the second floor of the Manchaca Fire Hall, 1310 FM 1626, in July and August. We are scheduled to meet at 6:30pm on the third Thursday of each month, but see the website ([eshhoa.org](http://eshhoa.org)) for exact dates and times. Come by and say hello!

***Aqua Texas Rate Increase*** (Continued from Page 1)

Second, we have retained legal representation with Mr. Ron Freeman of Freeman and Corbett, L.L.C. of Austin, Texas. And finally, we have joined forces with eight other HOAs also affected by the rate increase in order to share resources, workload and costs. This means that when we present in court, it will be on behalf of more than 1,000 homeowners, rather than just the 232 in the Estates.

We are also sharing resources and workload with other regions and entities involved in the case such as the Southeast Region of HOA, Village of Wimberley, Woodcreek, City of Houston, BriarCreek, etc. as available.

Finally, additional contacts and information are being passed onto other HOAs to solicit assistance as we progress through the trial process. Victoria has a Ph.D., and P.E., and will use her professional experience with other rate cases to testify on behalf of the Estates HOA as well as the aligned HOAs that are sharing in this protest.

If you have any questions or would like to offer any assistance, please contact Victoria Harkins.

**9,000 Years of Water!**

You're sitting on the water you drink. Or at least your house is. As you probably know, the water we drink here in the Estates comes directly from the aquifer that runs underneath all of our properties. And that water starts somewhere else, much of it coming from the City of Austin's Water Quality Protection Lands.

On the first Saturday of each month, the City of Austin and Austin Water are sponsoring ½-mile, 1½-hour interpretive hikes on some of their protected properties such as that which borders the western side of the Estates. These hikes are free, and blend the human history with the natural resources of these lands. They're a chance to learn more about these lands, why they are protected, and how they're managed today.

Take a look at the Upcoming Events page at [www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildlands.htm](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/water/wildlands.htm) for a full listing of hike dates and times. And to register for a hike, call 263-6433. These special hikes are limited to only 20 individuals, so don't wait to sign up. Pre-registration is required by midnight on the Thursday before the day of the hike.

**Meet John McGraw, 2005 Board Vice President**

John has lived in the Estates since 1993. He is Manager of Portfolio Engineering for Equity Office Properties, the largest owner of office buildings in the U.S. Prior to that, he worked for 6 years at Motorola and several years at Boeing Aircraft in Wichita Kansas.

John is a native Texan who just could not wait to return to the state and never intends to leave again. He sits on the Texas State Elevator Advisory Board, and is an active member of several Real Estate professional organizations. In his spare time, John enjoys restoring classic Corvettes and building Street Rods. He designed and completely built his own home here in the Estates with his own hands, and is very proud of his home.

**Another Way to Fight Higher Water Bills**

Water conservation not only saves you money, it's great for your yard, especially during the summer months when plants and lawns start feeling the heat. Here are a few suggestions to help maximize water efficiency in your yard.

Instead of watering your plants lightly everyday, practice heavy watering less frequently. This method will encourage deeper, stronger roots that will resist drought.

If you have a sprinkler system, make sure to routinely check for leaks and aim the water to areas that truly need it. A rain shutoff device and/or soil sensor can be added to your sprinkler system at a relatively low cost (\$100 -\$200). Such sensors can often pay for themselves over one summer.

Always use a spray nozzle on your hose. Hoses without a nozzle can waste 10 gallons or more per minute!

Go native! Non-native plants often need more water, fertilizer, and attention. When replacing and planting new plants, remember to choose native Texas plants.

Check out these links for more ideas:

[www.igin.com/Irrigation/0903sensors.html](http://www.igin.com/Irrigation/0903sensors.html)

[www.h2ouse.org/tour/landscaping.cfm](http://www.h2ouse.org/tour/landscaping.cfm)

[www.cityofaustin.org/watercon/images/selfaudit.pdf](http://www.cityofaustin.org/watercon/images/selfaudit.pdf)