

The Estates of Shady Hollow



www.eshhoa.org

September 2005

It's Annual Meeting Time -- Try It, You'll Like It!

The 2005 Annual Meeting of the Estates of Shady Hollow Owners Association will be held on Thursday, October 20th starting at 6:30pm in the Bailey Middle School Cafeteria. It won't be a long meeting, but in addition to being a great chance to visit with some neighbors, some important issues are on the agenda:

- * You will be voting on a proposed change to our CC&Rs (see *A Little More Housecleaning* on page 2).
- * You will be electing two Board members to take the seats of the current members whose terms expire at the end of this year (see *Happy or Mad, It's Your Turn* on this page).
- * We will be discussing our protest of the Aqua Texas rate increase and the special assessment required to fund that effort (see *Special Assessment* below).

Toward the end of this month, you will be getting a letter about the meeting and a proxy form you can use to make sure your vote is recorded even if you can't make the meeting. In the meantime, *mark your calendar for Thursday, October 20th at 6:30pm.*

Remember – This is *your* neighborhood, and if you want to keep it the way *you* like it, then *you* need to be involved.

Aqua Texas Rate Increase

There was a hearing before the Commissioners of the TCEQ on August 24th. As a result of challenges raised by our attorney, Aqua Texas must now demonstrate that the 309 water systems covered by the increase are substantially similar.

Showing substantial similarity should be rather difficult for Aqua Texas to do, especially in a relatively

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Happy or Mad, It's Your Turn

Terms expire this year for two of the five Board members and three of the five members of the Architectural Control Committee (ACC). If you're happy with the way things have been going in the Estates, you need to be on the Board or the ACC to make sure it continues. Not happy? Here's your chance to make things better.

Board members will be elected by homeowners at the Annual Meeting on October 20th. The Board meets monthly for about two hours, and sometimes there is some additional time spent during the month. Members of the ACC are appointed by the Board.

For more information, or to be included as a candidate for either the Board or the ACC, get in touch with Allen Gunter (292-4035; bodsec@eshhoa.org) or any one of the other Board members.

Special Assessment

Through the end of August, legal fees of just over \$25,000 have been incurred in our fight against the Aqua Texas rate increase. Because of the efforts of Victoria Harkins, however, the costs are shared by a number of homeowners associations that have joined the fight with us. So our share is \$7,407 (about \$32 per household) – less than 1/3 of the total cost.

At some point, a special assessment will be necessary to cover these costs. Because we want to avoid multiple assessments, we will wait to make it until we feel we have a handle on the final costs. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor costs to make sure you are getting good value for the dollars being spent.

As noted in the *Aqua Texas Rate Increase* article that begins on this page, we continue to believe that we have a good chance of reducing the increase. If we are successful, the savings should more than cover the special assessment.

Waging War On Oak Wilt

Submitted by Maggie Ambrosino, Estates Resident, Certified Arborist, and owner of Brown and Green Tree Consultants

Skeletons of dead oaks, standing gruesome and gray, are common sightings along Brodie Lane and throughout our neighborhood streets and parks. These images are far too haunting to ignore their existence. Many of our once grand oaks are now canopies of riddled decline, existing to the point of asset vs. liability—and many of the dead are left standing in testament to a dreadful disease too long ignored.

Our live oaks are worth saving. Our live oaks are worth protecting. What other trees grace us with their 100-foot canopies of cool, sweet shade, and waylay against our harsh ecosystem to showcase their majesty for generations of beauty and enjoyment?

The battle against oak wilt is far from over, and the fungal disease continues to progress 80 feet per year. A contaminated oak can infect healthy adjacent oaks underground up to 200 feet away.

Knowing what we now know, or should know, about oak wilt—that it is one of the most destructive tree diseases in the United States and the lethal fungus, *ceratocystis fagacearum*, spreads and kills in epidemic proportions by invading and disabling the water-conducting vessels in vulnerable trees—it is evident that pruning oaks should be done with knowledge and vigilance.

We also know that oak wilt is spread two ways: by insect vectors that land on fresh cuts or wounds, and through grafted root systems. By acting on what we do know, with due diligence, we can make great strides against the disease.

How do we recognize oak wilt? Look for the telltale signs evidenced by leaf symptoms, patterns of spreading decline, tip die-back, rate of tree mortality and close proximity of other oak wilt centers. Out-of-season browning, leaf drop and veinal necrosis are also warning signs, but words of caution please: Obtain a professional diagnosis. These symptoms are not all strictly indicative of oak wilt, and oak wilt is not strictly limited to these symptoms.

How do we further manage oak wilt? First and foremost, make wise and informed choices on how we prune our trees. The daily buzz of chain saws can seem more like *open season* than *pruning season*. When choosing an arborist, make sure they are certified. Ask for that ISA card (*International Society of*

Arboriculture) and ask for insurance! The inability to prove-up such requests should cast doubt. Drive-thru businesses leaving door-hangers and pulling trailers are not always your certified best bet, and though their labor costs are attractive, the value of resistance has a payback in the long run. It is better to save one tree at a time, if that's all the budget allows, rather than accept that rock-bottom price for substandard work and risk spreading the disease.

Ensure all tools are sterilized. Do it between every tree. Use pruning sealant on those oaks—on every single wound—whether it is from a saw or weed-eater or lawn mower scuffs across a lateral surface root. Vectors, which transport the disease from tree to tree, love the fruity smell of sap oozing from a fresh wound. Pruning paint or sealant helps to mask that smell.

Prune live tissue from July to the end of January or in the hottest of summer and coldest of winter. Avoid pruning in the spring when the insect population is high and roots are vigorous. The bulk of the infection is transferred below ground, through grafted roots. It is the healthy oaks, more so than the contaminated oaks, which warrant our attention and protection, and a tree that still retains at least 30% of its canopy deserves any and all attempts to restore its health and vigor.

How do we engage in direct battle with oak wilt? We can fight toward its prevention and suppression. The key to success with oak wilt, as with any disease, is recognition and swift response. Have those valued oaks injected by a professional applicator with an oak wilt-specific fungicide, or propiconazole, and avoid ineffective broad-spectrum fungicides; trench at a sufficient width and depth to sever root systems in areas where streets or utility work has not already done the job for you; and remove, wrap, dispose of or burn dead and dying red oaks immediately and never store the wood for firewood. If cut wood cannot be removed off-site immediately, it should be covered with a clear plastic tarp and the edges of the tarp buried below soil level.

Lastly, if it's oaks you love, consider diversifying your shade tree plantings to a more oak wilt resistant variety such as the burr oak, Monterrey or Mexican white oak, or chinquapin oak. There are also other natives and adapted species that are well worth considering.

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Waging War on Oak Wilt (continued from page 2)

The white oak family, which includes live oaks, is vulnerable to the red oak family which produces the deadly fungal mats responsible for the spread of the disease. White oaks can show symptoms over many years. The red oaks die quickly and suddenly, harboring lethal fungal mats beneath the bark.

Unfortunately there is no complete cure for oak wilt. But there is a high rate of success in suppressing the disease and prolonging the life and beauty of our oaks for many more years to come if we remain as aggressive as the disease itself. Remember, without the *Shady*, we'd just be *Hollow*. Think about it.

For more information you may contact:

- * MaggieAmbrosino: 922-4649
- * Erick Beckers with the Texas Forest Service : 407-9732

Or check out these websites:

- * www.isa-arbor.com/
- * www.texasoakwilt.org
- * www.ci.austin.tx.us/oakwilt/

Oak Hill Cruise 'n' Blues Festival

This year's Cruise 'n' Blues Festival will be held on October 8, 2005 (rain date of October 15), Noon to 7:00 PM at the Southwest Hills Community Church (7416 Hwy 71 West). There will be lots of cool cars, 6 live bands, magicians, clowns, pony rides, moon walks, arts and crafts exhibits, face painting, kids games and numerous other activities, **PLUS the TEXAS - OU game will be playing on a 9 x 12 foot inside screen.**

The festival is sponsored by the Oak Hill Association of Neighborhoods (OHAN) and a couple of other Oak Hill organizations. The Estates is a member of OHAN and we have been asked to provide some volunteers to help put on the event. If you are interested, please go to the OHAN website (www.OHAN.org) and volunteer. This is a terrific way to meet other South Austin residents and foster a greater South Austin community spirit.

For more information on the festival, or if you would like to get an exhibitor's booth or show a cool car of your own, go to the OHAN website and click on "Cruise 'n' Blues".

Aqua Texas Rate Increase (Continued from Page 1)

short period of time. And if it is unable to do so, it could invalidate the entire rate request. So while Aqua Texas is working on that, we are working with other groups protesting the increase to develop data to be used to refute any claims of similarity by Aqua Texas.

A Little More Housecleaning

Don't you just hate left-overs? Here's one from last year's review of the CC&Rs that will be up for a vote at the Annual Meeting in October. Article VII, Section 1, needs to be amended to specifically exclude carports from the list of permissible structures.

This will formalize a change made when the CC&Rs were amended in 1992. Prior to that time, the CC&Rs specifically allowed for carports. When homeowners voted to prohibit them, the reference to carports was simply dropped, rather than specifically stating that they are no longer allowed. Making this prohibition clear in the CC&Rs should hopefully prevent a homeowner from spending time and money drawing up plans for a carport which the ACC cannot approve.

Please note that if this proposal is not passed, carports will still be prohibited, they just won't be specifically mentioned in the CC&Rs.

Back Home at Bailey

Our September Board meeting will be at Bailey Middle School on Thursday, September 15th at 6:30pm (check the website for any last minute changes). Feel free to come to any meeting for all or part of the time. One of the first items always on our agenda is an opportunity for homeowners to share any concerns, questions, etc. they have.

Holiday Lighting/Decorating Contest

We know it's only September, but since our next newsletter won't be until January, we wanted to go ahead and remind you of the year-end holiday lighting and decorating contest. Like last year, three winners will be selected, monetary awards will be granted, and signs will be displayed in the winning yards:

Best Decorations	\$100.00
Honorable Mention (2)	\$50.00 for each.

And like last year, you will be able to vote for the decorations you like best. Your ballot will be in the December newsletter.

Board of Directors

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