

Holly Creek Chronicle

Holly Creek Property Owners Association -- Copyright 2013

February 2013

Publisher:

James Bartlett

jamesandeileen@comcast.net

281-255-6770

Editor:

Laura Urrutia

alberturru@aol.com

281-516-1092

Mailing Address

HCEPOA

P.O. Box 1584

Tomball, TX 77377



2013 Annual Meeting

The 2013 annual meeting of the Holly Creek Estates Property Owners Association will be held Wednesday, February 20 at Rosehill Fire Dept. Station One at 19000 FM 2920, on the north side of the highway west of Cypress Rosehill Road. The meeting, open to all residents, is from 7 to 9 p.m.

“We expect a large crowd to discuss key issues, chief among them security and board elections,” said Association President Jerry Hamaker. “Please arrive promptly and sign in as you arrive.”



On the agenda are a presentation by a Harris County Sheriff’s Deputy, approval of 2012 meeting minutes; committee reports and 2013 plans for security, road maintenance, landscaping, architectural review, deed restrictions, the newsletter and website; and other topics.

Elections will fill four expiring two-year-term board memberships – positions 3, 5, 6 and 7. Details on the elections will be sent to residents before the meeting.

Attendees will also be able to bring up any other business. “You can propose topics for the agenda by emailing hcepoa@earthlink.net in advance of the meeting. We’ll see you there,” said Hamaker.

Inside this Issue...

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HCEPOA Board

- Jerry Hamaker, President
- Pete DeLeeuw, VP & Road Maintenance Chair
- Steve Yon, Architectural Review Chair
- Bob Beeley, Treasurer, Architectural Review & Deed Restrictions
- Doug Beckmann, Landscaping Chair
- James Bartlett, Secretary & Newsletter Chair
- Gene Mattox, Deed Restrictions Chair

HCEPOA's Year in Review

2012 will be long remembered by HCE residents. It began with drenching rains that ended a merciless drought. But even as residents were felling the thousand-plus trees that were lost, a new challenge emerged - crime.

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First was a home invasion in April; the perpetrators were arrested after later committing murder in another incident. Then following an eight month calm, there were five burglaries in late November and December, and several apparent attempted burglaries in 2013.

As February dawned, residents and sheriff's deputies were watching for a suspicious 2008-2009 white Chevrolet Malibu, a 2001-era gold Oldsmobile Aurora and a black 2000 Ford Explorer. Reported suspects were a pair of black males, and a black female and male wearing hooded shirts.

"The burglaries were an unbelievable shock," said Pete DeLeeuw, HCEPOA VP and an original resident. "We'd had no known crime since 2008, and the only previous wave was 15 years ago, when we had several night burglaries." The outgrowth was understandable concern on the part of residents. "I dealt with 2,000 emails in the past three months," said Jerry Hamaker, HCEPOA president.

The board explored a number of options in response, and concerned residents formed a Neighborhood Watch program and solicited pledges to fund hiring a temporary guard service. At a meeting in late January, the board was advised by it's attorney against assuming responsibility for security, since such action is not set forth in HCEPOA's deed restrictions or bylaws; raises concerns about liability; and usurps the role of law enforcement agencies. Hence, the board voted against hiring a guard service.

Instead, the board voted to provide forums through which to exchange information; continue urging more patrols by sheriff's deputies; support the Neighborhood Watch program; work toward installing security cameras at the entrance; install appropriate signage; and institute a vehicle identification program.

Meanwhile, through the year the board dealt with such recurring issues as deed restriction questions and violations, architectural review responsibilities, road maintenance, collection of annual dues, maintenance of the entrance landscaping and facilities, state charter concerns, objections to deer eating landscaping, and others.

"Hopefully everyone recognizes that we are all in this together," said Hamaker. "We may disagree on tactics sometimes, but our common goal is preserving this special neighborhood that we all share."



Residents form Neighborhood Watch Program

by Laura Urrutia

Due to increased crime over the last few months, residents have started a Neighborhood Watch program in HCE. Neighborhood Watch works by bringing residents together for the purpose of reporting suspicious activity and sharing information employing crime prevention techniques.

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This is one of the most important steps we can take as a community to help law enforcement fight crime and protect our families.

There are several benefits of a successful Watch program. We reduce our risk of becoming victims of crime, get to know our neighbors better for mutual protection, and feel safer, which enhances quality of life for all of us.

Everyone is encouraged to join the Watch program, either as a member or as a block captain on your street. At this time, there are still a few block captain positions open. The captain's role is gathering information and disseminating it to other residents. Captains act as liaison between residents and the coordinator, establish and maintain contact information in case of emergency, and encourage neighbors to contact Harris County Sheriff's Office with information on suspicious or criminal activity.

We have already seen the positive effects of the Watch Program in HCE, and are just getting started. Together we can reduce crime and illegal activities that occur in our neighborhood.

If you would like more information or want to join the Watch Program as a member or block captain, please contact Vonda Tackett at vonda.t@riteresponse.com. She can put you in touch with your block captain and/or add you to the member list!

Dead Tree Sparks Christmas Power Outage

A cold Christmas Eve afternoon got a little colder when a falling tree brought down an electrical power line, sparking a brush fire and power outage that lasted into Christmas Day for much of Holly Creek Estates. The tree was on farmland just west of Holly Creek Trail.

"We saw smoke behind our house," said resident Harry Smith. "Flames were eight feet high in the bushes along our fence, where the power line fell. I'd never seen an electrical fire and it was violent, with explosions, smoke and flickering. We called Centerpoint and the Rosehill Volunteer Fire Department was here in five minutes. They had to wait until the power was turned off before dousing the fire. Fortunately it had rained recently, or the fire might have spread really quickly."

Centerpoint repaired the line and removed numerous dead trees along the easement during the next few days. Smith had reported the dead trees to Centerpoint in prior months, but was told that a gate to the farmland was locked and the landowner could not be located to obtain permission to enter the land.

"More than 60 homes were affected," said Smith, "and it was Christmas and really cold." HCE is supplied by two main power lines. One serving about a dozen homes in HCE's northeastern corner was not impacted, but the other line serving the rest was.

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Watch for dead trees near power lines

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Gene Mattox, chair of HCEPOA's Deed Restrictions Committee, recently surveyed the neighborhood and spotted more than a half-dozen properties with dead trees visible. "About half of these were near the utility easements," he said. During early February notices were sent to property owners reminding them to remove the trees in the interest of safety.

Regardless of your service provider, report power outages to Centerpoint by calling 713-207-2222. To track the status of repairs online, if you have Internet access via cell phone or a remote location, Centerpoint offers an interactive Energy Outage Tracker at <http://gis.centerpointenergy.com/outagetraacker/index.html>. It shows current outages with an estimated time for service restoration. "I used this site after a storm last spring caused an outage," said one resident. "It was helpful and accurate."

Natural Gas Service Extended in HCE

By Phiney Kays



With construction of pipelines down several streets in late summer, Hughes Natural Gas has expanded availability of service to all Holly Creek Estates. The new lines were laid on Oak Hollow and Country Hills, improving access to homes on Pennridge Lane and Red Oak Trail as well. HCE contains 77 properties, of which about 45 currently have natural gas service.

"I considered getting gas several years ago, but would have had to pay for 1,000 feet of line," said one resident. "Now the new line runs within 50 feet of my house, which really reduces the installation cost."

"A half-dozen Holly Creek Estates residents called to express interest in new service even while we were installing the lines," said a supervisor of the construction firm doing the work.

Phiney Kays, who researched this article, found that residents interested in getting a natural gas connection should call Hughes to confirm that service is accessible and request a cost estimate. Typically, costs include about \$1,070 in standard fees; plus labor costs of \$5 per foot for the first 150 feet of line and \$3 per foot over that; materials costs that range up to few dollars per foot; and any other miscellaneous costs.

Home owners would need to determine whether their home already has plumbing to deliver gas to appliances and fireplaces. Existing plumbing for propane may not be adequate for natural gas, and propane appliances would have to be converted or replaced. Natural gas and propane are fairly comparable in overall fuel cost and heating value.

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Once installation is ordered, it is typically performed within two weeks, requiring about four hours actual work time. New meters are now installed adjacent to the home, rather than on the utility easement at the perimeter of the property as in the past.

To learn more, contact Angie Guinn, construction liaison for Hughes Natural Gas, at 281-766-1265 or angieg@hughesnaturalgas.com.

Real Estate Update for HCE

By Elizabeth Mandola



It is an honor to be asked to provide updated real estate data to owners in your neighborhood, and I am glad to report that both the Houston Metropolitan Market and Holly Creek Estates experienced nice gains. The accelerated 2012 market data included a 27.3% increase in total unit sales of single family homes and an increase of 41.2% when comparing November 2012 to November 2011. Today's strengthening market is a result of historically low mortgage interest rates and a lack of available homes. A balanced market typically includes a six months inventory of homes, and we currently have slightly over four months. Real estate professionals are expecting the momentum to continue as we move into 2013.

This graph published by the Houston Association of Realtors last month offers a glance of the overall market as reported in the Multiple Listing Service (MLS).

CATEGORIES	NOVEMBER 2011	NOVEMBER 2012	PERCENT CHANGE
Total property sales	4,607	5,891	27.9%
Total dollar volume	\$926,637,654	\$1,308,414,028	41.2%
Total active listings	45,113	36,539	-19.0%
Total pending sales	3,013	3,267	8.4%
Single-family home sales	3,911	4,978	27.3%
Single-family average sales price	\$206,505	\$228,275	10.5%
Single-family median sales price	\$154,500	\$167,000	8.1%
Months inventory*	6.2	4.1	-34.2%

Holly Creek Estates is unique in that each property offers a variety of amenities, lot sizes, age, and home sizes. The condition of the property, including updates to older homes, is a major factor in a mature neighborhood.

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Therefore, it is unjustified to evaluate the neighborhood on a price per square foot basis. But I can tell you that five homes sold in 2011 with an average sales price of \$619,500 (or \$107.31/sf) and in 2012 three homes sold with an average sales price of \$728,400 (or \$138.89/sf). Note that two foreclosures in 2011 altered that data, which otherwise would have been three sales with an average price of \$721,200 (or \$131.17/sf). There is no need to fear that these foreclosures will affect the value of your home as that is not typical for your neighborhood. There are currently five homes on the market.

Many are asking questions about the new 3.8% real estate tax that was buried in the back of the new national health care plan. Although it can be a hefty tax burden on investors, it will not likely affect the sale of residential properties unless the net gain on the sale exceeds \$500,000 (a good reason to keep thorough records of the cost and improvements to your home). Your annual income will also play a role in that liability, if any. For more information on this new tax, see <http://www.ksefocus.com/billdatabase/clientfiles/172/4/1609.pdf> or <http://www.ksefocus.com/billdatabase/clientfiles/172/8/1437.pdf>.

For any resident considering a move, I recommend that owners seek the advice of an experienced real estate professional that knows Holly Creek Estates for guidance in evaluating improvements that are likely to provide increased value and for an in-depth market analysis. Should any home owner have specific questions about the market, I will do my best to obtain the information you are seeking. Elizabeth Mandola, Coldwell Banker, 713.299.0965 or elizabeth@mandolamail.com.

**Restaurant Review**

by Carole Benedict

Looking for a new restaurant to try? Our family enjoys a nice weekend brunch, so recently we ventured out to Vintage Park on Louetta and 249. That area has grown up so much over the past year and we were surprised to discover a wealth of new dining options. Aside from the perennial staples such as Peli Peli and Brix, El Tiempo Cantina has opened up a new location and there is a new Italian restaurant called Strata.

However, as we were in the breakfast/lunch limbo, we settled on Mia Bella, another founding restaurant at Vintage Park, but one we had yet to try. The brunch was delicious, service was excellent, and the restaurant is elegant and conveniently located.

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The brunch menu includes the usual breakfast items. To name just a few are the Eggs Benedict, Eggs Florentine, and design your own omelets; plus pasta dishes, fish, chicken and cocktails. The Mimosas, Bloody Marys, Bellinis and several other cocktails are priced at \$2.95 during brunch.

If you prefer, Mia Bella has a great lunch and dinner menu with an extensive wine list. Check out their website at <http://miabellarestaurants.com>. The restaurant also has two locations downtown and one in Sugarland.

As mentioned, the Vintage Park location has been there 4 years, so if you haven't been able to try Mia Bella yet, definitely make the short jaunt down to Vintage Park. Enjoy!



Cook's Corner

by Carole Benedict

It's cold and dreary, so what better time to make soup! Here's a quick, easy and delicious recipe for tortilla soup (delicious anytime) adapted from the famous El Fenix Restaurants in Dallas.

El Fenix Tortilla Soup

- One 14 1/2 oz can of diced tomatoes with green chilies
- A garlic clove - minced
- 1/4 teaspoon sugar
- 2 TBSP fresh chopped cilantro
- One onion - chopped
- 5 cups chicken stock
- 1 TBSP chili powder (or to taste)
- 1 TBSP Cumin powder (or to taste)
- Tabasco sauce, salt and pepper (to taste)
- Optional: Two cups of chopped or shredded cooked chicken (rotisserie chicken is great!), avocado, fresh cilantro, shredded jack cheese, tortilla chips, sour cream and fresh lime juice; any or all can be added after the soup is cooked.

Combine first five ingredients in a blender. Blend to desired consistency; El Fenix's is very smooth. Put blended mixture in a large pan with 5 cups of chicken stock, salt & pepper and Tabasco sauce. Add chili powder and cumin and, if you wish, a can of black beans. Simmer for 20 minutes. Add desired optional items to hot soup and serve immediately.

Welcome Spring!

By Laura Branson



With the holidays behind us and the Spring season just around the corner, it's time to start thinking about gardening and getting our lawns ready for display! Holly Creek has some of the most beautiful lawns in Harris County. An attractive lawn starts with understanding some basic terms combined with routine maintenance and care. For starters it is important to understand the differences between fertilizers, fungicides, herbicides and pesticides.

Fertilizers - Any organic or inorganic material (other than liming materials) that is added to a soil to supply one or more plant nutrients essential to the growth of plants.

Fungicides - A chemical or biological organism used to kill or inhibit fungi or fungal spores.

Herbicides - Agents used to destroy or inhibit plant growth

Pesticides - Chemicals used to kill pests, especially insects

Randy Lemmon is a leading expert in the Houston area and has been the host on **Newsradio 740 KTRH GardenLine** since 1995 and has the following great recommendations.



Fertilizing - Apply 4 times per year

Late February-Early March is an important time to fertilize. He recommends only organic fertilizers such as a simple 15-5-10 for an early green-up. Randy says, "Most companies that make slow-release fertilizers also make a non slow-release 15-5-10 that provides for a quick two-week green up before we get to the heart of the fertilizer schedule."

Late March-Early April - Apply slow-release 3-1-2 ratio fertilizers.

Recommended formulations:

19-4-10	Nitro Phos Super Turff
18-4-6	Fertilome Southwest Greenmaker
18-0-6	Fertilome's Zero Phosphate Formula
15-5-10	Southwest Fertilizer Premium Gold
20-0-10	Bonide Premium Lawn Food

Late June-Early July - Apply slow-release 3-1-2 ratio fertilizers. The recommended formulations are 19-5-9, 19-4-10, 18-4-6 or 15-5-10.

October-November - Apply winterizer formulas for winter hardiness. Ratios vary, but make sure they are "winter" or "fall" formulas designed for southern grasses. An example would be a 18-6-12, 8-12-16, or 10-5-14 mixture. This will make lawns winter-hardy.

Additionally Randy suggests the use of granular or liquid iron June - September in the event your lawn looks yellow or necrotic. A once a year application should be sufficient.

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Herbicides - Apply 3 times per year

February-March - Use the pre-emergent controls for grassy weeds again, to prevent such weeds as Crabgrass, Goosegrass and Dallisgrass from popping up late in the spring and summer. Use a grassy pre-emergent like Amaze, Betasan, Balan or Treflan. There is also Barricade, Dimension or Pendimethlin as a 2-in-1 control. Randy warns against using a weed-and-feed at this time. Randy states, "If you follow the GardenLine herbicide schedule, there should never be a need." However, Randy does recommend spot weed-and-feed treatments or those with turf-only landscapes or landscapes that have been established for many years. Most weed-and-feeds contain Atrazine which burns roots of young trees and shrubs so it's imperative that you be careful in your selection.

May-Early June - One more application of a grassy pre-emergent like Amaze, Betasan, Balan, or Treflan will keep fall weeds from invading from August on. There is also Barricade, Dimension-based or Pendimethlin as a 2-in-1 control.

(Pre-Emergent controls to prevent weeds)

Late October-Early November - Use two (2) different pre-emergent herbicides, to prevent the weeds that we experience in February and March. First is a pre-emergent with Portrait or Gallery for broadleaf weeds like clover. Second, use a pre-emergent with Amaze, Betasan, Balan or Treflan for grassy weeds like poa anna or annual bluegrass. There is also Barricade, Dimension or Pendimethlin as a 2-in-1 control.



Fungicides - Apply 2 times per year

July-September - Gray Leaf Spot is a blotchy spot on the grass blade leaves. (Mostly on St. Augustine lawns) Use fungicides with active ingredients like Daconil, Consan or Banner.

September-October - To control the dreaded Brownpatch fungal disease (symmetrical brown circles in the grass) you must prevent it from coming up with a systemic lawn fungicide with Bayleton, Terrachlor, Banner or Benomyl.



Pesticides

Randy has the following to say concerning Pesticides. "It is our belief on GardenLine, as a way to be kind to the environment, that you do not put down insecticides unless you know you have a problem. However, be prepared during the hot summer months - July through September - to attack chinch bug damage. This will show up as irregular shaped spots in the lawn along the concrete. Any liquid insecticide, like Permethrin or Cypermethrin, will treat the spot well. Then apply a granular insecticide like Deltamethrin or granular Permethrin in a broadcast applicator throughout the rest of the yard.

Thanks Randy Lemmon for these great tips!

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Gardenline with Randy Lemmon

Over 1.4 million Houstonians garden for a hobby or pastime, and GardenLine is where they listen for advice and information on gardening and landscaping. Every **Saturday and Sunday morning**, GardenLine's Randy Lemmon answers listeners' questions on everything from aphids to zoysias. He's Houston's absolute expert on lawns and gardens, offering help to listeners both with and without "green thumbs." Randy's a Texas Aggie who truly KNOWS plants and flowers. He explains them with ease and candor, and is as competent a "plant person" as there is. He studies, and he practices. He embraces "new methods" as well as the "old" ways of dealing with problems. Call for Randy's solution for your question ... **713-212-KTRH (5874)**.



Newsbriefs

Check your mail

Be sure to empty your mailbox promptly each day. Why? One morning in mid-2012 a resident found a large pile of mail on Oak Hollow. "It was where the mail truck stops, so I assumed it just fell out the day before," he said. The mail was addressed to residents throughout HCE, and included personal letters, magazines, junk mail - some of everything. "We took it to the Post Office, but they said it was apparently taken from mailboxes after delivery and later dumped." Residents can also consider installing locking mailboxes.

Verify your fire insurance rate

An HCE resident recently learned he was due a discount on home fire insurance. He noticed on the Rosehill Volunteer Fire Department's website home page at <http://www.rosehillfire.org> the RFD ISO Letter link. The November 2010 letter confirmed an upgrade of the department's Public Protection Classification Rating to Class 3/10 following an improvement in firefighting capability. "It was old news, but I called my agent anyway to check on my insurance cost," he said. The agent said these ratings are usually automatically checked by computer programs, but in his case, that hadn't happened. So he can now expect a lower fire insurance premium.

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Volunteers sought for sign maintenance

HCE road signs are popular with roosting birds, who leave behind what birds usually leave behind. Resident James Bartlett has volunteered to clean up the signs, straighten those that are leaning and install any new signage relating to security. To help, email him at jamesandeileen@comcast.net.

The lingering drought threat

Ever since desert-like rainfall of only 12.4 inches in Tomball from Sept. 2010 through Sept. 2011, HCE residents have worried that the drought could return. Heavy rain in January and July 2012 refilled ponds and restored greenery. But late 2012 was less wet; and despite recent rains NOAA's Feb. 12 Drought Monitor shows our area as in moderate drought, with the Seasonal Drought Outlook predicting the central Texas drought spreading our way through April 30. Both maps are at <http://www.lakelevels.info/>. For local conditions, the Texas A&M Forest Service produces a map of soil moisture. See it at <http://www.rosehillfire.org/kbdi.php>.

HCE documents available

Summaries of HCE bylaws and deed restrictions are available online at the Property Owners Association website at www.hcepoa.org. For the complete documents in electronic or hard copy form, email or call the association secretary, James Bartlett, at jamesandeileen@comcast.net or 281-255-6770.

Architectural plans require review

If you plan exterior work on your HCE property, deed restrictions require you to submit plans ahead of time to the Architectural Review Committee. "It's an easy process," said Steve Yon, committee chair. "We respond quickly, and in most cases there are few if any problems." Work requiring approval includes in-ground features such as swimming pools, water wells, septic tanks and sprinkler systems; on-ground structures of any kind, including the home, walls, gates and fences, outbuildings and landscaping; and above-ground features, including lighting, antenna and wiring. "We simply ensure the plans comply with our deed restrictions. We encourage owners to call us early, to help speed things along," said Yon. He is available at 281-255-6351 or yonsteve@gmail.com.



Letter From the Editor

By Laura Urrutia

After a brief respite, the HCE Chronicle is up and running, with the next quarterly edition scheduled for May, 2013! Our top priority is producing a quality newsletter that brings us together as a community through positive communication and shared interests. The newsletter belongs to all of us and we welcome your input!

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Letter from the Editor

If you have comments, suggestions, questions, and/or want to contribute in any way, please contact **Laura Urrutia** - editor (alberturru@aol.com) or **James Bartlett** - publisher and POA Board Newsletter Chair (jamesandeileen@comcast.net).

Several residents have joined the newsletter team and will share their talents. They are: **Carole Benedict**, Cook's Corner and Restaurant Review; **Vonda Tackett**, photography; **Laura Branson**, landscaping and seasonal design; **Josephine Kays**, feature articles; and **Winona Dutton**, social activities. Although not a resident but very familiar with HCE, **Elizabeth Mandola** with Coldwell Banker United, Realtors will keep us updated with valuable real estate information specific to Holly Creek Estates.

The Chronicle is off to a great start and we look forward to producing a fun, informative newsletter for all residents of HCE.

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