

# Barton Hills News

It's what's going on in your neighborhood

## Barton Springs Update

Since January, following the American Statesman's bombshell stories about serious contamination of Barton Springs and other areas, the City has been a beehive of intensive public education activity while awaiting test results and data analyses by other entities. The Pool was closed January 19th and will remain closed until the City receives confirmation of its safety for swimmers. City staff is anticipating consultant recommendations for remediating contaminated sites. BHNA concerns for protecting the long-term health of Barton Creek have not been addressed.

Although preliminary test results indicated the Pool is safe for swimmers, the decision to reopen the Pool depends upon the results of independent sampling and site assessments by an array of agencies: Texas Department of Health, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry; Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. According to the City, "all four agencies represent the definitive, independent authorities for this kind of investigation and are working collaboratively to determine (1) if there is any human health and/or ecological risk and, (2) determine whether a cleanup is necessary and what steps to take, if warranted."

A drainage area upstream from the Pool continues to be a focus of concern for contamination by benzo(a)pyrene, a probable human carcinogen in the chemical group of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Experts have said that benzo(a)pyrene is a common environmental chemical found in urban air, in charbroiled foods, and in runoff from urban roads or parking lots. Based on core sample tests of the Park Place apartments parking lot, the City has concluded that sedimentary contamination is not the result of a gravel pit for coal tar plant waste that operated during the 1800s, but rather from the sealant applied to the parking lot. The experts from the four state and federal agencies in their preliminary findings concur with that assessment.

The City hosted a work session on February 5th for environmental and health experts to discuss the issues with the City Council in a public meeting with several BHNA representatives in attendance. The work session was recorded and televised repeatedly for a week on local access cable Channel 6. A web page for testing information is established at [www.cityofaustin.org/news/2003/2003bartonsprings.htm](http://www.cityofaustin.org/news/2003/2003bartonsprings.htm). A telephone hotline for questions is also available at 972-5889. The City has also scheduled a Public Forum at the Palmer Events Center on March 27th for presentations on public health risk assumptions that support data analyses.

BHNA formed a special Springs Committee in January to serve as a liaison with the City for Barton Creek information. The committee, composed of Peter Hess, Mark Gentle, Mary Ann Neely, Craig Smith, Dick Kallerman, Glee Ingram, Derek Stuart, and Robin McKeever, wrote letters and met with City staff on March 3rd regarding specific questions, concerns, and requests. Nancy McClintock, Director of the Watershed Protection Division, also arranged a small-group walking tour on March 20th of the areas of concern in response to the committee's request.

At the end of March, the BHNA Springs Committee's main concern was that long-term protection of the Creek's water quality does not appear to be a priority for the City. The staff agreed with the committee's observation of Creek degradation over a long period. Flood events that transport toxic chemicals have become more prevalent as development creating water-impervious cover and pollution increases along the watershed. The City is operating under significant state and federal constraints that limit its ability to control Creek degradation. They estimate City control of the Barton Creek watershed to be only 27% following the loss of a major jurisdictional contest last year with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

## Message From The President

Spring is typically a busy time and this year is no exception. The year started with a bang when the Statesman reported on toxic contamination in Barton Springs. A special BHNA committee got busy and is still sorting out the issues. While the City can claim some successes, much work remains. See the related article for details and we'll also discuss more at the meeting. May is election month! Be sure to vote for your mayor and three city council members. Try to attend a candidate forum—several will be held around the city during April. Also BHNA will collaborate with the Zilker Neighborhood Association to put written questions to every candidate. Watch for the responses on the BHNA email message service. In the wake of the Barton Creek pollution issues, this election may be critical for effective City action in protecting the long term health of the

Also, Austin Community College has an important tax referendum on the May ballot. Rafael Quintanilla, Chairman of ACC's Board and BHNA member, will discuss increasing ACC service demands and budgetary issues at the April 8th meeting. None of the Safe Routes to School applications from Austin—including BHNA's—were approved by the Texas Department of Transportation! We're shocked! Come to the meeting and get the assessment.

Glee Ingram will give us a report on the first event of a new BHNA project, Greenbelt Guardians. The project is a collaborative effort with the City Parks & Recreation Department to maintain Greenbelt trails in our area and to promote public education about conservation practices. It's a great program that has drawn many BHNA volunteers.

A pending proposal by the Bicycle-Pedestrian Subcommittee to the City's Urban Transportation Commission would improve pedestrian and bicycle safety along South Lamar and at the Ben White intersection. It's on our meeting agenda. The subcommittee has requested assistance from adjoining neighborhoods to bolster the recommendations.

BHNA member Art Stone received an appreciation award from the Austin Police Department for his loyal participation and contributions in public forums hosted by the department. The award came on the occasion of the Southwest District Commander's Forum on March 19th. Although many APD staff changes have been made recently, Senior Officer Mike Summers will continue as the District Rep. for our area. Officer Summers indicated stepped-up APD ticket-writing for speeding violations on Barton Hills Drive.

**Robin McKeever**

**President, 2003**

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## Partners in Education

Partners in Education is a dynamic partnership between the Austin Independent School District and the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce. The mission of the Austin ISD Partners in Education is to create and foster effective community partnerships that support and enrich student learning and success.

Several businesses in the Barton Hills Neighborhood have joined with Barton Hills Elementary School (BHE) since September and we would like to thank them and encourage residents of our neighborhood to show their support to these businesses.

Changos at 3005 S. Lamar has issued a “monkey card” to all families associated with BHE. When the card is presented, 5% of monies spent revert back to the school. Matt’s el Rancho continually shows support for the school as does Phoenicia Deli, Austin Rentals and Austin’s Pizza (on Lamar at the corner of W. Mary).

Two local food markets have joined the effort. Randall’s has a program where you can designate Barton Hills Elementary School a recipient of a percentage of what you spend using your “Remarkable card”. All you need to do is to visit the courtesy counter and set it up. Thereafter, each time you pay for groceries you will be supporting the school. Sun Harvest has a similar program called “eScrip”. Applications are available at the check out counter or you can register online at [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com). Participation requires you to use your debit or credit card for payment and monies are, again, funneled directly back to the school. If you already shop at these stores, please take a moment to sign up with these programs.

And finally, BHE has a mentor program targeted at serving children within the school. Any community member willing and able to serve in this way should contact Kati Achtermann, Principal, at 414-2013. All mentors participate in a short training/screening process at the school.

As you undoubtedly as aware, the upcoming AISD school budget for the year ahead is certain to present educators with added challenges. Our Partners in Education combine their business savvy with service and we are most grateful! Please join us in supporting them

## Retirement

A retirement party will be held for Sharon Spillar on March 28th from 4p.m. to 6 p.m. in celebration of her 30+ years of service. The Barton Hills community and former students are invited to attend and celebrate with her that afternoon at the school. For further information contact:

Kati Achtermann at 414-2013.

## In Brief

### Open Forum

In response to a member request, we will try a new feature at the April 8th meeting—designating time for members to discuss what’s on your mind about the neighborhood. BHNA meetings often have packed business agendas that reflect the many activities of our members. If there’s a down side to the beehive, it’s that we might not have enough opportunities to visit with each other, meet new members, and share ideas and observations. We’re calling it the “open forum” and you’ll have the floor, so bring your new neighbors and tell us what you think!

### 4th of July Parade

The 4th of July parade is coming sooner than you think! We need your input and support to make this day special. Here are some of our wishes for this years parade:

1.Publicity and sponsorship.

2.Let’s put together a Barton Hills Marching Band! We need someone with some experience or willingness to head this up. I know we have old band mates out there. This can be eclectic we’re not picky.

3.We’d also like to invite our veterans to join in the parade. Please.

4.Any ideas for improvement that you have are much appreciated.

Jennifer Stuart, Committee chair will be gearing up for this in mid-April. If you are interested in serving on the committee, contact her at [jenstuart78704@yahoo.com](mailto:jenstuart78704@yahoo.com) or 441-3186.

## Vote May 3rd

This is Austin, so there's always an important election right around the corner! The next one is on May 3 for mayor and three City Council seats. Austin's at-large system means that every resident of the City can vote for the mayor and every City Council member. When Mayor Gus Garcia declined to run for another term, Council Member Will Wynn filed for the mayor's race, which leaves City Council Place 5 without an incumbent. Campaign competition for mayor and the Place 5 is fierce. Council Place 2 and Place 6 will also be on the ballot with incumbents Raul Alvarez and Danny Thomas.

The non-partisan election campaigns for each of these positions provide numerous opportunities for voters to register interest in neighborhood-specific issues with each candidate. Several candidate forums are planned for South Austin organizations. If you've never attended one of these events, this is a good time to start. They're fun and your presence demonstrates healthy democratic participation.

BHNA had hoped to host a candidate forum, but was unable to schedule the event due to scarce facilities and competing events. In lieu of an event, we anticipate submitting several BHNA-related written questions to every candidate. Each candidate's responses will be disseminated on the BHNA email message service. (If you are not receiving BHNA information through the Yahoo message service and you wish to receive it, please contact Derek Stuart, Treasurer, at 441-3186) Watch for this in April!

## Tax Hike for ACC

Austin Community College trustees have set May 3, 2003, as the date for an election they say will be "pivotal" in determining how ACC serves Greater Austin and Central Texas in future years. Two propositions will be on the ballot—one to increase the maintenance and operating tax cap, and one for bonds to fund facility projects.

Voters in ACC's tax district—Austin, Leander, and Manor ISD residents—will be asked to consider an increase in the ACC tax cap from the current 5-cent cap to 9 cents per \$100 assessed valuation. ACC's tax rate is unchanged since 1986 and is now the lowest in the state. The increase would be phased in. The phase-in plan, which will be included on the ballot, will feature a 2-cent increase in 2004 followed by 1-cent increases in 2005 and 2006. The bond proposals would be financed by an additional 1 cent on the tax rate.

"The additional funds realized from an increase in our tax cap would meet community needs carefully identified through ACC's Master Plan," says ACC President Richard Fonté.

Highlights of Master Plan projections for using additional funds include:

- Hiring more full-time and adjunct faculty to increase class offerings; ACC had to turn away nearly 4,000 students last fall.
- Expanding programs and courses related to health care, such as nursing, biology, chemistry and dental hygiene, and other high demand skills.
- Expanding basic foundation skills instruction such as developmental education, Adult Basic Education, GED preparation, and English as a Second Language.

"The impact of a 1-cent increase in our tax rate would be \$10 for the owner of a \$100,000 house," says Ben Ferrell, vice president for business services. "Therefore, the impact of the first year of the proposed phase-in plan would be \$20."

The College also will ask voters to consider funding \$99 million in bonds to finance campus construction and renovation. These funds would allow ACC to expand classrooms and labs in high demand instructional areas and continue to invest in direct student instruction/academic support facilities. Currently, the College has less than half the square footage per student of other colleges its size, and each ACC campus is at or exceeds national room usage norms for higher education.

## Envision Central Texas

You may recall the Envision Central Texas effort a few months ago to involve all Central Texans to participate in planning for projected population growth of 1.25 million in our area over the next 20-plus years. Austin currently has a population of about 1.5 million. Envision Central Texas (ECT) is a non-profit ad hoc group that is planning for growth in the five-county area around Austin. Eventually, the final ECT plan might be used for city zoning and county planning purposes, although the plan might take a year or more to finalize.

In the first phase of a very large project, workshops were held throughout the area for participants to pour over large maps and develop growth options. It was both daunting and fun! The second phase of the project, which is nearly complete, is for ECT's consultant to compile all the data from the workshops into several growth alternatives. The next phase, coming up in June, will be for a public "vote" on the most-preferred alternative. The "vote" will not be an official referendum, but rather a survey printed in newspapers and available online for anyone to fill out and send in.

Aspects of the project are somewhat controversial. The growth estimates, for example, might be way wrong. Some people detect a plot by real estate brokers and developers to hijack the best uses of community space in a slick campaign for a "publicly-endorsed" growth plan. Liveable City, a local non-profit focused on improving our quality of life in Austin, is working on a grass roots effort to increase participation in ECT. It is critical that ECT reflects the input and preferences of people across our region. Then there are other practical issues, like stuffing the "ballot box"—anyone might be able to send in as many surveys as they wish, although ECT is considering ways to minimize this potential problem.

Despite the problems, nearly everyone supports the efforts for community involvement in quality-of-life issues. Unless we change current land development practices and if the projected level of growth is close to accurate, we can expect:

600,000 acres to be developed in the 5-county area

1,000,000 more cars in the region

72% new jobs in Travis County

40% of land consumed in Williamson County

50% of open space to be developed (435,000 acres)

What can you do? Get involved! Regardless of your point of view, Liveable City is offering a dozen ways to participate constructively. Most important... vote in June! For more information, visit [www.liveablecity.org](http://www.liveablecity.org) or 481-8400. What we learn about land use, transportation, social equity, and the environment from this project will support our neighborhood strategic planning efforts beginning this fall. More on that later.

## Clean Sweep

Keep Austin Beautiful is organizing the 18th annual Clean Sweep on Saturday, April 5, at Festival Beach, Town Lake. It's the annual kick-off event for cleaning up Austin during the month of April, officially designated "Keep Austin Beautiful Month." Clean Sweep is also part of the statewide event, Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off.

Volunteers in communities across Texas will participate in the largest one-day cleanup event in Texas. Keep Austin Beautiful is inviting volunteers in the greater Austin area to spend a Saturday morning on April 5th cleaning up litter from the Town Lake area and surrounding neighborhoods.

Volunteers will then enjoy a free lunch; free T-shirt (while supplies last), entertainment and a chance to win great door prizes. They will be provided with clean-up supplies and are strongly encouraged to wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes.


Registration begins at 8 a.m. at Town Lake Festival Beach. Volunteers will pick up trash from 9 a.m. 'till noon. Lunch, entertainment, and door prizes will be provided from noon till 2 p.m.

Mark your calendars and bring everyone to lend a hand in the largest annual cleanup event in Austin on April 5. For more information or to register, contact Keep Austin Beautiful at 974-2533 or register on-line at [www.KeepAustinBeautiful.org](http://www.KeepAustinBeautiful.org).

Contact: Irene Guzman-Krill, Executive Director, Keep Austin Beautiful, (512) 974-3576.

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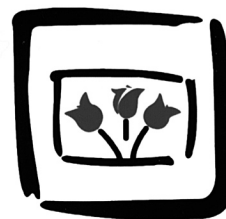
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# B.H.N.A. General Meeting

Tuesday April 8, 2003  
St. Mark's Episcopal Church

## AGENDA

6:00 – 7:00

Meet & Greet Social  
BBQ Dinner catered by  
Green Mesquite  
\$5 per plate, two meats,  
two sides, \$1 cobbler

7:00 – 9:00

General Meeting

Guest:

Rafael Quintanilla

## Reports:

ACC Tax Referendum

Barton Springs/Creek  
Contamination

Greenbelt Guardian

Safe Routes to School  
Application

BHNA Handbook Release

Open Forum

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# Barton Hills News

The newsletter of the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association is published quarterly, and is supported by the advertisements of our generous sponsors. It is distributed in print to every home in Barton Hills in January and June, and only to paid Association Members in April and October.