



Lakewood Village Update

April 15, 2015

Hello Everyone,

ELECTION NEWS. There will be a voter and citizen forum on Wednesday April 22nd at 7pm and on Sunday April 26th at 6pm, held at Town Hall. The format will be an open question and answer session where citizens can submit questions to the candidates. The forum is open to the public and all candidates have been invited to attend. Early voting starts on April 27th and runs until May 5th, Election Day is May 9th. Our polling place is the Lakewood Village Town Hall - you cannot vote at Crossroads or Little Elm for our election. Voting for the LEISD school board will take place at either the Little Elm Library or the Copeland Government Center in Crossroads. Please remember, you must have a government issued photo ID to vote.

WE ARE VERY FORTUNATE to have access to our wooded acreage at the front of town, which supports a wide variety of wildlife (deer, foxes, coyote, skunks, and the occasional bobcat). Unfortunately, if you are one of the



many people who walk or ride on the numerous trails, you know the area has recently become a dumping ground for construction trash. In response, we will be taking the following actions. First, all new construction will be required to use roll-off containers supplied by Allied Waste. Thus, there will be no more four-sheets-of-plywood trash bins and the "garbage guy" who hauls the trash away from the job sites in a trailer. Second, we will be organizing a clean-up Saturday. We will have Allied drop a roll-off at the entrance to the woods

and we will collect and dispose of the trash on a Saturday morning. Under the terms of our contract, the Town can obtain roll-off containers from Allied free of charge, so there is no out-of-pocket cost. We just need the labor - if you use the woods, or just want to help keep Lakewood Village clean, we'll be looking for volunteers and I think we can knock it out in just a couple of hours. It would be especially helpful for volunteers with golf carts or similar. We are still in the planning stages; I will let you know when we firm up the date. We don't want a repeat, so at our upcoming meetings the Council will be discussing various possible ways to deter future illegal dumping.

IT'S MOWING SEASON AGAIN. Traditionally in April, we send out the "happy letters" to our vacant lot owners (we don't send them to homeowners - you are already happy- because you live in LWV). We call them that because the recipients are happy they aren't violation letters, they are just a polite reminder to the owners that it is time to contact their lawn service and make arrangements to maintain their property. We also tell the owners to pick up the dead trees and brush on their lot, but not for the reason that most people think. On a few occasions, people have told me that "so-and-so" should clean up their vacant lot because it is a fire hazard. Well, ancient cavemen did not stack wood, sit around, and wait for it to catch fire. A dead tree lying on the ground will not suddenly burst into flames. Yes, if there is a fire it will burn, but so will the tree standing next to it - the fire did not take high school trigonometry - it doesn't care whether the tree is vertical, horizontal, or at some acute angle. Pretty much anything not made out of the space shuttle's tiles is going to burn if we have a fire.

Think of this, as you drive into LWV off Eldorado, what you see in front of you is 170+ acres of woods. In the last 50 years how many trees do you think have fallen over? Thousands, and nobody picked them up, yet, none of us wonders each night when the woods will spontaneously erupt in flames. The reason we want the brush removed is that the mowers will mow around it - they don't want to risk breaking their blades. Over time, these "islands" of tall grass get larger and more numerous (the less you mow, the faster you can finish). These unmowed areas can harbor snakes, mice, vermin, and other potentially hazardous animals so we cannot allow it in close proximity to our houses. That's why we want the brush removed

ON A RELATED NOTE, I would like to talk to you about code enforcement. Let me tell you how it works here in Lakewood Village. For many years, I have typically driven the town with Linda on Monday mornings - mostly our attention is focused on the empty lots, but if we see any significant violation, we note it. If it is an issue with a house, the next step is Linda will call you. She will explain the issue and ask you how you plan to solve the problem; most times people did not realize they were in violation. Ninety-five percent of the time, the person follows through and the problem is quickly solved - no letters - no official paperwork - no attorneys. **The first step is to treat you like a neighbor.** We just want the problem fixed - minimal drama - we aren't looking to threaten anybody, or punish you, and we certainly don't want your money. Now, suppose you tell us you will fix the problem by Friday, and the following week we observe that you did not. At this point, you will get an official letter from the town with the violation information (specific ordinance and usually a photograph), and a firm legal deadline to fix the problem - in other words - you are now on the clock. If you fix the problem before the deadline - then all is well. On the other hand, in the very rare case where you still are in violation after the deadline, then the Town Attorney enters the picture. In nearly all cases, I am the complainant. In cases where we receive a complaint from a neighbor, most times I will go out and observe it and then I will officially sign the complaint affidavit. You still have to live next door to your neighbor, so it's best for everyone if I am the bad-guy. Next, you will receive a summons to appear in court, and a pre-trial meeting date with the Town's Prosecuting Attorney where you will have the opportunity to discuss your issue. The prosecutor decides the next step; it could be no prosecution, give you more time, or offer you a plea deal with a window fine. The decision is up to the prosecutor within guidelines set by our judge. The Mayor of Denton can't tell the Denton D.A. what to do, and we can't tell our prosecutor or judge what to do.

Only the judge can fine you, not me, not Linda. In the television shows - **you've never heard the district attorney say**, "*Hey Judge, sit this one out, I got this one - I'm going to decide the punishment and sentence*". Like in most towns, our judge has pre-approved fines for certain offences if you want to avoid court (just like paying a speeding ticket). So, for example, although technically a mowing violation fine can be up to \$2,000, you can pay the window fine of \$252 to avoid court - which basically covers the cost of our prosecutor. As many of you know, I am a professor. If, on my final exam, the average is 80 and a student gets a 42, then they failed. I don't want to give them an F, it doesn't make me happy, and it doesn't mean the student is a bad or evil person. In order to maintain the integrity of the institution and in fairness to those who worked their tails off to pass, I have to fail the person. I don't like it. I don't like doing code enforcement, but I think we do it respectfully, and it's got to be done.

FENCES. Clint Bushong and I have been working on a proposal to the Town Council to provide financial incentives for people to fix their fences. Our proposal calls for the Town to temporarily waive the fence permit **fee** (you still have to get a permit) and the Town will handle the disposal of the old fences. The Town will recycle old fences that are unpainted - stained fences are recyclable. We will dispose of the remaining painted and non-wood fences (remember roll-offs are free for LWV). To participate, the fence companies will have to pass on the disposal cost savings to you. If your fence or especially your pool enclosure needs repairs, this is the time. I will provide you with more detailed information if the Town Council approves the proposal at our April meeting.

BETTER SIGNAGE IS ON THE WAY. We have an agreement with Little Elm to jointly develop directional signage for Lakewood Village and Little Elm Park. On weekends, we have quite a few people come over the toll bridge, turn into Lakewood Village, and slowly drive in circles as they look for "the lake" or "the park". Councilman Ed Reed is spearheading the MDD's efforts on this task. In a similar way, EDC President Bill Schoknecht is leading the effort for signage inside the Town. It is a win-win cooperative effort; Little Elm's sign department will manufacture the signs and we will install them. We expect to see the new signage efforts complete within the next few weeks.

You may have noticed that Little Elm is extending the sidewalks along Eldorado to the Sunrise Bay entrance. I have asked Little Elm Town Manager Matt Mueller to consider putting together an Eldorado Working Group to communicate and better coordinate the new improvements, esthetics, and design elements along Eldorado here on the west side. For example, Little Elm is looking at potentially installing a raised median strip rather than the current continuous “suicide lane” in some places. It would be nice for us to coordinate lighting, signage, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, etc., so it doesn’t end up an incoherent mess. As the gateway to both towns, it is in our shared best interests to do this well.

BATTLE OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS. Oak Point PTA is issuing a challenge, Oak Point Elementary versus Chavez Elementary in the 5K /1 Mile Color Run here in Lakewood Village on Saturday April 25th. The race starts at 8 am and is open to everyone in the community. A silent auction and post-race celebration with a live DJ will be held immediately following the race. This is a great way for the schools to raise funds for the PTA, and we are very glad to host it each year. Please be especially careful as you drive through town that Saturday morning.

REMEMBER, official town information is posted on our webpage: www.lakewoodvillagetx.us If you have questions about town operations, ordinances, permits, or procedures, or if you just want to get general town information, you should start with our webpage. Clint Bushong has spent a great amount of time modernizing the site, and he is continuously updating it. Council agendas, prior meeting minutes, and even council packets are all available online prior to our meetings. While there is a Lakewood Village social media page, it is not affiliated in any way with the Town.

COUNCIL UPDATE: The council is continuing to work on numerous initiatives; the preliminary budget discussions for 2016 are just around the corner. If you have expertise, experience, or a viewpoint that you would like to share, I urge you to contact any of your Councilmembers. We have positions available on our EDC, MDD, or we can create an advisory board if you have a special issue.

Final Notes:

- ★For those of you who had pictures taken with the Easter bunny, we now have the digital copies of the photographs available at Town Hall. So, if you want to email the picture to family or post on your social network, the digital files are available. Just stop by Town hall and talk to Summer or Linda.
- ★The previous Allied Waste calendar had an error. The corrected calendar is available at Town hall or you can download it from the website.

It is good to see the lake coming back, here in **Lakewood Village**.



Dr. Mark E. Vargus
Mayor