

Commonwealth Comments

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

May/June, 2004

www.commonwealthcivic.com

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Civic Association Annual Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting of The Commonwealth Civic Association will take place at The Commonwealth Clubhouse at **7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 18**. Two director positions will be available. Jim McGregor's and Steve O'Hara's positions are up for election. At the regular board meeting held in February, the board of directors appointed Conrith Davis to fill Zelma Loeb's position. Zelma's position was vacated in February when Zelma relocated requiring that she give up her position. (See related article on page 2 of this newsletter.)

Any resident of good standing may submit his/her name for one of the two director positions in the upcoming Association election. You must call Crest Management before May 14 at 5 p.m. to appear on the written ballot. (Write ins **will** be taken from the floor during the Annual Meeting.) To have your resume appear on the web site, please submit the information by email to: commonwealth@stansellweb.com.

Homeowners should be receiving a proxy from the Association shortly. **If you are unable to attend the Annual Meeting of The Commonwealth Civic Association, please be sure to return your proxy to Crest Management Service by 5 p.m. May 14.** You may fax your proxy to Crest 281-579-7062 or mail it to: Crest Management at 16360 Park Ten Place, Suite 310, Houston, Texas 77084. We must receive at least 115 proxies to make the election valid. Proxies, mailed or faxed, must be received by 5 p.m. May 14.

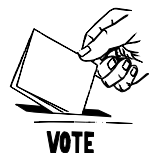
The 3 winners of
The Commonwealth Web Site
Contest will be announced at the
Annual Meeting on Tuesday, May 18.
(Winners need not be present to win!)

**14TH ANNUAL
JULY 4TH
PARADE & PICNIC
DON'T MISS THE
FUN!**

VOTE Saturday, May 15

7 a.m. - 7 p.m.
at The Commonwealth Clubhouse

City Council and School Board Elections



Association
Board of Directors

Tom Wooley
President
281-265-1734

Paula Stansell
Vice President
281-579-0761

Conrith Davis
Treasurer
281-579-0761

Jim McGregor
Director
281-980-1661

Steve O'Hara
Director
281-265-4485

Farewell Zelma!

It is with great sadness that the board of directors and the residents of The Commonwealth bid farewell to Zelma Loeb. Zelma has served on the board of directors for **five** years. She was an active Commonwealth volunteer for many years before her election to the Association Board.

The Board of Directors appointed Conrith Davis to fill Zelma's position.

Zelma's commitment and enthusiasm for her community will be missed.

Commonwealth Vandalism Incident

In February our neighborhood was hit by vandals. These occurrences cost residents a substantial amount of money each year. If you have any information concerning the Knightsbridge tennis courts and/or the Oxford neighborhood monument sign graffiti incident, please let us know. We are offering a \$250 reward for information (\$250 for tennis court information and \$250 for Oxford monument information) that will lead to the arrest of the person or people responsible. If you have any information, please let us know at: commonwealth@stansellweb.com. Photos of the vandalism may be seen at www.commonwealthcivic.com.

ALERT!

The purpose of this information is NOT to alarm residents, rather to alert you to the importance of a strong Neighborhood Watch committee and the fact that we must always be aware!

The information below is taken from a report given by a Commonwealth resident. Due to space constraints, I have paraphrased her comments.

"In March a Caucasian male, approximately 28 years old, with a scruffy beard, wearing a t-shirt, pants and a cross around his neck, rang my doorbell. My 24 year old daughter (who looks much younger) answered the door. Thinking she was a teenager, he asked if her parents were home. Avoiding the question, she asked if she could help him.

Holding ONLY a pen in his hand he indicated that he was taking signatures of residents interested in participating in an upcoming Commonwealth Community Association meeting. Upon questioning by my daughter, he indicated that he was not sure when the meeting would take place, nor what the meeting was about. He was "just" trying to see if residents would be interested in attending. He told her he would come back around 6 p.m. after her parents got home and proceeded to leave. My daughter then watched as he walked away down the sidewalk. She did not see any automobile that might have been associated with him.

This incident has the appearance of someone casing a home with criminal intent. There have been several home break-ins in our neighborhood in the recent past but no fingerprints could be found."

Please be aware and report to the Sugar Land Police ANY suspicious activity you note in our neighborhood.

This Association
would **NOT** approach
residents in this manner!

Association Nuts & Bolts

*Deed Restrictions/Modifications/Architectural
Changes corner*

Considering a pool? Please note that the Architectural Guidelines require that you follow the process outlined below. Following the process will reduce the amount of time and frustration involved in pool building and prevent plans being returned for modification or clarification.

Obtain an application form from Crest Management at 281-579-0762. This form may also be downloaded from our website at www.commonwealthcivic.com.

Fill out the application form **completely** and return it to Crest Management.

Attach a copy of your plan with the pool and deck location and dimensions clearly indicated.

Indicate on plat: site access **and** all drain lines as well as location of all pool equipment.

Backwash **and** drain lines must drain to the street.

Blueprint of pool must indicate schedule 40 PVC used for all drain lines.

Pool and deck **must be at least 5 feet from side and rear lot lines** and should not encroach on any easements.

Pool and deck must be within building setback lines.

See 9.0 in your Architectural Control Guidelines for more details.

A deposit, if needed, must be received by Crest Management **BEFORE** authorization for building can be given.

Association Committees

Clubhouse & Pool Rentals
Crest Management 281-579-0761

Neighborhood Watch
Nancy Castellvi 281-265-2769

Welcome Committee
Maura Ritchie 281-980-6347
Gwen Dahlin 713-304-1048

Landscape Committee
Steve O'Hara 281-265-4485

Modifications & Deed Restrictions
Dan Lumpkin 281-265-6709

Tennis Committee
Cindy Facker 281-207-5129

L.I.D. Representative
Mike Homeyer 281-980-3794

Commonwealth Alert

Be sure to sign up for our
Email Alert system.

This is a service of The Commonwealth
Civic Association in conjunction with
residents Paula and Charles Stansell,
who oversee the Association's web page:
www.commonwealthcivic.com.

NOTE: The Association will **NOT** be sharing these email addresses with any commercial venture and **NO ADVERTISING** (or jokes!) will be forwarded to residents. This email network is **STRICTLY** for alerting/providing information regarding timely matters that the Association feels are important to our residents.

You may sign up by sending an email to:
commonwealth@stansellweb.com
please include your name and contact information.



Volunteer Opportunities

As hard as it is to believe, our **4th of July Parade and Picnic** will be here before you know it!

Volunteer opportunities include: parade organization, cooking or serving for the picnic, organizing and working the children's activities, overseeing the pool party, and more.

If you'd like to volunteer to assist in some way, please send an email to: commonwealthcivic@stansellweb.com or call Tom Wooley at 281-265-1734.

Commonwealth Neighborhood Watch Program

The Commonwealth's Neighborhood Watch program is being reorganized. This program is a joint effort between the Commonwealth Civic Association and the Sugar Land Police Department. For the program to be successful we need a Coordinator for each Area in the Commonwealth. We will need a volunteer from Commonwealth Park, Commonwealth Estates, Oxford, Sutton Park, Sutton Forest, and Bridgewater 1,2,3, and 4. These Area Coordinators will help organize their area into Blocks with about 10 homes in each block.



Each Block will be headed by a Block Captain. News information or Alert information will be E-mailed directly from the Sugar Land Police Department to the Area Coordinator who can then E-mail the information to the Block Captains and then to the individual homes.

Benefits to our community are reduced crime and improved community communications. A significant advantage to the Neighborhood Watch program is the training that is only available to Neighborhood Watch Communities. The Sugar Land Police department will conduct the training at our Clubhouse. Training will be available in several courses involving safety and crime prevention.

To get this program started we first need Area Coordinators. If you are interested please E-mail your name, telephone number and the name of your area to commonwealth@stansellweb.com.



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State of the City

The following is the continuation of last month's article on Sugar Land's accomplishments in 2003, written by Mayor David Wallace. Items 1 through 6 appeared in last month's newsletter.

7. Annexation

The City continues to work closely with the Municipal Utility Districts in the ETJ areas surrounding the City to provide necessary services and to ensure the smooth transition for the areas that may be annexed in the future.

8. Airport Development

Design work is underway for the development of a new 20,000 square-foot terminal at Sugar Land Regional Airport, to better serve the needs of the region's growing number of corporate customers. The terminal is targeted for completion in 2005.

9. Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Open Space

A project began in September 2003 to update to the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan; fifty acres of land was donated for the development of Duhacsek Park on Old Richmond Road; and Imperial Park enjoyed its first year of operation since its recent dedication.

10. Cultural Arts

The fountain and statue of Stephen F. Austin, located at the center of Town Square, was unveiled in November 2003. The statue was designed by local artist Bob Pack and is surrounded by a path inscribed with our area's history.

11. Historic Preservation

The City has helped to sponsor the restoration of Lakeview Auditorium and is leading a program to preserve artifacts associated with the Imperial Sugar Company.

12. Community Involvement

The City enhanced and expanded its Web site, receiving national recognition, and will commence a community access TV station in 2004. A citizen task force dedicated to issues facing senior citizens was provided a permanent office on Brooks St.

13. Planning for the Future

City Council unanimously adopted the updated Comprehensive Plan in 2003, to provide vision for Sugar Land's future.

SUSAN M. DELCLOS,

DMD, MDS, PA

ORTHODONTIST

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(next to CiCi's Pizza)
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The Crisis In Public Education

While many these days decry the state of public education, most do not fully understand what the crisis actually is. If we examine the schools that **OUR** children attend, most will acknowledge that the 'problems' are not in **OUR** schools, but over there, in someone else's back yard. Most people, nationwide, will admit, for the most part, to being happy with the schools that their own children attend.

During my seven years serving as a School Board Trustee for the children and taxpayers in Fort Bend ISD, my eyes have been opened to hundreds of issues. I fully realize that FBISD is not perfect. There are many challenges the district must face and problems to be addressed. However, I am convinced that FBISD is doing a wonderful job overall. The proof is in our skyrocketing enrollment.

As you are aware, the enrollment in FBISD continues to explode. We have a history of adding between 2,000 and 2,500 students each year. Last year we added over 3,000 students. (The majority of the 1,038 school districts in the state of Texas have a total of fewer than 2,000 students enrolled.) Each additional pupil brings additional expenses. We must provide not only teachers and books and for these children, we must provide computers, counselors, nurses, librarians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, classrooms and many other services and facilities.

In addition to dealing with our rapid growth, FBISD must also adhere to the rigorous standards being imposed by both the state and federal governments. I have never heard the administration in FBISD bemoan the fact that educational standards are being raised.

Educators are being held accountable for student achievement, but accountability is a two way street! I feel strongly that it is unfair to demand that teachers be required to teach to these higher standards if the funds are not included to provide for the additional (necessary) resources they require to attain that excellence. I'd like to provide you with one example. While this probably didn't happen in your home or mine, we have hundreds of children who arrive in kindergarten on the first day of school never having seen a book or a magazine. These children have never been read to, don't know their numbers or their colors, they cannot repeat the alphabet and in some cases don't know their last name. They've never seen Sesame Street or Reading Rainbow (okay, I've dated myself here), been to a museum, a library or even a movie. Yet the new standards require these children to be reading on grade level by third grade, with the other children who have parents/home lives geared to providing these enrichments. Obviously EXTRA time and effort are required to make this leap happen.

Taxpayers are overburdened by the taxes charged by all government entities. We need relief! Schools are being asked to perform to higher standards and need more money. *How do we solve the problem?*

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The Governor has (just as we go to print) called a special session to address property taxes and school funding. The legislators have decided that they need to take another look at the school funding formula which they have already sunsetted as of 2005. They are attempting to overhaul the entire funding system. Immediate action is required. Our legislators need to hear from us! Please don't just assume someone else is going to speak up!

Unfortunately, each legislative session additional mandates are handed down, but are not fully funded. In some cases they fund the initiatives, but then discontinue the funding, forcing local school districts to come up with **additional millions of dollars to meet the required state mandates**. These are dollars that could have been spent directly in the classroom on instruction, on teacher salaries for example. Unfunded mandates affect cities and counties also.

Fort Bend is the choice of residence for tens of thousands of families. Generally, people move here because of the excellent school district. Our schools perform well. Good schools are a great investment! Good schools mean higher property values.

We need your assistance. Again, we do not disagree with the higher standards, but we do need funding to provide the resources to be successful. Please contact state legislators and tell them that you support public school education, but taxpayers are overburdened with high property taxes, and we need relief. It is crucial that they come up with an alternate funding formula immediately and provide adequate funding for public education.

Our State Representative is Charlie Howard (R). You may get contact information for Representative Howard by visiting: www.house.state.tx.us/members/dist26/howard.htm. The school district's web site is: www.fortbendisd.com.

*This article was written by Sue Hauenstein,
Fort Bend ISD Board of Trustees.*

Chalk It Up As One For The Ladies!

Lisa Womack Named Sugar Land Police Chief

City Manager Allen Bogard announced in February that Lisa Womack has been named Sugar Land's police chief, effective April 12.

A 12-year law enforcement veteran, Womack was a deputy chief with the Arlington Police Department (APD). As commander of APD's west patrol bureau, she supervised more than 120 police officers and civilians. She was responsible for patrol, K-9 and community policing functions for a diverse geographic area that included 160,000 residents and one of the largest retail shopping corridors in the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex.

We welcome Chief Womack to Sugar Land!

Click It or Ticket

The City of Sugar Land attributes five local traffic fatality accidents in 2003 to persons not wearing safety belts.

Many of the 4,000 deaths of Texans killed annually could have been prevented if the victims had been wearing seat belts.

That is one reason why the Sugar Land Police Department is joining the massive statewide Click It or Ticket effort to enforce the state's seat belt and car seat laws for adults and children.

Sugar Land Police Officers, and other local police and state troopers, will be out in force from May 24-June 6 (including the Memorial Day holiday weekend).

Click It or Ticket is a statewide initiative that combines a coordinated, cooperative effort to enforce seat belt laws with an intensive public education campaign to raise awareness about one fact. **If you don't buckle up, you'll get a ticket!**

Texas law requires every person sitting in the front seat of a vehicle to wear a safety belt. All children under 17 years old must be secured with a safety belt or in a child safety seat, whether they are sitting in the front or back seat. Children younger than four years of age or less than 36 inches tall **MUST** be secured in a child safety seat.

In Sugar Land, a safety belt violation can result in a fine for the driver, ranging from \$118 to \$210.

Trash Pick Up

The Association has received several complaints about residents placing trash, including grass clippings, at the curb long before trash pick-up. Please note that trash removal in Commonwealth takes place on Tuesdays and Fridays. A new city policy requires that we not place trash at the curb before 6:00 p.m. the evening before trash day.

Unfortunately, The Commonwealth has many offenders of this policy which creates an unsightly appearance to our neighborhood. It appears that the most common offenders are the yard service companies which leave clippings at the curb, often several days before trash pick up.

Please be a good neighbor and instruct your yard service to place trash out of public view. Residents may then place the trash at the curb at the appropriate time.

Enforcement of this new requirement does **NOT** fall to the Association. If there is an habitual offender in your area, you may call the City of Sugar Land Public Works Department at 281-275-2450 and report the address of the offending resident.

NOTE: The city will be enforcing the trash pick up requirement! A first offense will draw a visit to the residence. If the situation does not improve, a letter will be sent again asking for cooperation. The city will then impose a fine.

THE NEW TRAFFIC LIGHT AT ELKINS ROAD AND COMMONWEALTH BLVD. SHOULD BE OPERATIONAL BY THE TIME YOU RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER.

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CRIME PREVENTION TIPS

The following tips were distributed by Houston Community College after the recent death of one of their employees. They are being shared by Paula Stansell.

The emphasis of this article is on helping you present the appearance of being a “hard target,” which criminals admit cause them to look for another opportunity.

Have your keys out and ready when you approach your car or home. This practice allows you to quickly get inside or use the keys as a defensive weapon if caught outside. Specifically place the key ring in the palm of your hand with each key extended out between individual fingers. The keys can be used in a jabbing or raking motion against an attack.

While in your car, lock all doors and remember, you control a 3,000+ pound defensive weapon so long as it is mobile. **If followed, do not go home**, go to the nearest fire house, police station or open business and sound the horn until someone comes out to assist you.

At a red light, stay back far enough so that you can see the rear tires of the car in front of you. This means you have sufficient distance to steer left or right to get away if threatened. Recently, a favorite criminal tactic has been to bump a vehicle in the rear and then “car jack” the vehicle when the unsuspecting driver gets out to inspect the damage.

Again, drive to the nearest occupied public place and call for police to report the accident and ask for help. Only park in well lighted areas and never park next to a van. Try to get someone or several people you know to walk you to your vehicle.

Maintain no less than a quarter of a tank of gas and keep extra money for alternative transportation in the event your car is incapacitated.

Be extremely careful at ATM machines, including drive up machines. If you see someone suspicious, circle around or find another ATM. Remain alert and be aware of your surroundings.

Do not wear headphones while walking or jogging.



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If you wear a purse with a shoulder strap, be prepared to let it go if snatched. Otherwise you could be knocked down and hurt.

Many people consider a cellular phone to be a good investment in safety. **KEEP IT ON!** And know how to quickly dial 911 in case of an emergency.

If you are driving somewhere unfamiliar with, plan your route and check a map before you start out.

If threatened with a weapon, comply with the suspect, since he may be after your purse or your car and it would probably be safer not to resist. However, most crime prevention experts advise that you should do everything possible to avoid being abducted, for this can change the situation dramatically. This is a critical decision that you may have to make in a split second, so it's better to plan ahead and develop defensive tactics to avoid or recover from this situation. This could be a life or death decision and it may be best to keep from being abducted by screaming, fighting and running away, but this is a decision that you must make before being in this situation.

Remember, go with your “gut” feeling or intuition. If it does not look right, it's probably not, but you will not know this if you don't look. **BE SAFE BY BEING ALERT!!!**

Ads in Commonwealth Comments are available at very reasonable rates. If you would like to advertise, call Sue at 281-265-4556.

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May Election Update

On Saturday, May 15th, voters will elect one new City Council Representative and three new School Board Members. Commonwealth residents will vote at the Clubhouse.

City Council: Mayor **David Wallace**, and Councilman **Daniel Wong** are unopposed in this election. A new At-Large Council member will be selected from three candidates:

Tom Abraham - an Engineer living in Sugar Lakes.

Mike Casey - Banker living in Oyster Point.

Naomi Lam - Real Estate Investor living in Sweetwater.

The School Board races are much more contested. While **Cynthia Knox** has no opponent in her position 4 race, Position 3 and Position 7 have drawn several candidates.

Ke Chen, Civil Engineer, **Larry Danna**, Public Information Officer Pecan Grove Fire Dept./former FBISD bus driver, and **Lisa Rickert**, Community Leader/Computer Consultant are vying for Position 1.

Ken Bryant, Attorney, **Laurie Caldwell**, Home-maker/Community Leader, **Walter Gerlach**, Business Owner, **Cynthia Lenton-Gary**, Sociology Professor, and **Noel Pinnock**, HISD administrator, have each filed for Position 7.

The Commonwealth Civic Association has invited each of these candidates to meet our residents at a coffee scheduled for April 21 (which takes place after this newsletter goes to print.)

Please make an effort to familiarize yourself with information regarding these candidates before going to the polls. Candidates' web sites are listed at: www.commonwealthcivic.com.

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Upcoming Meetings

Landscape Committee Meeting

Meets once a month. Call Steve O'Hara at 281-265-4485 for the next meeting date and time.

Modifications Committee Meeting

Third Tuesday of each month - 7:30 p.m. at the Clubhouse

Modifications to be considered at the monthly meeting must be received by Crest on or before the 2nd Monday of each month.

Board Meeting

Fourth Thursday of each month - 6 p.m. at the Clubhouse

CAT Meeting

Third Thursday of February, March, June, October & November
7:00 p.m.
at the Clubhouse

HAVE A SAFE MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY - BUCKLE UP

FLAG DAY - JUNE 14
FATHER'S DAY - JUNE 20

Important Phone Numbers

Crest Management	281-579-0761
Police (Non-Emergency)	281-275-2500
Animal Control	281-275-2596
Fire Department	281-491-0852
Water & Street	281-275-2750
Trash Collection	281-275-2772
Recycling Coordinator	281-275-2770
Street Lights (Centrepont)	713-207-2222
Newsletter	281-265-4556
Police & Fire Emergency	9-1-1

www.commonwealthcivic.com

Attention Advertisers!!!

This newsletter is published in January, March, May, July, September and November. The deadline for each issue is the first day of the previous month. Ads and payment must be received by that date. All Mail to **Commonwealth Comments, 3909 St. Michaels Ct., Sugar Land, Texas 77479** and include a check for full payment. Ad rates begin at \$55.00 per issue.

If you have any questions, call Sue at 281-265-4556.

Newsletter email address:
newsletter@commonwealthcivic.com



Sue Hauenstein
the write idea
281-265-4556

Special Interest Groups

The Commonwealth Women's Club

The Commonwealth Women's Club is open to all women residing in The Commonwealth. The club's purpose is to stimulate civic, philanthropic, educational, and cultural interest in the community, as well as foster a cordial welcome to new residents. Volunteer outreach is available to those who are interested. If you are interested in this group, or would like more information, please contact Susan at 281-980-3290 or Donna at 281-265-7108.

Hispanic Club

If you speak Spanish and are interested in joining this informal group, contact Lucy at 281-265-2610, for information, date and location.

Moms in Touch

Moms in Touch is a group of mothers who meet for one hour each week to pray for their children and the school they attend. If you are interested in joining us, please contact: Debbie Glasscock (Commonwealth Elementary) at 281-980-4118; Sheryl Poole (Fort Settlement Middle School and Clements High School) at 281-491-4690; Mary Marwil (Elkins High School) at 281-265-0877.

If information about your group is incorrect or outdated, please advise Sue at 281-265-4556

If you are interested in publicizing a Commonwealth-based special interest group, give us a call.



**JOIN US FOR THE JULY 4TH
PICNIC AND PARADE -
11:45 A.M. - AT THE CLUBHOUSE**

The Commonwealth Civic Association does not investigate, qualify, or certify this newsletter's advertisers. The business of each advertiser is independent of the Association.

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Tuesday, May 18, 2004

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sists of walkers,
decorated bicycles,
strollers, and
wagons. Get
creative. Every
participant is
recognized.

*Our hot dogs and
hamburgers are
the best in town!
Our chefs are your
neighbors!*

Planning is about to begin on this year's 13th Annual

July 4th Parade and Picnic.

This very popular event will take place
at The Commonwealth Clubhouse
beginning around 11:45 a.m.

After the parade, stick around for
great goodies from the grill.



*Note: The Knightsbridge pool does not open until noon on July 4.
The Briarwood pool will open at 10 a.m.*