

Commonwealth Comments

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

September/October, 2007

www.commonwealthcivic.com

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Important Information on Flood Insurance- Please Read

FEMA Map Modernization Program may cause changes to Flood Insurance Maps and Rates

The rain in Texas falls mainly on the ground and a good amount of that rain runs off into nearby streams, creeks, and eventually into rivers like our own Brazos River. Recent rains in Marble Falls caused flooding many miles downstream in Fort Bend County. What can we learn from their misfortune? If we could ask for advice what would they offer?

The novelist, Kirk Vonnegut in his commencement address to the MIT Class of 1997 advised the graduates to "Wear sunscreen; the benefits have been proven by scientists..." Better advice comes from the victims of the Central Texas floods and that advice is; even if you think you are out of the 100 year flood plain, **"BUY FLOOD INSURANCE"**.

Almost 25 percent of all flood insurance claims come from areas with minimal flood risk. Statistically, your home has a 26% chance of being damaged by a flood during the course of a 30-year mortgage, compared to a 9% chance of fire. Experts say that, given the right set of circumstances, your home could flood because our county is so flat and subject to tropical style rain events. We are prone to localized flooding even without a Katrina or Rita styled hurricane.

For example:

Tropical storm Allison in 2001 produced catastrophic floods in Houston, TX which contributed to 41 deaths and \$5 billion in damages.

Tropical Storm Claudette (1979) brought 45 inches of rain to an area near Alvin, Texas, contributing to more than \$600 million in damages.

Tropical Storm Alberto (1994) drifted over the Southeast United States and produced torrential rainfall. More than 21 inches of rain fell at Americus, Georgia. Thirty-three people drowned. Damages exceeded \$750 million.

The National Flood Insurance Program is a pre-disaster flood mitigation and insurance protection program. The National Flood Insurance Program makes federally backed flood insurance available to residents and business owners.

National Flood Insurance Program call 1-888-CALL-FLOOD ext 445.
(TDD# 1-800-427-5593.) The website is www.floodsmart.gov.

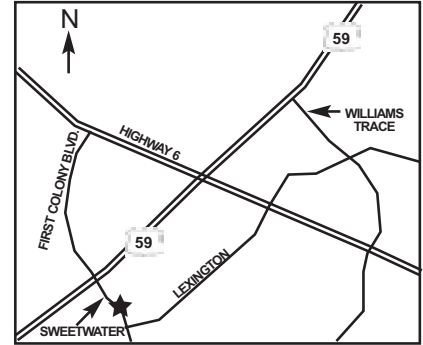
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-flood insurance info continued-

The Flood Insurance rates vary from as little as \$112.00 to over \$2,000.00 per year depending on your flood plain status and your level of coverage. If you are in a zone X or protected by an accredited levee you can buy combined insurance coverage of \$250,000 structural and \$100,000 contents for \$317.00 per year, which is less than \$1.00 per day. The same insurance in an unprotected zone can cost more than \$2,000.00 per year.

One under-reported fact about Flood Insurance is that if you buy it, you are subject to the rate class at the date of purchase. If the Zone you are in changes, as it recently did in Harris County (and may happen here in Fort Bend), you are sheltered from the rate jump by grandfathering. Equally important is that the grandfathered policy is transferable to a buyer if the coverage is continuous.

Please Note: There is a 30-day wait before a flood insurance policy takes effect.



Be Flood Smart. Get coverage today.

(Article provided by Ron Frerich, LID Director)



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LID Update

Plans are in the works for the levee district to the north of The Commonwealth to perform some maintenance on their levee. This is Fort Bend County Levee Improvement District #2 (FBCLID#2) which generally encompasses most of First Colony.

Their maintenance plan for the section of the levee that forms our northern boundary (their southern boundary) is to remove all of the trees on the top and side slopes of the levee. After this is done they want to add 12" to 24" of fill dirt to the top of the levee to fill in from the tree removal and to add additional height to the levee. Finally, they will plant grass seed over the new soil. The trees and shrubs in the area past the toe of the levee, hopefully, can remain.

FBCLID#2 is a separate governmental agency from us and has full control and responsibility for their levee. The levee to the east, south, and west of The Commonwealth belongs to First Colony Levee Improvement District #2 (FCLID#2) which protects your homes in The Commonwealth.

FBCLID#2 is expected to begin work late this year or early next year. This work will help put them in compliance with U. S. Army Corps of Engineer standards for levee maintenance.

If you have questions you may contact FBCLID#2 at 281-265-6686.

Information provided by Ron Frerich, LID Director

Board Meeting

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



Landscape Committee Meeting

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

Annual Garage sale

Saturday, October 20

8:00 a.m. - noon

Register, by email, if you wish to be included on the map of participating homes. The map will be distributed at the Clubhouse on the morning of the Garage Sale. Include your name and address in your email.

The garage sale will be advertised in the Houston Chronicle and the local papers. The deadline for being included on the map, given to shoppers on the morning of the sale, is **October 16**. There is no cost to Commonwealth residents. The expense of advertising and printing are underwritten by The Commonwealth Civic Association.

Send your registration information to:

ldooley@sugarlandtx.gov



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How To Practice Safety Tips While Walking

Step One

Find a partner, there's safety in numbers. If you must walk alone, go where there are other people.

Step Two

Walk during daylight hours whenever possible. If you must exercise in the dark, wear light-reflecting or light-colored clothing. Avoid running in the streets or in deserted areas.

Step Three

Be thoroughly familiar with your route. Know the location of phones, police or fire stations, and 24-hour businesses.

Step Four

Listen to your instincts and be willing to vary your route if you sense you're in danger.

Step Five

Walk against traffic whenever possible.

Step Six

Leave jewelry at home.

Step Seven

Ignore verbal harassment.

Step Eight

Always carry some form of personal identification in case of emergency.

Lastly, beware of dogs. If they're threatening do not run away or throw things at them. If necessary, yell, "No! Go away!" or "Down" or "Sit".

This article contributed by Conrith W. Davis, Commonwealth Civic Association Board Member



Ackkkk Termites!

An issue virtually every homeowner in the First Colony area will face, at some point in their lives, is termites. Termites do more damage to homes in the United States than fires. In fact, the economic impact of termites is an estimated one billion dollars in damage per year.

Many homeowners first become aware that they have termites on a bright, sunny, warm spring day after cool, wet weather. They discover a few (or sometimes a few hundred!) black flying insects with white or clear wings. These winged alates or swarmers do not eat wood or bite. They only want to reproduce. In fact, they have been born and live to do just that.

While no one wants termites, these "swarmers" may be your first sign of termite infestation. If you have termites, it's best to know so you can take action to stop the damage they are doing to your home.

Swarmers are born in the colony and after maturing, they wait. Yes, they wait days or even weeks. When the temperature and other environmental factors are just right, they leave the colony by way of the shelter tubes the workers have built. In nature, they fly in search of a mate and hope to start a new colony. If one of these tubes leads into your house, you may find swarmers inside your home.

It is important to remember that these insects do not bite or sting, and besides being a nuisance they are harmless. There is no need for fear or panic. If you are having a dinner party that evening (and don't these things always happen at the most inopportune times), it is perfectly acceptable to vacuum them up. Some-

times more than one colony of termites will infest a structure. For that reason, it is possible to see swarmers on more than one or two days.

It is very helpful to your exterminator to see the location of these swarmers, so leave them where they are if you can. Their location may offer him, or her, valuable clues about where the termites entered your home. This information is important to make certain the appropriate treatment is done.

Our homes are usually our biggest and most valuable investment. There are many pest control services you can do yourself, but termite treatment is not one you should try on your own. Termite treatment is not a commodity that should be purchased on price alone. You want a reputable professional.

(This information provided by Gary Gillen, Gillen Pest Control 281-342-6969.)

Insect Control

Pest infestations are a major home-maintenance issue. Avoiding a costly infestation is always a challenge. An annual insect/termite inspection and treatment could head off any possible problems you may need to address as a homeowner. For example, termites cause about \$1.5-2 BILLION dollars annually in damage to homes in this country.

Some home maintenance tips from the EPA follow:

- Be sure to remove piles of wood from around your home.
- Rake fallen leaves.
- Remove diseased plants that might harbor pests.
- Keep trees and shrubs at least 18 inches from your home.
- Remove tree branches that touch your home.
- Remove pet droppings from your yard.

-continued-

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- Do not let litter or garbage accumulate.
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In your home:

- Fix leaky plumbing.
- Store food in sealed glass or plastic containers.
- Keep your kitchen clean and free from cooking grease and oil.
- Do not leave food in pet bowls on the counter or floor for long periods of time.
- Put food scraps or trash in tightly covered, animal-proof garbage cans.
- Empty your garbage frequently.
- Caulk cracks and crevices to control pest access. Make sure doors have gaps no larger than 1/4 inch between the floor and the bottom of the door.
- Bathe pets regularly.
- Avoid storing newspapers, paper bags and boxes for long periods of time.
- Check for pests in packages or boxes before carrying them into your home.
- Install screens on floor drains, windows, heating and air conditioning vents, and doors to discourage

crawling and flying pests from entering your home.

- Make sure any passageways through the floor are blocked.
- Place weatherstripping around doors and windows.
- Caulk and seal openings in walls.
- Improve ventilation in crawl spaces.

Information in this article taken from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Pest Management Association (NPMA),

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 Tuesday of each month.

Community Watch Program

In past years, The Commonwealth has had a successful Community Watch Program. As urban crime increases throughout Fort Bend County, it becomes incumbent upon residents to take an active role in protecting their families and their property.

The Sugar Land Police Department does an excellent job patrolling our area and responding to calls, but they cannot be everywhere at all times.

We must be vigilant in our attempt

to "take a bite out of crime".

Please make an effort to know your neighbors. Become familiar with their vehicles and their routines. If your block does not have a Block Captain, please volunteer for the job. It does not require a great deal of time or effort.

We will be beefing up our Crime Watch activities so watch future newsletters for information in that regard.

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July 4th Parade & Picnic

July was marked by extremely heavy rainfall and July 4 was no exception. The downpour, however, did not prevent our hardcore believers from celebrating the holiday at The Commonwealth Clubhouse....The event is hailed as a major success even as the heavens opened.

A large pitched tent saved the day as hundreds of residents joined together to celebrate Independence Day.

The Association gives SPECIAL THANKS to the Event Co-Chairs: Stephanie Schirber, Michelle Lambert, and Laura Glasscock. We would also like to thank the cooking crew: Bobby Heth, Will Frerich, Jennifer Frerich and Nikki Frerich along with 25 plus Commonwealth residents who volunteered their time and efforts to ensure the success of our event.

The parade was a big success and participants were escorted by the pumper truck from Station 5 on Commonwealth Blvd. (in Avalon). All contestants received medals, with the top 15 receiving trophies, to remember the event.

Entertainment was provided by Rollo the Clown, several face painters and jugglers and Bill, the DJ.

Overall, despite the rainfall, a good time was had by all.

This annual, much anticipated event, is sponsored by The Commonwealth Homeowners Association and requires the assistance of dozens of residents.
Please consider "answering the call" next year!
You won't regret it.



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*July 4 Parade & Picnic Co-Chairs
Michelle Lambert, Stephanie Schirber,
& Laura Glasscock.*



Our cooks certainly didn't let a little rain keep them from having a good time!

The Commonwealth Women's Association

The Commonwealth Women's Association is open to all women residing in The Commonwealth. Girls just wanna' have fun. This is a great way to get to know your neighbors if you are new to the community, and a fun way to keep up with old friends if you've been with us a while. If you are interested in this group, or would like more information, please contact Valinda Weibel at 281-265-3157.

Our calendar is set for the upcoming year. *Although we try very hard to honor these dates, we have to be considerate of any unexpected changes that our hostesses might have. Please keep an eye on upcoming newsletters for possible date and/or location changes.*

Your \$30.00 membership entitles you to 8 awesome parties! That is less than \$5.00 each, what a bargain!

**Wednesday,
September 12th
Champagne
Social**

Bring new neighbors and friends and join this year for our exciting events. Everyone joining this evening will be entered into a wonderful raffle!

Hostess: Valinda Weibel
15 Leigh Court
281-265-3157



**Wednesday, October 10th
Hat Night**

Wear your favorite hat!
Awards will be given for the funniest and the prettiest!
Hostess: Louise Ostrander
626 Stalybridge

**Wednesday, November 14th
Holiday Recipe
Exchange**

Come exchange your favorite recipes for the holidays.
Hostess: Susan Chaluh
4310 St. Michaels Court
281-980-3290

**Wednesday, December 12th
Gift Exchange**

Talk about stealing!!!! Our ladies hold nothing back when they want that special ornament or gift of the evening! One of the most fun events we do!
Hostess: Nancy Benevides
14 Wickham
713-203-9975



**Wednesday, January 9th
Dinner with the Girls!**

With so much entertaining throughout the holidays it's nice to go out with friends and neighbors. The restaurant will be decided at a later date.

**Wednesday, February 13th
Wine and
Chocolate Tasting**

Get ready for Valentine's Day by pairing our favorite wines & chocolates!
Hostess: Violet Cairnes
14 Leigh Court
281-980-4855



**Wednesday,
March 13th
Go Texan BBQ Party**

Wear your best jeans and duds for a ho down of BBQ, Beer and Margarita's!
Hostess: Donna Danto
4902 Rutherford
281-265-8040

**Wednesday, April 9th
Tea Party**

A Tea Party is just what you need to bring in the beauty of spring! Hats will be optional for this lovely event. Plenty of tea sandwiches, flowers and desserts will make this party one to remember.
Hostess: Melinda Wolf
4414 St. Michaels
281-265-0816

**Wednesday, May 14th
End Of The Year
Pool Party**

Always a favorite, it ends the long hustle and bustle of the school year. Kick back and relax with the much loved Margarita Machine!!!
Casual is the ticket for this party!
Hostess: Allison Simmons
19 Tredington
281-494-8022



Unless otherwise noted, events begin at 7 p.m. and end around 10.

JOIN Us!!!!

Ratcheting It Up a Notch - Exterior Modifications

You spent the summer fixing up the inside of the house. You've tackled the remodeling/redecorating, reorganized the closets, and thought you were almost ready for the upcoming holiday entertaining. Then you walked outside!

Painful, isn't it? Whether you are sprucing up in order to prepare your home for resale, or doing it for yourself and your family, it's necessary to remember that many changes to the outside of your home require approval from our Homeowner's Association. You can find the required application forms for painting the wood trim, replacing windows, adding a swimming pool, or re-doing the garage exterior (and more), on The Commonwealth's internet site: www.commonwealthcivic.com.

It is very important that exterior modifications to your home are approved by The Commonwealth Civic Association Modifications Committee (MC) **BEFORE** you sink your bonus check, or your savings account into a change that may be declined by the committee.

The purpose of the MC is to review modification applications and to approve or disapprove the application

based on the Architectural Control Guidelines.

Unfortunately, over the years there have been Commonwealth residents who have spent additional dollars to bring their improvements into compliance.

Maintenance of your home such as minor landscaping modifications or **repainting your home the same color does not require approval.** However the following are common modifications that will require approval:

- Roof replacement
- Changing the color of your home's exterior
- Room additions
- Adding solar screens
- Fence changes
- Playground equipment
- Window replacement(most window replacements will require mullions)

The following are not allowed and will not be approved

- Vinyl or aluminum siding
- Driveway or sidewalk top coating

(Please note that the sidewalks in front of or on the side of your home will be maintained by the city of Sugar Land.)

IDEAS FOR THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME

It's important to pay attention to curb appeal, whether for your own family or a future buyer.

It's relatively inexpensive to de-clutter your garage, sweep the driveway, paint the front door, mow the lawn, and plant some flowers.

Landscaping

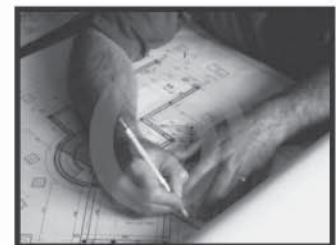
Be sure to keep garden plant sizes relative. Use trees and shrubs to frame your house, **not** to conceal windows or doors.

Lighting

Well placed lighting is a real plus for home security. Motion detector lights can guide your footing as you return home after dark and warn you if someone is approaching your front door or garage.

Light makes colors and textures come alive. Trees and shrubs (especially those with fall colors) benefit from backlighting, whether by use of artificial light or that of a rising or setting sun. It is amazing how an ordinary garden can be transformed into a magical night garden with just a few strategically placed lights.

Enjoy the outside!



Applications are to be mailed (or faxed) to:
Crest Management Services, P.O. Box 219320
Houston, TX. 77218-9320.

Application(s) must be received by Crest before 5:00 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, for review during that month. Applications received after 5:00 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday will be reviewed at the following month's meeting. Residents will receive a written notice concerning the status of their application by the end of the month in which it was reviewed.

If you have questions concerning the guidelines or an application, call Crest Management (281-579-0761).

OFFICIAL FEMA NOTIFICATION

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is in the process of conducting a review of all flood plains in the United States. Included in this process is a required re-certification of all of the levee systems in the United States. The levee protecting The Commonwealth is First Colony Levee Improvement District #2 (FCLID#2). FCLID#2 has been preparing documents, and performing geotechnical surveys and inspections in order to satisfy FEMA requirements.

As part of the drainage system re-analysis of Fort Bend County, it has been determined by the County Drainage Engineer that although our levee is already higher than the 100-year flood plain, we will need to raise our levee on the Southwestern corner of our community approximately 3 feet as an additional protection against waters which would exceed a 100-year flood event, and give our community additional protection against any increased flooding danger caused by future development on the other side of the Brazos River. This additional height at that point will allow our levee to be recertified. The remaining areas of our levee on the west, south and east are not in need of any dirt work at this time so you should only see the trucks and tractors on the Southwest corner.

Designs and plans have been drawn up by the District Engineer and advertising for contractors has begun. The competitive bid packages will be opened on August 29th. On September 4th, the bids will be reviewed and a contractor chosen from the qualified bids. Construction should begin approximately September 17th and the contractor should finish up approximately November 1st. The contract includes requirements to meet the City of Sugar Land work schedule limitations, which are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. It also includes costs to keep the local streets clean and make repairs to any landscaping and irrigation in the Landscape Reserves.

Activity on the levee that forms our Northern boundary is under the control of Fort Bend Levee Improvement District #2 (FBLID#2). They will be doing earthwork on that levee, but we do not know their exact plans.

Completion of our work will allow us to meet re-certification requirements and continue to maintain our status on the FEMA maps as outside the 100-year flood event.

The Commonwealth Civic Association wishes to thank Ron Frerich, one of Commonwealth's LID Representatives for his timeliness in sharing this information with our residents.

National Night Out

Registration numbers for The Commonwealth's National Night Out get-togethers were down this year, however, there were "unregistered" parties all over the community. Some parties had more than 75 neighbors in attendance.

Spotted visiting parties in The Commonwealth were Mayor David Wallace and City Council Members Michael Schiff and Tom Abraham. Also, a big hit with our younger residents, were firefighters and officers with the Sugar Land Police Department, the Constable's Office and the Sheriff's Department. There were fire trucks, police cars and motorcycles everywhere!

*Thanks to Leigh Mattson (Sutton Park)
for sharing her photos with us.*



Association Committees

Clubhouse Rentals
Cindy O'Hara
281-265-4485

Landscape Committee
Steve O'Hara
281-265-4485

Modifications & Deed Restrictions
Crest Management Service
281-579-0761

Pool Rentals
Miller Aquatics
713-776-3739

Tennis Committee
Conrith Davis
713-443-9069

Welcome Committee
Gwen Dahlin
713-304-1048

L.I.D. Representative
Ron Frerich
281-265-0137

www.commonwealthcivic.com

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 (Centrepoint)	713-207-2222
Newsletter	281-265-4556
Police & Fire Emergency	9-1-1

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. Mail to **Commonwealth Comments, 3909 St. Michaels Ct., Sugar Land, Texas 77479** and include a check for full payment. Ad rates begin at \$65.00 per issue.

If you have any questions, call Sue at
281-265-6681.

Newsletter email address:
newsletter@commonwealthcivic.com



Sue Hauenstein
the write idea
281-265-4556

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.

Hope you had a safe
and relaxing



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Crest Management Service

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Flood Information -
Please be sure to read!**

A newsletter for the neighborhoods of The Commonwealth:
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FOREST, SUTTON PARK AND SWEETWATER XII

No Agenda!

See some old friends
Make some new ones!

Bring a neighbor

Tell us what you did this summer or discuss the latest book you've read.

Mark your calendar TODAY!



**I Survived
The
Summer
Back-To-School
Coffee**

**at the Clubhouse
10:30 a.m. - noon
Friday, September 21**

New to The Commonwealth? Please join us -
we can recommend doctors, dentists, restaurants, shops,
organizations and more!

No RSVP required

If you have any questions, please email Sue at newsletter@commonwealthcivic.com or call 281-265-4556.