

Commonwealth Comments

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

January/February, 2007

www.commonwealthcivic.com

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Happy New Year!

The Commonwealth Civic Association Holiday Open House was held in the Clubhouse on Monday, December 11.



Despite the bad weather, residents in attendance had a great time and celebrated with refreshments and a visit with special guest, Santa Claus.



See more photos inside this edition!

Association Dues are (almost) OVERDUE!

The annual Commonwealth Homeowners Association membership dues are due in the office of Crest Management Service by January 1, 2007. Dues are considered late if they are not received by January 31 and interest will begin to accrue.

Association membership dues are used to maintain and improve our community. The greatest expense for the Association is the landscaping of our common areas. These beautifully landscaped areas are a big bonus for our community. We require water to keep our green areas green and we pay for the electricity to run our street lights. Well-lit streets provide a measure

of security for our residents.

Administrative expenses include the expense of our management service, including office supplies, insurance, the newsletter and legal expenses.

Our Management Company handles the day-to-day operations of the Association. This includes, but is not limited to, receiving and returning phone calls from residents, oversight and solicitation of vendors, payment of invoices, attending board meetings, and locating and advising residents of deed restriction violations.

-continued on page 2-

Visit www.commonwealthcivic.com for more current information.

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Dues -continued from page one

Dues are also used to maintain and repair our two swimming pools, tennis courts, and playgrounds. Our Board of Directors annually discusses pool usage and determines which hours the pools should be open (based on the previous year's usage) to minimize expenses and maximize availability to residents.

Additionally, a portion of our dues are placed in a reserve account for future replacement of physical assets such as the clubhouse, pools, and tennis courts.

Rest assured that The Commonwealth Civic Association Board of Directors takes their responsibility for oversight very seriously. Residents are encouraged to attend the annual meeting held each May where an overview is given and discussion is held regarding future needs for the Association.

If you have any questions about the annual dues, contact Crest Management Service at 281-579-0761.



VERY IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION!!!!

*** **Heads Up!** ***

At the December 14 Commonwealth HOA meeting, the City of Sugar Land Parks and Recreation Department made a presentation on the city's Hike and Bike Trail Master Plan. Discussion revolved around the city's plan to update the trails.

The main goal of the Hike and Bike Trail Master Plan is to plan a connected system of off-street and on-street routes for pedestrians and bicyclists for exercise, recreation and mobility. The plan will focus on connecting neighborhoods to parks, schools, libraries, shopping areas and other areas of interest.

Commonwealth offers many opportunities for safe off-street connections on its levees.

A CITYWIDE meeting will be held at the end of March to receive public comment on the plan. The date and location will be publicized on the City's website and in local publications!



Please read this information!

Commonwealth Civic Association Board of Directors

Tom Wooley
President
281-265-1734

Steve O'Hara
Director
281-265-4485

Virginia Mack
Director
281-207-5200

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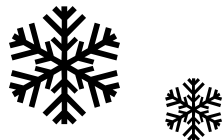
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It's not the sort of talk that local politicians want rolling off the tongues of residents, but it is a topic of grave importance.

It should come as no surprise to you that gang activity is on the rise across this nation.

Fort Bend County has NOT had a tremendous problem with gangs, however, areas surrounding us have seen a great increase in gang activity.

Gang members do not turn back as they see the "Entering Sugar Land" sign.

We, in Fort Bend County, are fortunate that our law enforcement officials have taken a proactive stand and are not only educating themselves on the problem, but have formed task forces to come up with an action plan to handle the situation.

The Student Support team at Fort Bend ISD has been meeting with local law enforcement for over two years talking about this increase in gang activity. I am on that committee and have witnessed the time and resources given to the subject by all concerned.

Teachers and Principals are being offered training on recognizing gang symbols and signs.

They need our help. We must have on-going discussions with our children about what they see and hear on campus daily. (Please don't think that the First Colony area is devoid of gang members.)

If your child sees or hears signs of gang activity, he or she must report it. (They can do so anonymously via the FBISD Crime Stoppers Program.)

We all want our homes and our schools to be safe refuges for our children and ourselves. We must be involved in the solution.

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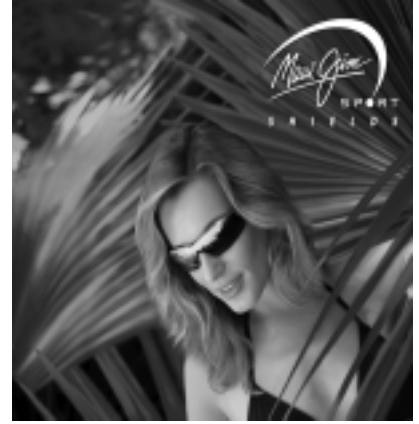
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**Along the same
lines.....**

This past year has seen an increase in the number of driveway robberies and home invasions in Fort Bend County.

Incidents of residents being followed home from work or shopping and assaulted in their driveways has risen.

One way to keep our community safe is to be sure we are always aware of what is going on around us. (And do not open your door to strangers!)

For example, at night we can watch for headlights following us in the rear view mirror.

It is imperative that we know our neighbors and watch out for each other.

You should make note of the vehicles your neighbors' own. Those that "belong" at their home and those that you just haven't seen before.

***An active Neighborhood
Watch program is the most
important step in develop-
ing a safe neighborhood!
Get involved.***

Residents should have at least one trusted near-by neighbor. Someone you can call when you are leaving town. Someone who will recognize that a strange vehicle is at your home while you're at your mother's.

Perhaps there is a young neighbor child who can pick up your newspapers and toss them into your back yard for you while you're gone.

If your neighbors don't know you, they are less likely to take action when something seems out of the ordinary. (For instance, a broken water pipe in the front yard.)

Many of us are fortunate enough to have friends who will pass on information about incidents of a

criminal nature via email. A great source for this type of valuable information is the Commonwealth Email Alert List. If you are not already on that list, please send an email to: commonwealth@stansellweb.com.

While you are at it, inquire as to whether or not your block has a Block Captain for our Neighborhood Watch program. If your block does not have a Captain, perhaps you could volunteer. If you do have a Captain, you might volunteer to have a get-together at your home so that residents on your block can meet and share important information.

This program can and does work when people get involved. Please do your part!



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Pediatric Dentist

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Sugar Land Council Debates Taking Over 11 HOA Neighborhood Parks

Last month Sugar Land City Council members cautiously agreed to consider a shift in philosophy that could result in the city eventually taking ownership of 11 neighborhood parks now owned and operated by homeowner associations. The discussion on that possibility ensued after Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Joe Chesser told council members the Settler's Park Homeowners Association has approached the city about taking over Mesquite Park, a 2.4-acre park near the center of First Colony.

The city has identified 11 neighborhood parks now owned and operated by HOAs that meet the city's definition of an acceptable neighborhood park, meaning in part that they are at least an acre in size, don't include any high-maintenance features such as swimming pools, and would not require capital improvements for at least two years.

Council was advised that if the city were to consider taking over ownership and operation of those parks, it would cost as much as \$300,000 in the next budget year, and that amount of money would cover renovations for at least one park per year. He said the city could afford such an undertaking.

Mayor David Wallace noted council members have had discussions in the past about taking actions that would only benefit "a handful of people." Allan Bogard, City Manager, said the city has provided neighborhood parks in some areas that only some citizens use.

"The HOAs are aging, like we all are," said Councilman Russell Jones. Covenants for some HOAs were written in the 1970s, he added. Some didn't take inflation into account when setting the maximum amount of HOA dues that could be charged. Now those neighborhoods have bumped up against the maximum in dues, and have no way to keep up with expenses.

"I think it's consistent with our plan for working with our older neighborhoods," Jones said. "I think it's appropriate to give the HOAs that relief. I think it benefits the whole city and balances out some of the inequities of service." Wallace and other council members reacted more cautiously to the proposal.

Councilman Dennis Parmer said he thinks it would be implicit that under any such arrangement, an HOA's members reach a consensus agreement before signing over any park to the city.

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PLEASE NOTE!

Former Commonwealth Board of Directors member **Conrith Davis** has had a change of plans and will not be leaving our HOA board. The Board voted to approve his return and he will fill the position vacated by Paula Stansell. His term will expire in May, 2007.

Chesser said such consensus was among several items the city would require before accepting any HOA park. The city also would require appropriate legal opinions from HOA attorneys, and neighborhood residents would have to be made aware that any city resident would have the right to use any such park – not just homeowners in the neighborhood.

Wallace asked Bogard if the proposal couldn't "evolve into adverse selection," where the only HOAs that opted to turn their parks over to the city were those whose parks required significant maintenance.

"That's likely to happen," Bogard acknowledged. "I think, though, that we are approaching a matter of what are our HOAs going to be able to bear in the future."

HOAs operating the other parks could be contacted about the proposal, but money to make it happen would have to come next year, Bogard added.

The Commonwealth Civic Association has NOT participating in these on-going discussions.

This report was adapted from a Fort Bend Now article by Bob Dunn

Commonwealth Votes!

Give yourself a pat on the back!
Precinct 4129 - The Commonwealth voted heavily in the November election.

We have 2,919 registered voters in our precinct.
1,368 voted in the election.
That is a grand total of 46.87%

(...now if we could just get that up to 90%!!!!!!)

The next election for the City of Sugar Land and the Fort Bend ISD School Board will take place on Saturday, May 12, 2007.



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.

Landscape Committee Meeting

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



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Commonwealth Women's Club

One of Commonwealth's best kept secrets for the past 10 years is its' Women's Club.

The Commonwealth Women's Club provides an opportunity for women with various interests to meet and share ideas in a social setting. The club also offers community service opportunities.

The December Ornament Exchange was a huge success and drew a big crowd. The ladies socialized while they shared dinner.

Meetings are generally held on the second Thursday of the month.

Come out and meet some new people or visit with some old friends.

The January meeting will be "**Dinner With The Girls**" on Thursday, January 11 at P.F. Changs (7 p.m.). The ladies would love to have you stop by.

The February meeting, "**Death By Chocolate**", is scheduled for Thursday, February 8 at 7 p.m.

15 Leigh Ct.



For more information on the time and place or information about the Women's Club, contact **Valinda** at (281) 265-3157.



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Commonwealth Garage Sale

The Commonwealth Annual Homeowner Garage Sale was a big success with over 30 homes participating.

We wish to thank resident Lisa Dooley for organizing the garage sale and compiling the list of participants. A map was given to interested parties early that morning and the event went smoothly.

Nuts 'n Bolts



If you are thinking of adding a swimming pool to your back yard this year, please remember that it is necessary for your plans to be approved by the Modifications Committee. A copy of the guidelines are available at: www.commonwealthcivic.com.

For the timeliest turn around, have your plans drawn up by a reputable professional and submit them to Crest Management by the 2nd Monday of the month.



**A HUGE thank you to
Melanie Carroll for decorating the
monuments, the marque and the clubhouse.
Great job Melanie!**

Tree Trimming - IT'S THE LAW!

Residents are reminded that the City of Sugar Land requires trees located on public right-of-ways be trimmed to certain heights. The ordinance was passed to assist with safe passage for large vehicles (fire trucks, trash trucks, etc.). The grace period ends in January, 2007.

Compliance is required! Your trees (hanging over residential streets) must now allow 12 feet of clearance above the street and 8 feet above the sidewalk.

Thirty days after notification, if no action has been taken by the homeowner, a citation will be issued.

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 Valinda Weibel at 281-265-3157.

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; Kim Newby (Fort Settlement Middle School) at 281-778-9218 ; Kathy Waldheim (Clements High School) at 281-565-2739 ; or Jo-Lynn Gill (Elkins High School) at 281-565-3823 .

**If information about your group is incorrect or outdated,
please email: newsletter@commonwealthcivic.com.**

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

Association Committees

Clubhouse Rentals
Cindy O'Hara
281-265-4485

Landscape Committee
Steve O'Hara
281-265-4485

Modifications & Deed Restrictions
Crest Management
281-579-0761

Pool Rentals
Crest Management
281-579-0761

Tennis Committee
Conrith Davis
713-443-9069

Welcome Committee
Gwen Dahlin
713-304-1048

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

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. All 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.

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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.



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SUTTON FOREST, SUTTON PARK AND SWEETWATER X

What is a Homeowner's Association?

HOAs were created to maintain the common properties in a community and provide services to benefit the homeowners. Some of these services are lighting, mosquito control, landscape maintenance, and capital asset maintenance. The Association is governed by By-laws, Articles of Incorporation, and Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions. The by-laws dictate the terms, duties, and responsibilities of the Board of Directors. The Covenants and Restrictions outline the amount and manner of assessments, and the guidelines for deed restrictions and architectural control.

Homeowners automatically become members of the Association upon the purchase of property within the confines of the community. The Association is governed by the Board of Directors. The Board are elected by the property owners at the annual meetings. The Commonwealth has five directors, each elected for a two year term (with staggered election dates).

Our Board of Directors hires a management company to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Association. Some of the duties of the management company include: attending board meetings, inspections and enforcement of deed restriction violations, billing and collection of yearly assessments, assistance with preparation of the budget, bill paying and record keeping, amenity inspections, bid solicitation and contract supervision.

The Management Company is directed by the Board of Directors and works within the guidelines of the Bylaws and Covenants and Restrictions. Our Association has worked with Crest Management for about twelve years.