

**NOTES FROM THE MEETING BETWEEN
RESIDENTS OF THE MOUNTAIN
AND
AUSTIN ENERGY**

On **Monday, September 21, 2009**, the Streetlight Committee of the Mountain Neighborhood Association (“MNA”) held an informational meeting between residents of the Mountain subdivision and representatives of Austin Energy, the division of the City of Austin responsible for streetlight design and installation. The meeting took place at Mountainview Park, and commenced at approximately 1:40 p.m.

Attendees:

Keith Harville and Kevin Hebert attended the meeting on behalf of Austin Energy. The following residents also attended the meeting: Jeanne Massey, John J. Hasse, Judy J. Hasse, Liz Harder, Steve Harder, Deborah Weiss, Walter Bodwell, Robert Goodman, Carolyn Scheider, Stephanie McCollum, Sharon Blythe, Jane Ellenberger, Usha Prasad, Astrid Jaehde, Marilyn Calhoun, Sydney Stadler, Nancy Traccarella, John Nutting, Helen Nooner, David Methven, Karen Clinkscales, Douglas Brown, Mike Harris, Halina Scibielski, Sandra Mott, Julie Ellis, Janet Richardson, Catherine Tannehill, Cindy Smith, Gail Gourley, Susan Tieman, Maury Tieman, Rick Naylor, Edmund Troche, Jeff Sundstrom, Rob Fiedler, Kent Fuka, Nancy Fuka, Deborah Miller Haines, Tommy Chilton, Doug Werner, Joletta (Joli) Kaiser, Debbie Harber, David Harber, Stephanie Methven, Eric Deal, Kristin Goodale, Judit Kolicsne, Roopa Mucherla, Amy Lemen, and Randee Ketzal.

Because Austin Energy requested that the meeting not be recorded or videotaped, Kristin Goodale and Jeanne Massey took notes from the meeting, so that those residents unable to attend could be informed of the information provided from Austin Energy.

Streetlight Committee Contact:

Doug Werner, the President of the MNA introduced Stephanie Methven, the chair of the Streetlight Committee, and advised those present that Ms. Methven is the point of contact for communications on the streetlight issues. Austin Energy confirmed that they want to be able to address issues through a single point of contact and not be contacted with issues by individual residents.

History of Project:

Keith Harville described the general process followed by Austin Energy in supplying streetlights for areas that have been annexed by the City of Austin. Streetlights

are one of 7 services that the City of Austin is required to provide upon Annexation of a subdivision or neighborhood. They have learned through experience, however, not to automatically install the lights. Instead, Austin Energy works with the existing neighborhood to determine the residents' preferences with regard to the streetlights. If the residents express a desire for streetlights Austin Energy will provide a design, as Kevin Hebert did for the Mountain, and the homeowners can indicate what lights they want on the design provided, and what lights they do not want.

Current Status of Project:

Keith Harville advised the Mountain residents that the streetlight project has been placed on "hold," and that the residents can take as long they need to assess whether the neighborhood as an entity would elect to have any streetlights, some streetlights or no streetlights. There is no timeline for Austin Energy to start the project, and the project can be remain "on hold" indefinitely. Mr. Harville noted that Austin Energy has done a lot of work on the project, but they are here to serve the citizens of Austin.

Key Factors:

Mr. Harville stated that:

- There are no minimums required before the City will install lights. If a resident does not want a light, then that resident will not get a light. However, if one neighbor does want the light and another does not, it is up to the neighbors to resolve that discrepancy. Mr. Harville encouraged the four neighbors surrounding the light location to communicate and work together to come to a consensus as to whether or not to install the light.
- The City will install the light when one neighbor wants it, because the City will "err" on the side of supplying the service.
- The streetlight project is not a "now or never" decision. If the residents vote to not have streetlights now, they can revisit the issue at another point in the future and vote to install the streetlights.
- If a single resident requests a light, the City will install it. However, the City would prefer that the residents work as a unified entity in determining whether to install streetlights or not.
- If there is no light on the design plat, then one will not be added at a future date, or moved from a current location. The only light locations available are those designated with a circle on the plat drawing. The electric meter is the tie-in point and will roughly determine the location of the light. The exact determination of a light, however, will be determined by where they can dig and not hit utilities. A light shown on the plat on a property line may end up on one side or the other of that line.

- If the neighborhood agrees to have lights and an individual does not want a light that is designated on the plat to be installed at this time, they can later request the light.
- Once installed, a streetlight cannot later be removed.
- If installed, the streetlight will go on the yard side of an existing sidewalk. It will not go between the sidewalk and the street.
- In reaching a determination for the neighborhood it is preferable not to have “dark” areas and “well-lit” areas. The neighborhood should try for some consistency and should make a collective decision.
- If the residents elect decorative lights (see discussion below), then all of the lights must be the same and a new plan will need to be drawn.

How Location of Lights Determined:

Mr. Harville further explained the design aspect of the streetlight project. He stated that the design aspect is limited due to the fact that the electricity is supplied by Pedernales Electric Cooperative (“PEC”). In arriving at a design as to where to put the streetlights, Austin Energy has to use PEC power where it is located. However, Austin Energy will try to minimize disruption to driveways, sidewalks and existing landscaping. They will also try to repair any reasonable damage to walls and vegetation that occurs as a result of the installation. He discouraged having only the infrastructure installed at this point without a light, on the basis that the installation of the infrastructure is what causes the most harm to existing landscaping, trees and the like. Mr. Harville advised that he cannot guarantee the standard streetlights would not shine in someone’s window. Customization of the location of the light is also not available.

The paint markings on the streets are from underground utilities. (He noted that the paint markings can be power washed off, but otherwise will take about a year to come off). Mr. Harville told the residents that the existence of the markings is not an indication that “someone will start digging.” No entity other than Austin Energy is involved in the actual installation of the lights, and the project is on hold until further notice.

Specifications of Standard Lights:

Mr. Harville advised the residents that the standards that Austin Energy follow target supplying lights with a .4 ft. “candle.” In order to meet those standards, the lights would be on a 25 foot galvanized pole and spaced approximately 150-180 feet apart from each other. The lights would be flat with no globes. The poles can be painted in either black, green or bronze for an extra cost to the neighborhood of approximately \$200-\$300 each. The total amount budgeted for the installation of streetlights in the Mountain neighborhood is approximately \$158,000 (for 102 lights designated on the plat). Mr.

Harville advised that the residents' taxes already paid to the City would fund the standard streetlight installation.

The standard streetlights are high pressure sodium lights. They put out an orange light, are considered to be "eco-friendly," and there is a "hum" that accompanies the lights. The noise is worse in some of the lights than in others. The lights will operate through a photocell, being on from dusk until dawn. Each light should last approximately 30,000 hours or 6 years.

Mr. Harville stated that solar lights are further behind on the economic curve and do not present a good option for this reason. He also discussed new technology, and advised that new LED options should become available by 2012. The LED lights would put out a blue light and make less noise. Mr. Harville also discussed advances where the City can control the lights remotely. He noted the City is reluctant to use dimming technology because of the inherent liability to the City.

Optional Decorative Lights:

Mr. Harville discussed the use of decorative lights, as were selected by the neighboring Enclave subdivision. If such lights are used, the residents will bear the additional costs. The additional costs would be between \$300-\$600 a pole, and there would be 3 decorative lights required for every 2 standard lights because the decorative lights do not put out the same amount of light. The "Townlake" lights used by the Enclave are considered "pedestrian" lights rather than streetlights. Other light styles include "Sunset Valley" lights or the "shoebox lights" used at Circle C which are more commercial lights. Any additional costs for either painting the standard galvanized poles or for decorative lights will have to be paid by the residents prior to installation. There cannot be a mixture of some standard and some decorative. The lights need to be uniform for the neighborhood.

Impact on Crime:

When asked about his view on whether or not streetlights reduce crime, Mr. Harville stated that it is his experience that lights make people feel safer. There are conflicting studies on whether streetlights deter crime. Mr. Harville personally does not believe the lights reduce crime.

Park Lighting:

Mr. Harville confirmed that the lighting for Mountainview Park is through the Parks and Recreation department, not through Austin Energy. Austin Energy will do the actual installation, but only at the direction of Parks and Recreation. Park lights can be installed and put on a timer switch, although the timer must be reset for daylight savings time and power outages. Doug Werner advised the residents that he called Parks and Recreation and was advised that the primary person in charge has retired. Mr. Harville

also noted that the Parks and Recreation budget is one of the lowest in the City and one of the first to get cut.

Where do we go from here?

The City will prepare two Plan designs without charge to the neighborhood. The first plat was prepared and provided to Doug Werner. Any designs over the two provided will cost approximately \$2,000-\$3,000 each. Mr. Harville advised he has been working on this project with Doug Werner since January 2009 and if the community decides to move forward, he anticipates that it will take approximately 6 more months to complete the installation phase.

In addition to the cost of design preparation, Mr. Harville advised that every care be taken to be certain the final design is correct because once installation begins it will not be changed or halted. A homeowner will not be able to stop a crew from installing the light if the light is approved and on the design plat. For this reason, Mr. Harville encouraged the residents and Committee to work together as a community and to communicate with every single home to determine whether or not they want lights or not. He noted the difficulty in having some people respond and expressed that the default response is usually interpreted as “no light” because the City does not want to install a light unless the homeowner/resident wants the light.

Additionally, Mr. Harville encouraged each individual resident to speak with their neighbors about the proposed location of the nearest streetlight. Because the exact location of the light cannot be determined and may vary slightly from the plan, neighbors should be in agreement and have full understanding that the light may end up on one side or the other of the property line, not necessarily in the middle.

Stephanie Methven advised the residents that the Streetlight Committee will meet again and develop proposals as to how to best proceed to communicate with all residents of the Mountain so that a final determination can be made and communicated to Austin Energy. Additionally, Eric Deal is establishing a website and hopes to be able to provide the current plat provided by Austin Energy to the public through that website.