



CCSPOA News

Council Creek South Property Owners Association, Inc.
120 Council Park Road, Burnet, Texas 78611

January 2013

IMPORTANT UPDATE-The Board has made the decision to send out one Annual newsletter that will capture what has been accomplished in the previous year and what the plans are for the new year. Other updates will go out as needed by email and via the website. Don't miss out-if you are not on our email list, sign up now. It's easy, just send an email to councilcreeksouth@gmail.com.

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2012 IN REVIEW

Firewise Update

As many of you may recall, Council Creek South was accepted into the Firewise Communities USA Program and we were recognized as a firewise community on November 20, 2010 at our POA meeting in Burnet. The recognition for 2011 was based on our efforts completed in 2010. Similarly, we submitted the required annual application in early December 2011 for 2012 recognition. In December 2012, we submitted the required annual application for 2013 recognition and expect to soon be recognized for that effort.

Our first step as a community and as individuals is to respond to the number one suggestion of reducing fire fuels on our property that endangers not just you and your property but that of others. Claire Harrah, Chairperson of the POA Firewise Committee, will be happy to make site visits and provide recommendations. It is surprising how little it takes to have a great impact on your safety.

Please remember:

POA is offering free chipping in January. The plan is to chip all cedar placed along the road easements/property lines by property owners in 2012. It is required that the cedar be cut to feed the chipper (not whole trees or sections too wide for the 12" chipper). This should be a big help since it provides the property owners a convenient method to handle their cut cedar. There is no cost to the property owners to have their cut cedar chipped as long it is stacked along the easement property line. The team doing the chipping will not enter the interior of private property to pick up cut cedar for the machine.

Texas Forest Service (TFS) website You are encouraged to visit the Texas Forest Service website, txforestservicetamu.edu/, for additional information on wildfires and useful mitigation checklists.

You may call Claire at 512-715-9540 for assistance.

CCS road easements cleared of cedar trees in 2012

With the exception of a few cases all easements have been cleared of cedar growth. A chipper will be rented in January 2013 to chip the cedar cut by the POA in easements and the cedar cut on private property and stacked along the easement boundary for easy feeding of the chipper by the POA hired workers. Originally the intent was to do the chipping in November but some folks wanted the holiday season vacation time to do some work on their lots. There is also some remaining road easement work that is expected to be done by the end of 2012. The largest effort to clear easements was a joint project between CCSPOA and the Texas Forest Service (TFS).

Joint Project conducted on Ledge Street by the CCSPOA and the Texas Forest Service (TFS)

The following paragraph briefly describes the work done on Ledge Street and was taken directly from the TFS website.

"Texas Forest Service's Heart of Texas and Lost Pines task forces completed in April 2012 a fuel mitigation project for the Council Creek community in Burnet County. The four-day project included thinning vegetation within a 1.5-acre perimeter. It was identified as a need in Council Creek's Community Wildfire Protection Plan and also was an approved project for Council Creek's Fire wise designation. The area protected is valued at more than \$2.5 million. One community member said that in addition to reducing Council Creek's wildfire hazards, the "badly-needed firebreak will provide critical emergency response access when needed." Texas Forest Service Program Coordinator Rich Gray led the effort. "This was a great collaborative effort with the community," Gray said".

The "Ledge" project was an important project that provided a lot of leverage in terms of cost. The direct cost for the TFS effort was in the range of \$6500. The estimated indirect cost was estimated at about \$4000, giving an estimated overall cost estimate in excess of \$10,000 for the TFS portion. The CCSPOA rented a chipper for the project and the TFS provided the labor to operate the chipper. Additionally, the POA committed to applying road base to Ledge Street between CR 137 and Paul Street so that vehicles, especially emergency vehicles, could travel that section of street. The road base application is planned to take place in 2013.

Council Park Drive and Park Circle Repaved In 2012

Council Park Drive had been in very bad condition for several years with many potholes and eroded edges. The park and boat ramp are available for use by all property owners and have been used extensively, especially when the lake level is at or above its average level of 1012 feet above sea level. Bids were taken from two established pavement contractors and the lower bid of \$17,000 was chosen. It included a new application of road base followed by two courses of tar and chip. The project included paving the driveway area of the VFD Station #3 located in the park. The VFD contributed \$1000 to the project and the Emergency Services Division (ESD) is considering an additional contribution to help offset the cost of the work done that benefits the fire station. The park area adds a lot of value to the community and all property owners are encouraged to use that recreational area. They are also encouraged to keep the park clean by picking up discarded items and other trash that seem to occasionally end up on the ground.

Lake Levels Continue to Drop

Water levels in Buchanan Lake and Lake Travis continue to drop as Colorado River LCRA customers and downstream rice farmers interact with LCRA on its water management plan. There are many interested parties that are concerned about the impact of the extensive drought on the availability of water and the ability of LCRA to manage the dwindling water supply in a well-balance manner. One of the best ways for CCS property owners to track the activities associated with this problem is to review the wide range of information available on the Central Texas Water Coalition (CTWC) website, www.ourwater-ourfuture.com. The LCRA website, www.lcra.org, also provides information on the drought and its impact on water availability. It is important that everyone in the central Texas area understand the issues on this subject and participate to the maximum possible extent in finding a reasonable solution.

Drought Conditions Continue to Seriously Impact CCS And Many Other Texas Areas.

The Texas Forest Service (TFS) examined the impact of the continuing drought on both urban and rural areas. There was a large amount of data collected for these cases, to include environmental, economic and financial impact. You are encouraged to visit the TFS website, txforestservice.tamu.edu/, to view the detailed information and gain the perspective of several experts.

Accounting Function Outsourced in 2012

The CCSPOA Board has used QuickBooks as its accounting software since 2006. QuickBooks is software that is better suited to the business environment than Quicken, which was previously used. It provides fields to collect information about property owners, services, contractors, etc., as well as simplifying the annual billing process. It also simplifies the creation of financial reports that may be needed by the Board for decision-making.

Several factors led to the decision to outsource the bookkeeping/accounting function. A major factor is that the POA itself has no office location, computers or other business equipment. Consequently, Board members utilize their personal assets, such as laptop computers and printers, to ensure that the job gets done. Additionally, the CCSPOA has a small talent pool and the volunteer members may not always have the skills and/or time to ensure that the accounting of resources is complete, timely and transparent.

This kind of scenario also increases the difficulty for creating smooth transitions with Board turnover. To avoid this problem the Board decided to outsource the bookkeeping/accounting function in early 2012. The board members agreed unanimously that the idea of outsourcing the bookkeeping function was a good one because it:

- a) Provides financial management continuity as the board membership changes over time, and
- b) It ensures the treasurer function gets done properly even if the needed skill set for effective and efficient bookkeeping may be absent in a particular board membership.

The CCSPOA Board reviewed the services of three bookkeeping services and chose the firm of Taber & Burnett, P.C., a well established firm that is located in Burnet, Texas. The following points were assembled to address the major factors that may be of interest to property owners.

- **How does the chosen provider charge?** The estimated average cost per month would be \$125.00 for the required professional services. Some months would take more hours than others but it is simpler for us to pay and them to receive the average monthly charge every month.
- **How much does CCSPOA expenditure reduction offset the monthly bookkeeping charge?** Effectively, the Board was able to cover the bookkeeping service average costs via offsets.

The POA board was able to reduce the electric bill from about \$60 per month to about \$15 per month. The savings can be used to offset the bookkeeping charge by about \$45 per month. The Board was able to gain additional offsets by publishing a hardcopy newsletter once annually (saves about \$10 per month on average) and maintaining the website in-house – Susan Cowen is performing the webmaster duties at no charge – saves about \$85 per month). THANK YOU SUSAN!
- **What type of accounting systems does the firm use?** The firm uses QuickBooks Pro. Previous CCSPOA Treasurers used QuickBooks. If the POA does have data in Excel that should be included, the provider can import excel data into QuickBooks.
- **What is the best way to get data to them?** Email is efficient for most data but they also use fax. Information can also be exchanged via phone and/or they are conveniently located for in-person drop-off, pickup and/or discussion.

- **What data does the provider expect from CCSPOA?**
 - o Copy of maintenance fee collection policy (this policy will be fully implemented January 1, 2013)
 - o Photocopy of every check and/or other value received by POA
 - o Photocopy of every check written by POA
 - o Copy of monthly bank statement
 - o Complete and accurate list of property owners that show name, address and status of maintenance fees (Note: The only property owner information that will be provided to them is public information at the Burnet County CAD)

- **What can the POA expect from the provider in terms of services?**
 - o Monthly and Quarterly Reports
 - o Annual Report
 - o Preparation of annual invoices and stuffed envelopes – POA will get the stuffed envelopes from them, apply postage and mail.
 - o Tracking and preparation of delinquency notices to property owners (the POA is responsible for postage and mailing)
 - o Reconciliation of our income and expenses with our bank statements on a monthly basis.

- **What steps does the provider take to secure POA data while in their possession?** Secure computer systems, passwords, and locked file cabinets

- **Who will be the main POC for the CCSPOA?** The current CCSPOA Treasurer

- **Who will actually be handling our data to provide our service?** Paraprofessional with CPA oversight

- **Is there a contract?** Yes, there is a Letter of Engagement that spells out terms and conditions

PREVIEW OF 2013



Request for 2013 Board Nominations

The current board strongly encourages you and/or your spouse and/or your friends to submit a nomination for a position on the Board of Directors. The submission is a self nomination stating something about your relevant background, your vision for CCS and what you would like to do as a board member to improve CCS. We need to get more property owners involved to ensure continued improvement in our community. We have to keep every position on the board filled with people that care about the community as a whole, have the skills to make a contribution and are willing to put forth a reasonable effort to move the community forward.

Two positions will be up for election at the annual CCSPOA meeting. Positions currently held by C.B. Harrah and Susan Cowan will be up for election. If you are interested in having your name placed on the ballot for election to the CCSPOA board, please submit a short biography that addresses your qualifications and goals for further improvement of CCS. The biography may be mailed to CCSPOA, Attention Candy Smith, at 120 Council Park Drive, Burnet, TX, 78611, or emailed to councilcreeksouth@gmail.com. Nominations will be accepted through March 22 but the sooner your name is submitted, the better, since the biographies will be posted on the CCS website prior to the election. All candidates must be CCSPOA members in good standing to be considered for election.

2013 Annual Meeting and Picnic

Join us for the members Annual Picnic on Saturday, April 27, in the park. A main dish will be available for a nominal charge at noon, and the meeting will begin at 1 p. m. So come on down, bring a side dish, get to know your neighbors and hear what the Board has been working on and what plans we have for the future. Hope to see everyone there!

Neighborhood Cleanup

The annual neighborhood cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, April 13. Our lovely neighborhood collects a lot of trash on the roadside every year. We have found all sorts of treasures. Come help us clean up — you never know what you might find. Meet in the park at 9 a.m. and bring your gloves and nail sticks. Trash bags are provided. This is another great way to get to know some neighbors and help your community.

New Policy for Collection of maintenance assessment to be implemented on January 1, 2013*****

Though liens have historically been filed on properties in arrears, the CCSPOA Board felt that a fair and effective policy should be written, made available to all property owners and strictly enforced. Liens will be placed on properties that are in arrears in accordance with a formal collection policy that will be implemented on January 1, 2013. The policy is posted on the CCSPOA website, councilcreeksouth.org, under the business link, in the Handbook of Policies and Procedures section. The policy calls for the CCSPOA to issue reasonable reminders and a demand letter prior to filing liens at the Burnet County courthouse. It should also be noted that the POA does not report the nonpayment to credit-rating bureaus but it is possible that the three major bureaus will scan electronic public records or use vendors to detect non-payment events in public records. In this case your credit rating could be adversely affected by non-payment of maintenance fees. It is also possible that the POA may be contacted as part of a credit check associated with business transactions.

Portion of Copper Lane to Be Paved

The stretch of Copper Lane that extends from CR 137 to the existing concrete section will be paved in 2013. The condition of that road section is described as very poor. The road is very narrow, has significant erosion along the edges and a large number of potholes. Copper Lane currently services two residences. The approximate length and width of the planned chip/seal pavement is 840 feet and 12 feet, respectively. The estimated cost for the work is 15,000. This project will follow the Ledge project to ensure that funds will be available for unforeseen events.

Road Base on Ledge Planned For 2013

Applying road base to Ledge Street fulfills a commitment to the joint project with the Texas Forest Service to provide an interior alternative route for emergency vehicles as well as provide an additional fire break. There will be some need for tin horns (or concrete section) to handle the water drainage across the easement. The approximate length and width of the applied road base is 1150 feet and 14 feet, respectively. The estimated cost for the work is \$12,000.

Proposed changes to POA Bylaws to be voted on in 2013

The December 2010 election to amend the POA Bylaws failed to achieve the proposed revision. The Board subsequently analyzed the election results and now believes any concerns that may have previously existed have now been addressed. This Board strongly feels that the bylaws need to be modernized in terms of language and structurally revised to (1) ensure a POA BYLAWS REVISION ELECTION PROCESS where all POA members are made aware of the proposed changes in advance of the election and (2) all members are provided the opportunity to vote (e.g., certification that ballots are mailed to those members unable to attend a meeting announced in advance). Consequently, there will be another election held in 2013 to present the proposed POA Bylaws to all POA members for approval.

As a note of gratitude, a lot of effort went into developing proposed revisions to the existing bylaws (e.g., Bruce Weir and Mickey Moore worked several months on the revised document before handing it off to the Board). Hopefully, the proposed bylaws will be approved in the planned 2013 election.

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REMEMBER THIS NEWSLETTER WILL ONLY BE PUBLISHED ANNUALLY. Stay connected with important neighborhood events by joining our email list. It's easy, just email Candy Smith at councilcreeksouth@gmail.com. You can also visit the website at councilcreeksouth.org, to find lots of information about our neighborhood.