

# March Meeting

**When:** 7:00 p.m.  
Monday, March 2, 2015

**Where:** The Griffin School  
5001 Evans Avenue

*Note: HPNA meetings usually take place on the first Monday of each month.*

## HPNA General Meeting Agenda for March 2

- Local Business Spotlight, with Reggie Davis, owner of DownHome Diner, providing samples of some of the delicious food he serves at Hyde Park's newest restaurant located at the new food trailer park at 51st Street and Duval
- Presentation and discussion about the Mobility 35 project and improvements planned for 51st Street
- Information from Sunshine Gardens about their upcoming organic plant sale
- Announcements

**See You There!**

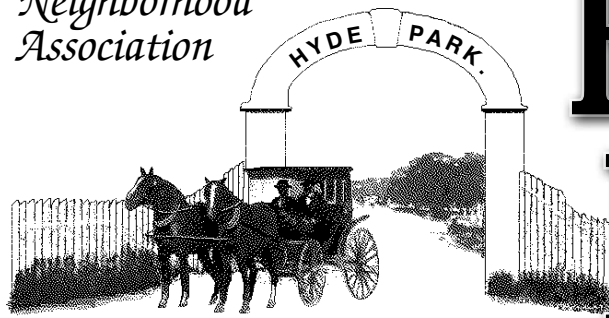
## An Invitation to Direct Democracy

Direct democracy can be a disconcerting business. People come together, they state their opinions, they vote. They discover, unexpectedly, that their neighbors don't share their opinions or that there are sides to an issue they hadn't considered. Some win, and some lose. After the vote, they pick up and move on. It's all part of the process. We've all won and we've all lost.

The Hyde Park Neighborhood Association is a direct democracy. Any resident can become a member, a common standard for neighborhood associations in Austin. Its meetings are conducted according to democratic rules. Any participant can speak after raising a hand and being recognized by the person chairing the meeting. Any participant can make a motion or a second. Any member can

**Continued on page 7**

*The Hyde Park  
Neighborhood  
Association*



# Pecan Press

March 2015 • National Register District Neighborhood • Vol. 41, No. 3

## Exploring Lives

### Interview with Oliver Franklin

**E**ditor's Note: In December 2012, Oliver Franklin was appointed Museum Site Coordinator (effectively "director") of the Elisabet Ney Museum. As the following interview reveals, his background, interests, and intellectual perspectives made him a wise choice for this position. His plans for this historical museum located in Hyde Park are ambitious, which will be of particular to neighbors. He has a strong sense of place and a deep love for Austin, a city he originally moved to with his parents in 1971 when he was still in grade school.

**Pecan Press:** Like Elisabet Ney, your parents had an artistic, bohemian lifestyle. Can you talk a bit about growing up in that environment?

**Oliver Franklin:** My father, George Franklin, was born in Llano County. My mother, Anne Lacorne Franklin, was Parisian. They ran and owned the Austin Want Ads from 1971 to 1987. Before I was born, though, my parents were deeply involved in theater and the arts in both the US and Europe.

My first home was in Manhattan, just a few blocks from the Greenwich Village cold-water flat where my dad spent the late 1950s. As a result, I had an intimate awareness of twentieth century creative history. There are a million stories about my mom, my dad and their luminary friends that I could trumpet but, I suppose like Lorne, Elisabet's son, I find the stories thrilling but also frankly a bit exhausting. Convention held a very low priority in our home. That said, my parents were wonderful people and had a nurturing impact on many. The resonance with Elisabet and Edmund, her husband, is palpable.

**PP:** When you were still in elementary school, your parents moved to Austin. How did the move affect you?

**OF:** I was familiar with Austin because we would spend summer months on the family ranch, and we'd often venture into town to cool off at Barton Springs. I was in the fourth grade when we moved here, so I was too young to sense much culture shock. But it was a beautiful, sweet, tolerant, and thoughtful town. We quickly embraced Austin



**Continued on page 13**

# From the Desk of the Co-Presidents



Spring seems to be upon us and, accordingly, we look forward to our annual Easter Celebration – the Egg Scramble! In only a few years, it's become a prized part of our yearly cycle of events and festivities. Being an adult is no excuse to miss it; you can still enjoy the balloon twister, face painter, and photo booth. And who doesn't look forward to an annual visit by the Bunny? Please join us at Shipe Park on April 4 to enjoy watching Hyde Park's children – and grown-up children – celebrate the season.

Congratulations to Adrian Skinner, HPNA co-vice president, and to Jennifer Berbas for their recent election as co-chairs of the Hyde Park Neighborhood Plan Contact Team. At the same meet-

ing, the Contact Team created its second joint HPNA-Contact Team committee, CodeNEXT.

(The first was the ASH committee, under the leadership of John Williams.) These events mark an increasingly closer working relationship between the Contact Team and HPNA. Given the shared interests of the two groups, that relationship will benefit both groups.

We also welcome Mark Fishman back to the Steering Committee, this time in the position of co-treasurer. Mark's experience with QuickBooks enables him to provide the relief I. Jay has needed since he assumed the treasurer position alone. We appreciate Mark's ongoing willingness to contribute to the neighborhood.

We want to thank Chandra Muller and William Beckner for their donation of shelves to our storage closet. Our archivist, Griffin Brown, has been putting our records in order, but a reorganization of the closet is long overdue. Now that we have shelves, we're looking at taking on that task in the near future.

– Kevin Heyburn &  
Lorrie Weidlich  
HPNA Co-Presidents



## Monthly Calendar March

- 2 — HPNA General Meeting
- 6 — Recycling Collection
- 9 — HPNA Steering Committee Meeting
- 20 — Recycling Collection

### Pecan Press

The Pecan Press is published monthly by the Hyde Park Neighborhood Association in Austin, Texas.

Note: Each month's ad and editorial deadline is the 15th of month preceding publication.

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- Heidi Bojes • Sharon Brown • Jessica Charbeneau • Betsy Clubine • Ellie Hanlon • Dorothy Richter • Debbie Wallenstein • John Williams

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# Around & About the Avenues

**Don't Miss the Hyde Park Egg Scramble:** You're invited to the Third Annual Hyde Park Egg Scramble at Shipe Park on Saturday April 4, 10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. This HPNA event, sponsored by Grande Communications, will feature popcorn, snow cones, and cotton candy as well as many fun activities including egg hunts, a bounce house, and a balloon twister—all free to Hyde Parkers who attend the event! A photo booth, provided by Carolyn Grimes of Coldwell Banker United, Realtors will also be there for pictures with the Egg Scramble Bunny!

For those who are new to the neighborhood or have not participated in the past, an egg scramble is basically a traditional Easter egg hunt; the only difference is that you provide the eggs yourself for your child's age group. The egg hunt will start at 10:45 and be divided into the following three age groups: under 3 years old, 3 & 4 year olds, and 5 years old & up. If your child is going to participate in the egg hunt festivities, please drop off one dozen plastic eggs filled with age appropriate treats any time between Saturday, March 28 and Friday, April 3 in the bins marked by age group on the front porch at the following houses: Rossomando/Williams House at 4307 Avenue F – OR - Fitzgerald House at 4402 Avenue F.

Questions, comments, or interest in volunteering, please email Tim Luyet at [timluyet@hotmail.com](mailto:timluyet@hotmail.com).



**It's My Park Day:** Sponsored by the Austin Parks Foundation, this annual event is scheduled for Saturday, March 7, from 9:00 a.m. until 12 noon. Thousands of volunteers will be working to improve parks & greenbelts throughout the city. For more info & volunteer registration (receive a free T-shirt), go to [www.austinparks.org/its-my-park-day.html](http://www.austinparks.org/its-my-park-day.html). Join your neighbors at Shipe where HPNA and Friends of Shipe Park will be organizing the work projects.



**Organic Plant Sale:** On Saturday, March 7 from 9 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Sunshine Community Gardens (4814 Sunshine Drive) will be the scene of the largest nonprofit organic plant sale in Texas, featuring, for example, 150 tomato varieties, 72 types of bell peppers, and thousands of herbs ready for spring planting. It promises to be a fun-filled occasion with live music and opportunities to learn organic gardening practices, talk with vendors, and walk the 180 gardens. For more information, visit [www.sunshinecommunitygardens.org](http://www.sunshinecommunitygardens.org).



**Support a Local Public School:** On Saturday, March 7, Lee Elementary will host its premier fundraising event, Lee Live, 6:30 p.m. at the Spiderhouse Ballroom, 2906 Fruth St. The event features live music by Lee parents Kelly Willis, Bruce Robison, and Hayes Carll, and a live and silent auction. Proceeds help fund things like technology enhancements, special-area teachers, playground and outdoor classroom opportunities, and teacher development. Individual and business sponsorships are welcomed. For more information, visit [http://www.lee-elementary.org/lee\\_events/lee-live/](http://www.lee-elementary.org/lee_events/lee-live/).



**More Awards for Restoration Work:** The National Association of the Remodeling Industry named local Austin construction and remodeling firm Avenue B Development as the South Central Regional Contractor of the Year winner in the Historic Renovation category of its annual awards competition. This marks Avenue B Development's second straight South Central award and fourth straight local Austin Chapter award for the Historic Renovation category. In its five years of operation, it has been the company's goal to enhance the character of Austin's unique neighborhoods by creating homes that are both timeless and modern. Congratulations to our neighbors!



Hyde Park Neighborhood Association Enrollment		2014-15 Membership	HPNA Membership Info
Name _____ Phone _____		Bring to an HPNA meeting, or send to:  <b>HPNA Membership</b> P.O. Box 49427 Austin, Texas 78765 Make checks payable to HPNA.	All memberships expire on September 30th of each year.  ✦ Membership in HPNA is open to all residents aged 18 years or older who reside within the boundaries of Hyde Park or within 300 feet of the designated boundaries.  ✦ New members, and members who lapse in dues for over six months, are eligible to vote at HPNA meetings 30 days after receipt of dues.
Address _____			
<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to be notified via email of HPNA meetings and events.			
Email _____			
<b>Dues (per person)</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Standard - \$5/year/person <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Citizen- \$1/year/person			
<input type="checkbox"/> New Member <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing Member			
Payment: <input type="checkbox"/> Check <input type="checkbox"/> Cash    Date _____			
Amount Paid \$ _____			

## We Welcome Your Submissions to Pecan Press

Send in your articles, letters, and photos (but not your poetry\*) by the 10th of each month to:

**Editor, Pecan Press**  
[editorpecanpress@gmail.com](mailto:editorpecanpress@gmail.com)

\*Send your poems to:  
**Charlotte Herzele**  
[herzele@gmail.com](mailto:herzele@gmail.com)

Note: The Pecan Press will not publish unsigned/unattributed poetry. All poems (even if written under a pen name) must carry a name and address or phone number for identification and verification purposes.

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## HYDE PARK AREA: ANNUAL SALES IN REVIEW

	2012	2013	2014
NUMBER OF HOMES SOLD	76	79	74
AVERAGE SALES PRICE	\$401,513	\$477,040	\$470,565
AVERAGE SQUARE FOOTAGE	1,606 SF	1,773 SF	1,565 SF
AVERAGE SOLD \$/SQ FT	\$257.20	\$284.11	\$316.36
MEDIAN DAYS ON MARKET	34 DAYS	44 DAYS	29 DAYS

All statistics & square footage are from Austin MLS for Single Family Residence taken 12/31/2014 from the Austin MLS. For detailed market information about your home, contact Sam Archer, Broker.



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# Crime & Safety Update

A newly formed group of interest is the Citizen Led Austin Safety Partnership (CLASP). It is dedicated to encouraging and sustaining a community-wide network of Neighborhood Watch and Patrol leaders.

They report that outgoing City Council again waived the fees for SXSW; and now the Austin Police Department has announced that its plan is to beef up police coverage for this year's event by 120 officers, including 60 patrol officers that could possibly be pulled from the District Representatives (DRs), Burglary, and TAC programs.

Taking officers from their areas of responsibility to work special events leaves the streets in Austin very low on police coverage. Last year, there were several crime sprees during SXSW, so please be aware and protect your property.

There are a few actions that CLASP suggests. First, protect your property and neighborhoods and work with police to monitor and report criminal activity. 911 should be called for anything suspicious and disruptive during SXSW, March 9-22, so that it will be obvious that the other parts of town need police coverage during that time.


Second, other cities use event fees to hire officers from surrounding cities, so they don't have to pull so deeply from their own personnel. Doing this would also mean that the taxpayers wouldn't take a hit on paying overtime. We really need to tell our City Council that we want to stop the fee waivers and the reassignment of so many officers to special events without full reimbursement of expenses. Other cities which do not waive fees still have all the special events business they can handle.

Third, last year, thanks to protests and emails, the North/Northwest police region had to give up officers for SXSW, but didn't for other events like Halloween. The message was heard, leading to at least some concessions.

CLASP asks that we take a few minutes to email or call the mayor and our City Council member (Kathy Tovo), and then pass this message on to friends and neighbors. Now is the time to help educate the new City Council about public safety.

Also, it was reported at the Commander's Forum that there have been a number of burglary of vehicles. Purses and other items were stolen from the Hyde Park Baptist Church area and throughout the neighborhood. Please don't leave any items in your vehicle that could tempt someone to break in. Our District Representative, Josh Metteauer, can be reached at [Joshua.metteauer@austintexas.gov](mailto:Joshua.metteauer@austintexas.gov) or 512-974-8124.

— Carol Welder



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# HPNA Meeting Minutes: February 2, 2015

The February meeting of the Hyde Park Neighborhood Association was called to order by Lorre Weidlich, co-president, at 7:07 p.m. Lorre announced that the agenda had changed due to cancellations. The DownHome Diner was not able to attend, and a representative of the Friends of Hyde Park was not present to give an update on the organization's activities.

The City of Austin's Sustainability Department offered a presentation on the history of sustainability activities in the city and the development of the city's Climate Protection Plan. Four Technical Area Groups have been charged and are proposing 1-3 items for future action towards meeting the city's sustainability goals. The items will be presented to the Council for action, probably in March.

The next item for consideration was a report from the Nominations Committee. This committee selected Mark Fishman to serve as co-treasurer with I. Jay Aarons. Mark Fishman was then unanimously elected.

Lorre opened the meeting for discussion of the general state of 45th Street. After some discussion, a resolution was proposed by Karen McGraw stating "HPNA supports existing zoning along 45th Street and does not support changes to any residential zoning for commercial use." The resolution was seconded and after discussion the resolution was passed 21 in favor, 2 against, and 3 abstentions. Additional discussion of other considerations in regard to 45th Street included reducing lanes, reducing the speed limit, and ways to resist commercial development along the street. No additional resolutions were proposed.

Finally, Adrian Skinner and Mity Myhr gave a report on the January quarterly meeting of the Contact Team. At that meeting, the previous chair was removed and Adrian Skinner and Jennifer Berbas were elected co-chairs, a discussion of CodeNEXT was started and a joint committee with HPNA was created to review CodeNEXT and its implications for the neighborhood plan and the NCCD. Additionally, the Contact Team will take action on the transition from the PLUM presented in the neighborhood plan to a FLUM, in order to align with current city practices. Finally, a city representative will present on sidewalks and the bylaws committee will make a presentation on potential bylaw changes at the April Quarterly meeting.

The meeting was adjourned around 8:30 p.m.

- Submitted by Artie Gold & Reid Long  
HPNA Co-Secretaries



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# Deeply Rooted

As noted in the February issue of the *Pecan Press*, I am now serving as the chair of the Hyde Park Tree Preservation Committee. I am excited to take on this role and look forward to tre(e)mendously serving the neighborhood!

Dendrolatry and tree preservation are embedded in the soul of Hyde Park. Monroe Shipe, the original developer of Hyde Park, understood the value and mythical nature of trees; and a number of his original plantings remain along our streets and avenues. Attention was certainly given to the preservation of the Central Texas ecosystem in the envisionment of the neighborhood as evident with the many heritage trees that remain today. Frank "Fruit Tree" Ramsey, whose nursery existed for decades north of his 45th and Avenue B residence, continued this legacy by making pecans, crepe myrtles, and other fruiting trees available to residents.

A host of Hyde Parkers have served in various roles of tree preservation in the neighborhood and throughout Austin. For example, Dorothy Richter and Margret Hofmann were involved with the original Tree Preservation Ordinance as well as the Heritage Tree amendment in 2010. In addition, other dedicated neighbors played a significant role in documenting the historic landscape at the Elisabet Ney Museum, as well as assisting with readjusting the clearance standards for tree trimming along utility right-of-ways.

Please contact me at [jawalewski@gmail.com](mailto:jawalewski@gmail.com) or [walewski@tamu.edu](mailto:walewski@tamu.edu) to join in this noble effort.

— John Walewski



## Direct Democracy... ...cont'd from page 1

vote after a 30-day waiting period, another common standard for neighborhood associations in Austin.

Those of us who conduct meetings can't guarantee that every speaker will be tactful or restrained. Speakers exhibit the spectrum of human behavior. What we can and do guarantee is that everyone who wants to speak will have the opportunity to speak and that every member who attends the meeting will have the opportunity to vote. Accordingly, we invite you to attend, to join, to speak up, and to vote. We welcome you to the world of direct democracy.

— Lorre Weidlich

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# Recipe Corner



Photo by Tom Vessley.

## Giant Green Pie (Torta Pasqualina)

Adapted from the *New York Times*

We have a small flock of hens, so we're always on the lookout for delicious ways to use lots of homegrown eggs! Currently, we have three hens – Chicksie, an Ameracauna who lays bluish-green shelled eggs; PioPio, a Silver-laced Wyandotte (brown eggs); and Fauna, a Gold Star (brown eggs). We raised them from day-old chicks and enjoy watching them forage in the yard.

If you are interested in backyard hens, the Funky Chicken Coop tour is on April 4 this year and is a great way to learn more about keeping chickens and different types of coops. For more info, visit <http://austincoptour.org/>.

This dish is great reheated and served the next day. Perfect for making the day before a party, or to pack as lunch during the week. It is easier to make than it might seem and is really delicious.

**Time: About 1 ½ hours**

**Yield: 10 to 12 servings**

### INGREDIENTS

#### FOR THE DOUGH

- 375 grams all-purpose flour, about 3 cups, plus more as needed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons olive oil

#### FOR THE FILLING

- 2 ½ pounds washed greens (a mix of chard, spinach or other greens) – or one 10 oz. and one 16 oz. package of frozen spinach (or other leafy greens), thawed and squeezed dry
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for brushing pastry layers
- 3 cups diced onion

- Salt and pepper
- Grated nutmeg, to taste
- 1 cup ricotta
- 3 ounces grated Parmesan
- 9 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons sugar, optional

### PREPARATION

Make the dough: Put flour in a large mixing bowl. Stir together 1 cup water, 1 teaspoon salt and 4 tablespoons oil, then pour over flour and mix until dough comes together in a rough ball. Turn out onto a floured board and knead until smooth, 2 to 3 minutes, adding more flour if dough is sticky. Wrap and set aside at room temperature for 30 minutes. (May refrigerate overnight and bring to room temperature.)

Make the filling: Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Working in batches, blanch a handful of greens at a time, dropping them into the water until just wilted, then cooling in a colander under running water. Divide greens into 4 balls and squeeze to remove as much water as possible. Chop greens coarsely with a large knife, then squeeze again. There should be about 4 cups cooked greens.

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet or wide pot over medium heat. Add onions and a little salt and cook, stirring, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add greens, season generously with salt and pepper, and mix well. Turn off heat. Add nutmeg, ricotta and half the Parmesan and mix. Taste and adjust; it should be highly seasoned. Beat 4 of the eggs. Set aside 3 tablespoons beaten egg; add remaining beaten egg to greens and mix well. Let cool.

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Cut dough into 4 pieces and form into balls. Roll out each ball into a very thin 12-inch circle. Place 1 dough circle on a 12-inch pizza pan lined with parchment. Brush lightly with oil, then lay another dough circle on top. Spoon greens evenly over dough to a 2-inch thickness, leaving a 1-inch border of dough. Smooth the surface. With a soup spoon, make 5 indentations in greens and crack a raw egg into each depression. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan. Cover with another dough circle and paint lightly with oil. Place last dough circle on top. Using a paring knife, trim any excess dough at perimeter of pie. Fold outer edges together and crimp to seal pie. Paint top with reserved beaten egg. Sprinkle with sugar if desired. Using a paring knife, make 2 or 3 steam vents.

Bake for about 45 minutes, until very well browned. Slide torta onto a cutting board and let cool slightly before slicing. May also be served at room temperature.

– Ellie Hanlon

*(Editor's Note: Are there readers out there who have other great recipes to share with neighbors? If so, please submit them to the editor at [editorpecanpress@gmail.com](mailto:editorpecanpress@gmail.com). Thanks.)*



## Categories

People with nothing to do  
are dangerous.  
people with too much to do  
are dangerous.  
people who walk past a  
sliding board  
without being tempted  
are not dangerous.  
They have succumbed.

— *Albert Huffstickler*  
(no date)

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Much of life is spent waiting,  
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Waiting in doctor's offices,  
Waiting for Santa Claus,  
Waiting for someone, a relative,  
A loved one, to arrive  
Waiting to be picked up,  
Riding in a car,  
Waiting to get somewhere,  
If you don't like waiting,  
You are, basically, S-O-L  
If waiting is hell for you,

Women learn to wait  
On babies to be born  
Speaking of which,  
This is the reason I am writing,  
Our assignment was to  
Bring an aroma, an odor  
That carries a memory,  
Smells are the most evocative  
Of all the senses and,  
Even though the cells  
Responsible for smells,  
Are rapid adapting,  
That is to say, one becomes  
Accustomed to a smell  
Very quickly, and yet,  
As fast as the assault is felt  
And as fast as it is forgotten,  
Whatever is happening  
When it is first smelled,  
Burns into the memory so that  
Should even a tiny whiff  
Of that aroma, odor, or scent  
Make its way to near the brain,  
It carries with it the entire memory,

Which brings me, at last,  
(I made you wait)  
To the aroma/memory  
I chose to share, tonight,  
This is a scent, incomparable  
By any other, an aroma  
Known by every mother,  
Known by any aunt,  
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Who has ever had the  
Privilege of holding  
A newborn baby,  
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# Contact Team Meeting Minutes: January 26, 2015

The quarterly meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church. Kevin Heyburn, co-president of the Hyde Park Neighborhood Association opened the meeting on behalf of Pete Gilcrease, chair of the Contact Team. Mr. Heyburn was asked to chair the meeting through the first two items of business.

The first item on the agenda was a vote on whether or not to replace the current Contact Team chair. Statements in support of and in opposition to replacing the chair were presented. After deliberation, the Contact Team voted to replace the chair (24 voted to replace, 7 voted not to replace and 3 abstained).

Mr. Heyburn then entertained nominations from the floor for a new chair. After discussion and a vote, Jennifer Berbas and Adrian Skinner were elected to serve as co-chairs (29 voted in favor, 0 opposed, 5 abstained). Jennifer Berbas is a former Hyde Park resident and now owns rental properties in the neighborhood. She is a real-estate agent. Adrian Skinner lives in the neighborhood. He is currently serving as co-vice president of HPNA. He works at the Attorney General's office and is a student at St. Edward's University.

The evening's agenda then continued with a discussion and resolution regarding the proposal to change the zoning of 4500 Speedway from Residential to Neighborhood Office. The following Resolution was requested and accepted (25 voted in favor of the resolution, 0 opposed the resolution, 4 abstained): The Hyde Park Contact Team does not support a change in the zoning of 4500 Speedway from Residential to Neighborhood Office. The main argument against the change in zoning was the reluctance of neighbors to lose residential properties along 45th Street. Following the vote, the Contact Team asked the co-chairs to follow up with the property owner to confirm his intentions for the property.

Next was a discussion related to neighborhood planning and the City of Austin Planning Department. Concern has been growing over the confusion caused by Hyde Park's Planned Land Use Map (PLUM). Hyde Park, as well as Old West Austin, wrote its neighborhood plan early in the city's process and, as required by the city, created PLUMs. The city now requires a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and does not recognize the PLUMs. The Contact Team would like to change our PLUM to a FLUM as it makes the neighborhood plan amendment process easier. The Contact Team agreed to place the following resolution on the April meeting agenda: The Hyde Park Contact Team changes the name of its Planned Land Use Map to Future Land Use Map and agrees to whatever further steps are necessary to eliminate this confusion with The City of Austin Planning Department. This resolution may change, depending upon the outcome of conversations in the Planning Commission about this matter.

The Contact Team then agreed to establish a sub-committee to work on CodeNEXT and how it will impact our neighborhood plan. The sub-committee will work with HPNA and develop informative presentations for all neigh-

borhood groups. The following Contact Team members agreed to serve on the sub-committee: David Connor, Barbara Gibson, Kevin Heyburn, Ellie Hanlon, Wanda Penn, Kathy Lawrence and Karen McGraw.

The last item on the agenda was a discussion of proposed changes to the Contact Team bylaws. The authors of the proposed amendments withdrew their proposals and agreed to pass them along to the Contact Team sub-committee on bylaws, which agreed to take them into consideration.

The co-chairs welcomed Kathy Tovo, Mayor Pro-Tem and the District 9 City Council Member, to the Contact Team meeting and expressed our appreciation and congratulations.

The Contact Team concluded its business with a brief discussion of two April agenda items. Lisa Harris announced that a representative of the city will attend the April meeting to discuss sidewalks. Reid Long, chair of the sub-committee on bylaws, will present proposals for amending the bylaws for discussion only.

The next quarterly meeting of the Hyde Park Contact Team will be on April 27, 7:00-8:30 p.m. An agenda will be posted to the Contact Team and HPNA listservs two weeks prior to the meeting.

All residents, renters/tenants, property owners and business owners in Hyde Park are encouraged to become members of the Contact Team and participate in discussions.

— Submitted by Mity Myhr  
Contact Team Secretary

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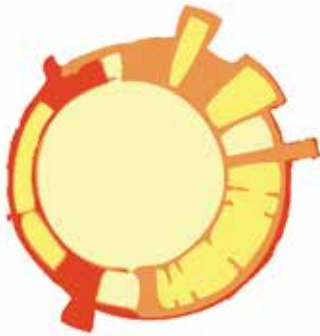


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# Oliver Franklin Interview...

## ...cont'd from page 1

music, thanks to KUT, KMFA, and KOKE! My parents enjoyed the opera on KMFA every Saturday morning and then Waylon and Willie in the afternoon. By my late teens, my buddies and I cottoned to the 'Dillo, Luckenbach, and Soap Creek. Then punk rock hit. It was an awesome time, and Austin was a wonderful place to grow up.

**PP:** *Given your background, should we assume you majored in the arts in college?*

**OF:** Well, I did take a lot of art classes; but UT and Austin were so laid back, I didn't know or care much what I'd major in. After graduating from Saint Stephen's, I enrolled in Plan II; but I left that program to take random classes I liked until I could figure out what appealed to me. Eventually, I discovered that I was closest to graduating in geography. As it turned out, that was ideal. I loved thinking about how "places" work, how they form and inform people and culture, and vice versa. To this day I am deeply influenced by the intellectual foundation I got from these studies and my professors, notably Robin Doughty, Shane Davies, and Karl Butzer. I am a geographer at heart.

**PP:** *At that point, did you have a career goal in mind?*

**OF:** I aspired to be a professor of geography. I was fascinated and perturbed by the difference between "landscape" and "real estate." My master's thesis, "Listen to the Walls Speak: Murals and Symbology in Austin Texas," explored that notion. The city's landscape became quite precious to me. It still is. My goal was to earn my PhD elsewhere and return to my beloved Austin to teach.

**PP:** *But something happened to change your direction, leading to your first museum job in the Rio Grande Valley. Can you talk about that?*

**OF:** Well yes. I had an "unstable" ex-girlfriend... and felt I had absolutely no choice but to leave town, immediately. So I packed a bag, threw it into my '67 Bug, and headed to the border! But while there, I miraculously landed a job as museum educator at what's now the Museum of South Texas History, in Edinburg.

**PP:** *You had no experience or training in museum work. How did you approach that challenge?*

**OF:** I was scared to death. I was in a place I barely knew. I had traveled in Europe and Mexico but after New York never actually lived out of sight of a moon tower. I was terrified of public speaking. I didn't even really like museums!

At first I figured I'd give it a year, then get my PhD. But I soon fell in love with the work. The kids I taught were amazing: loving and delightful and yet so utterly poor and deprived. I thought I could perhaps apply my studies to help them. If ever there was

Continued on page 15



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## Oliver Franklin Interview... ...cont'd from page 13

a community that needed a "secular church," one that celebrated the place/community itself, it was the Valley. And the history was fascinating! So I arranged with school districts to bring whole grades – district-wide – through that museum. I also got very involved in the whole region, on both sides of the Rio Grande, in historic preservation, arts programming, film, theater and much more.

A few years, some terrific stories, and a couple of healthier girlfriends later, it was time to come home. I got an educator job at the Capitol. And then I got married (which I no longer am), and had two enchanting kiddoes of my own.

**PP:** *You eventually worked at the Harry Ransom Center in outreach. For most of its history, it really seemed to do little outreach. Were you hired to change that?*

**OF:** Yes, that was my job, Executive Curator for Public Programs. In 2003, the Ransom Center, with its spectacular collection, had just expanded into the old Huntington Galleries. It was *utterly* new. At the time, hardly anyone off-campus knew anything about the Ransom Center. I was tasked with changing that.

**PP:** *What do you see as some of your accomplishments there?*

**OF:** I enjoyed so much, but the exhibit-related American 'Twenties Music Series, featuring sixteen Austin bands playing 1920's inspired music in five downtown nightclubs including Emo's (!), with a ribald "Flapper" fashion show to boot...that was amazing. But so were productions featuring local artists like Luke Savisky, Peter Stopschinski, Graham Reynolds, Tosca String Quartet, and more. Fortunately the Ransom Center staff was great, and that made my time there even more special.

**PP:** *Recently then you came to the Ney as the director. What drew you to this position?*

**OF:** I always wanted to manage a facility. And, frankly, the Ney is an astonishing "facility," a massive kaleidoscope of storytelling. When you look at the legacy of the site, the extraordinary individual at its heart, and the community that surrounds it – all are rich beyond belief. People don't usually come to historic sites expecting to be challenged. Interested, yes. Inspired, perhaps. But amused? Surprised? Touched? Confused? Never. A big box – a conventional museum – isn't nearly as much fun. This is terrific.

I would add that the notion of working for the City of Austin itself, and its Parks and Recreation Department, was very compelling. My co-workers, at all levels, are dedicated, smart, and tireless.

**PP:** *Early on, the way the sculptures were exhibited at the museum changed? Why?*

Continued on page 17



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## Oliver Franklin Interview... ...cont'd from page 15

**OF:** We felt that the sculptures had a voice, a unique and distinct one. Indeed, these pieces were absolutely Elisabet's way of telling stories. She too was in essence a storyteller. The sculptures were her medium. And their voice had become lost. We needed to give that back.

So we stripped away the text. You'll notice that there are almost no words on the first floor. The more conventional second floor mixes personal items (including her extraordinary bed) and text. But the Tower, a room Elisabet designed for Edmund to write in, is almost exclusively words. That was his medium. Visitors have his words and a typewriter up there with which to ruminate on themselves. That room is about thought, contemplation and, ultimately, sharing. But also silence.

**PP:** *The Ney is a museum without changing exhibits. How does a director maintain ongoing interest, get people to keep coming back?*

**OF:** We will always be exploring opportunities to adjust, to shift focus, and so forth. That said, there are oceans of people in Austin who still have never been to the Ney, which means more people that we can tell her story to.

As for repeat visitors, I firmly believe that museum storytelling – or “docentry” – is a genuine art form, not unlike documentary filmmaking. We push our docents to experiment, to craft their own voice. We also reject the notion of scripts. As a result, one visit can be very different from the next.

Furthermore, what really propelled Elisabet was engagement. She was always cultivating community at Formosa. She sustained that with her ever active mind, always willing to converse, challenge, and inspire, and ask that of her visitors. So we aim to follow her example through vigorous programming.

**PP:** *What are your major goals at this point?*

**OF:** I never want to do anything that's ever been done before. So we challenge ourselves to come up with terrific new ideas for programs, interpretive strategies, events and installations, ones that will be insightful, unexpected, and fun. Increasingly creative collaborations are coming that we think will really excite people. You can count on that. And it's gratifying that PARD is willing to let us be creative here.

**PP:** *You will also be working on the buildings and grounds. What's on the horizon?*

**OF:** Well, the historic prairie recreation is doing precisely what we hoped – becoming a beautiful natural landscape, with some spectacular spring and fall flowers. There are precious few spaces in the central city like it. It's also a unique educational asset, and subdued interpretive signage will appear soon.

Continued on page 19

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## Oliver Franklin Interview... ...cont'd from page 17

The north side of the creek, essentially a void for so long, is prime now to assume its own character. I am very pleased with the way our events, the new signage at 45th, and the Lodge paintings have infused personality there. It's so nice to see people picnicking under the trees. Within the next few years, we hope to have "the Lodge" renovated into our offices, classrooms, and galleries. That's also urgent because we yearn to open the main building's spectacular basement to visitors.

The main building will also undergo another phase of major work in order to provide the best environment possible for the house and its contents. To accomplish all this, we will have to raise money — mostly through grants. This effort will start in earnest this spring.

**PP:** *The building is historic. Any chance it could become a National Historic Landmark?*

**OF:** It would be a high honor. The Capitol and the Governor's Mansion are Austin's only NHL's. But we have a strong argument to make for the Ney, one that will only strengthen as more people become aware of us.

**PP:** *How do you see the Ney and Hyde Park having a mutually beneficial relationship?*

**OF:** When Elisabet built Formosa, Hyde Park was in its infancy. The Elisabet Ney Museum has been a part of Hyde Park forever and it will be forever. We benefit so much from the love and care our neighbors have for Elisabet's home. The Ney has increasing international stature, and people from all over the world come and are enchanted by Elisabet, her story, her home, and her community. All in all I believe that as the years go by, the neighborhood and the museum will continue to enrich each other symbiotically and organically. I certainly will do everything I possibly can to ensure that that relationship remains robust, healthy, and intimate.



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