



## *It's Time to Renew Your Membership!*

Please renew your Old Braeswood POA membership by completing the enclosed form and sending in your annual dues contribution (at any level) in the envelope provided. Your support allows us to enforce our deed restrictions, beautify the neighborhood, bring you fun neighborhood events, and informative newsletters and eBlasts throughout the year. Members will be acknowledged in the Old Braeswood newsletter. Thank you in advance for your continued commitment to our beautiful neighborhood!

## *Garden Club Meeting, Wed., February 1<sup>st</sup> @ 6 p.m.*

All Old Braeswood residents are invited to attend an informative talk presented by Gary P. Moss of Moss Landscaping. His topic is "Roses: Pruning, Planting and Caring." Refreshments will be served.

Date: Wednesday, February 1, 2012

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Location: 2311 Blue Bonnet Blvd., home of Dawn & Richard Gervais

Hosted by: The Old Braeswood Garden Club of Houston, Texas

RSVP to: Dorry Shaddock [dss@shaddocktexas.com](mailto:dss@shaddocktexas.com) or 713-661-6106

## *City Passes Watered-Down Residential Buffering Law*

Last December 21, Houston City Council passed a new ordinance referred to as the Residential Buffering Ordinance. The announced purpose of this ordinance is to protect single family residential neighborhoods from adjacent high-rise development in the form of office buildings, apartments, condos, or parking garages.

The Residential Buffering Ordinance arose out of recommendations made by one of the Mayor Annise Parker's transition committees, which was asked to develop a blueprint to mitigate the effects of high rise development on adjacent residential areas. These issues had been very publicly highlighted by the proposed Ashby High Rise, but the Ashby project enjoyed grandfathered status under the so-called Texas "vested rights" law, and the ordinance was really intended to address similar land use "surprises" in the future.

As passed, the ordinance applies to new high rise development located on local or collector streets, but not on major thoroughfares. "High rise" for purposes of the ordinance means structures (occupied or unoccupied) whose uppermost finished floor is 75 feet or more above grade. Such structures will have to be set back at least 30 feet from a property line if single family lots represent at least half of the land use along that border of the project. In addition, such high rises would have to provide a 10-foot landscape buffer with a tree every 20 feet and an 8-foot fence along that border. *(Continued on Page 6)*

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The house at 2302 Bluebonnet sits on a lot with a curious history. It isn't often that someone is sued for planting vegetables.

When the lot was vacant, then owner Seymour Schwartz was asked to turn it into a garden. He did. The controversy that followed erupted into a lawsuit filed on December 5, 1991, by the Braeswood Civic Club and five residents (Cause Number 199160579-7). It alleged that the garden violated deed restrictions that OB lots be used only for "private residence purposes," and that, until a residence was built, the "grass, weeds and vegetation must be kept mowed at regular intervals." Schwartz was quoted in *The Houston Chronicle* on June 8, 1992, as saying, "So I have to build a house on it before I can grow a garden on it."

Schwarz, at the time the suit was filed, was 72 years old, lived miles outside the Loop, and drove "a creepy, crusty old maroon station wagon with no hubcaps." [*Houston Press*, May 20, 1993] The *Press* article just quoted, was titled: *Garden of Strife, How a Plan to Help the Hungry Started a Dirty Little War in One of Houston's Nicest Neighborhoods*.

Schwartz had purchased the lot in 1974 for \$40,000 as an investment. The *Press* reported that in 1991 Schwartz was asked by a resident of West University to lend his OB lot to Houston Metropolitan Ministries to grow food for the Salvation Army Family Center. [It was said later that she made the request because she couldn't use her own land without violating West U's deed restrictions.] Volunteers in the garden included Lamar High School football players, Rice University students, a Boy Scout working on his Eagle Scout badge, West U Elementary students, West U Garden Club members, and non-violent convicts fulfilling the community service requirements of their sentences. Donations in kind came from various businesses including Cornelius Nursery and K-Mart. The Braeswood Garden Club made a monetary donation. Initially, both the president of the Braeswood Civic Association and the chairman of the Braeswood Architectural Review Committee approved the garden. Later, they explained that they had been told the garden would be a flower garden.

The *Houston Press* article, which is extensive, reports that neighborhood concerns about the garden focused on its being an "agricultural conversion" of the lot which could set a precedent for OB lots to be "used for any non-residential use, including gas stations, convenience stores, and the like." It opined that "for Old Braeswood, deed restrictions are the only boundary protecting neighborhood cohesiveness and keeping a vulnerable single-family community near downtown unanimously residential."

Schwarz allowed Houston Metropolitan Ministries to withdraw from the garden project to free it from potential involvement in the lawsuit. Without HMM, the project lost its community status, its volunteers, and its tax exempt donations. The garden faded, but not without media attention by Channel 11, the *Houston Business Journal*, the *Houston Post*, and even the *Wall Street Journal*. [Space constraints preclude including more about these other reports, referenced in the *Houston Press*.]

The lawsuit ended in an Agreed Judgment, with an Order signed on May 14, 1993. The garden disappeared and the lot sat waiting for another use.



2302 Bluebonnet and owners Krista Heidersbach & Mike Kelly

In 1996, the waiting ended when Dana and Craig Stewart bought the land and built the house that now stands there. Craig, a professional photographer, took a collection of images he had shot while in Tuscany to the architectural team of Walter Murphy and Kirby Mears. He hoped to recreate a modern version of the villas he and Dana had fallen in love with while on vacation. The result was featured in *Texas Home and Living Magazine*

on March 2, 2010.

Besides its Tuscan styling, the house includes details characteristic of its first owners. Dana taught at River Oaks Baptist, and the Cross was used in the design of windows and the front door. A Bible quote is embedded in the front steps ["Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." James 4:10]. Then, in 2011, with their daughters grown, the Stewarts sold the house. Craig was retired, but he and Dana still operated a commercial lavender farm near Belleville. A townhouse was all they needed in Houston.

The new owners, Krista Heidersbach and Mike Kelly, are engineers for Chevron and newly married. Formerly, he lived in the Memorial energy corridor and she lived in Southgate. They favored OB as the neighborhood for making a home together, both for its lot sizes and for its location. They own two Siberian huskies and provide rescue shelter for other huskies. The house has a separate, fenced yard for dogs. Other selling points for them were the balcony view of the lighted Medical Center at night, the pool view from the second floor dining room, the antique bath fixtures, and the many Tuscan details throughout.

Besides providing charm, the Tuscan details tie an agricultural area of Italy to OB's own flirtation with agriculture.

[This is the 20th article in a continuing series on houses and people in Old Braeswood. Suggestions for future columns are welcome.]

On Tuesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> the Old Braeswood Garden Club hosted Gary Moss, President of Moss Landscaping, for a talk on *Gardening During the Drought*.

As a co-founder and member of the Coalition for Greater Houston's Sustainable Resources he was enthusiastic about recent developments which may result in a change to the watering schedule during the drought. While stage 2 water restrictions are in effect, residents can water twice per week, which is adequate this time of year if you water wisely. However, Mr. Moss feels the current schedule of twice a week at peak times of 4 – 7 a.m. is not effective, as pressure is lowest at that time and less water actually gets to plants and lawns. A three day a week watering schedule at off peak hours would cause less draw down of pressure on the system and would provide better overall watering for landscape maintenance. Spray heads are most efficient for watering landscaping and should be adjusted so as not to water the sidewalk or driveway or spray on any portion of the house.

He cautioned against overwatering in the winter months as this can cause brown patch fungus to form on your lawn. Brown patch conditions can be controlled by not overwatering during the cool season. If you do have a brown patch outbreak you should implement a chemical or organic program. Core aeration of your lawn is recommended quarterly. He cautioned against applying rye seed for a green lawn in the colder months, as it has a tendency to choke out St. Augustine grass. A discussion was had as to the fines that should be placed on commercial properties that disregard the watering schedule and about making sure residential property owners also comply with the stage 2 watering schedule.

Mr. Moss related findings reported at a recent meeting of the Coalition for Greater Houston's Sustainable Resources. Houston is in the middle of what is expected to be a 5-year drought and which is believed to be caused in part by a La Nina system and also the fact that Houston seems to create its own hot spot that breaks up many weather systems that have the potential to bring rain to the area.

Now is the time to plant, emphasized Mr. Moss. During the colder winter months trees and bushes are able to establish their root systems before the hot dry summer months arrive. Existing trees should be evaluated for complete removal or trimming of dead branches. Water oaks in particular should be examined for anthracnose fungus/virus and for borers which attack near the base and cause pin holes with sap across the bark of the tree. He has seen several water oaks in this condition that have simply fallen over. Now is also an excellent time to deep root fertilize your trees and shrubs.

Mr. Moss cautioned against racing to replace existing landscaping with foliage intended for drier climates, as the drought is a temporary condition. You may want to consider replacing annual seasonal color with perennials. Be sure to use the right plant for the right location and consider its water requirements before planting. If replacing dead ornamentals, reevaluate your overall landscape plan. If trees have also been removed, the lack of shade may af-

fect what should be replanted. Many ornamental bushes may also have sustained sun damage or other damage from the drought. He suggested cutting back the scorched or dead branches to allow the bush to regrow. Spray waxy leaf plants with dormant oil. Hardwood shredded composted mulch is recommended for weathering the winter and the drought in summer. He also cautioned against over trimming a tree as it is then unable to "feed" itself, and never mulch at the base or flare of the tree as it will kill the tree. Instead, place a mulch "ring" beyond the flare of a young tree, or apply a thin layer of mulch just beyond the flare of a mature tree. Bubblers are an inexpensive and easy way to water trees during the drought.

When mulching, it is important to not cover the weep holes in the bottom course of brick on the exterior sheathing or the bottom edge of the stucco, as this creates a condition allowing termites and water to enter your home.

Finally, during the colder months check your pressurized vacuum breaker (PVB, aka the irrigation supply line from the street), making sure the two valve handles are not rusted (if so, use some WD40 to loosen it – and apply WD-40 to handles twice a year to prevent the need for expensive handle repairs), and during hard freeze warnings covering them with a blanket or towels to protect them from freezing and bursting.

Moss Landscaping is a full service landscaping company offering design, construction, drainage and maintenance services. You may contact Moss Landscaping for individual consultation, analysis and estimates at 713-861-5511 or Gary@mosslandscaping.com.

***Gary Moss will be presenting a talk for the Old Braeswood Garden Club on roses on Wednesday, February 1, 2012 at 6 p.m. at the home of Dawn & Richard Gervais. All neighbors are welcome !***

## *Garden Club News*

The Fall Yard of The Season is..... 2351 Underwood, home of Jan and Rick Kaminsky. They have done a fantastic job of keeping their yard looking great during the hot and extremely dry summer and fall. Drive by and see the garden club award – a silver flamingo- and be inspired.

During this 5 year drought cycle (don't be fooled by the January rain), the Garden Club will provide a series of recommendations on how to keep your plants alive, what to plant and other information. The first in the series is a You-Tube video provided by Texas A&M on how to water your trees during this dry spell. Check out the link: [www.youtube.com/TexasForestService](http://www.youtube.com/TexasForestService). Please also plan to attend the presentation on Feb. 1 at the home of Dawn Gervais. For more info please see the first page.

If you are interested in becoming a Garden Club member, please contact Margo Elgohary [smaro@sbcglobal.net](mailto:smaro@sbcglobal.net) 713-664-4630. All neighbors are welcome!

## Old Braeswood Celebrates the Holidays



*Topiaries cavort in their holiday finery at 7309 Greenbriar.*

Walking or driving in Old Braeswood during the holidays was a lovely experience because of all the lights and decorations. Houses were decorated beautifully. The house at **2518 Blue Bonnet** was a visual wonderland. Other houses that were wonderful:

- ★ Dorrington: 2409, and some of the condos on Dorrington
- ★ Gramercy: 2329, 2323, 2337, 2345, 2346, 2401, 2419, 2414, 2428
- ★ Bellefontaine: 2320, 2324, 2330, 2333, 2339, 2335, 2340, 2401, 2415
- ★ Maroneal: 2322, 2330, 2338, 2348, 2402, 2426, 2430, 2502, 2508
- ★ Glen Haven: 2308, 2315, 2405, 2415, 2340, 2442, 2500, 2515, 2507, 2523
- ★ Greenbriar: 7315, 7309
- ★ Main: 2314
- ★ Braeswood Ct.: 2330
- ★ Blue Bonnet: 2311, 2317, 2320, 2329, 2340, 2351, 2414, 2479, 2505, 2506, 2516, 2518, 2517
- ★ Underwood: 2342, 2306

*(\* Please forgive us if we missed your house but it was difficult to see Addresses at night. )*

### ***Park Housekeeping***

One of the great features of Old Braeswood Park is that neighbors supply the park with gently used toys. Unfortunately, one of the downsides is that, at times, there are too many toys in the park. Last month, Blue Bonnet resident Lisa Cohen helped thin down the toys to a more manageable level. Ideally, the park would have about 35 toys that are in good condition. Another close by option for donating toys is the Goodwill at 2428-B Holcombe. Thanks to Lisa for her help with the toy reduction project, and thanks to all of you for your help in keeping our park beautiful!



### ***Invitation from Rice University***

2012 marks the centennial of the founding of Rice University and many events will occur throughout the year, including events to which residents of Old Braeswood are welcome.

On April 11-15, Rice will sponsor an UnConvention so that the Houston community can see what goes on "inside the hedges." They are opening the doors to their 300 acre campus with tours, demonstrations, concerts, lectures, athletic events, art exhibits and more. Further information is available at [www.centennial.rice.edu](http://www.centennial.rice.edu).

[Rice University, acting as a good neighbor, sponsors quarterly lunches at which representatives of surrounding communities and institutions are updated on events at Rice. This news from Rice was provided by Bob Birenbaum, who represented Old Braeswood at the last luncheon.]

# Old Braeswood Real Estate Report

by Dawn Gervais, Realtor® Consultant



I would like to start out by wishing you all a very happy 2012. I think we are going to see more activity in the coming months in the Real Estate market. Low interest rates have boosted consumer confidence.

Average fixed mortgage rates in the U.S. over the past week finished the year near all-time lows, with the 30-year home loan at 3.95%.

According to Freddie Mac's weekly survey of mortgage rates, the rate for a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage has been at or below 4% for the past nine consecutive weeks and only twice in 2011 did it average above 5%.

The 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 3.95% for the week ended Thursday, up from 3.91% the previous week and below 4.86% a year ago. Rates on 15-year fixed-rate mortgages averaged 3.24%, up from 3.21% last week and below 4.20% a year earlier.

Five-year Treasury-indexed hybrid adjustable-rate mortgages, or ARM, averaged 2.88%, up from 2.85% yet below 3.77% of a year ago. One-year Treasury-indexed ARM rates averaged 2.78%, up from 2.77% in the prior week and below 3.26% last year.

If you are one of the many homeowners waiting until spring 2012 to list your home, you may want to consider putting it on the market sooner. I'm hearing and seeing a great number of people ready to move now, but waiting for additional homes to come onto the market. In this market, it's so important to price your home competitively and make sure that your home is in top shape.

To maximize your return, you may have to invest a little to insure your home is what current buyers are looking for. Consult a Realtor® for optimum results!

<u>Homes sold in 2011.....</u>	19	<u>Total # of Homes For Sale.....</u>	9
* Minimum Sold price	\$479,000	* Min. Asking Price	\$575,000
* Maximum Sold price	\$3,075,000	* Max. Asking Price .....	\$1,299,000
* Average Price per SF	\$227.66	* Average Price per SF	\$256.14



## Tai Chi Comes to Old Braeswood in March 2012

Old Braeswood newcomer Rose Pu, the mother and mother-in-law of G.G. Hsieh and Mark Hausknecht, was born in Beijing, China, and began taking Tai chi lessons at age 60. She has come to appreciate its profound physical and mental benefits. Now 84, she starts her day with Tai chi, possibly the reason for her youthful appearance.



Tai chi is a "meditation in motion" and shares attributes with yoga and meditation. Early forms of Tai chi were practiced in ancient China, but it was introduced in this country in 1939. It consists of a series of slow, graceful, weight-bearing movements that form a sequence which is practiced daily. There are numerous styles of Tai chi. Ms. Pu is versed in the Yang style. She emphasizes that, while the physical practice of Tai chi is itself beneficial, the real relaxation and mental benefits of stress relief may easily take months if not years to develop. [See Mayo Clinic website <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/tai-chi/SA00087>]

The name "Tai chi" is derived from the yin (receptive) and yang (active) principles of the I Ching, an ancient Chinese text. Some people believe that Tai Chi was developed by a Taoist Priest. It is said that he once observed a white crane preying on a snake, and mimicked their movements to create Tai Chi. Initially, Tai Chi was practiced as a fighting form, emphasizing strength, balance, flexibility, and speed. Through time it has evolved into a soft, slow, and gentle form of exercise which can be practiced by people of all ages.

Ms. Pu will start free Tai chi lessons for interested OB residents in March. There will be 2 weekly sessions: one weekday class, and, to accommodate those at work during the week, a weekend class. The initial class will take place in March at her home on Bellefontaine. To join, email her ([RosePu2003@aol.com](mailto:RosePu2003@aol.com)) or call and leave a message with her daughter, G.G., at 713 660-9520.

New  
**WELCOME**

**Neighbors**

**LeAnn & Geoff Cislo**

2335 Dorrington

**Krista Heidersbach &**

**Michael Kelly**

2302 Blue Bonnet Blvd

**Craig Baudier & Zuany Molina**

2305 Blue Bonnet

**William B. Connolly**

2433 Maroneal

**Zhandong Liu & Nan Wu**

2201 Maroneal

**Keila Torres & Jason Reed**

7510 Morningside

**Cathy Ginger & Carlos Ramos**

2311 Underwood

**Sign up for  
Old Braeswood  
eBlasts & Crime Alerts**

Would you like to receive up to the minute news and crime alerts electronically? To subscribe, call the Old Braeswood office at 713-807-1787 or send your email address to [info@OldBraeswood.com](mailto:info@OldBraeswood.com).

## *January Voter Registration Card Mailing Delayed Due to Redistricting*

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New voter registration cards will be sent after the Supreme Court decides the pending redistricting case, according to Don Sumners, Harris Co. Tax Assessor-Collector and Voter Registrar.

Normally, in mid January of every even-numbered year, persons registered to vote in Harris County are getting their new voter certificate in the mail.

**Not this year.** The 2012 redistricting maps drawn by the Texas Legislature are in dispute and the matter is in the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court.

"My office cannot prepare and mail the new certificates until the court has approved the final maps. Only after that can voters be assigned to the correct voting precinct," said Sumners.

The Democratic and Republican party primaries have been delayed by the same dispute and now are scheduled for April 3.

"The delay in mailing the registration certificates will not interfere with anyone's right to vote. I and my Voter Registration Department will support and protect the rights of every qualified voter. We will prepare and mail every certificate as soon as we can after the Supreme Court decides this case," Sumners said.

"Look for a new certificate -- yellow and white this year -- soon after the decision is final," Sumners said.

## *High Rise Buffering Ordinance Update Continued from Page 1*

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Unfortunately, the ordinance was substantially watered down from earlier versions and it seems unlikely to provide significant protection to neighborhoods faced with these kinds of threats. Even though the ordinance would not apply to the Ashby High Rise, if that project was used as a test case, the ordinance would at most require a modest change to the Ashby parking garage at the rear of the project and it would have no effect on the size or location of the tower.

The ordinance was originally drafted to include additional performance standards that would apply to any commercial development located adjacent to single family residential property, whether high rise or not. These standards would address screening on parking garages and outdoor lighting and noise standards for mechanical equipment to protect adjacent homes. Developers, however, could still locate loading docks, dumpsters, and parking lots next to residences. These standards were removed from the version of the ordinance that was passed under the rationale that they are more appropriately included in the City's building code and would be taken up for consideration later, but it remains to be seen if and when these standards will be presented for City Council consideration.

## Remember to Submit Plans For Review Before Beginning Construction or Any Exterior Alteration



Old Braeswood's deed restrictions require that all alterations to homes be approved in writing prior to construction or implementation. Not only must plans for new construction of homes, garages, fences and other outdoor structures be reviewed, but changes such as window replacement, new siding, addition of solar panels, garage door replacements and new fences, must also be approved. In a nutshell, anything that impacts the exterior of your home in any way must be reviewed and approved prior to construction. For a plan review application, please contact [info@OldBraeswood.com](mailto:info@OldBraeswood.com) or call the office at 713-807-1787. Construction projects that begin without approval will be assessed a fee of \$500.

## Save the Date!

### Southampton Home Tour

12 - 4 p.m.

Saturday

March 25<sup>th</sup>

This annual fundraising event is great fun and of special interest to preservation minded neighbors.

All proceeds benefit the Sunset Blvd. Esplanade Maintenance Fund.

## Join the Old Braeswood Yahoo Group

This is a real time group where you can send messages to other members without delay. The Yahoo group has been very helpful for tracking down lost pets and has even been used to help the RACS Constables Patrol track down thieves. Please note that the Yahoo group is not related to the eNews and crime alert service. Visit this link to get started:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/OldBraeswoodNeighbors/>.

## Recycling & Trash Schedule



### Household Trash Yard Waste

Tuesdays  
Tuesdays

### Tree & Limb Debris Junk Waste

1st Monday (odd months)  
1st Monday (even months)

### Recycling

Every other Tuesday

Jan. 17 & 31    Feb. 14 & 28  
Mar. 13 & 27    Apr. 10 & 24

In accordance with Chapter 39 of the City's Code of Ordinances, trash may not be set on the curb for collection before 6 p.m. of the day preceding pick up. Please remind your yard service not to leave bags on the curb during the week. Please also remind crews not to blow leaves or other debris into the storm sewers, as this clogs the system and creates the perfect conditions for mosquitoes—and is against the law. For more trash rules, visit [www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste](http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste).

## 2012 OBPOA

### Officers & Chairpersons

President	John Eldridge
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Pres.	Susan Teich
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Pres.	Buddy Steves
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice Pres.	Ryan Maierson
At-Large	Molly Khalil
At-Large	G.G. Hsieh
Treasurer	David Leathers
Secretary	Dawn Gervais
Past President	Dee Murray
Architectural Review	Marilyn Archer Matthew Kelley Prince Ambooken
Block Captains	Sally Miller
Historic	Susan Teich
Newsletter	<u>Volunteer Needed</u>
Park	Matthew Kelley
Enforcement	Sam Bernstein John Eldridge Bill Marchbank
RACS Rep	Ryan Maierson
Rice U Liaison	Bob Birenbaum
Social	G.G. Hsieh
Trees	Carroll Shaddock
University Place	Kathy Lord
Welcome	Dawn Gervais

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## *Annual Meeting Recap*

Old Braeswood POA held its 2011 Annual Meeting on November 17 at the beautiful, new home of Gayle and Scott Hoffer at 2343 Underwood Blvd. The meeting was well-attended by over 55 neighbors who enjoyed delicious fare provided by Old Braeswood board members. Neighbors also enjoyed Gayle Hoffer's famous Mexican spinach-artichoke dip and Dorry Shaddock's wonderful creations. Special thanks to Sally Miller for coordinating the meeting and the delicious food!

Annual elections were held and the following officers were elected to serve for the 2012 term:

President	John Eldridge
1 <sup>st</sup> Vice President	Susan Teich
2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice President	Buddy Steves
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vice President	Ryan Maierson
At-Large	Molly Khalil
At-Large	G.G. Hsieh
Treasurer	David Leathers
Secretary	Dawn Gervais

After the election, committee chairmen reported on their activities over the year and plans for 2012. Carroll Shaddock gave a very informative report on the Tree Committee's activities and his work to secure drought remediation treatment for many of the street trees on Kirby, Greenbriar, Main, Holcombe and N. Braeswood through Trees for Houston. Information about drought remediation treatment for trees and options for homeowners was mailed to all residents in December and can be found at <http://www.OldBraeswood.com>.

John Eldridge thanked outgoing treasurer Brent Whiteley and outgoing At-Large member Sam Bernstein for their service. Although Sam is retiring from the Exec. Committee, he will continue to serve on the Legal Committee. Dee Murray will continue to serve as Past President. After the election, the meeting was adjourned and revelry ensued.



**PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

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