

# Grand Lake GAZETTE

Volume 1, Issue 1

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE GRAND LAKE ESTATES POA

July 2015

## NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE BOARD

### May Board Meeting Summary - May 26th, 2015

- The board reviewed and approved minutes and accepted financials for April 2015 (visit GLE website for recent minutes and financials at [www.glepoa.com](http://www.glepoa.com) - Documents - 2015 Minutes and Financials).

- Updates on progress toward Connie Lane drainage were provided to the community, with progress reported on bids for dirt work and surveying needed for the project.

- Road repair bids were re-bid with new specifications with repairs expected to begin in late June/early July provided weather cooperates and contractors are not inundated with large jobs caused by recent flooding.

- Progress on replatting of front reserve 3A was reported with verbal agreements reached with reserve owner of 4A to swap portions of greenbelt so that POA may retain Honea Egypt frontage on southern entrance and convert portions of reserve lots to residential lots to facilitate greenbelt transfer agreement.

- Board passed a protocol for notifying the community about any trespass or vandalism on POA property and provided residents with cell numbers of 5 board members who can be called 24-7 to meet Sheriff to press charges on any incidents with damage to POA property. Residents are encouraged to call Sheriff to report vandalism and trespass incidents on all other private property to further discourage such activity in GLE. Phone numbers for contact will be placed on the website.

- Progress on repairs to Guinevere spillway repairs reported with work expected to be completed by end of June.

- Peel Inc. was contracted to provide the community newsletter for GLE free of charge and Adriana Swanson was named volunteer Newsletter Editor, serving under the Website committee.

- Several community signs were reported replaced/placed and discussion ensued on ATV use and possible signage restricting

ATV use in GLE. Under New Business, Phase 3 improvements at the Sandy Beach Park (fencing, parking lot, bike racks) were discussed and board member Chris Kisling volunteered to head that committee. Tabled Issues: Acquisition of Reserves, Curb Mitigation/Boulder Placement for Selected Streets, ATV Issues, and Website/Webmaster Duties.

- Several speakers/guests from the community expressed concerns and issues for the board's consideration in a question and answer session of approximately 25 minutes following agenda completion.

#### NOTES FROM THE BOARD

**SCHOOL'S OUT FOR SUMMER:** All GLE residents are reminded to be extra cautious driving through our community now that youngsters are home from school. If you have deliveries or housekeeping, lawn or pool service providers who come to your home, please remind them to drive carefully, and to comply with posted speed limits (35 mph) throughout GLE. Chronic and persistent speeding continues to be a major safety concern for many GLE residents, especially concerned parents and summer vacation means more children will be out playing, so please drive safely. The POA Board has received a number of suggestions and requests about introducing speed humps, speed bumps, traffic patrols or radar signs and other traffic calming options to slow down speeding, but there is no substitute for increased safety and diligence on the part of concerned drivers.

**STOP! :** Several stop signs and safety signs were damaged in recent months in various locations throughout GLE. Because GLE streets are private, Montgomery County does not provide replacement signs and GLE POA funds must be used to repair/replace such damage.

*(Continued on Page 2)*

# Grand Lake Estates

## IMPORTANT NUMBERS

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

EMERGENCY .....	911
Fire.....	911
Ambulance.....	911
Montgomery County Sheriff.....	936-760-5800

### AREA HOSPITALS

Conroe Regional Medical.....	936-539-1111
Memorial Hermann-The Woodlands.....	281-364-2300
St. Luke's – The Woodlands.....	936-266-2000

### SCHOOLS

Montgomery ISD.....	936-582-1333
Lone Star Elementary.....	936-588-6100
Montgomery Intermediate.....	936-597-6494
Montgomery Middle School.....	936-597-7070
Montgomery Junior High.....	936-582-6400
Montgomery High School.....	936-597-6401

### PUBLIC SERVICES

Montgomery Post Office.....	1-800-275-8777
Driver's License Info.....	936-442-2810
Montgomery Central Appraisal.....	936-756-3354
Montgomery County Registration & Titling.....	936-539-7896

### BOARD MEMBERS

Thomas Clare.....	thomas@glepoa.com
Ali Eichenberg.....	281-935-2638 ali@glepoa.com
Chris Hageman.....	713-992-5220 crh@glepoa.com
Lonna Hord.....	305-905-0483 lonna@glepoa.com
Chris Kisling.....	832-689-4889 chris@glepoa.com
Ray McCrea.....	281-914-1544 ray@glepoa.com
Karen Valdez.....	karen@glepoa.com

### PROPERTY MANAGEMENT GROUP (DTA)

DTA.....	832-364-6880
----------	--------------

### GRAND LAKE ESTATES GOLF COURSE

Clubhouse.....	936-447-4653
----------------	--------------

### NEWSLETTER PUBLISHER

Peel, Inc.....	888-687-6444
Article Submission.....	grandlakeestates@peelinc.com
Advertising.....	advertising@peelinc.com

(Continued from Cover)

**NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH:** GLE owners and residents are encouraged to report all incidents of vandalism or theft to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Dept. at 936-760-5871 or 5800 and notify a board member as well to meet Sheriff Dept. personnel to file reports. Several board members have agreed to be available to take your calls 24/7 and they can be reached at the numbers below to file reports and press charges for vandalism or trespass on GLE POA property.

Chris Hageman (817) 673-1701, Lonna Hord (305) 905-0483  
Ray McCrea (281) 914-1544, Ali Eichenberg (281) 935-2638  
Chris Kisling (832) 689-4889

During regular business hours, you can also phone or email GLE Association Management Offices of DTA Property Management (832) 364-6881 or email [stephanie@webdta.com](mailto:stephanie@webdta.com).

**GARAGE SALES & OPEN GATE WEEKENDS:** Several GLE residents have asked about scheduling garage sales in the summer months. GLE owners are reminded to schedule their garage sales during the twice-annual "Open Gate" weekends in April and October. Go to the GLE POA website at [www.grandlakeestates.net](http://www.grandlakeestates.net) and click on the Governing Documents tab to read the Resolution passed by the POA Board in 2010 in an effort to balance owners' private property rights against the limited access that goes with living in a gated community.

**LOST/FOUND PETS** - If you lose or find a pet in GLE, please post a notice to Management via email or phone and they will send an email blast to other GLE residents to assist in reuniting pets with their families as soon as possible. Pictures are welcomed and will be sent out with the notice. If you find a pet that is noticed as lost, please let Management know and be diligent to remove all signs placed in the community if your pet is found.

**COMPOSITE BUILDING SITES:** GLE owners who own up to three (3) adjacent lots are reminded that they can declare their lots a "composite building site" and pay only one annual POA maintenance fee. However, if the owner separates the lots by selling or transferring title to one or more of them; the unpaid POA annual fees previously due will then become due. To declare contiguous, adjacent lots as a composite building site, please contact Management at DTA Property Management (832) 364-6881 or email [stephanie@webdta.com](mailto:stephanie@webdta.com).



## TOP 10 TIPS FOR PROTESTING YOUR MONTGOMERY COUNTY PROPERTY TAXES

Well, it's that time of year again - Love is in the AIR! The flowers are blooming, the bees are buzzing and the Montgomery County Appraisal District is sending all of us love letters about how much they want our tax money!

Now you will rarely hear a Realtor® tell you that it is not a good thing when an appraiser tells you that your house is worth more - but in this one case, it is NOT A GOOD THING. If your home's appraised value has increased, you will pay more in property taxes. Your appraised value set by the county each year determines the amount of annual property tax owed, but the county cannot increase the appraised value of a homesteaded property more than 10% in value each year. It is the largest source of revenue for county services in Texas - paying for your schools, streets, fire, police, and many other nice amenities we all appreciate and depend on. If the value of your home is equal to those of your neighbors and other houses like yours, you are probably paying the right amount of taxes, but if you think your value is higher than similar houses like yours, or if your house has problems that make its value less than ideal, you may be an ideal candidate to get your values lowered by filing a protest. Protests must be filed by the May 31 deadline for 2015, and after filing, you will get a notice for an appointment with an appraiser to make your case for why your house is worth less than they say it is worth. I am not an expert on tax protests, but I know a few of them and I've compiled some of their tips and tricks for you below as well as links to the most well-known tax protest advisors in Montgomery County. Most importantly, you need to have a good Realtor in your corner to help you find the data you need to make your case because you can only use sales within the most recent 24-months to prove value for similar homes in your area/neighborhood. I make it a point to help my clients with this information annually because I believe service after the sale is paramount. As a special service to Grand Lake Estates homeowners, I have compiled a list with the statistics on the most recent 47 sales in GLE in the last 24 months which GLE residents can access on the password protected side of the [www.glepoa.com](http://www.glepoa.com) website under Documents - Tax Protest - GLE Recent Sales 1-1-2013 to 12-31-2014.

Here are some tips for a successful tax protest:

1. Mail/file your protest as late as possible but still by the deadline?

You can do your filing completely online in Montgomery County - you don't have to do paper forms and you don't have to take anything down to the Gladstell Street office in Conroe. You want to file your protest late because by doing so you will get a later appraisal hearing date and then you can do your research on properties that have already had their values lowered on nearby homes and use them for your hearing and bring this data as evidence. If you have a very early hearing, you won't be able to gather this data. Early hearings also have the benefit of fresh appraisers - the longer they do this, the wearier they become. Some other tips in filling out the online protest form:

Check boxes for both "property is over value" and "property is unequal compared to other properties" - you will want to make a case for either or both of these arguments depending on what data you can find to support these arguments.

Don't put any arguments for facts that will support your case - leave it blank. You can make those arguments at your hearing AFTER you have done your research. Also, putting your arguments here puts you (by default) in line to receive an online "settlement offer" without a hearing. Hold out for an informal hearing to make your full case.

DO NOT PUT ANYTHING under "what do you think your property value is?" - you don't know that yet because you haven't done your research and you don't want them holding you to what you put on the form out of ignorance.

2. Get professional help to protest if you don't have time to do it yourself.

Lots of people do it themselves and are very successful, but if you are too busy or just don't want to bother, there are good services out there who will do the work for a set fee or a percentage of what they save you in taxes. Some only charge you if they get your taxes lowered. I've put a list of links at the end of this article of those who work in Montgomery County that I am aware of.

3. Spend some time exploring the [Mcad-tx.org](http://Mcad-tx.org) website.

Search your street and neighborhood to see what all your neighbors are valued at - you may be surprised. Use this list as your primary evidence to show similar homes that are valued lower than yours.

*(Continued on Page 4)*



**CYPRESS CREEK**  
**PEST CONTROL**

*"Providing Quality Dependable Service Since 1968"*

**Free yard treatment for  
new Quarterly customer**

**281-469-2679**  
[nobugs@cycreekpestcontrol.com](mailto:nobugs@cycreekpestcontrol.com)

# Grand Lake Estates

*(Continued from Page 3)*

4. Ask your Realtor to provide you with a customized Sales Comp grid on lower-priced sold homes in your neighborhood.

Use the data in the Documents - Tax Protest - GLE Recent Sales 1-1-2013 to 12-31-2014 custom document provided for your use this year and feel free to call me or your preferred Realtor® for similar data assistance in subsequent years. You will need to get this recent sales data from a Realtor because [www.har.com](http://www.har.com) lists closing values in ranges for consumers - only HAR members can see actual exact closing prices, which is what you will need for your hearing data. I can help you review sales comp data to find any reasons why the sold homes might have a higher value than your home. They might have a pool or a major remodel that your home doesn't have and we can probably find homes that sold for less than the ones the appraisal district uses.

5. Force the appraisal district to give you their homework.

If you request a "House Bill 201 package" from your appraisal district, they have to provide you with the data, schedules, formulas and other information they plan to introduce at your hearing to establish your value. They will ask you to pick this up at the Gladstell office (Conroe) and charge you a nominal copy fee, but it is well worth it to see the actual list of comparable sales and values they will use to get your value from. I have provided another valuable sample "201 Request" letter you can find on your website at [www.glepoa.com](http://www.glepoa.com) - Documents - Tax Protest - 201 Sample Request Letter.

After you file your protest tax protest and receive an informal hearing date, you can send in the 201 Request Letter and then they will provide you with this information, but they are not required to provide it to you until 15-20 days before your hearing date. You may want to actually drive by those properties to see if they are truly comparable because they often are not - take pictures to prove they are not and take those pictures to your hearing.

6. It's about pictures, pictures, pictures.

The appraiser who completes your hearing needs you to prove to them why they need to help you. Provide them the evidence they need with pictures and lots of them. If your house is in worse shape than the comps they use, show them exactly why with pictures. The condition of your home on January 1 (the golden date when all appraisals become realty) is most important.

7. Be nice, be prepared. Get them to want to help you.

Remember, these folks are human beings who listen to people gripe about their taxes every day. They want to help you, but they can only help you in one limited area - the area where you show them evidence that outweighs the evidence they have. This process is less about "protesting" and more about presenting information in a polite, logical way that justifies what the market value for your house is -- "Market value" being what your home would sell for on the open market. You want to make your argument nice and logically compelling so that it's a no-brainer for them to support your ideas.

8. What to expect from the informal appraisal hearing?

You show up at the Montgomery Appraisal District building on Gladstell Street in Conroe and wait for your name to be called. The appraiser will bring you to their cubical.

Bring all the documentation with you to this meeting - all your pictures, presentations, spreadsheets, PowerPoint's - anything you have in paper or on your laptop or tablet that details your case. Lots of quality

pictures of defects with your home that adversely affect market value are crucial. You will have 15-20 minutes.

Most of the time, people get the results they want with the informal hearing process. If not, you can take it to the next step by going to the appraisal review board.

9. What to expect from the appraisal review board (ARB) hearing?

The panel is comprised of three to 6 citizens not employed by MCAD to hear your case and one MCAD employee who argues the Appraisal Districts' case against your point of view.

Plan to have a packet of materials prepared for each of the panel members and the MCAD employee.

Give them the reasons your house should have a lower value than the comparables - provide clear color pictures showing the problems with your property that make it worth less than the comps.

Explain why the MCAD comparables are not similar and show pictures of those properties to show why your property is worth LESS and those properties are NICER than yours and should be valued more than yours.

Put together a professional looking package. Anticipate what the MCAD representative's arguments will be and refute them before they get up in your presentation. The MCAD employee will make their response based on the comparables data from the 201 lists you were provided so if you have already blown those out of the water that they are NOT comparable, they will not have a valid argument to refute your case when it is their turn to talk.

When both sides are finished presenting, the board considers the information, and you get a final determination from them at the end of the hearing.

If you win at this level, you've beaten MCAD until next year, when the computer spits out the same old wrong valuation and you make many of the same arguments year after year, (so save your documents).

If you don't win a reduction in value at the ARB level, then your next choice is district court, which for most people, is just not worth the money or effort. There is no guarantee you and the ARB panel will agree with your assessment, so sometimes it may be worth it to take the informal appraisal reduction for the certainty involved.

10. Talk to your neighbors.

You know your property. Your neighbors know your neighborhood. Sometimes they may know gossip that can help you gather helpful and valuable home value information.

One year, one of my neighbors emailed out a list of values of his research to several people in our neighborhood, showing how unfairly appraised our properties were compared to surrounding neighborhoods. The fact that this conscientious homeowner highlighted an improper valuation issue helped everyone in our neighborhood. Sometimes, something as simple as letting everyone know that a lower-priced foreclosure sale took place will serve to index everyone's values down.

Talking to your neighbors can sometimes give you a sense of what works and doesn't work in doing your own property tax protest.

Most importantly - Don't give up. Every time you protest you have a 50/50 chance of getting your value lowered and you are not going to get it raised, so you have nothing to lose. Focus on asking questions and learning from the process so you can increase your chances for success next year and please don't hesitate to call me if you need help getting the data you need to win!



# SEND US YOUR Event Pictures!

Do you have a picture of an event that you would like to run in this newsletter? Send it to us and we will publish it in the next issue.

Email the picture to: [grandlakeestates@peelinc.com](mailto:grandlakeestates@peelinc.com). Be sure to include the text that you would like to have as the caption. Pictures will appear in color online at [www.peelinc.com](http://www.peelinc.com)



# NOW HERE'S A SWEET IDEA!

Download the Peel, Inc. App



Search "Peel, Inc." in the the AppStore



# Grand Lake Estates

## Join the Yard of the Month Committee!

The GLE POA association would like to show its appreciation to those homeowners who take pride in their yard and demonstrate exceptional efforts to maintain and improve their property in a manner that contributes to the overall appearance of the community. You can be part of this important committee that will look at nominated yards and select the winner for each month. You can help recognize a neighbor's home for the Yard of the Month! Winners receive a sign to place in their yard and a picture in an upcoming newsletter of their beautiful home.

If you are interested in being on this committee, please email your contact information to: [webmaster@glepoa.com](mailto:webmaster@glepoa.com).



## Join a Committee!

The participation of home owners is essential to the future of our neighborhood. Everyone's contribution whether small or big is important! You can support our community by serving on one of many of our committees, simply by attending meetings and getting involved. If you wish to volunteer to join a committee, please visit our community website and complete the eForm entitled "Join a Committee".

.....



*Look for upcoming Movie Night at  
the Park dates on the message board  
at the front gate*



## GLE FALL FESTIVAL

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2015**

Volunteers Needed to help with:

Setting up booths

Running booths

Breaking down booths

Float and costume contest

Someone to bake and decorate cupcakes

Donations accepted

Become a sponsor!

For more information contact

Holly Jackson at 936-588-1007 Email: [hollyajackson@live.com](mailto:hollyajackson@live.com)

## WOMEN'S Book Club

If you like to read, come join us! This is an opportunity to read a great book and be able to get to know other ladies in the neighborhood. The goal of the book club is to have fun, exchange ideas, and treat yourself to reading and discussing at least one book a month. Come to laugh! Come to share!

Our first meeting will be held Thursday, July 23th at 6:30pm at the community park. All genres of books are welcome and all book suggestions are encouraged! We are currently choosing books. If you have questions, please feel free to contact us at: [grandlakeestates@peelinc.com](mailto:grandlakeestates@peelinc.com).



## Teenage Job Seekers

Name	Age	Baby Sit	Pet Sit	House Sit	Yard Work	Phone
Doe, John.....	15.....	•.....	•.....	•.....	.....	111-1111

\*-CPR Training

+First Aid Training

### Attention Teenagers

The **Teenage Job Seekers** listing service is offered free of charge to all Grand Lake Estate teenagers seeking work. Submit your name and information to [grandlakeestates@peelinc.com](mailto:grandlakeestates@peelinc.com) by the 9<sup>th</sup> of the month!

.....

## Classified Ads

**Business classifieds** (offering a service or product line for profit) are \$50, limit 40 words, please Peel, Inc. Sales Office at 512-263-9181 or [advertising@PEELinc.com](mailto:advertising@PEELinc.com).

At no time will any source be allowed to use the Grand Lake Estates Newsletter contents, or loan said contents, to others in anyway, shape or form, nor in any media, website, print, film, e-mail, electrostatic copy, fax, or etc. for the purpose of solicitation, commercial use, or any use for profit, political campaigns, or other self amplification, under penalty of law without written or expressed permission from the Grand Lake Estates Homeowners Association and Peel Inc. The information in the Grand Lake Estates Newsletter is exclusively for the private use of Grand Lake Estates residents only.

DISCLAIMER: Articles and ads in this newsletter express the opinions of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Peel, Inc. or its employees. Peel, Inc. is not responsible for the accuracy of any facts stated in articles submitted by others. The publisher also assumes no responsibility for the advertising content with this publication. All warranties and representations made in the advertising content are solely that of the advertiser and any such claims regarding its content should be taken up with the advertiser.

\*The publisher assumes no liability with regard to its advertisers for misprints or failure to place advertising in this publication except for the actual cost of such advertising.

\* Although every effort is taken to avoid mistakes and/or misprints, the publisher assumes no responsibility for any errors of information or typographical mistakes, except as limited to the cost of advertising as stated above or in the case of misinformation, a printed retraction/correction.

\* Under no circumstances shall the publisher be held liable for incidental or consequential damages, inconvenience, loss of business or services, or any other liabilities from failure to publish, or from failure to publish in a timely manner, except as limited to liabilities stated above.

From design to  
print to mail,  
**Quality Printing**  
can help you with  
all of your  
printing needs!



Call today for more info

**512.263.9181**

Or visit our website at:  
**[www.QualityPrintingofAustin.com](http://www.QualityPrintingofAustin.com)**



**NOBODY IS DROWNPROOF  
 WATCH & KEEP KIDS IN ARM'S REACH**



[www.colinshope.org](http://www.colinshope.org)

**COLIN  
 HOLST**

**THESE TIPS CAN SAVE LIVES**



**CONSTANT VISUAL SUPERVISION**



**LEARN TO SWIM**



**WEAR LIFE JACKETS**



**MULTIPLE BARRIERS AROUND WATER**



**KEEP YOUR HOME SAFER**



**CHECK WATER SOURCES FIRST**



**PRACTICE DRAIN SAFETY**



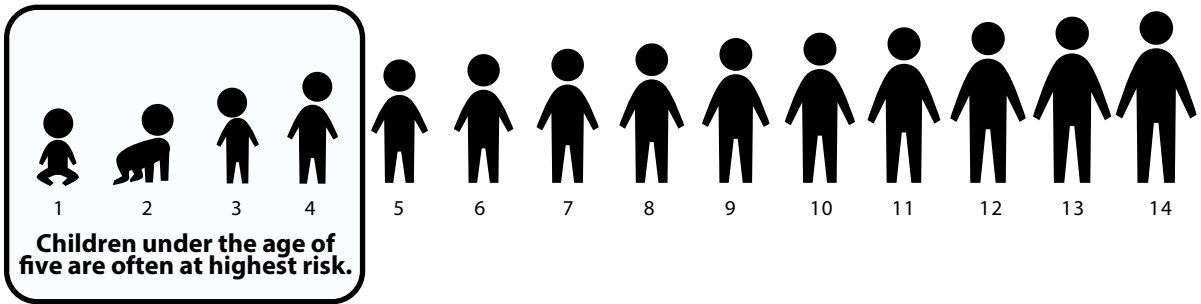
**BE SAFER IN OPEN WATER**



**LEARN CPR**

**LEARN MORE: [www.colinshope.org/RESOURCES](http://www.colinshope.org/RESOURCES)**

**DROWNING IS THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE, AND A LEADING CAUSE FOR CHILDREN AGES 1 - 14.**



**24 Texas children have already lost their lives to drowning in 2015  
 DROWNING IS PREVENTABLE**