

THE **ATASCOCITA FOREST**
COMMUNITY GAZETTE

VOL 1 ISSUE 2 | MARCH 2017



THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ATASCOCITA FOREST COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

For the most up-to-date neighborhood information, announcements, and resident resources, visit us online at www.AtascocitaForest.org

ATASCOCITA FOREST ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Atascocita Forest Community Association was held on Thursday, February 9. Board Member Troy King (Treasurer) was re-elected for another three-year term. The board is excited to continue working with Troy on the team, as he does an excellent job of ensuring that HOA funds are spent wisely and effectively.

Approximately 15 residents attended the meeting, and several members of the board were available to answer attendees' questions regarding the neighborhood budget and security. Board members also briefly discussed plans

for improvements to the neighborhood pool and park area. Sheriff's Deputy Julie Diaz (neighborhood Security) and Sgt. Chris Zorzi with Harris County Pct. 4 Constable were also in attendance to answer attendees' questions regarding security and crime.

The next HOA meeting will be held on March 9 at 7:00 PM at the neighborhood pool (weather permitting – in case of inclement weather, the meeting will be moved to the CAM offices in Humble. Please check the AtascocitaForest.org website for updates). We hope to see you there!



IMPORTANT NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

EMERGENCY	911
Fire/Ambulance.....	911
Officer.....	911
Harris County Animal Control	281-999-3191
Poison Control.....	800-222-1222

NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Pct 4 Constable Non-Emergency Dispatch.....	281-376-3472
Atascocita Volunteer Fire Dept.	281-852-2181
Harris County Precinct 4	281-376-3472
Texas No Call List Registration	866-TXN-OCAL
Emergency Roadside Assistance.....	800-525-5555

SCHOOLS

Humble ISD	281-540-1775
Whispering Pines Elementary.....	281-641-2500
Humble Middle School.....	281-641-2500
Humble High School	281-641-6300

UTILITY NUMBERS

Report Power Outage - Centerpoint.....	713-207-7777
Report Street Light Outage - Centerpoint	713-207-2222
Report Gas Leak - Centerpoint	713-659-2111
Centerpoint (Gas)	713-659-2111
Call Before You Dig	811
Water - SiEnvironmental.....	832-490-1600
Emergency Number.....	832-490-1601
Electricity - Multiple Providers.....	www.powertochoose.org
Trash - RR&R of Texas.....	866-516-9805
MUD District	www.TrailoftheLakesMUD.com

PUBLIC SERVICES

Humble Post Office.....	281-540-1775
DPS Office.....	281-446-3391
Harris County Clerk (Will Clayton Pkwy.)	281-540-1173

NEIGHBORHOOD MANAGEMENT

Community Asset Management	www.CommunityAssetManagement.com
Pam Valentine.....	pvalentine@cam-texas.com

ATASCOCITA FOREST COMMUNITY ASSOC.

Email the Board	board@atascocitaforest.org
Website Questions/Problems.....	website@atascocitaforest.org
Newsletter questions.....	newsletter@atascocitaforest.org

HOA BOARD MEMBERS

William Shepard - President	bills@atascocitaforest.org
Bill Wisenbaker - Vice President.....	billw@atascocitaforest.org
Troy King - Treasure	troy@atascocitaforest.org
Lauren Shwartz - Secretary	lauren@atascocitaforest.org
Norman Laskie - Member	norman@atascocitaforest.org

NEWSLETTER INFO

PUBLISHER

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Advertising.....	advertising@PEELinc.com

Getting to know the MUD

This is the first article in our series, Getting to Know the MUD, through which we seek to help residents better understand the functions, role, and responsibilities of the MUD district in our area: Trail of the Lakes MUD.

To kick things off, we will start at the beginning with an overview and explanation of a MUD's role in a community.

WHAT IS A MUD DISTRICT?

A Municipal Utility District (MUD) is a legal entity of the State of Texas that is authorized, regulated, and overseen by the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality (TCEQ). MUDs are legally authorized to provide water, sewage, drainage, trash, security, and other municipal services to a community, as well as plan and develop amenities and improvements to benefit residents within the district's boundaries. Essentially, MUDs operate similarly to a "city" government in areas that are not within a city's limits. In Humble, for example, the City of Humble Public Works department provides water, sewage, trash, and other public services within the city's limits. City of Humble Police and Fire Department only serve the Humble city area as well. Because Atascocita Forest and other areas in Atascocita are unincorporated Harris County and are not within any city's boundaries, the services that are not provided by Harris County must be handled by separate entities: MUD districts.

WHAT SERVICES DOES OUR MUD PROVIDE?

Our MUD, Trail of the Lakes, provides water, sewage, trash, and

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Business classifieds (offering a service or product line for profit) are \$50, limit 40 words, please contact Peel, Inc. Sales Office @ 888-687-6444 or advertising@PEELinc.com.

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contract police service to residents and businesses within the district's boundaries. Additionally, Trail of the Lakes is developing plans to build a park and recreation center at the end of Woodland Hills Dr., south of Will Clayton Pkwy.

WHO IS IN CHARGE OF A MUD?

As MUDs are legal, governmental entities, they are governed by a Board of Directors whose five members are elected by district residents. Most often, board members are residents of the district. The board members are responsible for all aspects of the MUD's operation and policies.

The Trail of the Lakes Board of Trustees conducts monthly meetings which are open to residents in the district. Meetings are typically held on the last Monday of each month at 12:00 PM at the offices of the MUD's attorney in downtown Houston. Meeting agendas are posted on the MUD's website prior to each meeting, and minutes from previous meetings are available online as well: www.TrailoftheLakesMUD.com.

The March MUD board meeting will be held on March 27 at 12:00 at 2929 Allen Parkway, Ste. 3450, Houston, TX 77019.



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ATASCOCITA FOREST Q & A

I want to improve or modify the exterior of my home. Is there anything I need to do with the HOA?

Yes! Residents who wish to change the exterior of their home should submit a formal request to the Architectural Control Committee (ACC) prior to beginning the desired work. The ACC is comprised of three members of the HOA board, and they review requests for exterior changes to ensure that the changes adhere to deed restrictions, do not encroach on property easements, and are in-keeping with the aesthetic standards of the neighborhood.

What type of projects require ACC approval?

Residents are often unclear about what work requires an ACC request. As a general rule, any permanent modification or change you make to the visible exterior of your home will require an ACC request to be submitted and approved. The following is a list of common projects requiring approval, but it is not exhaustive; if you're wondering whether your project requires an ACC request, we strongly recommend that you contact CAM and inquire before beginning work. The old adage of "it's easier to ask forgiveness than permission" should not be applied here!

Common Projects Requiring ACC Approval:

- **Painting the exterior of your home in a color different**

than what is already on the structure (Note that even if you are repainting all or part of your home in the same color(s) that is already on the structure you still need to submit an ACC request)

When submitting an ACC request for repainting, you must include the color chips for all of the paint colors you intend to use on the structure. If you are still deciding which color(s) to use, the HOA has a good selection of pre-approved colors from which you may choose. Contact CAM for more information.

- **Replacing your siding**

Include information about the proposed location, brand, composition, style, and color of the siding you wish to install on your home. If possible, provide a physical sample of the siding to CAM.

- **Replacing your roof**

Before replacing all or part of your roof, you must submit an ACC request which includes a shingle sample. Contact CAM with any questions for clarification.

- **Building or installing a shed or storage building**

If the structure extends above your fence, the dimensions, color, materials, and location of the structure must be approved by the ACC prior to it being built or installed.

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- **Building or installing a standalone swing set or play set in your back yard**

Ensure you include a sketch showing where the structure will be located in your back yard. The ACC will verify that it does not encroach on utility easements at the back of your property.

- **Modifying concrete (driveways, sidewalks, etc.)**

Any modifications to the shape, size, or configuration of your driveway or sidewalk must be approved by the ACC prior to work.

How do I submit an ACC request?

We have recently made the ACC request process even easier, as residents may now complete and submit the form directly on our website. You can find the electronic form, as well as a download link of the paper form if you prefer, on our website on the ACC Modification Requests page under Forms & Requests on the navigation menu. <https://www.atascocitaforest.org/p/ACC-Modification-Request-Form>. Fill out the form and include as much information and detail as possible, and be sure to scan and attach any relevant files, such as sketches, surveys, or schematics.

How long will the ACC approval process take?

The ACC approval process is generally very quick. The ACC has up to 30 days to make a decision on your request, but it very rarely takes that long. You will be notified by mail or email of the ACC's determination.

Is there anything I can do to speed up the approval process?

The best thing you can do to have your request approved promptly is to carefully review the deed restrictions for your section (a section map is available on our website) and ensure that the project you are requesting does not violate any restrictions. Look at the homes near your own; if what you are wanting to do is drastically different than the homes around you then your request may be denied. Make sure that you include as much information as possible with your initial request so that the ACC does not have to contact you to request additional information, samples, photos, etc.

What happens if the ACC denies my request?

If the ACC denies your request, it may simply be an issue of a minor adjustment being needed. The response communication you receive will include the ACC's justification for refusal, as well as any recommendations for how the project should be modified. For example, if you want to paint the exterior of your home and choose a color that is not in-keeping with the aesthetic standard of the neighborhood, then the ACC may recommend that you select a different shade or color. In cases where the ACC simply denies a request, it is likely because the request violates a deed restriction.

Please understand that the two most important responsibilities of the HOA board are to maintain the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood and to do what they can to maintain or increase property values.

Who should I contact if I have a questions about ACC requests?

Please feel free to contact CAM, or email ACC@AtascocitaForest.org

Loose Pets in the Neighborhood

Pets are an important part of many people's lives. Most pet owners are responsible, caring people who love their pets deeply and do everything in their power to ensure that their pets are securely restrained and do not cause a nuisance to their neighbors. Pets do, however, sometimes escape from yards, slip a leash, or otherwise perform a disappearing act. Whether you have lost a pet, or have found a loose pet, there are several steps you can take to ensure that the pet is returned safely.

We would like to take this opportunity to remind pet-owning residents of the leash laws that exist in Harris County. It is against the law to allow a pet to roam loose, either purposefully or due to negligence. It is your responsibility to ensure that your pets are securely contained and do not pose a risk to others. It is relatively easy for pets to escape from back yards, either through digging or through insecure fences or gates.

Also, if you keep your pet in your back yard, please note that utility workers have the legal right to open your gate and enter your back yard, even if you are not home. While companies sometimes give residents advanced notice that they will be entering the property, they don't always do so. Consider investing in a separate pen or enclosure for your pet to keep them safely contained within your back yard.

If you lose a pet:

- Ensure all of your pets have a microchip registered with current contact information, or have current identification tags on the pet's collar. You may also write your phone number on a light-colored collar with permanent marker if your pet frequently loses tags.
- Keep a current, clear photo of your pet that clearly shows its face and body size, color, and markings.
- As soon as you realize that your pet is missing, post the photo with a description of your pet, your contact information, as well as approximately how long the pet has been missing, the last area it was seen, etc. to social media, such as the Atascocita Forest Neighbors Facebook group, the Atascocita Forest NextDoor.com page (if you are a user), and the HKA Lost & Found Pets Facebook group. You may also issue an alert from the Atascocita Forest website (<https://www.atascocitaforest.org/p/Alerts>), which will be sent via email to all registered users on the site. Please note, however, that you cannot include a photo with an alert message, so please be sure to carefully describe your pet and include your contact information.
- Let your neighbors know that your pet is missing and ask them to keep an eye out.
- Alert local veterinarian offices and animal shelters that your pet is missing and provide a description and photo of your

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pet (see list below).

If you see or find a loose pet:

- If the pet does not seem inclined to come to you of its own free will, do not attempt to catch or restrain a loose animal, both for your own safety and for the safety of the animal. Your attempts to catch or restrain it may frighten the pet and cause it to run further away from home, or run into oncoming traffic.
- If you can, take a photo of the animal (even from a distance) and post it to social media; include the location and approximate time that you saw the pet, as well as which direction it was heading (if applicable). If you cannot get a photo, then simply include as detailed a description as possible with your posts. You may also issue an alert through the neighborhood website.
- If you are able to catch the animal, look for a tag or other identification on its collar for owner's contact information.
- Take the animal to a nearby vet to have it scanned for a microchip.
- You may contact Harris County animal control, but please note that they only have a few response officers to service the entire county. They generally prioritize calls involving obviously aggressive or dangerous animals. Also, animals taken in by animal control are usually put on a 3-day hold, meaning that if the owner is not located within that time frame then the pet will be euthanized.

Contacts & Information

Suggested Social Media Outlets & Websites

- Facebook.com: Atascocita Forest Neighbors group (if you are requesting to join in regard to a lost or found pet, please private message Lauren Shwarts to expedite your join approval)
- Facebook.com: HKA Lost & Found Pets group – this is a large group for the Humble, Kingwood, & Atascocita areas with high visibility with thousands of members
- NextDoor.com: Atascocita Forest

- www.AtascocitaForest.org > Alerts (www.atascocitaforest.org/p/Alerts) – sends an email message to all registered users of the Atascocita Forest website
- www.lostmydoggie.com – create a free lost pet poster and contact local vets & animal shelters

Animal Control Agencies:

- City of Humble Animal Control: <http://cityofhumble.com/animalservices.html> | 281-446-2327
Please note that Humble Animal Control only services areas within Humble city limits and therefore will not respond to calls in Atascocita Forest; however, animals may venture into Humble city limits and end up at their shelter. Shelter location: 240 Dennis St., 77338
- Harris County Veterinary Public Health (Animal Control): <http://publichealth.harriscountytexas.gov/About/Organization/VPH> | (281) 999-3191 | Shelter Location: 612 Canino Road, Houston, TX 77076

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 newsletter@atascocitaforest.org.

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.



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