

THE RIVER REVIEW

August 2017

Volume 11, Issue 8

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NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF RIVER PLACE

AUGUST 2017

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Editor's Comment



In this edition we again strive to provide information that River Place residents might, in conversation, ask one another about. One concern we're aware of is that the hard copy of The River Review is received in the mail sometime during or just after the first week of the month but there might be community events happening close to the first of the month. So how can we find out about these early events if we don't receive our newsletter in time? We have the answer and regret that we haven't suggested it much sooner:

By the end of the preceding month we normally have the new issue available in an on line version. The website to view the new issue is: www.peelinc.com/RV

In addition, you can sign up to receive notification of the new on line issue. The link to sign up to receive it via email is: www.peelinc.com/residentsNewsletterSubscriptions.php

We also offer an iPhone and iPad app where the newsletter can be viewed. To download the app, search "Peel Inc" in the AppStore and then subscribe to The River Review on the app.

Hopefully the above information will help you stay better informed about upcoming events. And we are well aware of the various area circulars and newsletters that River Place residents now receive each month. However, we hope that our more narrow focus on River Place related concerns will preserve us a special place in your busy reading schedule. Just remember, we're the newsletter with the River Place fountains on the cover!

Feel free to let us know what you would like to see offered in future editions of The River Review. We value your input. And we always welcome articles from residents. If you need help with an article or have questions, feel free to contact (email or phone) me. Please send articles to either me at mrobertallen@aol.com or riverreview@peelinc.com.

Hope you enjoy this one as well as your future editions!

Robert Martin, Editor (512-517-3619)

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

EMERGENCY	911
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Ambulance	911
Sheriff – Non-Emergency	512-974-0845
Hudson Bend Fire and EMS	
Emergencies	512-266-1775
Information	512-266-2533

SCHOOLS

Leander ISD.....	512-570-0000
Cedar Park High School.....	512-570-1200
Vandegrift High School.....	512-570-2300
Four Points Middle School.....	512-570-3700
River Place Elementary.....	512-570-6900

UTILITIES

River Place MUD.....	512-246-0498
City of Austin Electric	512-494-9400
Texas Gas Service	
Custom Service	1-800-700-2443
Emergencies	512-370-8609
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Billing	1-800-858-7928
Time Warner Cable	
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IESI (Trash).....	512-282-3508

OTHER NUMBERS

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Peel, Inc.....	512-263-9181
Article Submissions	riverreview@peelinc.com
Advertising.....	advertising@peelinc.com

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Please support the advertisers that make River Review possible. If you are interested in advertising, please contact our sales office at 512-263-9181 or advertising@peelinc.com. The advertising deadline is the 8th of the month prior to the issue.

ARTICLE INFO

The River Review is mailed monthly to all River Place residents. Residents, community groups, churches, etc. are welcome to include information about their organizations in the newsletter. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, recipes, special celebrations, and birthday announcements are also welcome.

To submit an article for the River Review please email it to riverreview@peelinc.com. The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the issue.

RIVER REVIEW

4TH OF JULY CELEBRATIONS!

The weather was typical July – hot and sunny. The 4th of July celebrations kicked off with the parade at Sun Tree Park at 9:30 am. The large turnout of River Place participants and spectators were composed of a myriad of outfitted children and adults, many wearing patriotic hats, sunglasses and even full costumes. The parade was led by the Fire Department and the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts. Then came you name it, decorated bicycles, motorized toy cars, and people outfitted in all sorts of red, white and blue garb. Even dogs, some outfitted, were welcome to take the lap around the park. The accompanying photos clearly show what a great time was had by all!

Beginning at 11:00 am then, the River Place Country Club took over, offering outdoor fun with balloons, swimming and even a large children's water slide. Indoors, a great BBQ meal was served featuring chicken, sausage, and pulled pork with all the fixings. So, throughout the day, there was something to look forward to and take part in. What more could we ask for?



IN AND AROUND RIVER PLACE

4 Points Taco Cabana Has Closed:

There has been a great amount of conversation regarding the closing of our local area Taco Cabana. It seems most people liked the food but many had concerns about slow service and unfortunately, cleanliness. However, one might also consider that, within the immediate 4 Points area, there are a dozen or so restaurants and fast food places of great variety, making competition quite keen. And McDonald's and Taco Bell were practically right next door. They did seem to have difficulty getting workers as there were always employment signs in their windows. We even heard it conjectured that perhaps the current tightening of exportation practices scared potential employees away. Regardless, many of us will certainly miss the nearby availability of their unique tasty Mexican dishes, \$2 happy hour margaritas and homemade tortillas.

Free ACT/SAT Practice Tests:

Krysta Aguilar of River Place once again reminds us of free ACT/SAT practice tests: For High school Juniors: Free practice ACT/SAT tests will be given all year long at the Northwest Hills College Tutors Learning Center! The exam mimics the setting and timing of the actual tests, and families will have a chance to meet with one of our experts to go over the scores in detail. Reserve your spot now: Online: <http://goo.gl/forms/3e2cmzOkAF> Call: 512-372-8385 Email: austintx@collegetutors.com

Next session: Thursday, August 17, 2017, 1:00 pm

Address: 3908 Far West Blvd. Austin, TX

Possible Water Meter Malfunctions:

River Place resident Michael Walls posted on Nextdoor: "I noticed my water consumption increased 72% from last month. This is an issue considering I've been averaging a 30% decrease every month from last year. And our wastewater remained the same which raises more concern.

Anyone notice a significant increase based on your normal usage last year/this year?" This is not the first time we've heard of water meter problems so it does behoove each of us to keep an eye on what's going on with our water charges since it's quite expensive already, even without complications. Thanks Michael.

"Street Service Fee" Warning:

"AUSTIN (KXAN) — If you're at least 65 years old, you're exempt from paying what's called a "street service fee" on your

utility bill. But don't expect the city to tell you. You have to let the city of Austin know you're qualified. And when you do, the fee will only be removed from bills from then on out. According to the city code, passed in 1992, there are no refunds." The monthly fee funds street maintenance and repair and annual street overlay and striping, along with other necessary activities to keep up roadways. What shows up as "street service fee" on your utility bill, is actually called the "transportation user fee" in the city code and on the Public Works' website. While the fee appears to not currently be applicable to River Place residents, it may very well show up once we become part of the city of Austin. Thanks to Karl Shutte for the heads up.

The Moral Aspects of Annexation:

A recent article in the Austin American-Statesman explained that one of the reasons for Governor Abbott recently calling back the legislature for a special session is fortunately, to review the rights of municipalities to annex nearby communities. The Governor has spoken out against this practice. Many have noted that annexation is routinely done with little consideration of seniors and retirees on fixed incomes who simply may not be able to afford the additional taxes and fees (such as the street service fee mentioned above) that come with the process.

What about the folks who chose not to live in the city but in a nearby community simply to avoid the red tape of city councils and legislators whom they never elected? What if you don't want the many regulations and requirements that city living brings or the requirement to pay off debt that you didn't accrue?

Annexation though is not, in itself, a cruel act. After all, it's the way cities expand and grow the revenue base. However, for it to be accomplished fairly and without governmental overreach, the citizens of the community to be annexed should certainly be afforded a vote so that those to be governed may give their approval or disapproval. This approach seems much more in line with the democratic process enshrined within the Declaration of Independence where it is noted that governments derive "their just powers from the consent of the governed." Hopefully the legislature will take the Governor's lead on this in time for River Place residents to have a vote on annexation. This only seems fair!

Is Artificial Grass Right for You & River Place?

Our HOA Board is considering artificial grass allowance in River Place, most likely at first under certain conditions and situations. Currently it is not approved, even for back yards. But as the climate continues to warm, water becomes more expensive and our trees create more deep shade areas, it seems to be making a lot more sense. It has become quite popular in the Southwestern arid climates of Arizona and Nevada. On July 11th, the Board listened to a presentation by a local installer in which the benefits and drawbacks of artificial turf were discussed. The Board members had many good questions. No decisions were immediately forthcoming however but it will certainly be interesting to find out what they ultimately come up with.

Top American manufacturers of artificial grass are fairly consistent in the quality and durability of their products. Foreign products should be avoided unless one is ready and willing to do some research. Most use polyurethane as backing and polyethylene as the grass material. These are durable, fade resistant materials known for their lasting qualities which may exceed 20 years under lighter use conditions. Warranties are typically 10 to 15 years with some being progressive or limited after a certain number of years. Incredibly,

some installations can still look great after 10 or 15 years.

Artificial grass is installed (after surface preparation which includes any natural grass removal) over a layer of decomposed granite and a permeable weed barrier. A material called infill, usually sand in most home applications, is brushed into the grass to weight it down and help the blades stand up for appearance sake. Cost is generally in the \$6 to \$8 per square foot range due to both the material and labor intensive installation process.

Primarily because it is perforated, drainage and run-off are not problems normally. One Maryland study on a type called FieldTurf concluded that it has superior water drainage characteristics when compared to natural turf. It should be considered eco-friendly since fertilizers and pesticides are not required and gas or electric powered mowers are a thing of the past. Artificial grass can also act as a rain water filter, reducing phosphorus and sediment load carried by stormwater that ultimately reaches natural waterways.

Above 90 degrees in the sun, artificial grass can be quite hot to the touch. It cools down quickly however and how many of us play in the sun on these hot summer days? This is something to be considered

(Continued on Page 8)



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RIVER REVIEW

(Continued from Page 6)

however. Working in the sunny part of the yard on a hot day may require sandals or some sort of footwear.

Additionally, one should consider the expense. It is not cheap, especially for larger yards or areas where cost may easily exceed 4 or 5 thousand dollars. In such cases though, looking at it as an investment might be wise since you no longer would be required to water the yard where artificial turf is installed. Payback or break even points can easily be 5 years or less, putting money in your pocket every month after that. And we can only expect these terms to improve as the cost of water increases in the Austin area.

Many of us want to know though, how does artificial grass look once installed? When done properly with the right materials, the best description we've heard is that it looks like a finely manicured lawn. Of course it would behoove any homeowner to make sure their installer is experienced and reputable, using only the best American made products.

As for maintenance, it can be simply rinsed off with a hose and, since leaves and debris tend to sit on top of it, they can easily be raked up or vacuumed. Of course, under heavier use, there may be times when the installer is required to touch up or repair areas, especially if the blades become matted down. However, the homeowner can

tend to this problem by simply brushing the grass to stand it up should that occur.

So, is artificial grass right for you or right for River Place? We realize the above information is a lot to digest but, if you have an opinion and want to let the HOA board members know how you feel, just send an email to frontdesk@cmaaustin.com. Address your email to the Board and then express your opinion, being courteous of course. Meanwhile, let's hope that a sensible approach is adopted that fits River Place homeowners' future needs and preferences while keeping community appearances and values in mind.

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HOME IMPROVEMENT: Properly Bonding Home-Flex CSST

River Place builders began using CSST (corrugated stainless steel tubing) in the mid-nineties when it had become popular, beginning in 1989, due to its flexibility in home gas line applications. It was subsequently found out however, that house fires could occur due to electrical arcing to CSST as a result of lightning strikes. And lightning does not have to strike a home directly to cause damage. Although the code was changed in 2008, this left many of our homes unprotected and therefore subject to serious fire damage. Most people now find out about this when they replace their heating and cooling systems although some inspectors still do not notify you of the need for bonding. We have checked a few homes and many are still not protected.

While “bonding” sounds quite technical, you can actually think of it as grounding your outside gas piping to your outside electrical box. The effect then is that any arcing to your gas line CSST is dissipated to ground, reducing fire risk. While this is an easy job for the home do-it-yourselfer, if you are inexperienced, we strongly recommend you contact an electrician. To familiarize yourself with the process, visit YouTube for various explanations and recommendations.

Typically, the last section of your gas piping entering your home from your meter outside is CSST. It is coated with a yellow rubberized sheath that may be protected by paint or tape however. To bond the system, a grounding clamp is placed on the last piece of metal piping on the service side where the piping is entering the home but just before the CSST section. Then, a #6 copper ground wire is attached to the grounding clamp and ran over to the electrical box where it is attached to one of the grounding screws where all the other copper wires (grounds) are attached. If you should feel like attempting this yourself, make sure to study the various YouTube instructions so you are fully aware of what you need to do. Make sure to turn off the main breaker in the electrical box as well.

The clamp and wire costs less than \$10 and it takes about a half hour total to complete the job, once you have what you need in hand. But again, we strongly recommend hiring an electrician if you have any doubts whatsoever regarding what needs to be done. The important thing is that you protect your home and family from this little known lurking danger. Improving your home by updating its safety features can only be a good thing!



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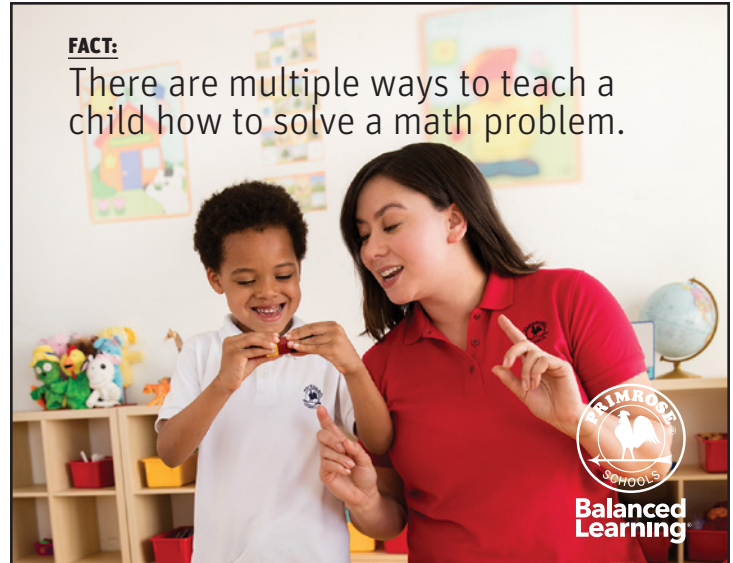
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RIVER REVIEW

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TENNIS TIP OF THE MONTH



Doubles Australian Formation

There are different formations we play in doubles and mixed doubles. The tennis tip

this month is about the familiar formation called Australian. No, we are not going to Australia; it is simply the terminology used for the formation where the server lines up as if he is serving singles and his partner is directly in front of him at the net. Unfortunately though, some players execute the Australian formation with good intent but not quite in a fully effective manner. The following tip will help you make sure it works for you.

Tennis Tip: Understand first that we play Australian to take away the strong cross court return. The returner still has different options on the return but it does, in most cases, take away his best return due to the net player being in the path of the cross court return that is often used as a weapon. Plus, it provides a different look and can cause some confusion, especially when performed intermittently.

And here's another aspect that can help: Whenever you do play Aussie, it is important to communicate with your partner to try to throw the returner off and possibly cause them to make a mistake. The net player simply lets the server know if he is going to poach or not. Also, a little fake movement never hurts and might even be key to controlling the point. Give it a try. Either go or fake! Rattle the returner and take charge of the point. Keep them guessing. If it works, keep using it until it doesn't.

Lastly, make sure you practice this formation before employing it in an important match. It should be so familiar that you can go to it whenever you feel the need. You don't want to try something that could cause your own level to drop. In keeping the returner confused though, you might be quite surprised at how effective your doubles team can be! Go Australian!

If you have a question on these techniques, feel free to call or text me.

Walter: 512-497-9971

"In tennis you're on an island. Of all the games men and women play, tennis is the closest to solitary confinement," – Andre Agassi

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