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Willow Creek Elem (K-4).....	281-357-3080
Northpointe Int (5-6).....	281-357-3020
Willow Wood Jr (7-8)	281-357-3030
Tomball High (9-12)	281-357-3220
Tomball Memorial High School	281-357-3230
Transportation.....	281-357-3193

SERVICES

Village Creek Management	Pam Hummel
Email.....	pam.hummel@crest-management.com
Phone.....	281-945-4618, Site Mgr.
Website.....	www.Crest-Management.com

Village Creek Board Website.....	myvillagecreek.com
Village Creek Website	Unrelated to the Board
.....	VillageCreekCommunity.com
Harris County Animal Control.....	281-999-3191
Lost/Found Pets	Nextdoor.com
Harris County Veterinary Public Health.....	281-999-3191
Municipal District Services (24 hrs)	281-290-6503
For water leaks, water outages, water quality, or sewer leaks or stoppage. Street lights out & power outages	www.centerpointenergy.com/outage
Harris County traffic signal outages.....	713-881-3210
Best Trash	281-313-2378
customerservice@besttrash.com, and www.best-trash.com	

Trash and Bulk Waste on both Tuesdays and Fridays

Recycle on Tuesdays only. Recycle only plastics (1-7), steel and aluminum cans, cardboard, paper, plastic or paper grocery bags, and glass (any color).

Digging? Two days prior to ANY digging in your yard, call 811 or use <http://www.lonestar811.com/>

NEWSLETTER

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.....	villagecreek@peelinc.com or Watson.g@sbcglobal.net

Social Committee Calendar

By Lisa Rawles, Chair

Fall Garage Sale: Friday & Saturday, October 11 & 12

Cookies with Santa: Sunday, December 1, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.



DO YOU WANT TO CONTACT THE BOARD?

The Board's new website at villagecreek.us is quite amazing. Did you know that you can go there, click on CONTACT, and send all of the Board members a message within a minute? Another option is to send both the Board members and the Management Company a message. Either way, it is fast and effective.

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." - Aesop

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Solar Systems - HOA Guidelines and Restrictions

Written by: Steve Winter, Architectural Review Committee Chair. Members: Joe Wright, John Mudd, and Ben Yerby

We have been approached by several residents asking what the standards are for solar panel installations. It seems there's a great deal of interest right now in solar panels. In the past three months, we've processed five applications which is more than we handled the entire previous year. So, what's driving the increased interest? Well, probably mainly power prices. But also package solar systems offers have changed radically over the past couple years. They're beginning to look more financially attractive.

The number one question asked is, "Do we have deed restrictions covering solar panels?" As with any significant exterior property change, the answer is yes. In the original Village Creek Deed Restrictions, solar panels were not addressed. Then, in 2011 the Board of Directors adopted a solar panel policy which is almost a carbon copy of Texas Property Code 202.010. Well, they didn't have much choice as Texas Property Code overrides any Homeowner Association rules.

The rules they adopted were quite simple. There are eight of them:

1. The owner must apply and receive written approval from their ACC well before the installation.
2. The solar panels must in a fenced-in backyard or on the roof and must not be visible from the front of the residence.
3. The solar panels must be located entirely on the property of the owner.
4. When mounted on a structure, no solar panel may be higher than the roofline of the structure.
5. When mounted on the structure, the solar panels must be parallel to the roofline of the structure.
6. When located in a fenced-in yard or patio, the solar panels must be lower than the fence line.
7. The solar panel's frames, brackets, wires, and pipes must be a shade of silver bronze or black.
8. If the owners wish approval for the installation of a solar panel or device that does not comply with any single criteria above, they must demonstrate that the change will enable them to generate 10% more electricity in this new location. So as an example, if the solar panels generate 10% more located on the front of the residence, the ACC must approve it with proper documentation of this fact.

There are three main types of residential solar electric power systems: grid-tied; grid-tied with battery backup; and off-grid.

A **grid-tied** solar power system is directly connected to the home and the traditional electric utility grid. Grid-tied systems allow the homeowners to get power from either the home panels, the utility grid or a combination of the two. Switching between the residential system and the grid is seamless. When a grid-tied system is producing more power than the home is consuming, the excess is sold back to the utility in a practice known as net metering. When the system is not producing sufficient power, the home can draw power from the utility grid. Grid-tied systems are the lowest cost type of residential solar electric system, due to having fewer required components.

One drawback to the grid-tied system is: If the grid is down, so is your system. This is to say that if there is a power outage in the area, you're going to be out as well because you are tied to the grid and for safety reasons your system will go into a safety shutdown to prevent back feeding the grid and endangering line workers.

A **grid-tied with battery** solar power system is also connected to the traditional utility power grid and adds battery-backup to the system. The addition of a battery backup enables the system to balance production and demand and protects against power outages. When production exceeds demand, the excess power can charge the batteries, which store the electricity. When the system is producing less electricity than demanded by the home, the batteries can make up the shortfall. The grid-tied with a battery will also isolate itself from the grid in the event of a power outage. The difference is you can continue to have electric at your home until the batteries on your system are exhausted.

An **off-grid** system is completely disconnected from the traditional electric power grid. You typically would not consider this type system here in Village Creek. It is more for very rural areas.

The majority of the systems installed today are the grid-tied system. Usually, you can get this type of system for around \$3.30 per watt. The average system installed today is about 7.6 kilowatts and would be \$25,500 before incentives or tax credits. Using an average monthly electric bill of \$200, the return on investment would be 10.6 years.

If you have decided that a solar system may be for you, here are some things to consider before you sign the contract. Make sure you discuss these things with your contractor. Don't just assume they are experts. Solar is a very new industry. Insist on a company with experience, visit some of their previous jobs, and talk to the residents. A great source of information is the ElectricChoice.com blog. Here are some of the high points:

1. **How's your roof?** You will need to get an excellent roof inspection done before you begin the installation process. Once the panels are installed, a simple roof leak will become a big deal. Ensure your roof will also take the weight load. You're going to be placing as much as an additional 1000 lbs. up there.

2. **What shape is your roof?** Do you have enough unobstructed footage for the panels you will need for the amount you want to generate? Obstructions like vent stacks, attic vents, and general roof shape can limit the placement of solar panels. If you have a detached garage, consider installing panels on it as well.

3. **Where will the water go?** When installing solar panels, equipment like racking and wire harnesses can prevent the water from flowing and draining correctly. In some cases, solar equipment can move the water in a different direction, which can create leaks and other problems. These problems will need repair, which means the solar panels will need to be removed.

(Continued on Page 3)

The Voice

(Continued from Page 2)

4. **Don't forget about nature?** Part of maintaining your solar power system is dealing with severe weather like lightning storms, hurricanes, hail, and more. There is a potential for some solar power equipment to get damaged during these events. While some insurance will cover these types of events, it is something to consider, especially if you live in an area where this type of weather occurs often.

5. **Do you have the right insurance?** Having the right insurance to cover both yourself and any damage to your home during installation is something you need to consider. Many problems can arise during the installation of your solar panels that you might not even think about until it happens.

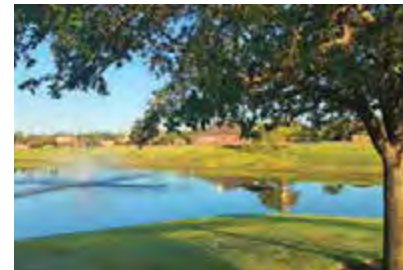
6. **What about warranties?** Typical solar panel warranty is 25 to 30 years. Industry standards indicate that you should receive a minimum of 80% energy output for the length of time the panels are covered under warranty. Installation warranties are usually 2 to 10 years. Discuss this in detail with your contractor, and be sure you understand what is included. Inverter warranties average 5-10 years for string inverters and 25 to 30 years for panel mounted micro-inverters.

7. **Maintenance?** Keeping your solar panels working and your roof in good condition is all about establishing proper maintenance procedures. It's a good idea to find out from your contractor what those maintenance procedures are before the installation begins. If you are unable to meet those maintenance requirements, there is a good chance your equipment will not last as long as you want it to.



Landscape Committee

*Sherry Watson, Chair
Laura Domangue and Kristin Jones, Members*



The Landscape Committee will be making good use of the end of the year planting season. Earlier in the year, the area around the lake bridge was cleaned up and opened up by removing unappealing plants. Six bald cypress will be added to this area to provide shade and beauty. Plans are being made to add trees, shrubbery, and sod to areas where landscape beds were removed. The Committee's policy is to add plants to open spaces, but not next to residents' fences. A program to add trees around the lake sidewalk will begin this fall. The Committee encourages residents to take notice of their surroundings both in the public areas and around your homes. If you see something that needs to be addressed notify the Committee and the Board by using our website VillageCreek.us. We appreciate resident involvement with both concerns and compliments.

Village Creek Volunteer

By Ben Yerby, Architectural Review Committee



Ben is a native Texan (East Texas) with stops in Germany and Louisiana before ending up in Houston a little over 39 years ago. He attended Northeast Louisiana University (now Louisiana State University – Monroe) before starting his career in Information Technology. He spent over 46 years in various technology positions ranging from entry-level computer operator to senior management positions (over 24 of those years were with Palais Royal). He retired last year from an international logistics company. He is currently doing some limited consulting

for the logistics and retail industries as a supply chain systems subject matter expert.

He met his wife, Deb, over 24 years ago in Houston. Deb is semi-retired from full-time work in the Cypress Fairbanks ISD, where she was an elementary teacher. She is currently still with the district as a Reading Interventionalist working to help children achieve their potential and succeed in school.

They moved to Village Creek almost 18 years ago and have no plans to live anywhere else. Their plans for the future revolve primarily around travel and making up for all the time missed while in the middle of their careers.



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Village Creek Infrastructure



Village Creek has fifteen locations with park benches, picnic tables, or trellises. Because these features are wood and exposed constantly to the environment, they need periodic refinishing. Recently, we refinished all but two benches. Two are in such poor condition with iron rust that we plan to replace them. New benches will have metal frames but also have synthetic “wood” slats which will eliminate yearly touchup. We like the bench design selected by a previous Board (at the east end of the lake), so plan to use that basic design. We will repaint trellises as funds allow. We know there are a few more issues out there, but the volunteers cannot keep track of everything. Let the Board know if you know of any infrastructure issues we need to fix. Go to myvillagecreek.us. You can send us a note from there.

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The Voice Food Review Editor



Swanny's Bar and Grill

My favorite place to enjoy an evening out is Swanny's Grill, 6224 Theall Road, Houston, 77066. This place is among the most unique in Texas (or beyond). Before the Swansons bought it, it was a golf club in a massive and beautiful wooden structure. The owners, the Swansons (ah, the source of the name of the place), purchased it in 2009.

The Swansons added a huge patio which probably seats several hundred people. In addition there are two pool tables inside, shuffleboard, bean bag throws, playground, two beach volleyball courts, a stocked pond (I hear), and other things I probably didn't notice. The huge patio is the place to eat. There, you will enjoy an extensive menu from tilapia to a patty melt along with a full bar. There is an extensive kids' menu. The service is always excellent and do not be surprised if the owners drop by to talk. Nothing is fake or fancy here. It is what it is. The tables are worn with love but clean. You can watch the Astros or Texans on TV's around (sound off) or listen to recorded or live music. Off to one side, last night, a caricature artist applied his skills to a line of children (\$5 seemed very reasonable, and even with a tip, it is a good deal). A band played (but pretty much ignored by a large number of patrons just enjoying chatting or playing games). You would think that outside dining outside in the middle of summer in Houston would not be fun, but, somehow, with the fun and fans, it works. Give it a try. <http://www.swannysgrill.com>



Pool Committee Monthly Report

By Gordon Watson, Chair Stacy Cheeseman Member

Swimming season is over. Once school starts, it is almost impossible to get lifeguards. We will try to keep the pool open as much as possible (after school starts), but lifeguard availability is an issue.

Depending on whether funds are available, the Board will be looking at replacing the two water cannons removed several years ago (for safety reasons) with a new splash pad water feature. We will be discussing what that may be over the next few months.

Some improvements made at the pool will be transparent to most residents. They will involve electrical changes such as moving switches inside of the pool room to make the operation safer for the lifeguards. We were pleased with Aquatic Management's service this year. We had no serious injuries (knock on wood), and the pool and pool building were well maintained.

If you have any pool or splash pad related suggestions, let us know at myvillagecreek.us.

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