

Oakridge News

Vol. 17, No. 09 September 2009

http://oakridgena.com

Observations

By Mike Rose, ONA President

This section of the ONA by laws gives direction to your Board and to you as a resident in the Oakridge community.

BYLAWS OF THE OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

ARTICLE I ORGANIZATION ...

1.2 <u>Purposes</u>: The purposes of the Association are to assure the beauty, safety and stability of the area and the surrounding community, and to promote neighborliness and pride among the residents.

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Check out these Oakridge Services!

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Check out the Newly Designed ONA Web Site

http://oakridgena.com/

The web site is so easy to use.

Page 2 ONA Newsletter

National Night Out Chili Cook Off

By Rebecca Chanez

The ONA, Oakridge Country Club and Citizen's On Patrol are all gearing up for National Night Out, which will be held at the Country Club parking lot on October 6th, 2009. Last year we had an incredible turn out and some exciting moments such as The Careflite Helicopter landing in the middle of the parking lot, Garland Fire Department having the fire truck on display and meeting new neighbors from the subdivision.

This year's event promises to be even more spectacular. Without giving too much away, we will have live entertainment; more activities for the kids and Careflite will be back!!!

However, We thought this would be a great time to also have a Chili Cook Off!! So, if you would like to participate, please contact me Rebecca Chanez via email at Rebecca chanez@yahoo.com or call (214) 227-4181. I understand there are a lot of great cooks in the neighborhood and I am sure there are new neighbors that would like to show off their talents. We will have a prize for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. So, start working on your recipe folks!! We will have guest judges and feature you in the newsletter.

We look forward to having all of our neighbors out for this event. If you would like to volunteer, please contact me. We could always use volunteers!!!!

Observations Continued from page 1

But without you, how would the ONA board be able to accomplish these purposes? The ONA board over the years has continually struggled to maintain the beauty, stability and pride in our community. It continues to be a struggle because membership has not significantly grown. Our community contains approximately 1,200 homes yet less than 50% are members of the ONA. Why is that so? Why would one not desire to have beautifully landscaped entrances into their community? Who do you think would take care of the nine entrances plus the perimeter of our community on a regular basis? Haven't we all read that our homes are among the largest investments we make? Surely these large investments are maintained so that the value continues to grow or at least remains stable. The ONA participates in causing your home value to grow by fulfilling the purposes as stated above. Landscaping maintenance and improvements consume approximately 70% of the annual budget while the ONA communication tools require approximately 20% of the budget. The remaining 10% is a compilation of expenses. If you are a member I am "preaching to the choir", if you however are not a member we need you to at least join the Oakridge Neighborhood Association.

Come join us at our general membership meeting (see announcement); meet new neighbors; tell us what is on your mind regarding the ONA; ask question or just listen.

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NO JOB IS TOO SMALL

Page 4 ONA Newsletter

District 7 Council Report

By Rick Williams, District 7 City Councilman

I had a District 7 constituent complain that his electric bill went up as a consequence of GP&L putting a new meter on his home. Turned out he was right. In Garland. GP&L has 72,824 meters and their plan is to replace the old ones with mechanical parts that wear out with new electronic meters without moving parts. Thus far, they have replaced 48,509. In a discussion I had with a GP&L technician, he explained that as the parts wore out on the old mechanical meters, they slowed down and often under measured the kilowatt hours of electricity each month sometimes in the neighborhood of 3%. New electronic meters do not wear out and they capture all the electricity used. The constituent that called me wasn't particularly happy about the slight increase due to his new electronic meter, but I told him the "glass half full" way of looking at this is that he has been getting an unintended discount on his electric bill during the time his old meter was wearing down.

Speaking of GP&L, there is a little comparative electric rate chart in the *Garland City Press* (the bi-monthly publication sent to all households by the City), and about a year a go, GP&L-supplied electricity was the cheapest in the area. Now it's in the upper third of that chart, even though we have not changed the price of electricity in

over 3 years. It would take a long time to give a detailed explanation, but here are the basics. Garland is contractually obligated to get about 75% of its electrical power from a coal-fired electric generator in Grimes County. The other 25% is generally purchased in the open market. A year ago when natural gas was selling for about \$13 to \$14 per MMBTU, Garland's goal-generated electricity was much cheaper than gas-generated electricity. However, gas has plummeted and it was recently selling for just under \$3.00 per MMBTU. Consequently, there is a lot of cheap electricity for sale, and Garland's relative position on the comparative price chart no longer looks good. We are looking for ways to lower the price, but currently litigation is creating a problem to one important strategy to lower cost. Of course, if theprice of natural gas starts going up again, GP&L will look better on the comparative chart.

The 2009 Annual Housing and Population Summary was recently released. As of January 2009, Garland has 225,865 residents with 60,472 single family dwelling units and 18,676 multi-family units.

As many of you know, Garland did not have its annual Star Spangled 4th (SS4) of July celebration this year to

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Philip Hanas

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District 7 Council Report

Continued from page 4

save money, since typically it costs the City about \$230,000. Like other council members, I received complaints. We are going to try to find the money to have a SS4 "lite" this year. As I mentioned in a recent council meeting, we don't need to pay a lot of money for entertainment (there's plenty of local talent) or a VIP food

tent—we just mainly need fireworks. If we decide to have it again, the issue now is where to have it—Firewheel Town Center or Downtown Garland.

I have mentioned in several of my articles in the last year how City of Garland employees have achieved leadership positions in outside organizations, and here's one more. Robert Wunderlich, Garland's Managing Director for Engineering and Transportation, was recently elected Vice President of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). The announcement was made at the Annual Business Meeting during the ITE 2010 Annual Meeting and Exhibit. More than 1,000 transportation professionals were on hand to participate in the four day event. If you are like me and are not familiar with ITE, this is no "local-yokel" organization. Founded in 1930, ITE is a community of transportation professionals including, transportation engineers, transportation planners, consultants, educators and researchers. ITE has a network of nearly 17,000 members, working in more than 90 countries. Now that Robert is VP, there's a good chance he'll be President in the future. He brings great credit to himself and the City of Garland!!

For those of you familiar with Richoak Street (on the south side of Holford Park), Mr. Wunderlich was the one who devised the striping and signage that finally solved the huge traffic problem created during the school year when children were let off and picked up at Parsons Pre-K and Ethridge Elementary schools. And speaking of Richoak, the City got it reconstructed with new lane markers just before school opened re-

cently.

I am very much aware that there are a lot of alleys in Garland that need to be reconstructed with rebar and concrete. At a recent budget meeting, I learned this sobering fact about alleys—if we were to reconstruct all alleys in Garland that are in need of reconstruction, it would cost about \$24 million. In the FY 09/10 proposed budget, we have a little less than one million budgeted for reconstruction. Limited funding must be spent on road surfaces most used by the public, and these tend to be public streets—not alleys. So, ye' ole unpopular asphalt patch will continue to be the repair technique for almost all alleys with pot holes.

On August 18, we revised the city ordinance dealing with the placement of green trash containers for homes where the can is picked up in front of the house. Basically, the new ordinance says the cans must be stored out of view or behind a line extending from the front face of the house. Residents will no longer be permitted to store the can in view in front of their home (e.g., on the front driveway). An article will be forthcoming in the *Garland City Press* explaining the new provision and including a diagram before Code begins enforcement of this provision.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, feel free to call me (214 535-2648) or E-mail me at <u>rick-</u>





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Garland Code Compliance Department – Neighborhood Standards

By Richard Briley, Managing Director of Health & Code Compliance - Steve Killen, Director of Code Compliance

The Code Compliance Department's mission is to enforce property maintenance laws and the minimum housing codes to enhance neighborhood vitality. The department attempts to prevent and eliminate aesthetic problems and ensure that residents have the opportunity to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment.

To accomplish this mission the Neighborhood Standards Division changed the process of neighborhood inspection in 2008. The department began "proactive neighborhood sweeps" looking for violations at each property of the City instead of passively waiting for a complaint to be lodged. The new methodology has proven very successful. Each residential property within the City of Garland is inspected on average three times per year and staff is conducting over 4,000 enforcement actions each month.

The Neighborhood Code Inspectors look for an assortment of different violations as they make their sweeps:

GRASS & VEGETATION

Grass must be maintained in the yard, parkway (the area from the curb to the sidewalk), alley and along fences to a height less than twelve inches (12"). Grass can not grow over sidewalks in manner that might cause a tripping hazard. Property owners and residents of developed properties must not allow landscaping vegetation to become "unmanaged". All shrubs and trees must be cut back so as to not block the sidewalk, the approach to the house, the driveway, or cover any windows. Poison ivy can not be within fifty feet (50') of a residence. In addition to these requirements, yard waste should not be dumped or blown into a street, alley, or the storm sewer system.

ENCROACHMENTS & OBSTRUCTIONS

Vehicles must be parked so that they do not extend over the sidewalk and become a hazard for pedestrians. Sidewalks, alleys and the streets must also be free of limbs, bushes, basketball goals, skateboard ramps, and other objects that interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic. The city's ordinance specifies that the sidewalk should be free of obstructions to a height of eight feet (8'). Limbs should be trimmed so that there is a fourteen feet (14') clearance from the street or alley to the lowest limb. This is critical because many of the City's fire trucks, service vehicles, and school buses require a clearance of up to fourteen feet (14').

FENCES

Fences must be maintained in good repair. The fence should not contain broken or missing slats, lean more than ten degrees (10°) vertically, or contain badly deteriorated material. Fences must not be constructed of prohibited materials, which include barbed wire, razor wire, and welded or woven wire, such as chicken wire, hog wire, stockade panels, and similar agricultural wires. Galvanized sheet metal, corrugated fiberglass, and materials not approved for exterior exposure are also prohibited.

TRASH & IMPROPERLY STORED ITEMS

Residential yards must be kept neat and clean and free of trash and rubbish. Trash that will fit should be placed in the green trash container. Waste that is too large for the green container, such as large boxes, furniture and appliances should be placed at the front curb no earlier than the day before scheduled pickup. The exception is tree limbs and yard waste, which may be placed at the front curb any day of the week. For a list of items eligible for pickup, please contact the Environmental Waste Services Department at 972-205-3500. If a refrigerator is being placed at the curbside for pick up, the doors must be secured or removed.

Items that can deteriorate when left outside should not be kept outside. These include indoor furniture, appliances, boxes, car parts, and paper products. Lumber or firewood shall also be neatly stacked on a rack at least six inches (6") off the ground to avoid becoming a harborage to rodents.

TRASH CONTAINER PLACEMENT

The green trash container should be placed at the collection point no earlier than 6:00 pm on the day before the scheduled collection. Residents should move the container to the side of the house or to a location out of public view no later than 11:00 pm on the collection day. If the collection point is in the alley, it is not necessary to move the container after pickup unless the property abuts a street from which the container will be visible.

PARKING ON AN UNIMPROVED SURFACE

City of Garland Ordinance sets strict rules on allowable parking surfaces in front, side, and back yards. In general, the City's rules are as follows:

It is illegal to park any kind of vehicle (car, truck, boat, motorcycle, utility trailer, or recreational vehicle) on the grass or dirt.

In a front yard, parking surfaces must either be concrete

Garland Code Compliance Department - Neighborhood Standards

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five inches (5") thick or interlocking concrete paving tiles on an approved sub-base.

In a side or back yard, citizens may construct parking areas made of concrete, asphalt, or gravel (white rock or pea gravel six inches deep) held in place by an approved border such as treated lumber.

Due to the highly specific requirements, all residents and owners planning to construct a parking surface should contact the Garland Building Inspection Department and obtain a permit before construction.

JUNK MOTOR VEHICLES

A junk vehicle remaining on a residential property tends to reduce property values and invite vandalism. They are also a nuisance and present a risk to minors. A vehicle is considered a junk vehicle by definition if it does not have a current license plate or a current state inspection sticker and is wrecked, dismantled, or discarded. Additionally, it is considered a junk vehicle if it remains inoperable for more than 48 hours if parked on public property or more than 60 consecutive days if parked on private property. These stipulations apply even if the vehicle is covered with a tarp or car cover. The only options are to remove the vehicle from public view (inside a garage) or to ensure that it is licensed, inspected, and operable.

OVERSIZED VEHICLES

Oversized vehicles are restricted in residential areas. Examples of oversized vehicles are a truck tractor, road tractor, semi trailer, tow truck, passenger motor vehicle designed to carry more than 16 persons (including the driver), or any other modified vehicle with a manufacturer's rating of 9,000 pounds gross vehicle weight or higher. The oversized vehicle is allowed in a residential area only if it is actively being used in the loading or delivery of passengers or goods. Recreational vehicles (motor homes, travel trailers, boats, and utility trailers less than 18 feet in length) are not defined as an oversized vehicle; however, they must be parked on private property and not on the street.

HOME BUSINESS

Several rules apply to businesses that are conducted from the home:

The business can be operated only by a person living in the home.

Signs cannot be placed on the property advertising the business.

No equipment can be present that would not normally be found at a residence.

The business cannot create noise, odor, increased traffic, light, or smoke.

All business must be conducted indoors; no materials can be stored outside.

GARAGE SALES

A permit is required for all garage sales and yard sales. There is no fee for this permit. Sales may last only three consecutive days, and only three garage sales or yard sales are allowed each year per residence. The City of Garland prohibits the placement of signs or flyers on public property, including telephone poles, utility poles, traffic signal poles, rights-of-way, medians, trees, and public fences and buildings. In addition, garage sale signs that are on private property must be removed at the end of the sale. No sign should block the view of vehicles or pedestrians.

ADDRESS NUMBERS

Each property must display address numbers that are at least three inches (3") tall in the front and back of the building—whether on the building itself, on an adjacent fence, or on an appropriate detached sign. The address numbers must be installed and maintained so that they are visible and legible from streets, alleys, and private drives.

MINIMUM HOUSING CONDITION

Each home must have adequate weather protection. All brick work must be in good repair and all painted surfaces must be free of cracking and chipping. The roof and shingles must also be maintained in good condition. Peeling or missing shingles must be replaced.

In addition to all of the neighborhood property standards listed above, Code Inspectors also regulate the multi-family properties within the City and inspect single-family rental properties as the tenants are changed. As the City of Garland ages it is imperative that the Code Compliance Department assist residents in maintaining their neighborhoods in a manner that is conducive to reinvestment and assist in stopping, or at least slowing, any decline in the appearance of homes or properties in the community. Garland's Code Inspectors are available to discuss any topic with you at 972-485-6400. Give them a call.

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Oakridge Membership

By Cecile LaBossiere - Membership Director

Why Not You – Why Not Now – Help us reach our ONA Membership Goal Today

We are in the final phase of our Annual Oakridge Neighborhood Association (ONA) Membership Drive and we need your help to achieve our membership goals. Our goal is to have everyone that lives in Oakridge a participating member in the Oakridge Neighborhood Association. I want to remind you that this is your community, neighborhood and home. In order to keep it clean, safe and a beautiful place to come home too – we need you participation!

Our Neighborhood Association is voluntary and it relies on the residents of Oakridge to support it financially so that we can continue our efforts to:

- * Enhance the Beauty of Oakridge
- * Maintain the landscape, sprinklers and lighting at all of the entrances
- * Provide opportunities for neighbors to meet at sponsored events throughout the year
- * Work with the City of Garland and the Citizens on Patrol to keep our neighborhood quiet and safe

Many residents may think that Oakridge will remain the same with or without the ONA but I want to remind you of how quickly things can change for all of us. Drastic differences in the beauty of Oakridge would result if the ONA wasn't here to provide this valuable service. Our ability to continue to serve the residents of Oakridge depends on every resident becoming a member today! Our ONA purpose is to serve the residents of Oakridge and to utilize the funds we receive in a judicious manner so that we can all enjoy the beauty and comfort that comes from knowing that our neighborhood will be well kept, secure and enhanced as funds are available. We also strive to preserve the sense of community that we have in Oakridge. How many other neighborhoods have community block parties. seasonal decorations, lost pet finder, etc... These benefits are what make our community special and I am proud to call Oakridge home.

If you haven't joined yet – why not reconsider and recognize that you're an important of the neighborhood and we need you. Can't find the application and invoice – go to our website oakridgena.com and download a copy that you can fill out and mail in with you \$60.00 annual dues contribution.

Join Today!

Things Financial and Personal

By Dave Morgan, ONA Treasurer, CPA,

Disclaimer – You should consult with your professional advisor before acting on any of the recommendations or ideas that follow. The author is not an attorney and does not profess to be providing legal, tax, financial, or personal advice. Dave will be happy to meet with you to see if your personal facts and circumstances would warrant any action on your part.

It was a selfish move on my part to cease contributing articles to the ONA newsletter a while back. Having only received three inquiries on all the articles that were written, made me think that there was no readership and that writing articles was a waste of time. After being honored with the opportunity to become the ONA Treasurer, however, it became apparent that they were read and appreciated.

The much bigger picture that was opened before me, though, is that the scope of the work being done on a volunteer basis both now and in the past by our neighbors that comprised the ONA Officers, District Directors, and Committee Directors made what I was doing really embarrassingly small in nature. I would encourage everyone to issue a word of thanks to those individuals that spend a ton of their personal hours and their own money in some cases making Oakridge a wonderful place to live. If you are not a member, I not only encourage you to join, but to also get involved with your neighbors to make this a special place to live. Everyone has talents that can be utilized, and you can contribute only as much time as is comfortable for you.

Let me now ask something from all of you. Please be so kind as to mail your suggestions for articles to our Post Office Box. Let us know which articles you really like and why – and let us know the opposite as well. The writers would always like some feedback. Further, please indicate whether or not you would like an "Ask the ONA Board" question and answer section in the newsletter where you could get, for example, an answer as to why we don't have certain types of plants in our entry areas. Channel 8 used to have an "Ask the Manager" program some time ago, and I always found that interesting for some strange reason.

This issue has been sent to all Oakridge residents. We do a full mailing twice a year – the June and September issues. Our remaining issues are mailed (emailed if preferred) only to members. If you like the information you receive in the newsletters plus the community parties and the landscaping/maintenance the ONA provides, please consider becoming a member for the \$60 of voluntary dues – that's \$5 per month to invest in your neighborhood's activities. I'm planning on writing an October article on Living Trusts – are they really all they're advertised to be?

Preventive Maintenance Agreements

By John Von Eper

Preventive Maintenance is essential to the proper functioning of your air conditioning and heating equipment. If preventive maintenance is not performed or is done haphazardly, the equipment will require extensive and costly repairs at a later date that is sooner than it should be.

Preventive Maintenance programs of air conditioning and heating equipment include regular inspections each year. During these inspections, proper operation of the equipments checked and verified. All mechanical equipment is designed to operate within certain limits, air conditioning and heating equipment is no exception, and if not properly maintained, the equipment will exceed its design limitations with the result being equipment failure. Your best insurance against HVAC failure and cost containment is a preventive Maintenance Program.

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Environmental

By Joseph J Fagan - Labor Arbitrator

This year has been a challenge; after we completed the upgrading of our entrances with the vitality grant, Mother Nature hit us with a dry winter and spring. Copper thieves stole the copper sprinkler stand pipes in the flower beds, and June hit us with 100 degree days. The Laurel Oaks entrance has been the scene of 3 accidents with damage to property, and only one of the drivers had insurance. We have lost some of the flower beds and trees due to the weather and sprinkler failures; we are currently in the process of assessing the cost to replant this fall, and get all the beds back in shape. We will be repositioning a couple of trees to improve the view of oncoming traffic.

Upon the recommendation of David Collins, (He is the owner of DLS Landscaping, who completed the vitality grant), we will not be planting winter flowers. There has been a problem with a fungus attacking the Pansy's.

The maintenance cost for the entrances and flower beds is the ONA's number one expense, utilities for the year ending May 30, 2009 were \$4666.36, and this includes water, electricity, and sewer tax. Landscape maintenance includes: mowing, shrub trimming, tree trimming, fertilization, and trash pickup. The cost for year ending May 30, 2009 was \$14,354.56, and the budget for the current year is \$16,887.00. If it were not for the residents supporting the ONA by their yearly \$60.00 dues, then there would be no maintenance program. If the common areas were not maintained, the city of Garland would make a determination what homeowner, or homeowners were responsible for a specific area and that homeowner would be responsible. If the homeowner did not maintain the area the city would do what was necessary, and then send a bill to the homeowner. It pays dividends to have the ONA.

If you have any concerns or questions with regard to maintenance of the entrances I can be emailed at fa-qan1234@verizon.net please put ONA in the subject line.

Page 10 ONA Newsletter

Crime & Safety Report By Bill Olive

Only one incident from July 26 through Aug 15. a theft at 2302 Rocky Trail on 8/15/09-value between \$50 and \$500.

The "graffiti kid" who was responsible for the gang writing on walls, signs, and fences behind Hearthside has been arrested due to some great detective work done by our NPO John Capers. The story is much too long to be explained here but Officer Capers spent hours piecing together the puzzle that led to the arrest of a 17 year old. The youth lives in an area adjacent to our neighborhood. Since he and his family rent the HOA may be asking its management company to seek the families removal. A big "atta-boy" to our NPO.

The brick wall along Beltline was badly damaged by a motorist who says he was "hit & run" by another car. The two Oakridge homeowners who now must repair the wall have been given a copy of the accident report. One resident said he got an estimate of \$1,000 for his wall's repair. This may take some time because the driver's insurance company and himself are liable.

This past week we responded to several call regarding youths soliciting for signatures to support environmental reform. After talking with the city attorney's office we

were told this group is a non-profit organization and did not need a permit. We then drove to the area and chatted with the groups local supervisor and the group left Oakridge soon after. The day before this (Saturday 8/15), another group of 5 people were going door to door asking for money to help the children. An officer responded to our call and the group was asked to leave Oakridge and told a citation would be issued if they returned. This is the 2nd or 3rd year where we have had this environmental group asking for letters. They must have been successful in the past or they wouldn't have returned. Our advice---turn them away or don't answer the door. We can not allow Oakridge to become "easy pickins" for solicitors.

We have been in touch with "code" and the police department regarding boats and 4 sale vehicles parked <u>on</u> <u>the streets</u> here in our neighborhood. Our NPO, patrol, and code have come out and "stickered" several violators.

Oakridge Country Club has again asked for our help in keeping vehicles not authorized from parking in the club parking lot. Big Bass Towing has placed signs in the lot and we have come up with a plan to enforce the club's request. Big Bass is the company which is under con-

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Joe Wrinkle

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tract for Garland's towing. Please do not use the club's parking lot unless authorized. Only one warning will be given.

Last month I had a great conversation with one of Oakridge's residents about what we all need to do to keep our neighborhood a premier community. When out walking we should always have a cell phone to call for help, be able to take down tag numbers of vehicles that seem "suspicious", let outsiders know you are watching, take valuables out of the car, keep the yard neat and clean, don't leave garage doors open and unattended, supervise teens and get to know their friends, become involved with your child's school, know your neighbors and watch out for each other, do not place outgoing mail in mailboxes, support your ONA, etc. Thank you Robert.

Let's all welcome the latest patroller to the COP group----Emily Krause

If anyone would like to win a 2010 Harley-Davidson Fatboy motorcycle, the Garland Police Dept's. Motor-Cops for kids is selling tickets at \$25 per ticket. Only 2000 will be sold. Drawing will be held on Nov. 15 benefiting Shriner's Hospitals for Children. The COP is able to get tickets through our Citizen Police Academy Alumni group. Let us know if you wish to help this wonderful cause. Call 972-495-3402.

The Oakridge News is a publication of the Oakridge Neighborhood Association

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Oakridge News

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The ONA Board meets the Third Wednesday of each month to conduct the business of the ONA.

The ONA Board set the dates for the

General Membership meetings.

Mark your calendars:

September 24, 2009

March 4, 2010

May 27, 2010

Check the ONA web site for current information

www.oakridgena.com