



Oakridge News

<http://oakridgeNA.com>

Vol. 18, No. 02

February 2010

Observations

By Mike Rose, ONA President

General Meeting March 4th

Be sure to mark Thursday, March 4th on your calendar as that is the night of our next General Meeting. We will be electing a nominating committee and listen to a presentation made by the folks from Bruce Miller Nursery. These folks were here last year and all in attendance appreciated the question and answer time. Come and hear from the "professional" the do and don'ts of how to take care of your yard. For those who did not attend last years meeting, please note that this is not a "pitch" time for the nursery. See you all on March 4th.

Opinion Survey

Another item that should be of interest to all of us living in the Oakridge community is the results of City sponsored Residential

Opinion Survey of 2009. Actually the survey was conducted in 2008 with the City publishing the results the summer of 2009. There is a lot of information contained in this 2009 Survey Trend Report and will take some time to digest. Please reference the actual 2009 Survey Trend Report at:

<http://oakridgena.com/community.htm>

Several pages that may be relevant are page 12 of 38; 26 of 38 and 27 of 38. Page 12 illustrates the participation level within our community. One must wonder why only 31% of our neighbors responded to this survey. All it cost to those who received the survey was time as the city supplied a self addressed stamped envelop for the return of a completed document. Page 26 is self explanatory. However, it continues to be a challenge for the ONA Board to keep our common public areas looking attractive. The effort the Board spends on these common areas positively af-

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District 7 Council Report

By Rick Williams, District 7 City Councilman

Pet Registration

Hope everyone enjoyed the holidays and, amazingly, a white Christmas. During December, three members of City staff and I met with *Dallas Morning News* columnist, Steve Blow, regarding the issue of animal euthanasia in municipal shelters. Mr. Blow wrote an excellent article on December 29 focusing on the real problem—irresponsible owners who don't neuter their pets. Although not directly related to the euthanasia issue, I recently learned something else about animals in Garland which I found very surprising. In Garland, only 6 percent of the dogs and cats are registered. To be registered, a dog or cat must get the required shots (e.g., rabies, etc.), and then the shot record from the veterinarian should be sent in to Garland Animal Services, and they in return will send the metal tags. It amazes me that 94 percent of the animals in Garland have not been properly registered the City. It also amazes me that in a January 4 briefing to City Council, it was reported that in FY 09, animal services received 9,572 calls about stray animals.

GP&L settles with TMPA

One of the most interesting, and by far the most complex, subject with which I have been involved since becoming a councilman

has been Garland Power and Light issues. Because most of these issues are "competitive matters" or "attorney-client issues," these discussions are held in closed meetings, so most citizens know very little about the issues. I shall not go into details, but you may have seen a press release in December that the City of Garland had approved a settlement agreement with the Texas Municipal Power Agency (TMPA). If you saw the article, it likely looked pretty boring, but let me tell you, that settlement was way bigger than huge! With this settlement and some other financial strategies, GP&L (and thus, GP&L customers) will save about \$200 million dollars between now and September 1, 2018. Primary credit goes to GP&L Director Ray Schwertner, City Attorney Brad Neighbor, and Assistant City Attorney Mike Betz. This settlement would not have happened without their efforts and incredible expertise, and it resolved at least 12 years and 20 pieces of litigation involving the TMPA and its member cities which include the cities of Garland, Bryan, Denton and Greenville.

New Traffic Signal

As I mentioned in an article several months ago, a new traffic light was going in at North Garland Avenue and Wagon Wheel

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Observations

Continued from Page 1

fects our desirability for future home buyers and our home values. Page 27 parallels the results found on page 26.

Golf Course Flood Plane

We have tried to make the ONA web site a useful tool. One item that may be of interest is a map illustrating the approximate 100 year FEMA flood plane. The map below is an approximation with the area within the Bold Lines identifying the flood plane. The actual flood plane map is at:

<http://oakridgena.com/community.htm>

and the flood plane regions are lined in pink on the map. You will notice that most of the golf course is within the flood plane. However, there are some areas that could be developed as residential lots. Our entire area is zoned single family with a minimum of a 1,500sq.ft. house. The areas that could be developed do have several challenges which might cause a home builder second thoughts when trying to buy and build on the golf course land.

District 7 Council Report

Continued from Page 1

(near Winters soccer field). That signal was installed during December and became operable January 5. I would have been operable sooner, but a car was "T-boned" at that intersection on December 23, and the \$20,000 signal control box was destroyed. Amazingly, the driver had insurance and so the box was replaced with insurance funds.

New Zoning @ Old Minyard

Also, during December, the Council approved new zoning for the location of the old Minyards at Arapaho and Jupiter. Essentially, the old Minyards will be razed (that was really important because it was going to be virtually impossible to find a tenant for that 55,000 sq. ft. building), and in its place will be the three new establishments:

Continued on Page 3



District 7 Council Report

Continued from Page 2

- (1) A Quik Trip convenience store,
- (2) A "work club" building with office, meeting, and storage space, and
- (3) An upscale car wash which will have associated family-related and neighborhood events. Another good sign for that same shopping center is that Ace Hardware is currently getting ready to open where the old C&S Hardware store used to be. Not too many things look worse than a half-empty, declining shopping center, so I'm greatly encouraged. I know there was a lot of interest in Sprouts at that center, but unfortunately, Sprouts said "no".

Cell Phones in School Zones

Over a year ago, the Garland City Council made an 8-1 decision to NOT ban hand-held cell phones in school zones. It's not that we are opposed to child safety, but after a lot of study and discussion, we felt such an ordinance was simply a "feel good" ordinance which would not increase safety in school zones. Then, earlier in 2009, the Texas State legislature passed a State law banning hand-held phones in school zones, but the law can only be enforced if there are signs by each zone. We'll be discussing whether we want to install signs. Stay tuned.

Stealing Recycle Material

I had a call recently regarding an individual taking recycle material from a red bin on collection day. Section 52.18 of the City ordinance states, "Title to all solid waste placed for collection by the City shall be vested in the City immediately upon placement by the person disposing of such solid waste." Therefore, it is illegal to take such materials and violations can be reported to the GPD using the administrative number 972 485.4840.

Code Sweeps

I've written in the past about how the Code department a couple of years ago started doing proactive sweeps of neighborhoods. Essentially, each neighborhood gets swept 3 times each year by Code inspectors, whereas in the past, they only reacted to citizen complaints. One measure of the effectiveness of these proactive sweeps is the number of citizen complaints, and for FY 09 complaints dropped by 26%.

Mayor's Good Neighbor Award

The Mayor's Good Neighbor Award recognizes Garland residents who have made an extraordinary commitment to improving the quality of life in their neighborhoods. If you know someone who might be worthy of this award, you can find more information on the home page of the City's web site at <http://www.ci.garland.tx.us/Home/>

I look forward to 2010, and as always, if you have questions or concerns, feel free to call me (214 535-2648) or E-mail me at rickwilli@gmail.com.

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Oakridge Daytimers December Coffee

By Dianne Winters

Daytimers Enjoy Gift Giving

The drizzly weather could not dampen the spirit of joy for the almost thirty Daytimers as they were greeted by Sally Weiss and welcomed to the festively decorated home of Ann Conrath on Tuesday, December 8th, to celebrate their friendship at Christmas. The hostesses who provided all of the goodies were Brenda Britton, Lillian Dalton, Jo Dietz, Monica Evans and Suzanne Snow.

After all the members had visited and sampled the food, president, Ruby Nell Ormon, conducted the short business meeting. Peggy Crenshaw, Becky Thomas and Margaret Fowler reported on the Book Club, Mah Jongg and Canasta Groups. Brenda Olive and Becky Thomas discussed a few neighborhood and ONA concerns. Margaret Fowler invited everyone to go Christmas Caroling on Sunday, December 13th.

Sally Weiss announced Ladies Night Out to be on Thursday, Dec 17th.

Since Audrey King could not be there, Doris Autrey gave the birthday announcements. The Daytimers were shocked when Jo Dietz revealed her age.

Beth Fagan directed the the gift exchange and the Daytimers were shocked again when Jo Dietz opened her gift to find a plump little bean bag frog. It was Jo's day as that gift was taken from her and she opened her second gift to find some beautiful lingerie. Both of these gifts deserve more description but you will have to ask a Daytimer for that. Another highlight was a decorated umbrella which was good for the rainy day. Everyone else enjoyed the remainder of the gift exchanging which resulted in a laughter filled celebration of the season.

The next meeting will provide a lot of fun as the Daytimers meet at the First Methodist Church of Garland for a Bean and Bingo party at 11 am on Tuesday, January 12, 2010.

Thanks to everyone who made this meeting a success.

Daytimers is a social organization that requires residence in



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Oakridge Daytimers January Coffee

By Dianne Winters

Daytimers celebrated the New Year with a change of location, menu and fun. On January 12th, almost thirty Daytimers met at the First Methodist Church of Garland for the annual soup and bingo get together.

Tables were appropriately decorated with snowmen - a sign of the recent temperatures. The serving tables were laden with soups, crackers and cornbread and desserts. The food hostesses and others who provided the great selection of food for lunch were: Nell Burt, Ann Conrath, Peggy Crenshaw, Mary Jensen, Brenda Olive, Ruby Nell Ormon, Mary Pattie, Pat Tharp, Shirley Mohler, Sally Weiss, and Jo Ann Williams.

President Ruby Nell Ormon led a brief business meeting that consisted of reports by Peggy Crenshaw, Becky Thomas. Visitors Estelle Stevens and Donna Byrd were introduced and Betty Thomas was welcomed back. Ruby Nell announced the great activities for the remainder of the year that have been planned by the officers. Volunteers were solicited for food hostesses and models for the upcoming style show.

Everyone visited while they enjoyed the variety of soups. Compliments to the chefs!

The Bingo game was quite a success. Suzanne Snow called the letters and numbers and a variety of about ten games were played and gifts were won. Charlotte Vaughter provided the beans for markers to continue the yearly tradition.

Thanks to Sharon Carlton and JoAnn Williams for making the arrangements to meet at the church.

The next meeting will be held at the home of Suzanne Snow on Tuesday, February 9th, 10 am.

Thanks to everyone who made this meeting a success.

Daytimers is a social organization that requires residence in Oakridge and \$15 dues. Daytimers promotes the Oakridge Community and the ONA. Questions should be directed to President, Ruby Nell Ormon, at 972 414 4775.

Making Strides to Find a Cure

On Saturday, January 30, 2010, Matthew's Raiders took a "Victory Lap" for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) at the Cowboy's Stadium in Arlington, Texas.

Matthew Parrish, an Oakridge resident and a senior at North Garland, named his team after his favorite high school mascot. Matthew is the son of Sharon and David Parrish, our ONA District 7 Directors.

Besides Matthew and his parents, Matthew's Raiders included several friends and family. MDA is fighting to defeat some 43 neuromuscular diseases that affect people of all ages.

In each of the last six years, Matthew and his Raiders have made the MDA Honor Roll by raising over \$3,000. The Dallas-Fort Worth Stride and Ride is proud to be MDA's largest fund raising walk.

In 2009, despite the poor economy, the DFW Stride and Ride raised over \$440,000 for MDA with 1,800 people taking the "Victory Lap". These funds help MDA provide services such as summer camps, clinics, wheelchairs, and braces, plus scientific research seeking treatments and cures.

Home Updates

By Phil Hanas: Oakridge Paint & Paper

One update we do in homes almost every week involves removing wallpaper. I often get asked what is the best way to remove it? The answer depends on the paper and the condition of the paper.

The first thing we do is remove as much of the paper as possible when it is dry. Then we wet it and if needed score the rest of the old paper. It is usually a time consuming process.

When all the paper is removed we will have drywall repair and floating with a skim coat of joint compound. Now you are ready for your update.

New texture could either be a random skip trowel, or a sprayed texture that is dragged with a trowel. Either texture can be faux painted or just painted. Faux finishes are still great looks in entry areas, dining rooms, bathrooms, and kitchens.

Next Month: Exterior Painting and Repairs

Anyone wishing to join Matthew's Raiders and help MDA by making a donation can do so online at:

<https://www.joinmda.org/dfwstrideandride2010/MatthewsRaiders>

For more information on the Muscular Dystrophy Association and neuromuscular diseases, see:

<http://www.mda.org/>



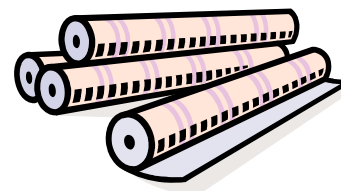
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Things Financial and Personal

By Dave Morgan, CPA - ONA Treasurer, Mortgage Broker, Real Estate Broker, Investor

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.

Wow, it's 2010! Happy New Year to everyone! What do we officially call this decade? Is it the "ten's", the "teen's" (when we get there), or "adolescent to adult's"? What was the last decade? Was it the "aught's"? Is it really a new decade since the first ten year period started with year one and ended with year ten? Please help me with this.

Property Taxes due January 31

What are some things on the real estate front that you need to know? Well, property taxes were due on or before January 31st so that penalties would not be assessed. If you pay your taxes with the 7% penalty the day after January 31, that would be paramount to paying an effective interest rate of 84%. Ouch! If you have your property taxes included in your mortgage payment as an escrow deposit, they should have been paid before the end of 2009.

Homestead Exemption

If you just bought a new residence in the neighborhood (and/or if friends or family bought a new home) in 2009, the homestead exemption (if this is your primary residence) application needs to be filed for the first and only time for this home by April 15th of this year. The Dallas Central Appraisal District (DCAD) folks should have mailed the very easy to complete application in January and will mail a reminder application in March if they did not receive your January application. You can also visit the DCAD website at www.dcad.org to print your application form too. NOTE – there are a lot of predator firms that will charge you from \$30 to \$50 to complete this form on your behalf. That is a waste of your money because you will answer the application questions on their form or verbally that they will just transcribe onto the application. If you do NOT know if you have a homestead exemption in place and/or if you need help with the application, call me at 972-824-7499, and I will help for FREE since you are an ONA member.

1st Time Homebuyer Tax credit

Federal legislation back last November also extended the first time home buyer tax credit (or perhaps for your home purchasing kids, grand children, or other friends) of up to \$8,000 (\$4,000 for a single person) until April 30th to get an executed contract on a home and you have up till June 30th to get the closing done at the title company. That program was expanded to also cover individuals that have owned their own home at least for five years to provide a credit of up to \$6,500 (\$3,250 for a single person) to purchase a new primary residence. You still have until April 30th to get an executed contract on a home and you have up till June 30th to get the closing done at the title company. Either credit acts just like a tax payment – the money comes to you on your tax return net of any tax due or plus any refund otherwise due. Give me a call if you need any details on how either program works.

Real Estate Market

The real estate market is terrible – right? Wrong! The above programs combined with low interest rates and the relatively stable Texas economy (our unemployment is 2% lower than the national average) have kept things reasonably lively. Sure, you need to properly have your home properly readied for sale and appropriately priced (not too high and definitely not too low). When you receive multiple contract offers, you need to make sure the folks with the winning offer are pre-approved for financing before you suspend your property on the MLS (I have terrific resources to do their financing if they do not have any-one yet). Yes, you can also sell your home yourself (a FSBO), but the National Association of Realtors tracks all home sales data, and over 50% of all FSBO's end up contested with many of them ultimately ending up in legal proceedings. There is also good news on non-foreclosure sales in our neighborhood that reflect strong market values. DCAD has a very good market value based system now, and your last property tax bill (if re-valued) likely reflected a strong increase in your home value. Even better news is that foreclosure sales were even relatively strong. You, your neighbors, and your proactive neighborhood association have kept this community looking great, and that always helps to maintain property values for everyone. Your \$60 annual dues are a terrific investment to maintain your home's value!

Garland Energy Rebate Program

Since homes in the neighborhood are primarily 1980's vintage, any insulation that has not been "kicked up a notch" (actually several notches) needs to be enhanced. The City of Garland has an energy rebate program where they will give you a credit on your utility bill of a certain dollar amount that will offset your utility billing. For example, a credit for a 2,200 square foot home would be \$300, and the cost of the required insulation type and depth might cost around \$550 to \$700. Consider doing your windows too since most of our homes came with aluminum framed windows. Even though they were usually double paned, the metal framing is very energy inefficient.

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Since we are in the cold months of the year and keeping in mind the age of our homes as mentioned above, many of you have replaced an air conditioner compressor (or two or three) along the way. If you have the original gas heating unit inside your home (or even an older replacement), have that unit checked by a professional, such as the folks at ETC that advertise with us, to make sure that your heat exchanger does not have any cracks. This is ESSENTIAL because the silent killer of carbon monoxide created from the flames underneath the heat exchanger can leak up through the heat exchanger cracks and, thus, blow into your home. Further, there is also a remote chance that a fire could be started as well. It is also recommended that you have carbon monoxide detectors installed, and these are NOT to be installed in the same heights as your smoke detectors. Carbon monoxide is a heavy gas and you need to follow installation instructions carefully to account for that fact.

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Vote in March Elections

Finally, in chatting with my friend Patricia Seehorn, we remarked that we have the primary elections coming at us very fast on March 2nd. Please make sure that you get registered to vote, get informed on the candidates, and then exercise with the privilege to vote - many in the world don't get this opportunity and we as a citizen group toss away this remarkable blessing. To vote in this election, the voter registration deadline was February 1st and, if you missed that deadline, get registered so that you can vote in the November elections. If you need assistance with getting registered to vote, give me a call and I'll get you in touch with Patricia since she has volunteered to assist you in getting registered in a non-partisan manner as she is required by law to do. Voting is a really a duty for all of us considering the valiant efforts of many now and before who have sacrificed their all in defending this country against those who would want to destroy this country that we love. It is my opinion that local elections are where we need to get even more involved as they have the most direct impact on our daily lives. Even though this is an "off-year" election, let's have a 100% turnout at the polls by the ONA members!

Black-Eyed Pea

By Alan Norris

Run, don't walk to Black-Eyed Pea and try a new appetizer – Fried Guacamole. It's two halves of fresh avocado filled with sour cream and pico de gallo and deep-fried.

I know – don't ask me how they do it!

Served with chips, but we sliced it up and ate with forks. This reliable, comfy restaurant in Oakridge Plaza known for family favorites such as chicken fried steak, pot roast, and broccoli-rice casserole never goes out of style and remains affordable.

On a recent visit, there was a grad party of 30 in one corner, yet the restaurant didn't seem too crowded or noisy as some do these days. After a busy day, stop in for a well-prepared meal and beverage from the bar.

The secret is the excellent kitchen and friendly wait-staff. Great iced tea and my dad says the onion rings are the best in town.



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Spiders in Texas

By Kimberly Schofield, Program Specialist-Urban IPM , Texas AgriLife Extension

As winter weather approaches, spiders are likely to enter indoors. Spiders are closely related to ticks and scorpions, all belonging to the Class Arachnida. Spiders are beneficial to our environment by controlling insect populations. However there are two groups in Texas that are considered harmful to humans, the black widows and the recluse spiders.

Dangerous Spiders:

Recluse Spiders

There are five species found in Texas, but only two species are considered dangerous. Their color varies from orange-yellow to dark brown and they are the about the size of a quarter. Their most distinguishing characteristic is the eye pattern and the violin marking on the top side of its first body region, the cephalothroax. These spiders have six eyes arranged in three pairs, forming a semi-circle. The eyes also form the base of the violin shape that extends to its abdomen.

Recluse spiders are shy and will hide during the day. They are most active at night, so people are usually bitten at night. Recluse spiders are usually found in garages, wood piles, cluttered attics, closets bathrooms, bedrooms, and under furniture.

The recluse spiders' bite may cause effects immediately or be delayed, depending upon the amount of venom injected. The bite usually causes a stinging sensation followed by intense pain. Within 24 to 36 hours, fever, chills, nausea, weakness, and joint pain may result from the bite. The bite will also produce a blister surrounded by a swollen area. The

venom kills the skin tissue, which gradually sloughs away until medical attention is sought.



Recluse spider (Genus *Loxosceles*).

Widow Spiders

There are four species of widow spiders in Texas. Their color varies from brown to black, but all have a marking consisting of two united triangles that can be red, yellow or orange in color. This hourglass marking is found on the underside of their abdomen. The females are 1 1/2 inches in length and are the dangerous ones. They have eight eyes in two rows, which is a common eye pattern for spiders. They usually live in protected areas around houses and may live in garages, basements, furniture, shrubbery, rain spouts, gas and electric

(Continued on page 9)



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meters and in other undisturbed areas.

The widow's bite may leave a swollen area with two red spots in the middle. The pain usually becomes worse, causing high temperatures, tremors, nausea, vomiting, leg cramps, perspiration, loss of muscle tone and rise in blood pressure and even death. Death results in less than 5% of the people bitten by a widow spider.



Widow spiders (Genus Latrodectus).

Other Common Spiders:

Tarantulas

These are large, hairy spiders that vary in color from brown to black. Adults are usually more than 3 inches in length. They tend to spend the day in hidden areas or under rocks and hunt at night feeding on crickets, caterpillars, and other insects. Since they are spiders, they can bite; however, their toxin is not considered harmful to most people. Also their hairs can penetrate the skin, which causes irritation.

Wolf Spiders

These spiders vary in color from brown to black and some have longitudinal stripes running along their bodies. Wolf spi-

ders are large and can be seen at night under lights. They frequently enter homes and buildings, but their toxin is not considered harmful to humans.

Southern House Spider

These spiders sometimes are confused with recluse spiders, but they are larger than recluse spiders. Also they are dark brown in color, have eight eyes in one cluster, and lack the violin marking. These spiders are most commonly found in old barns and in undisturbed areas within human structures. Their toxin is considered harmless.

Some Control Options for Spiders

Non-Chemical Controls:

Seal cracks using caulk, weather stripping, and screens to prevent spider entry into buildings. Make sure that all stored boxes are taped and sealed to prevent spiders from entering. Also, vacuum webs throughout homes, since some spiders lay their eggs within the webs, the vacuuming will prevent these eggs from hatching.

Chemical Controls:

Only use products labeled for spider control or in areas where spiders are found. These products can contain such chemicals as permethrin, deltamethrin, or bifenthrin. Outside spray or dust under roof eaves, porches, and window ledges. Inside spray around windows, door frames, baseboards and in attics and other places of storage. Some spiders are hard to control, so it is best to contact a pest control professional.

Mention of commercial products is for educational purposes only and does not represent endorsement by Texas AgriLife Extension or The Texas A&M University System. Insecticide label registrations are subject to change, and changes may have occurred since this publication was printed. The pesticide user is always responsible for applying products in accordance with label directions. Always read and carefully follow the instructions on the container label.




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The Rise & Demise of Your Texas Residential Construction Committee

By Dave Morgan, CPA - President RCD Luxury Homes

Wow, the Texas Residential Construction Commission (TRCC) was a powerful governmental agency that has now collapsed? But you ask "What in the world was the TRCC"? The TRCC was established by the Texas government to (a) register all builders, (b) provide for the adoption of limited warranties that all builders had to provide home owners, (c) to establish minimum building performance standards, (d) provide a dispute resolution procedure between builders and home owners, and (e) administer disciplinary actions against builders who failed to follow the statute and laws.

Now, who is considered a builder? It was anyone who was compensated for constructing, supervising, or managing the construction of (a) a new home, (b) except for a roof, a material improvement to a home, and/or (c) an improvement to the interior of an existing home if that cost was greater than \$10,000.

There were dispute resolution procedures that were promulgated to try to solve things in a mediation environment, but a formal TRCC determination was a required prerequisite before a lawsuit could be filed against a builder for an alleged construction defect.

So, what happened to the TRCC? Well, effective September 1, 2009, it no longer exists as a governmental entity. There is still a TRCC website, but it is there as a grave marker for the TRCC. Why did it go away? Simple, one body of the Texas Legislature provided for the renewal and the funding for the TRCC to exist beyond being "Sunsetted", but the other body did not get to that process (either intentionally or not – who knows?) before adjourning the last session of the Legislature.

So, what do you do now to resolve defect issues with your construction professional? Well, there are two answers. If you filed a claim with the TRCC before September 1, 2009, your claim should have been worked. If you have a dispute thereafter, you're effectively on your own. You always try an open communication with the builder and try to get to a professional mediator if needed. If that fails and you really have a legitimate material claim to make, you can try contacting the Texas Attorney General's Consumer Complaint Department, the Federal Trade Commission, the local County or District Attorney, the Better Business Bureau, and/or any builder trade associations to which the builder indicated belonging. If the builder has any other professional licenses (such as being a Realtor), contact

that licensing entity as well. Barring that, seek legal advice, but be aware that attorneys want to be paid, and their service and court costs are not inexpensive.

What do I need to know for the future to minimize potential claims for poor workmanship? First, work only with builders that will provide at least a one year warranty for new home construction. There will be the previously existing law back in effect now that recognized the implied warranties of good workmanship in construction and of habitability – a written warranty in hand is always better though.

Work with someone who is experienced and trustworthy. That is determined by looking at their background (ask questions and verify answers). If you have a large remodel project or major construction, ask for references and go look at that referred work plus ask questions of that referral person. Try to avoid anyone who will not provide you with a free quote. Seek someone who will take some time to work out design issues and, if appropriate for large projects, enlist an architect (at a cost of course) that you know or that the builder knows. Ask about what permits will be required, and if the builder handles them (if the builder does not, show him the door). Look for a builder that will answer your questions, will actually educate you with a good overview on the process, and provide alternative design ideas. Determine if the builder only uses trusted resources including the utilization of only US citizens and/or legal aliens by himself and any of his subcontractors. Determine and agree to a timeline for completion of the different phases of your project with expectations of both the builder and of you, as to who is going to do what and when it will be done (if the builder must clean up a mess in the area in order to get started rather you doing it, there will be an associated cost). Finally, remember the lowest bid should not always determine the winner of your business. A low bid may lead to the builder cutting corners and/or using inferior products to make the same profit a higher bid would have made. Give the final competing builders a chance to compare and contrast other quotes to explain any differences. The more detailed the bid that is provided obviously means a better idea of what exactly is to be done; any changes not in the bid you have will result in a Change Order, and that means additional costs beyond what you thought you were getting in the original quote.



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ONA General Membership Meetings:

- March 4, 2010
- May 27, 2010

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