

Balcones Woods Neighborhood Watch
Block Captains Meeting
February 17, 2001

Attending:

Bob Vehon - Program Coordinator
Mike Dunn, Austin Police Department - Guest
Scarlett Spivey
Nancy L'Amie
Marion and Paul Douglas
Michelle Manning
Gretchen Claiborne
Valerie Mitchell
Mary Morales
David Bryant

Bob Vehon provided information about a class (academy) held several times a year, which provides information for the general public about the Austin Police Department (APD), and made fliers about the academy available. He has attended a similar session for the Travis County Sheriff's Department and found it both informational and interesting.

Bob alerted the group to the fact that there is a crime wave in this area with vandalism and robberies. Balcones Woods is the only area neighborhood getting involved in the Neighborhood Watch (NW) program. He added lack of an effective communication vehicle within a neighborhood is the greatest barrier to a successful NW program and Balcones Woods has a leg up on many neighborhoods because of the yahoo group, the Directory and the Newsletter.

Bob expressed appreciation to the group volunteering to be block captains, noting it isn't unusual for a small group to step up and implement a program on behalf of the larger community. Following the second neighborhood-wide NW meeting, about 60 households sent in data sheets. He added that the data sheets will be treated confidentially and only the coordinator will have access to the information.

Bob introduced Mike Dunn, who also provided information at the first two meetings. Officer Dunn explained there would need to be a third neighborhood-wide meeting in order for Balcones Woods to be certified for the NW program. Following that meeting, the neighborhood can order signs and decals for display by the households participating.

The Neighborhood Watch Program is set up to be the eyes and ears for the Police Department, therefore, at our meetings; we will only discuss items pertaining to the Neighborhood Watch Program. If you are having a squabble with your neighbor or are seeing violations in the City Code or Covenants, please contact the department or committee that oversees that particular instance. Please leave those issues at home; they will not be discussed at the meetings.

Officer Dunn and Bob both emphasized there was no time commitment for being a block captain. What is needed are individuals who are willing to be vigilant as they go about their regular activities and take action when they see illegal or suspicious behavior/circumstances potentially threatening harm to Balcones Woods residents or property. **The action block captains should take is to call 911 if they see illegal or suspicious activity in progress and call 311 if they see evidence of illegal activity that has already occurred.** If possible, helpful information, especially car license numbers, makes and colors and descriptions of individuals involved should be reported when calling 911 or 311 as well as precise locations. 311 is also the number to call for code violations. In addition, block captains should tell neighbors about the program and explain its value in deterring crime for the whole neighborhood.

Bob asked about a 'kid watch' program and Officer Dunn explained how the program worked but indicated APD was no longer actively assisting to establish new programs although the Department frequently made "Stranger/Danger" presentations to youngsters at schools and other venues.

Bob told the group that at the last Balcones Woods board meeting he was successful in getting a NW position added to the operating committee. This will also assure the program is included in the association's budget. As coordinator, Bob will fill the position for now, but in the future, others can apply for the assignment on the operating committee and the regular process for filling such positions will be followed.

Each block captain in attendance volunteered to pay particular attention to portions of streets visible from their homes. There was discussion about recruiting additional block captains for strategic locations throughout the neighborhood.

The next neighborhood-wide meeting was tentatively set for Thursday, March 11 at the club house at 6:30 p.m. The date is subject to Officer Dunn's availability. The next block captain's meeting was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 25 at 6:30 at the club house.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40.