

alamo heights

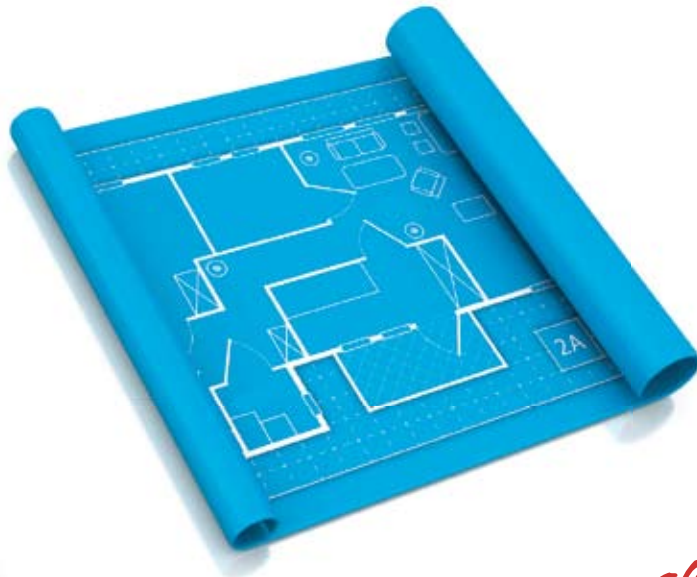
OCTOBER 2011

vol.3, no.10

advocate

THE NEWSLETTER of the **ALAMO HEIGHTS** NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION www.myahna.com

It's here.



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Inside: City Hall's plan for new, improved facilities. Find out what it means.

to you



Founder's Corner

JOHN JOSEPH

2009 vs. 2011

What a difference two years makes!

In the Nov. 8, 2011 election AHNA and I strongly support the Proposition for a new City Hall. In 2009, as you may recall, we strenuously opposed it.

Two years ago, although opposed to the \$10.3 million project, we loudly and often said there was a definite need to improve the existing City Hall complex. I never heard anyone ever argue there wasn't a need then (much less now). The problem in 2009 was the price tag, plus many voters disliked the proposed architecture.

In Nov. 2009 Alamo Heights voters loudly said No Way! ... and they rejected the \$10+ million City Hall by a lopsided margin of over 70% to less than 30%.

This time the City, specifically the new City Manager, Mayor and entire City Council did everything exactly right. In 2009, to put it mildly, they did not. Two years ago the City and the people they hired did just about everything as wrong as they possibly could.

A lot has changed in the intervening two years, except the need for new facilities has grown even more acute.

\$48k or \$425k?

This year the City paid \$48,000 to a team of interim architects for all the necessary preliminary work. In 2009 Alamo Heights paid the architects \$425,773 for their design work leading up to that election. The striking difference in those amounts is

shocking enough, but the *real* difference between the two approaches was not the end result, it's how the architects reached the finish line.

In 2009 the City held meetings for the staff and Council to which the public was invited. These were billed as "public meetings", but the public really was never allowed at any of them to offer meaningful input. It was as if they were scheduled so someone could scratch "Public Meetings" off a checklist. Since the City hadn't listened to residents in the summer of 2009 they felt the need to mail multiple, expensive full-color, and expensive four-page brochures to everyone in town in the fall.

This summer, by comparison, the City held three very public meetings. Residents were invited to eat hamburgers at the Fire Station and to tour the facilities to see them firsthand. Then the City's interim architects did something really strange yet remarkable—they actually *l-i-s-t-e-n-e-d* carefully to all sides at those public meetings. They took that input and incorporated much of it before the next meeting. Each time it was the same story. It was truly revolutionary to see the project evolve over the summer.

In 2009 the City and its architects decided everything in a vacuum without listening to the citizenry. Had they *really* listened they would have realized the project was in deep trouble and was headed for a train wreck. But they "knew what's best" for us. This year there were no slick brochures, just simple postcards inviting residents to community meetings in their own neighborhoods. The difference between 2011 and 2009 is the difference between explaining and selling. Much credit

is due to our new **City Manager, Dr. Mark Browne**, for keeping a steady hand on the wheel. He's avoided all the bumps in the road, plus he has avoided driving the bus off the cliff like in 2009.

Unfortunately, 2009 was exactly the opposite of 2011. Although to her credit, it is said that then **City Manager Becky Waldman** (who abruptly "retired" six weeks before that election) strongly objected to hiring Lake-Flato. One or possibly two of the previous City Council members apparently favored Lake-Flato and, unsurprisingly, they got the job. No one really understands how the 2009 architects were allowed to run up a \$425k bill on a project that hadn't even been voted on. Apparently most voters didn't like the resulting contemporary design. The rest is history.

\$6.3m is \$4m less than \$10.3m

The only good thing that came out of 2009 is our City's leadership, who was there then and is still on Council, quickly learned from their mistakes. They did a big 180! The good news is the voters saved \$4 million by giving a thumbs-down in 2009.

Last year **Mayor Louis Cooper** appointed a Facilities Committee to find a solution that would be acceptable to most residents. Interestingly, I believe all six of those committee members voted against Prop. 1 in 2009. The committee had two architects, a commercial contractor, an attorney/CPA/entrepreneur and a travel agent (me). We met dozens of times for 3-4 hours each and had many healthy disagreements, but the result is the current, realistic \$6.3m project. (See the Site Plan on Page 5).

» CONTINUED on page 9

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President's Message

TOM HARMON

CITY MERITS NEW FACILITY

During the past few weeks, the City of Alamo Heights continued its community outreach concerning the proposed new fire, police and administrative complex, the bond issue for which will be on the Nov. 8 ballot.

The first of six neighborhood informational meetings took place at St. Peter Prince of Apostles Catholic Church on Oct. 5. The others followed on separate dates and locations, ending on Oct. 20. If you missed your neighborhood meeting, further details can be found on the City's website at www.alamoheightstx.gov. Citizen comments and observations that were elicited from earlier public meetings in July and August contributed to the plans for the proposed new facility and I expect the additional feedback received more recently was appreciated as well.

With the proposed new facility, the police department will be able to get out of their cramped quarters and our firefighters will finally have adequate living quarters, as well as a day room, kitchen and administrative offices and appropriate accommodations for their nine vehicles.

The proposed plan calls for a new administrative building to face and be contiguous under a shared roof with the police quarters, which saves money by avoiding the duplication of cross beneficial space. To save even more money, City Council has gone on record as supporting, to the extent it is viable from a thorough inspection, the adaptive reuse of the present City Hall building for a good portion of the police department structure. But there is more good news.

Any additional tax burden created by passage of the Nov. 8 bond issue has already been at least partially if not totally offset by the recent reduction in everyone's property insurance premiums due to the change in the City's fire rating, which improved the City of Alamo Heights from an ISO (Insurance Service Office, Inc.) class 5 to an ISO class 2 rating, on a 1-10 rating system, with 1 being the best and 10 being the worst. This was made possible by the efforts of our fire department, which presented as evidence in favor of the change, the purchase of a new ladder truck, as well as investments in the city's water distribution system and our emergency dispatch communications center. Only 1% of all communities surveyed in the nation received an ISO rating of 2. This entitles Alamo Heights residents to a maximum credit on their property insurance premiums (class 1 and class 2 receive the same credit). This typically translates to an estimated 10-15% decrease in homeowner's insurance premiums. For an annual property insurance premium of \$2,000, this should mean a reduction of at least \$200 a year. If that did not happen to you, be sure your insurance agent is aware of this change. Compare that to the City's projection (based on a \$6.3 million bond issue and an estimated 4.5% fixed interest rate leading to a tax rate increase of \$0.041) that the owners of a \$355,000 home would see an increase of about \$146 a year on their property taxes. Our city employees' efforts to bring that about provides an additional element in favor of the bond's passage. In addition, operating costs should be reduced from lower utility costs arising from the installation of more energy efficient equipment, windows and insulation.

All in all, the level of effort put forth to both communicate with the voters and to develop a well crafted and financially conservative plan to meet a demonstrated need, leads me to **ask for your support in seeing that the Proposition passes on the ballot in November.** Should you still have any questions, go to the City's website or ask one of your City Councilmen for any additional information.

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SMOOTH START TO 2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR

DR. KEVIN BROWN,
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Alamo Heights ISD has had a wonderful start to the school year! Nearly 4,800 students have enrolled in school this year – our largest enrollment in 42 years. We have had a very smooth beginning.

COLLEGE READINESS - TOP 1% IN USA

The year began with the good news that the *Washington Post* ranked Alamo Heights High School as one of the top 1% of high schools in America. The criteria for the ranking involved college readiness, something we care about greatly. In the class of 2011, 96% of AHHS students are attending a college or university this fall. Although the high ranking is a well-deserved honor for the high school, it also reflects tremendous work by our teachers from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, as well as strong parent and community support. We should all be very proud of our students' accomplishments.

RECORD ENROLLMENT & BOND CONSTRUCTION

With our extra large enrollment this year, it is fortunate that we were able to complete a lot of construction before students arrived. At Woodridge Elementary, we were able to add nine additional spaces for classroom instruction without adding any square footage. That addressed the needs of our students while keeping our costs low. Woodridge has grown to 930 students this year. At the high school, major work was completed to stabilize the

foundation in some areas, and we are in the middle of completing a new fine arts complex expansion. We hope to have students in that building before school dismisses in May. Solar panels will be installed at Woodridge and AHHS early in 2012, providing much needed income to the district. Additionally, the fine arts facility at the high school should be completed in late spring to accommodate the increasing number of students in strings, choir and band. Work on Howard and Cambridge will begin next year.

HEROIC STAFF

Although the state cut \$2.3 million in funds to AHISD, our staff is committed to providing the highest quality education to our children. They come to work every day with a positive attitude, ready to serve our children. They have not allowed these cuts to diminish their love of teaching, dedication to their students, or their sense of fellowship with each other. I am proud to work with our outstanding team to serve your children and grandchildren.

Have a great school year!

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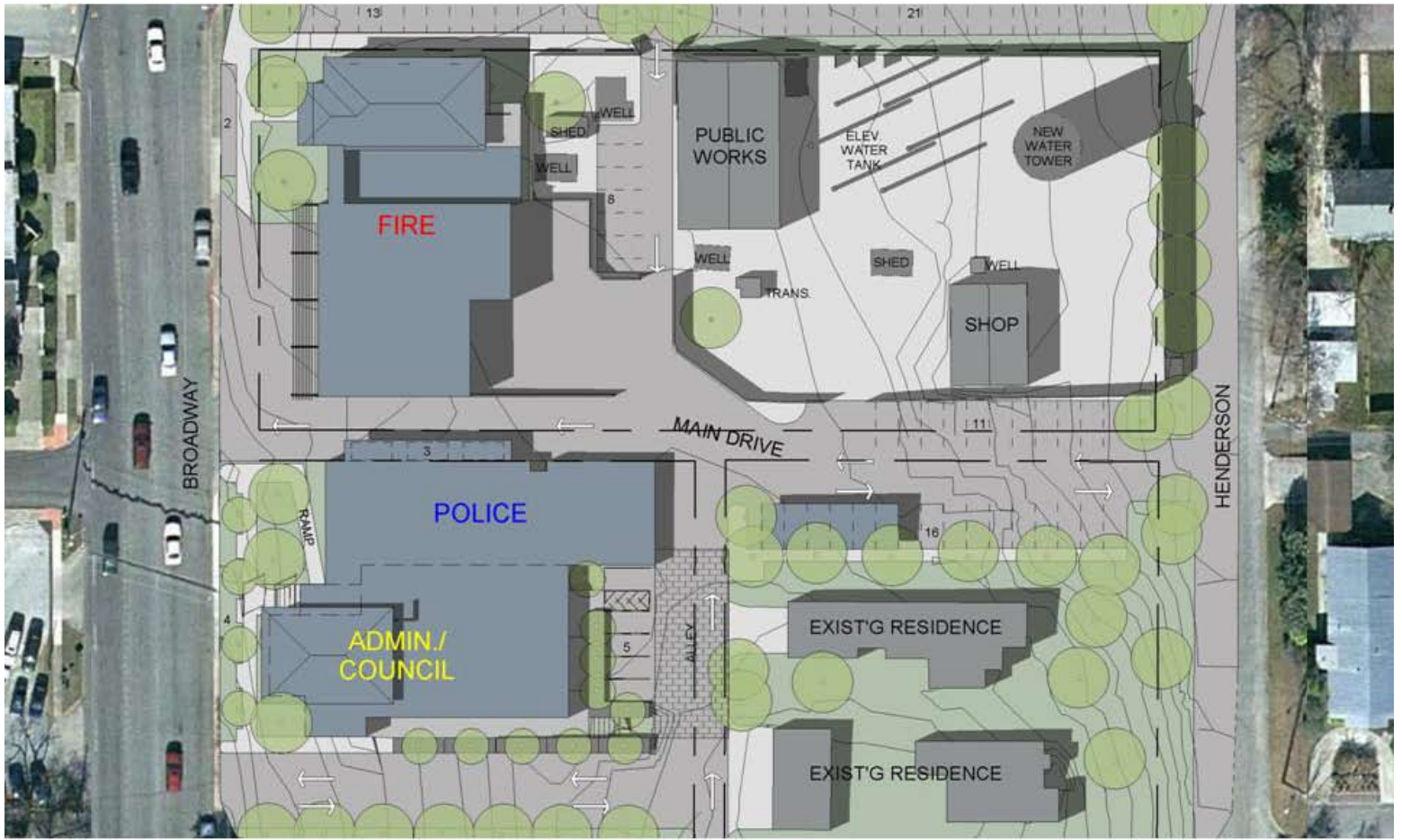
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SITE PLAN - PROPOSED CITY HALL COMPLEX

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WHAT'S COOKING in

Mrs. Craig's Legendary Desserts

For over a quarter century the people of Alamo Heights loved the extraordinary desserts of Mrs. Pat Craig who operated a home bakery from her house on Joliet, just off Broadway. During the 1950s and 60s Mrs. Craig sold her distinctive, homemade desserts in her living and dining rooms. No one who walked through her front door will ever forget the heavenly aromas and her coming out of the kitchen, wiping her hands on her apron and greeting them with a big smile. And no one could forget her many feline friends.








Those were, indeed, the good old days! Many current residents still fondly recall her incredible home-baked goodies. Mrs. Craig always said her aim in life was "just to make people happy." She certainly did that!

Her daughter, **Sandee Craig Middleton**, said her mom never used a recipe. During her mother's last few years, Sandee was able to record some of her recipes and methods. It was often an arduous exercise because her mom never measured anything and baked in such large quantities. Mrs. Craig's favorite expression was "till the batter feels right."

Special thanks to **Joann Fielden**, and the **Hasslochers—Susan, Jill and Bobby** for find these wonderful, treasured recipes. Hopefully, some of your favorites were included last month, below or in *The ADVOCATE* in this continuing series.

Start baking!

MRS. CRAIG'S POUND CAKE

-  8 eggs
-  2 cups sugar
-  1 lb. butter
-  2 tbsp. vanilla (or almond) extract
-  1 tsp. salt
-  1 tsp. baking powder
-  4 cups cake flour

Beat butter and sugar together.

Add eggs one at a time while beating.

Add vanilla/almond.

Sift together flour, salt and baking powder and add slowly to batter until well blended.

Pour into large mold or bundt pan which has been buttered and floured.

Bake at 325° for almost an hour until a toothpick can be inserted in top and removed clean.

Remove from pan.

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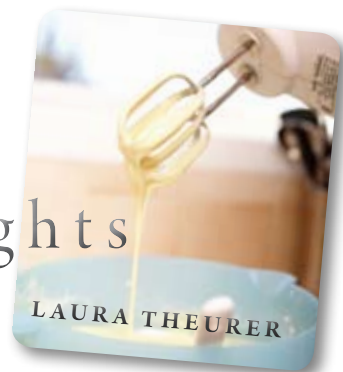
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Alamo Heights



MRS. CRAIG'S LEMON MERINGUE PIE

-  6 egg yolks
-  2 cups sugar
-  2 tbsp. butter
-  2/3 cup lemon juice
-  1/2 tsp. salt
-  1/2 cup corn starch
-  2 cups water

Combine sugar, corn starch and salt. Add water and boil in a heavy saucepan until thick and clear.

Add beaten egg yolks and continue cooking, stirring constantly, until thick again.

Remove from heat, add lemon juice and butter. Blend well.

Pour into baked pie shell and top with meringue, sealing edges.

Bake at 425° briefly until meringue peaks begin to brown.



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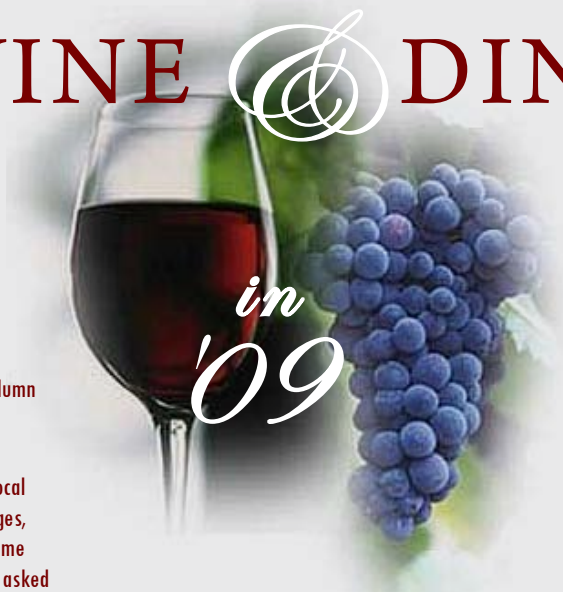
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WINE & DINE



in
'09

NOTE: To encourage everyone to “wine and dine in ‘09” to help keep the restaurants that we have now, *The ADVOCATE* has launched this column to regularly provide review restaurants and bars in the Alamo Heights area in an unbiased manner.

The Phantom Foodie will anonymously visit local establishments, pay in full for all food and drink charges, and regularly give unbiased opinions based on a lifetime of devotion to gourmet cooking and fine dining. When asked “what are you making for dinner?”

The Phantom Foodie usually answers: “Reservations!”

You are encouraged to patronize the restaurants and bars we have along Broadway. That's the only way we can keep them here.

The Phantom Foodie

Hitch up the wagon, pile the family in and head over to Broadway and Alamo Heights's newest eatery, a barbecue place called the **RUSTY BUCKET BBQ** at **6421 Broadway at the corner of College Blvd.** in the old rock-faced service station. Apparently it's really true what they say about BBQ restaurants in former gas stations!

The Rusty Bucket describes their prize-winning pit smoked BBQ as “jaw smackin” and it really is. Enjoy a simple meal either outside among the picnic tables or go inside where cool A.C. and lots of old toys and license plates on the walls and ceiling will aid the digestion. There are even ‘green boards’ on the lower walls with plenty of chalk to keep your lil’ budding Georgia O’Keefes or Norman Rockwells sketching away while you order at the counter.

This is the best smoked BBQ for miles around and moderately priced. You can buy smoked meats (brisket, sausage, ribs, turkey, chicken or pork loin) by the pound and sides of Mac or potato salad, pinto beans, cream corn, coleslaw or spicy green beans by the pint or quart. They also have beef jerky by the half-pound or pound. Eat in or order to go. Pick and choose--there are even Family Orders of meats by the pound with sides, plus a gallon of tea (the priciest item on the menu, but enough to feed the whole posse).

The smoky flavor is just right, with a bit of crusty edges on the meat yet moist inside so that you don't even need to slather on any of their sauce, unless you really like sauce. (I don't.) Even the ribs are very moist and juicy, never greasy or salty. Quench your thirst with ice tea, sodas or cold water.

For lunch try a combo plate of one, two or three meats, plus two sides of your choice. Or a sandwich of any of the meats chopped with a split sausage on top (absolutely the best!) which also comes with chips and tea. If you prefer, get a side instead of chips. Just tell 'em...for less than \$1 more, you can substitute any side. My favorite is the turkey/sausage sandwich with the Mac salad, a cold macaroni salad with flecks of green onion and cheddar cheese in a very light mayo mix.

Potato salad is just right and the slaw is tangy and crisp. To my taste, the cream corn is a little runny and the spicy green beans a bit hot. But others who've tried these sides pronounce them just right. You be the judge.

Hi-ho-Silver! Try the Lone Ranger Combo if you can't make up your mind about what to order. Get this sandwich of chicken, brisket and sausage packed on a sesame seed bun. It's excellent! And if you're still needing a little more to tide you over for the ride home, try the peach and apple cobbler with ice cream. Just be sure to let your belt out a notch or two.

On their menu the Annis and Rhodes families thank Alamo Heights for welcoming them to the neighborhood. *The Phantom Foodie* says: thanks to them for coming our way with such fine chow.

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CRIME BLOTTER

The *ADVOCATE* thanks Chief of Police Rick Pruitt and the entire AHPD for the outstanding job they do 24/7. We also greatly appreciate their sharing the CRIME BLOTTER with our readers as a public service to alert the entire community to what is going on around Alamo Heights, especially in our neighborhoods. AHNA is happy to provide this space at our expense, not the City's. The CRIME BLOTTER is printed verbatim and unedited from public information provided by AHPD.

- Theft** 9/17/11 300 blk. Wildrose
Fed-Ex package delivered to front porch was stolen before owner returned home.
- Vehicle Burglary** 9/16/11 200 blk. Argo
Vehicle parked in residential driveway was illegally entered to steal property left in open view. No signs of forced entry.
- Theft** 9/13/11 4800 blk. Broadway
A purse was stolen from a shopping cart while owner was distracted shopping.
- Theft** 9/12/11 200 blk. Halcyon
Fed-Ex package delivered to front porch was stolen before owner returned home.
- Theft** 9/08/11 100 blk. W. Elmview
Property owner reported evicted tenant stole all the kitchen appliances, bathroom fixtures and ceiling fans. **AHPD Detectives recovered stolen property valued at \$18,000.**

- Theft** 9/08/11 200 blk. Encino
Resident reported several items of value stolen from the home over a short period of time. Housekeeper is suspected.
- Vehicle Burglary** 9/07/11 5000 blk. Broadway
Vehicle parked in commercial parking lot was forcibly entered and a carry bag in open view was stolen.
- Theft** 9/01/11 200 blk. Claywell
UPS package delivered to front porch was stolen before owner returned home.
- Theft** 9/01/11 300 blk. Alta
Miscellaneous tools stolen from unsecure garage area.
- Vehicle Burglary** 8/30/11 5300 blk. Broadway
Vehicle parked in a commercial parking lot was unlawfully entered and a laptop computer left on the front seat in open view was stolen. There were no signs of forced entry to the vehicle.

» CONTINUED on page 9

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CRIME BLOTTER *cont'd*

Theft **8/30/11** **900 blk. Cambridge Oval**
Lawn equipment left in open view was stolen from the back of an unattended pick-up truck.

Vehicle Burglary **8/26/11** **5000 blk. Broadway**
Vehicle parked in a commercial parking lot was unlawfully entered by breaking a window. Property left in open view on the seat was stolen.

Vehicle Burglary **8/25/11** **100 blk. Vanderhoeven**
Four vehicles were forcibly entered and sound systems stolen. Cable company employee working nearby provided description of suspects and their vehicle.

Credit Card Abuse **8/24/11** **1000 blk. Townsend**
Multiple credit cards were stolen from an unattended wallet. Numerous unauthorized transactions were made in the San Antonio area within hours.

Credit Card Abuse **8/23/11** **4900 blk. Broadway**
A wallet was stolen while owner was shopping. Numerous unauthorized transactions using credit and debit cards were reported in various parts of San Antonio.

► *Founder's Message continued from pg. 2*

In 2009 we were told the City Hall could never be built for under \$10.3m. We now know that was dead wrong. This year's project has everything the City needs and, even though it is two years later, the price has come down \$4m. In 2009 I publicly said the project should've cost \$5m. I think time and facts have validated that. Two years ago, if things had been done differently, it could have been built for \$5-\$5.5m. Given the cost increases in material, especially metals, since then I think \$5m was fairly accurate back then. But the actual price of the bond then was double that and the voters rightly rejected the \$10.3m City Hall Taj Mahal.

Now we have a viable, attractive, reasonably priced alternative that is no Taj Mahal.

If you are even remotely thinking about voting against the Proposition on Nov. 8 (since there's only one Proposition on the ballot this time it is not numbered) please do yourself, your fellow residents and the Fire and Police Departments a big favor. Take 15 minutes, stop by the Fire Station and ask to look around. If you haven't visited there lately, you will be stunned at the deplorable conditions the firefighters and EMTs live and work in. There is one room for eight firefighters to sleep in dorm-style, and only one shower.

On Nov. 8 I'm voting YES on the Proposition and I hope you will too.

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Open Records Requests to City of AH

From June 3, 2011 to August 1, 2011

6/3/2011	Beth Morgan	1.video tape from citation E022172 (CD) 2. All police officer documentation from E022172
6/6/2011	Ginnel Reyes	Blueprints of our out-house built outside of our main home, specifically proof for water & electrical
6/8/2011	Tyler Bowker	Any info on resignation investigation of Tyler J Bowker
6/13/2011	Leslie Vigni	Bldg permit & minor repair for last 6 months from June for all AH residential addresses
6/13/2011	William Kiel	Copy of most current numbers on drought analysis
6/15/2011	Yael Vinciguerra (1)	Bldg permits issued in 5-11 for residential construction valued over \$30,000, commercial construction valued over \$30,000 & all swimming pools
6/17/2011	Suzy Bettac	Copy of ADA Report by Richard Berry paid for on 5-27-11 with ck #27865 for \$656.25
6/28/2011	Robert Ruggiero	Audio file for 6-27-11 City Council Meeting
6/28/2011	Sarah Reveley	Copies of all correspondence re: 139 Harrigan after Nathan Lester's 4-5-11 e-mail to Brian Chandler
6/17/2011	Taylor Coulthurst	Copy of police video of arrest in incident #11-01383
7/1/2011	Carole Bartholomew (2)	Copies of issued permits for 6-11 with contractor, job address, value, sq. footage & issue date
7/1/2011	Lucy S Perez (3)	List of each permit issued 6-11 for new residential & commercial facilities plus additions & renovations with baseline of \$25,000. Also list of permits issued for in-ground pools
7/11/2011	Tyler Bowker	Copy of time card 5/22
7/11/2011	Mary Faanunu (4)	All Commercial & Residential Bldg permits (snpl family homes, commercial bldgs, additions, remodel, tentants improvements, patios, etc.) & swimming pools. Info needed: permit #, date, site address, valuation, description of work being done, contractor & owner
7/15/2011	Suzy Bettac	1. Fund balance report given to Council @ Budget mtg detailing budgets by dept but not provided to public 2.Electrical assessment study by Cleary Zimmerman Engineers provided to CoAH on 11-18-10 & referred to @ 2-7-11 Facilities Cmte mtg 3.Did CoAH purchase emergency generator Council allocated expenditure of \$250,000 from Utility funds?
7/14/2011	Suzy Bettac	Copy of all campaign finance reports due 7-15-11 for Hasslocher, Cooper, Rosenthal, AH Neighborhood Assn. (sic), Weser, Prassel & Savage
7/19/2011	Andrew Grohe	Copy of 2009 site plan done by Lake-Flato
7/19/2011	Suzy Bettac	Copy of 1-15-11 campaign filings of Councilmen Weser & Savage plus AH Neighborhood Cmte
7/25/2011	Bonnie Hernandez	Copy of list of all new businesses 5-1-11 to 7-31-11 incl address, phone # & name of owner
7/29/2011	Lucy S Perez (3)	List of each permit issued 7-11 for new residential & commercial facilities plus additions & renovations with baseline of \$25,000. Also list of permits issued for in-ground pools
7/29/2011	Sarah Reveley	Copies of all correspondence (e-mail, text messages, hard-copy, etc.) involving Facilities Cmte, City Council & staff 5-7-11 to 7-29-11 (Notation: "large request")
8/1/2011	Carole Bartholomew (2)	Copy of issued permits for 7-11 listing contractor, job address, value, sq. footage, issued date or whatever you have on your monthly report.
8/1/2011	William Kiel	Copies of campaign financial reports from 5-11 election to include A) formation or amendments to existing campaigns; B) 30 days prior; C) 8 days prior; D) Final (7-15-11) for 1.Susan Harwell-All reports (A,B,C,D) 2.AHNC- A,B,C 3.Louis Cooper-A,B,C 4. Bobby Rosenthal-A,B,C 5. John Savage- A,B,C 6. Sarah Reveley A,B,C,D 7. Prop. 3 Supporter- A,B,C,D
8/1/2011	Jady King (5)	Copies of building permits issued 7-11 covering residential construction valued over \$30,000, commercial construction valued over \$30,000 & all swimming pools

Non-Alamo Heights Residents:

- (1) Yael Vinciguerra, Construction Enterprise Information, 1206 W 43rd St, Austin TX 78756. Phone: (512) 814-5892
 (2) Carole Bartholomew, 1423 Swallow Circle, Lewisville, TX Phone: (972) 318-0026
 (3) Lucy S Perez, HBW, Inc., 227 Merry Ann, San Antonio TX 78223. Phone: (210) 533-1131

- (4) Mary Faanunu, PO Box 2202, Cedar City, UT 84721. Phone: 1(800)925-6085 ext 130
 (5) Jady King, Construction Enterprise Information, 1206 W 43rd St, Austin TX 78756. Phone: (512) 814-5892



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Alamo Heights
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MISSION STATEMENT

To encourage and secure the preservation of the distinctive and unique beauty of the Alamo Heights community by being an active force in the planning processes and problem-solving efforts of the city while promoting community education and safety in a cooperative, progressive manner.



2011 NRC Awards Luncheon with Mayor Julian Castro

Friday, October 21, 2011
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The program honors and recognizes neighborhood and homeowner associations and individuals who are doing good work in their communities.

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