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# City of Balcones Heights

March, 2004

[www.balconesheights.org](http://www.balconesheights.org)

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*Mayor*

**Jim Craven**

*Mayor Pro Tem &  
Councilman, Place 5*

**Bill Johnson**

*Councilwoman, Place 4*

**Lucille Wohlfarth**

*Councilwoman, Place 3*

**Melissa Castro**

*Councilman, Place 2*

**Steve Walker**

*Councilman, Place 1*

**Bennie Cass**

*City Administrator*

**Lanny Lambert**

## Residents say NO to VIA referendum

### Council agrees in 5-0 vote

Anger and fear were expressed as strong resistance from residents, bus riders and businesses at two public hearings at the Justice Center, convinced Council to unanimously vote against placing a referendum on the May 15th ballot to opt out of VIA.

The response from citizens and non-citizens alike was overwhelmingly against dropping out of VIA and using the nearly \$500-thousand tax dollars for repairs on infrastructure.

A number of residents expressed their opposition although they didn't personally ride the bus.

At the second hearing, Jesse Pacheco, who lives on Shadyview, spoke for opting out and criticized VIA for its unequal formula for taxing suburbs.

"We are taxed heavier for the number of residents we have as compared to other suburbs," he added.

Former resident Linda Hartman also took VIA to task for scaring bus riders by threatening to pull out of Balcones Heights and padding their numbers. "If I ran my business the way VIA did, I would have some major problems," she said.

Roland Mena, who lives on Crestview accused VIA of deception and distortion of the facts.

City Administrator Lanny Lambert addressed the second public hearing by pointing out how the Council came to consider looking at the revenue

generated by the 1/2 cent tax.

He suggested a number of scenarios to include maintaining the current 1/2 cent tax and using it for economic development.

According to Lambert, "we were looking to use the 1/2 cent tax to build a new City Hall, Senior Center or Library. We could have upgraded parks, purchase a street sweeper, repair the streets and address drainage programs."

### Concern for residents

He also noted that the Council needed to be more concerned about the residents who they represent than those who lived in San Antonio.

He told the packed audience that he averaged 20 calls a day from people who did not live in Balcones Heights complaining about the City wanting to cut off the buses in the City, even though they didn't even ride buses through the City.

Sheldon Padgett, VIA CEO informed the Council that the City had accrued \$434-thousand dollars in its escrow account to use to pay for infrastructure repairs.

He also volunteered to assist the City in finding ways to stretch the funds to make the needed repairs.

### 61 citizens speak

Twenty-five speakers addressed the Council at the first meeting and 36 speakers addressed the Council at the second public hearing.

# Crossroads Mall is officially the new home of the annual Cowboy breakfast

A revised estimate of over 50 thousand excited would-be cowboys converged on Crossroads Mall in January for the annual Cowboy Breakfast.

According to Cecil Lankford, event chairman, "I think we have found us a new permanent home."

Seventy Sheriff's Deputies and numerous Constables from Bexar County assisted Bal-

cones Heights police officers, who directed the traffic around the Mall while the deputies controlled the grounds.

Interim Police Chief Robert de la Garza called in reserve police officers to beef up the security.

During the event, numerous elected officials participated in a cow chip throw. Officials included: District Attorney

Susan Reed, Commissioner Tommy Adkisson, Sheriff Ralph Lopez, Constable Charlie Campos, County Judge Nelson Wolff, Mayor Jim Craven, Councilman Steve Walker and El Rey Feo Tom Sinini.

Event officials said the food ran out by 7 a.m. and over 500 volunteers showed up to include Council members Bennie Cass and Lucille Wohlfarth.

## Filing deadline for office is March 15th

Deadline for this year's City Council election will end Friday, March 15th at 5 p.m. at the Justice Center.

### May 15th election day

This year's election has been changed from the first Saturday in May to the third Saturday in May by state law. May 15th the polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Early voting will begin

Wednesday, April 28th to Monday, May 11th.

Early voting will begin at 8 a.m. and end at 4:30 p.m. until May 4th and from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. on the 5th of May to the 11th..

This year, Place 1, 2 and the Mayor's slot are up for grabs. Currently those seats are being held by Bennie Cass, Steve Walker, and Jim Craven, respectively.

To be qualified to run, a

resident must be a US citizen, 18 years old, have not been determined mentally incompetent, not convicted of a felony, have resided in the state for 12 consecutive months and resided in Balcones Heights for six months. Candidate's packets must be filled out and notarized.

For those interested in serving on the Council, contact City Secretary Delia Flores at 735-9148 ext. 236.

## Valentine's dance is "unforgettable"

Balcones Heights Seniors danced the night away at the City sponsored Senior Valentine's Dance at the convention center at Crossroads Mall, Thursday, February 12th.

Nearly 60 seniors attended the free dance which hosted DJ Charlie Lopez playing the tunes of the 30s, 40s, and 50s.

He played such tunes as "unforgettable," and "time goes by," some swing music and ballads from the Mills Brothers.

According to event coordinator Steve Walker,

"the dance was to honor all the contributions the seniors of Balcones Heights have made over the years."

Various local businesses donated gift certificates and various prizes for those who attended.

Business Alliance Director, Lynn Calkin said, "it was great fun listening to all the old tunes that I grew up with as a little girl."

Calkin pointed out that there were so many gift certificates and prizes, no one went home empty handed. (con't on page 5)

## Council votes 3-2 to fund a VIA bus for the El Marco apartments

A heated discussion on who should pay for a bus for the El Marco and Santa Fe Apartments ended in a 3-2 vote at the February 9th Council meeting.

The controversy arose during the recent public hearings when Council voted 5-0 not to opt out of VIA.

At the February 2nd public hearing, Via Chairman Sheldon Padgett offered the bus line as an incentive to the Council for not placing a referendum on the May ballot.

Two months earlier, Maria Cruz, El Marco Apartments manager and apartment resident Rosa Mall, addressed the Council during the Citizen's To

Be Heard segment, requesting assistance in lining up a bus for the elementary students who live at El Marco.

According to Cruz, "the San Antonio School District will not schedule a bus for El Marco kids because they say we are less than two miles from Arnold Elementary. The problem is our kids have to walk across IH10 to get to school. That is a safety issue. Our kids have been without a bus for nearly three years."

Padgett told the residents of Balcones Heights that VIA could provide the bus and the City could fund it with the monies in the VIA local Assistance

program.

He also noted that once the bus was in place, VIA would negotiate with SAISD to place the El Marco and Santa Fe bus on their permanent route.

The escrow account has accumulated \$434-thousand in the fund since 1992.

Funding a bus for the rest of the school year will be \$9-thousand dollars.

Despite some objections by two Council members that it was SAISD's responsibility to fund the bus and not the City, Council members Bennie Cass, Lucille Wohlfarth and Steve Walker voted in favor of the temporary measure.

## Administrator proposes capital improvements

City Administrator Lanny Lambert presented 10 capital improvement proposals to the Council for consideration at a later date at the February 9th Council meeting.

The proposals include:

- Mill and Hot Mix Overlay for City streets
- Two course seal coat for City streets
- Slurry seal for City streets
- Street lights with Banner Posts along Fredericksburg Road & Hillcrest
- Welcome to Balcones heights structures and landscaping along Fredericksburg Road
- Police Reimbursement for VIA law enforcement activities
- New sidewalks along City streets
- New Handicap access corner for sidewalk corners on City Streets
- New Covered bus stops along Fredericksburg Road
- New street & stop signs throughout the City

If approved, all will be funded from the VIA Local Assistance Program.

## Attorney recommends sign ordinance change

City Attorney Frank Garza recommended some changes to temporary sign regulations at the February 9th City Council meeting.

Councilman Bennie Cass requested that the Planning & Zoning Commission look at the changes before the Council approves them.

From L to R:  
Councilwoman  
Lucille Wohlfarth,  
Suzanne de Leon,  
Sam Barr,  
Cris Iden and her  
father.



(Con't from page 2) **More on Valentine's Dance**

Emanuel Herrera decorated the room and provided the food for the Seniors.  
Herrera hung hearts, cupids, and assorted mobiles from the ceiling which added to the atmosphere.  
Moving centerpieces flanked the ends of the serving tables. "It was delightful touch," said Council woman Lucille Wohlfarth who also was observed dancing to her favorite tunes.  
Attendee Clem Rocha said, "the music was great and my wife, Eva and I had a great time."  
Evelyn Guerrero pointed out that the music brought many good memories.  
Numerous couples spent much time on the

dance floor to include Arnoldo Muniz and his wife Elisha, Clem and Eva Rocha, Ambrose and Hallie Vince, and George Moellering and his wife Edna.  
Natalie and Rudy Torres echoed the sentiments of many who attended, agreeing "we need to do this every year."  
Door prizes included gift certificates from Grady's Barbecue, Frontier Enterprises, Whataburger, Merle Norman Cosmetics, Amerisuites Hotel, Bonanza Family Steakhouse, Babe's Old Fashioned Hamburgers, caps and mugs from 3A triple Keys Mini-Storage, Letty's Gift Shop, Catherine's Woman Shop and many more.

**Ask the Administrator**

By Lanny Lambert

Fellow Citizens:  
I hope to get around in the next month to meet you personally. I intend to walk the neighborhoods and the business district to meet you, the Citizens.  
Please save your questions for our next meeting or call me at 735-9148, Ext. 227.  
I look forward to meeting you. We are working on street maintenance, a drainage plan, park playground equipment and maintenance, new police and fire safety equipment, and increased code compliance; (weeds, junk automobiles, trash and junk.)  
We will also look at the 2004-2005 budget. Contact me if you have any comments on these issues or if you wish to report problems. **In Balcones Heights, the best is yet to come.**

**Letter to the Editor**

Maria Cruz, the manager of the El Marco Apartments (4300 Fredericksburg Road) has been trying for three years to convince SAISD to provide a bus for our children who have to walk across a freeway to school. Thanks to the Balcones Heights City Council for stepping in and appropriating money for a VIA bus. Once the Council provided a VIA bus, SAISD suddenly decided the walk across the Freeway was hazardous after all and have offered a school bus. The good news is that we have a school bus for our little ones. Thank you Balcones Heights!  
**Rosa Mall, El Marco Apartments**

**NOTE:** After the City Council voted to contract with VIA to provide a bus for the El Marco students, SAISD had a change of heart and are now providing a school bus to Arnold Elementary. The \$9-thousand dollar contract is terminated and the money is credited to the City's VIA escrow account.

## Candidates file for office

With the filing deadline near, four candidates have already filed for office. They include Mayor Jim Craven and Councilman Steve Walker for

Mayor, Bennie Cass filing for re-election to place 1 and Suzanne de Leon filing for place 2, currently held by Steve Walker.

## First brush pickup for 2004-March 29th

The first of three annual clean-ups is scheduled for the residential area in Balcones Heights for March 29th.

- March 22nd through March 26th (actual pick-up, Monday, March 29th)
- No household hazardous waste
- No appliances with freon

All discarded items such as old furniture, hot water heaters, appliances, brush, etc. must be placed at curbside in front of the residence to be

serviced no later than 7 a.m. on Monday of the actual pick-up. **No brush should be put to the curb earlier than ten days prior to the pickup.**

Since the collection vehicles will pass down each street only once, pick-up cannot be assured if bulky waste items are placed on the curb after the above cut-off date and time.

The second pickup is scheduled for July 26th and the third pickup is scheduled for November 15th.

## Sewer Service rate increases

The Balcones Heights City Council has established new sanitary sewer charges applicable to all customers within the City sewer service area. The new rates will be effective and included on the March water bill.

Residential	Current	New Rate
0 to 2992 gallons	\$7.62 minimum	\$9.37 minimum
Over 2992 gallons	.1701/100 gallons	.2092/100 gallons
Commercial	Current	New Rate
0 to 2992	\$7.32	.2187/100 gallons
2993 to 22,443 gallons	.0778/100 gallons	.2187/100 gallons
Over 22,443	.1699/100 gallons	.2090/100 gallons

Correction from last issue. Rebecca Sheffield who spoke at the public hearing was listed as assistant manager at the Villa Madrid/Cumberland Apartments. In reality she is a volunteer assistant and not a paid employee.

The Business Alliance will meet for their monthly business meeting and lunch at Career Point Institute, Wed., March 17th at noon. Career Point is located at 485 Spencer Lane across from the Diamond Shamrock gas station on Fredericksburg Road. For more information contact Lynn Calkin at 735-3255.

**The Balcones Heights Newsletter is the official publication of the City of Balcones Heights. Articles must be submitted to Editor Steve Walker before the last day of the month. For more information, call City Administrator Lanny Lambert at 735-9148, at Ext. 227.**

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## City Roster

City Secretary.....	Delia Flores.....	Ext. 236
Municipal Court Clerk.....	Yvonne Baez.....	Ext. 223
Asst. Court Clerk.....	Michelle Garcia.....	Ext. 224
Police Chief.....	Kenneth Menn.....	Ext. 237
Ast. Police Chief.....	Robert de laGarza.....	Ext. 238
Police Secretary.....	Gracie Lerma.....	Ext. 222
Detective Sgt.....	Joyce Pena.....	Ext. 232
Special Investigator.....	Lee Powers.....	Ext. 240
Dispatcher.....		Ext. 225
Financial Officer.....	JoAnn Vidal.....	Ext. 244
City Administrator.....	Lanny Lambert.....	Ext. 227
Mayor.....	Jim Craven.....	Ext. 235
Code Compliance.....	Ben Hoeffner.....	Ext. 241
Balcones Heights Justice Center.....		735-9148

## Upcoming events in Balcones Heights

- Regularly scheduled City Council meetings are held the second Monday each month at 6 p. m. at the Justice Center located at the corner of Hillcrest (3300 block) and Gentlemen Road. All citizens are invited to attend. Meetings are held on the first floor in the courtroom.
- Senior Citizen's Dinner will be held the 4th Thursday of the month at the Community Center, located at 107 Glenarm Ave. at 6 p.m. For more information, call Edna Moelnering at 733-8718.
- Deadline for filling for office is March 15th at 5 p.m.