



ARBORS ANGLES



Bits from the Board

by AIA Board

Any of you who have used the South Gate, have seen the new signs posted informing residents and visitors of the surveillance cameras now in operation. If you attended the Neighborhood Night Out at the Park, pictures were displayed that are examples of what the cameras capture when a vehicle goes through the gates. The cameras will be connected to high speed internet service so the pictures can be downloaded on computers both in the Arbors or at the Sheriff's office if the need arises.

The Board is considering placing cameras at the North gate pending an evaluation of the performance of the ones at the South Gate.

The fence along Highway 95 that was damaged as a result of the double fatality accident in 2009 has been re-built by Arbors Maintenance Committee members. The MC plans to replace the fencing along the entrance to the North Gates in the near future as well.

As the seasons change, Arbors residents must be aware of the conditions if they plan to do any outdoor burning. The National Weather Service issues Fire Weather Warnings from time to time with the passage

of a cold front. Conditions with the passage of a cold front can deteriorate rapidly and even though there is no "BURN BAN" in effect, high winds and low humidities can be a mixture for disaster. Before you burn, check the weather forecast and plan your burn accordingly. Remember, Arbors By-Laws prohibit any Clear Lot Burning at any time. Small campfires and burn piles are allowed at appropriate times. Residents must have water readily available in case of an emergency.

The Maintenance Committee will start to replace the street signs this month starting with the signs on Dogwood all the way to Arbors Circle. The signs in Section 1 will be replaced first and then the signs in Section 2 will be done. Please drive carefully when you see a work crew out and about.

Parking in the easements in the soft sand continues to be a problem. 99% of the time, it's a sub-contractor who doesn't speak or read English since we have plenty of signs posted to warn folks to stay on the roadway. If you are having any work done at your home, please inform the workers to park properly and not in the easement.

Alcoa Update

by Dale Pyeatt

My name is Dale Pyeatt and I live in the Arbors. I serve pro bono on the Community Advisory Panels (CAP) for both Alcoa Rockdale and Luminant Mining.

Alcoa produces aluminum worldwide and has a major plant at Rockdale in Milam County. Recently, Alcoa Rockdale suspended most of its aluminum smelter operations, including the pot lines, cast house, green anode pressing, and anode baking. Alcoa laid off approximately 820 employees in two separate phases. After the second lay-off, they maintained about 120 employees but now are down to about 70 at Rockdale. The only product currently made at Rockdale is aluminum powder which is used in metallic paints, solid propellant rocket fuel, and certain chemical processes. Last year Alcoa Rockdale processed 26.5 M pounds of aluminum powder. This product requires about 50 personnel, and the others are involved in maintaining the plant should it start production again, and several employees are involved in restoration of the land where the Sandow Mine is located as part of the Rockdale plant.

The 37,000 acre Rockdale plant

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Alcoa

continued

opened in 1952 and has capacity for producing 1.67 million pounds of aluminum in a single day. Alcoa Rockdale produced 40,000 pound sheet ingots, 1,500 pound primary ingots, and aluminum powder, and generated large amounts of electrical power in three generating plants which were used to produce the aluminum. At its peak, Alcoa Rockdale had about 1,200 employees. The electrical power plants were fueled by lignite which was mined locally at the 22,000 acre Sandow Mine, using open pit mining methods. Large draglines and huge dump haulers were used in this process. In 1981, a fourth power plant was built.

In 2004, Alcoa Rockdale suspended mining in Milam County and began operating Three Oaks Mine in Bastrop and Lee Counties, and mining these 14,000 acres is permitted by the State of Texas. The lignite is transferred from the mine to the power plant on a 12 mile long conveyor. The southern edge of Three Oaks is within 5 miles of the northern edge of the Arbors.

Luminant, which was part of Texas Electric Utilities (TXU) before electrical deregulation was initiated in Texas, is the largest power generating company in Texas. They are also the largest miner of lignite in Texas. Luminant operates two nuclear power plants and several lignite and natural gas power plants in Texas. In 2007, Luminant purchased from Alcoa the Three Oaks mining operation, Sandow power plant 4, and began building Sandow 5, a modern, fluidized bed plant which cost \$890 million and

became operational in 2009. Meanwhile, Sandow plants 1, 2, and 3 were shut down and dismantled, but their smoke stacks remain because they are too close to other facilities to implode.

Luminant is contractually obligated to provide electrical power to Alcoa Rockdale and the excess power is sold wholesale and distributed by the power grid managed by ERCOT (Electric Reliability Council of Texas) located in Taylor. ERCOT controls 75% of the power grid in Texas.

When Alcoa Rockdale ceased smelter operations, they cited market conditions and the high cost of electrical power from Luminant. At that time the worldwide price of aluminum was in the vicinity of \$1,600-\$1,700 per metric ton, and various company officials stated that it cost Alcoa \$2,400 to \$2,800 per metric ton to produce aluminum. The current worldwide price for aluminum is \$2,440 per ton, as quoted by the London Metals Exchange.

Alcoa sued Luminant for \$500 million; and in June 2010, a Milam County court rejected the claim and ordered Alcoa to pay \$10 million in damages to Luminant. Meanwhile, Alcoa has sold its railroad spur and entered a letter of intent with Florida development company, Velocita, to sell 13,400 acres of Alcoa property, basically all of the property that was not part of the Sandow Mine. The letter of intent would allow Alcoa to reopen the smelter even if they sell the land, and a deal and closure is expected to take at least another year, if ever.

Alcoa will continue to restore the remainder of the land that had been mined at Sandow. Alcoa Rockdale has posted a large bond to ensure that the property will be restored to better condition than before the mining started. The restoration will take another seven years to complete before the bond can be released. I have toured some of the restoration area, and in my opinion, Alcoa has done an excellent job. The areas I saw have been planted in native grasses and trees and contain several ponds and wetlands and abundant wildlife. Returning the property to the original contours and waterways is a condition of the bond. The restoration is overseen by several state and federal agencies.

Currently, Alcoa and Saudi Arabian Mining Co. are building a \$7.5 billion aluminum plant in Ras Azzour, Saudi Arabia that will contain an alumina foundry, aluminum mill, and a rolling mill. An adjacent power plant and desalination plant is being built by Saudi Electricity Co. Bauxite will be mined at Al Baitha. Because of the plant's integration, this factory is expected to produce the world's lowest cost alumina and aluminum products when it comes on line in 2013. It will also be the Middle East's first food-grade can sheet rolling mill.

The future of Alcoa Rockdale as well as other Alcoa plants in the U.S. is uncertain at this time. However, Luminant has a heavy investment in mining and electrical power generation and most likely will have a presence in Bastrop, Lee, and Milam Counties for a long time.

Yard of the Month

by Kathy Mowrey

The Yard of the Month is awarded each month from January through November. Watch for the yard sign as you are driving through the area.

June Yard of the Month

*Keith and Gail Newman
150 Juniper Trail*

July Yard of the Month

*Rufus and Debbie Vasquez III
261 Maple Leaf Trail*

August Yard of the Month

*Ovis and Connie Vestal
111 Spanish Oak Trail*

September Yard of the Month

*Rick and Donna Minks
120 Sycamore Trail*

October Yard of the Month

*Clay and Kristi Underwood
141 Juniper Trail*

November Yard of the Month

*Pat and Susie Anderson
110 Spanish Oak Trail*



Welcome Neighbors

by Welcome Committee

John & Valarie Salisbury

123 Sycamore Trail

Ed & Cathy Waley

236 Juniper Trail

Hans Larson

173 Pin Oak Crossing

Duane Weber & Ann White

109 Elm Wood Drive

Brian & Lorraine Mahoney

233 Maple Leaf Trail

Dave & Linda Holmes

275 Arbors Circle

Raibon & Peggy Clawson

119 Pin Oak Crossing

Fred & Jane Pollard

150 Elm Wood Drive

Christmas in the Arbors Contest

by Kathy Mowrey

Once again the Arbors will celebrate the magic of the Christmas season with a Christmas lighting and decorating contest. All those interested in participating please have your yard decorated and ready for judging by 7 P.M. Saturday, December 11th. This year we will award a prize and certificate in each of the following categories: Best Decorated Mailbox, Spirit of Christmas, Holiday Wonderland, and Magic of Lights. As always, our judges will be from outside our neighborhood in order to insure total impartiality. Winners will be notified; prizes and certificates will be presented on Sunday, December 12th. Be creative – and good luck!

Santa in the Park

by Welcome Committee

Santa in the Park will be held on December 11, 2010 from 10 am to 12 noon in the Arbors Park. December 12, 2010 is the rain date.

Santa and Mrs. Claus will visit the Arbors Community Park, arriving by fire truck. Each child and grandchild of Arbors residents is welcome to visit with Santa.

Each child will be given a Christmas ornament to decorate. (Note: family members will have to provide any needed assistance). Decorating supplies will be available.

Moms, dads, and grandparents: remember to bring your cameras to record this special holiday event! (Santa will arrive 11 am and leave at 12 noon.)

Cookies & beverages will be provided for your enjoyment.

Come and enjoy some Christmas cheer and visit with your neighbors!

We will again provide an opportunity to participate in the Elgin Blue Santa program. A box will be available to collect your donations of wrapped gifts. Please Attach a tag to each gift stating gender and age



SANTA IN THE PARK
DECEMBER 11, 2010
10 AM TO 12 NOON

Oaks in the Arbors

by Anneke Henderson

“Trees are poems that earth writes upon the sky...”(Kahlil Gibran)

If you recently purchased property in the Arbors it was likely because you like trees. And there are plenty of them. Most here are a variety of oak, though there are also Pecan, Sumac, Juniper, Cedar, Pine, Yau-pon, and a smorgasbord of small bushes. The oaks include the Post Oak, Blackjack, Bur, Shumard, Southern Red Oak, and Turkey Oak.

Nature’s choice of oaks here is not capricious: while some Arbors properties may have a ribbon of red/yellow clay running through them, the vast majority of lots in this community sport sandy soil...the kind that one refers to as the Good News, Bad News soil.

Good news: there is nothing detrimental in this soil.

Bad news: there is nothing in this soil.

ture well and worse, when fine sand dries completely, the surface can become water repellent. Natural organic materials that accumulate over years (leaves, decaying wood, etc) will eventually hold some moisture and provide nutrients but both leach to lower layers of sand. Trees adapted to our particular soil have done so because they 1) root down to tap into moisture and nutrient layers, or 2) have genetically evolved to withstand droughts. Usually it’s both.

One tree in particular, the Blackjack is much maligned by most oak lovers. It is not a majestic tree, doesn’t spread its branches far and wide, is not long lived, nor pest free. Of course, if it were all that, it wouldn’t be called a Blackjack, but a Live Oak!

What the Blackjack is though, is adaptive. Blackjacks occupy areas where soil is too poor or dry for oaks with more stature. They typically grow from central Texas, northeast, through Oklahoma, in what is known as the Cross Timbers belt.

The Blackjack is a relatively small

tree, usually under 35 feet tall with wide three-lobed leaves. Leaves stay on the tree all winter and are pushed off by new growth the next spring. Its trunk is often deeply furrowed and black in appearance... though its unknown whether the trees name is from the trunk color or the shape of the leaf (a leather covered bludgeon, a blackjack).

Unfortunately, despite its ability to adapt to hostile environs, this Rodney Dangerfield of oaks gets little respect from homeowners who tend to carry in mind a paean of “The Majestic Oak”. The Blackjack just doesn’t fit that image. They are not a nursery trade tree so many residents who have them on their property dispatch them with a chainsaw, and they don’t get replaced... what being ugly and all.

But, before dismissing this scrubby oak as a nuisance and relegating it to the woodpile, reflect on its toughness and adaptability under adverse conditions. It deserves at least that moment of recognition as one of the few tree species to spread throughout the Great Plains before the white settlement, and usually in areas where no oak had gone before.



Sandy soils do not retain moisture



National Night Out

October 5, 2010



Photos Courtesy of Sharon Lakings