

How Things Function, Get Done in Kingwood

By Richard P. McGucken

Many Kingwood residents may not understand how governmental and quasi-governmental organizations operate in Kingwood. This is particularly true of residents who have moved from other areas of the country. Because Houston does not have zoning, we depend on deed restrictions, enforced by our community associations to restrict how property owners use their property. Another organization, Kingwood Service Association provides services to the entire Kingwood community. The following is an attempt to clarify how things function and get done in Kingwood,

Back in the early 1970s, Friendswood Development Company, a subsidiary of Exxon, began development of the Kingwood community in unincorporated Harris County. With no zoning to protect property owners from undesirable development on nearby properties, deed restrictions enforced by community associations was the means established to protect development.

Community Associations

Kingwood is a community of “villages.” Each village has a community association, the purpose of which is to provide community, civic, and social welfare and to promote and/or to provide municipal services, educational and recreational services within their particular village. Property owners are members of their respective community association. These residents elect a board of directors, who are volunteers serving with no compensation.

Basically, each community association board of directors is charged with enforcing the deed restrictions and architectural standards on the properties within the village and maintaining village-owned property. Most community association boards of directors meet monthly. These meetings are open to the public. If residents have questions about what is happening in your community, attend the board meeting and get your questions answered. If you don't like the way things are being done, volunteer to either fill an open board position or volunteer to assist the board.

Most of the community associations in Kingwood own swimming pools and community rooms. They also maintain landscaped entries. They employ a management firm to handle the administrative duties of the association. Your annual assessments are used to pay for maintenance, repair and replacement of these facilities as well as the assessment charged to each member community association by the Kingwood Service Association (KSA).

Trail Associations

A 75+ mile greenbelt system winds throughout Kingwood. These trails preserve the natural vegetation in the area and to provide safe access to schools, parks, and shopping without having to cross major roads. Residents can walk, ride bikes or roller blade through tunnels built along the major streets. Depending upon the particular location in Kingwood, these trails are maintained by a community association or a separate trails association.

Kingwood Service Association

The Kingwood Service Association was formed “to provide for community, civic and social welfare in the Kingwood Area of Harris and Montgomery Counties, Texas and to promote the health, safety and welfare of the Kingwood Area residents and property owners.¹ Kingwood community associations contract with KSA to provide group property, liability, and other insurance, maintenance to common areas, facilities and services of overall benefit to the Kingwood residents. KSA owns parks and recreation areas and provides for maintenance that are not the responsibility of the individual village community associations. Entrances to Kingwood are also the responsibility of KSA. Each member community association selects a member of its board to serve on the KSA Board of Directors. The KSA Board meets at 7:00 pm on the third Thursday of January, April, July, and October. The board also meets in September to receive the proposed budget for the following calendar year. The Board votes acceptance of the budget at its October meeting. KSA meetings are open to the public, and public attendance is encouraged. KSA has two permanent committees comprised of KSA board members from who volunteer their services.

For additional information, go to www.KingwoodSewrviceAssociation.org

KSA Public Safety Committee

The Public Safety Committee meets at 7:00 pm on the second Wednesday of each month. Meetings are open to the public. Each community association that is a member of KSA is encouraged to designate a representative to the Public Safety Committee.

This committee was established for the purpose of establishing a public safety programs in Kingwood. The KSA Public Safety Committee reports monthly the reports developed by the Houston Police Department, the Houston Fire Department, the activities of Harris County 911, and other public safety agencies serving Kingwood and its surroundings. It helps inform Kingwood residents of public safety information and concerns. We assist the Houston Police Hike Patrol by providing financial support to purchase and maintain the bicycles for the HPD

¹ Articles of Incorporation, Kingwood Service Association.

Bike Patrol. and sponsor the National Night Out, and the Shattered Dreams Program at Kingwood High Schools.

KSA Parks Committee

The KSA Parks Committee meets at 7:00 pm on the first Thursday of each month. Meetings are open to the public. The committee was established to administer all KSA-owned parks and Kingwood entries. The committee is comprised of representatives of KSA member community associations.

KSA parks include Creekwood Nature Area (3300 Maple Park Drive), Deer Ridge Park (1411 Woodland Hills Drive), East End Park (6400 Kingwood Drive), North Park Recreation Area (4202 Woodland Hills Drive, and River Grove Park (800 Woodland Hills Drive). The Kingwood entries at Kingwood Drive and US 59 and North Park Drive and US 59 are also managed by the KSA Parks Committee.

KSA owns a total of 356.6 acres of land distributed among its five recreation properties. East End park is the largest park, totaling 158.5 acres. The North Park Recreation Area is the smallest park, at 188 acres.

Goals

The amount of park and recreation land available in Kingwood is extremely limited. Since the community is essentially fully developed, optimum use of the available parks is a primary concern of the KSA Parks Committee. To guide the use and development of our parks, the KSA Parks Committee program has been predicated on the following goals and objectives:

- ✓ Provide parks and common open spaces adequate in size and distribution to serve all Kingwood residents;
- ✓ Provide recreational facilities and activities to meet the leisure interests and health needs of Kingwood residents of all ages;
- ✓ Use the KSA park system to preserve and protect environmentally significant areas for public enjoyment and education; and
- ✓ Operate the parks in a cost-effective manner.

River Grove Park

River Grove Park is a 74 acre park located at the south end of Woodland Hills Drive. The facility most heavily used by the general public is the boat ramp, which provides boat access to Lake Houston. The park also includes picnic tables, four covered picnic shelters, a disc golf course, and a children's play area.

A boardwalk extending over the San Jacinto River provides wide views of the river and fishing opportunities.

East of the Harris County Flood Control District drainage ditch is an 18 acre tract leased to the Kingwood Alliance Soccer Club and Humble Atascocita Kingwood Lacrosse (HAKLAX). An adjacent 10 acres has recently been deeded to KSA., The Parks Committee is evaluating the appropriate use for this land.

Deer Ridge Park

Deer Ridge Park is a 63-acre park located on the west side of Woodland Hills Drive south of Kingwood Drive, surrounding the water tower on three sides. All but approximately 4 acres of the park and the driveway through the park are leased to the Texas HeatWave Soccer Association, Kingwood/Forest Cove Baseball Association, and the Kingwood Horsemen's Association. The sports groups make extensive use of the facilities in this park.

Facilities open to all residents of Kingwood are the tennis courts, basketball court, sand volleyball court, restrooms, the duck pond, and a gazebo.

North Park Recreation Area

The 19-acre North Park Recreation Area is located on Woodland Hills Drive, north of North Park Drive and immediately north of the new Kingwood park High School. This park is used exclusively for organized sports, with land leased to the Texas HeatWave Soccer Club, Kingwood Adult Softball Association, and the Kingwood Girls Softball Association.

Creekwood Nature Area

The Creekwood Nature Area is a 42-acre site left in its natural, wooded state, except for mulched hiking trails. The entrance to this natural area is located at the end of Maple Park Drive in Bear Branch Village.

East End Park

East End Park is a Nature Area comprised of 158.5 acres of wetlands, woodlands and meadows with trails for residents to enjoy the beauty of nature. The land for East End Park was donated to KSA by Friendswood Development in 1994. The park now contains 3.5 miles of developed trails, 2 miles of natural trails, 2 miles of Lake Houston frontage, and 131 species of birds, including several that are threatened or endangered. Other wildlife, including deer, also live in the park.

For additional information, go to www.eastendpark.com

Kingwood Area Super Neighborhood Council

And finally, the Kingwood Area Super Neighborhood Council, representing Kingwood and Forest Cove, is one of 88 super neighborhoods in the City of Houston created to encourage residents to identify, plan, and set priorities to address the needs and concerns of their community. The council is comprised of residents and stakeholders who volunteer their time and energy for the benefit of the community at no cost to the community. The super neighborhood initiative is intended to provide avenues for more effective community input into city government policy making, budgeting, planning, and service delivery systems. The Kingwood Area Super Neighborhood Council meets on the third Monday of each month. These meetings are open to the public.

For additional information, go to www.kingwoodsnc.com

There are ample opportunities for persons who perceive problems in our community to help find solutions by attending the public meetings of the above organizations, and better yet, by volunteering their expertise for problem solving.

City of Houston

Since December of 2006, Kingwood has been a part of the City of Houston. Police protection is provided by the Houston Police Department headquartered at 3915 Rustic Woods Drive. The Houston Fire Department serves the Kingwood/.Forest Cove area through four fire stations. For police and fire emergencies, call 911.

The City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department maintains portions of the medians on arterial thoroughfares – Kingwood Drive, North Park Drive, West Lake Houston Parkway, Woodland Hills Drive. The Public Works and Engineering Department maintains the portion of the right-of-way on arterial thoroughfares between the curb and the right-of-way line.

Other resident concerns that are handled by the City of Houston include illegal dumping and bandit signs. Bandit signs are the inexpensive signs placed randomly on the street right-of-way. They are illegal, and any citizen may remove them. To report bandit signs, potholes, or improperly operating traffic lights, call 311.

For additional information, go to <http://www.houstontx.gov/>.