**Willo Neighborhood Association: Why Are We Here and What Do We Do?**

**Inside our HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD**

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If you are a new resident of the Willo Historic District, you may not know much about the Willo Neighborhood Association and its Board of Directors; however, if you have visited the neighborhood website, willophx.com, you may have learned a lot. The website contains links to both the bylaws that govern the neighborhood association, and the Willo neighborhood’s official Conservation Plan. Both of these documents make for interesting reading if you want to learn more about the neighborhood itself and the association.

**History and Membership**

The Willo Neighborhood Conservation Plan created a Special Conservation District for our neighborhood when it was approved by the Phoenix City Council in 1986. The neighborhood association exists to “promote and support” this plan, as stated in the bylaws. The bylaws also dictate the rules establishing our 13-member board. They provide other details regarding neighborhood association meetings, financials, and membership. Membership in the association is not automatic when you move into the neighborhood. Membership is not required to receive *Inside Willo*, attend association meetings, or go to neighborhood functions like happy hours. Membership is required to vote, though, and it is required for all individuals running for and serving on the board. Membership is “opt-in,” meaning that residents must indicate that they would like to become a member of the Willo Neighborhood Association. This can be done by using either the online membership opt-in form or the paper opt-in form. The link to opt in can be found in the Membership section of willophx.com, and at the end of this article. Membership must be renewed annually to be valid. All memberships expire on December 31 and should be renewed each year in January, or whenever a new resident wants to establish membership during the year when they begin residence in Willo. According to the bylaws, membership is open to any member who resides in the conservation plan’s boundaries, and who is of voting age (18), including renters. Membership is limited to four members per household. Membership is free of charge!

**Money and Meetings**

The Willo Neighborhood Association is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization whose budget plan runs from May 1 – April 30 each year. In the spring, the following year’s annual budget is presented and approved by the board no later than the April meeting. Each month thereafter when a meeting occurs, the Treasurer prepares a report with an update on the budget, which is then reviewed by the board and generally approved. Neighborhood association meetings happen each month, usually on the second Thursday evening, with the exception of July and August when the association does not meet. Typical agenda items at the meetings include reports from our Phoenix Police Department’s Community Action Officer, updates on zoning issues in and around Willo, various requests from neighbors for the board to address a question or concern, and updates from committees.

Historically, meetings are held in person at the Fairfield Inn & Suites on the corner of Central and Virginia. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, meetings have also been available remotely via Zoom. The link to join the meeting online is posted on willophx.com, and is shared in the neighborhood facebook page prior to the meeting. Unfortunately, attendance at monthly neighborhood association meetings is often low, although spirited discussion frequently occurs. If you haven’t done so, consider attending a neighborhood association meeting. Perhaps you will be inspired to run for a board position in a future election or volunteer on a committee.

**Fun and Work**

The biggest event in Willo each year is the Home Tour, which happens every February, usually on the third Sunday. Since the Home Tour’s beginnings in the 1980s, it has happened every year except for 2021. When Home Tour planning gets going each winter, expect to hear about many opportunities for neighbors to volunteer at the event. Other fun things brought to you by the neighborhood association are Kids Club events that focus on our youngest residents (and their parents), the monthly neighborhood happy hours and other events organized by the Social Committee, the holiday luminaria lining every street at the end of December, and this and every issue of *Inside Willo* that is hand-delivered to your door by volunteers…the list goes on and on.

All of these fun things involve work to create them, so the neighbors who get together to organize them are appreciated. If you have questions about any of these events, please come to a neighborhood association meeting, or contact your favorite board member or committee chair. Contact information for all of these individuals can always be found on page 5 of *Inside Willo*, and at willophx.com.

**Property Maintenance FYI**

The Willo Neighborhood Association is NOT a homeowners’ association. This means that the association does not have the authority to issue citations for blight, regulate the paint colors residents choose for their homes, or dictate what kind of landscaping residents use. Residents must refer to and follow the regulations that apply within the City of Phoenix; for example, Willo neighbors sometimes ask whether the City is responsible for trimming palm trees that grow in the easements (the strips of land between the street and the sidewalk). Phoenix City Code, Chapter 39, Section 39-7D states:

Property owners are responsible for keeping their properties, and the adjacent rights of way, free of dead or dried vegetation (weeds, tall grass, tumbleweeds, shrubs, trees, palm fronds, etc.). All dead or dried vegetation must be removed and disposed of properly. Property owners are also responsible for assuring that grass and weeds on their property and in the adjacent rights of way do not exceed six inches in height.

So, the answer is no, the City is not responsible for trimming those palm trees or maintaining that easement – it’s up to the property owner and/or resident.

Sidewalk repair and maintenance is similar: owners whose property abuts the sidewalk are responsible, per Phoenix City Code, Chapter 31. Furthermore, if someone is injured due to a defective sidewalk, the property owner who is responsible for that sidewalk shall be liable. Read more at this link to relevant sections of the Code regarding sidewalk repair: <https://phoenix.municipal.codes/CC/31_ArtIV_Div2>. At least we don’t have to shovel snow from our sidewalks in the winter.

While it is not always the most captivating reading, taking a look at the Phoenix City Code once in a while can be informative and enlightening. You can find the complete Code at this link: https://phoenix.municipal.codes/

**Helpful Links on willophx.com:**

**Willo Neighborhood Association Bylaws**:

<https://willophx.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Willo-Bylaws-2021_Approved-6_10_21.pdf>

**Willo Neighborhood Conservation Plan:**

<https://willophx.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/willo-conservation-plan.pdf>

**Online Membership Opt-In Form**:

<https://willophx.com/membership-opt-in-form/>