

Stonegate Email News of 5/11/07

“Speeding results in speed bumps.”

That’s the text of a new sign that may soon appear on a street near you. It means what it says, literally: if speeding continues, a temporary speed bump will appear here -- and stay until it’s no longer needed.

We know that most people dislike most speed bumps. Speed bumps let the road do the talking: “Slow down or I’m gonna bonk ya upside the head with your own car roof.” Speed bumps should never be necessary. We have yet to meet a Stonegate resident who believed that speeding was good. But plainly, some people make exceptions. Speed bumps never do.

There is one remedy that’s even more effective than speed bumps: human contact. And it’s something that you can help with. If you know of a car that routinely goes too fast, call or email us at the Community Association (480-391-9760). Generalities aren’t helpful. We can only act on specifics: a description of the car and, if possible, the driver, time and day of the observation and, we hope, an address in Stonegate. We won’t use your name, but we will try to find the offending driver.

Stonegate’s speed limit is 25 miles per hour. Do the math. Going 35 mph down Palomino East, tires squealing on the turn, all the way to Mission Lane in Mountain View Estates, you’d save about 8 seconds. It’s hard just to imagine that anyone would put lives at risk and impair the quality of life in their own community – to save 8 seconds.

Trees.

It’s the answer to a Jeopardy question: Apart from dogs, what is the biggest bone of contention between otherwise-friendly Stonegate neighbors?

Throughout the community, people have planted messy canopy trees, often near property lines, and seen them grown into big, thorny problems with the neighbors. Few Stonegate lots offer room for trees like palo verde and mesquite to grow as big as nature intended. Sure, they looked good when they were planted. But five or ten years later, they're littering the lawn and clogging the pool at the neighbor's house.

State law permits neighbors to thin encroaching trees. Generally, you're permitted to cut any portion which overhangs your property – but that's where the issue gets tricky. You may not trim your neighbor's tree in a manner that does it great harm. So if the tree is near the property line, that vertical rule of thumb may not apply. The damage done by the tree may also be a consideration. If the tree isn't particularly messy, you may not be within your rights to trim that overhanging branch.

So the obvious first course of action is to talk to your neighbor. Tell them if you're having a problem because of their tree. Or if you're the tree owner, be pro-active. Find out whether your neighbor hates that messy tree – or loves the shade. Then you'll know if you need to call the tree trimmers – or even consider removing the tree. That's always a sad decision. Mature trees add value, beauty and shade to a property and the entire community. But if your tree is knocking tile off the neighbor's roof (or your own), and the roots are lifting the party wall, you may have to bite that bullet.

All trees require maintenance, and your neighbor should be an important consideration in deciding what to do and when. Monsoons are another consideration, and we're not far from the start of the season. Big, dense mesquites are beautiful. But when the tree falls dead across your back patio, you may find yourself wishing you had paid a tree trimmer to lace it out.

Right now, many residents are looking at replacements for dead or severely frost damaged trees. If you're among them, remember to ask the right questions. How messy is it? And how big will its canopy be at maturity?