

# THE GREATER LAKE PALESTINE COUNCIL

## A SHORT HISTORY

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**I**n July of 1998 a group of 5 subdivisions met informally over dinner to discuss crime in the neighborhoods. However, it did not take long for the group to determine there were many other problems that all had in common, such as dogs, nuisances, maintenance of roads, fire protection, working with the Upper Neches, etc. From this meeting it was decided to contact HOAs/POAs and Crime Watches all round Lake Palestine and invite them to a meeting to discuss how a group could be formed that would have influence with the River Authority, County & City Governments, State & Federal Officials, and law enforcement agencies.

On September 15, 1998 the first official meeting was held to discuss the above items and 15 associations came together. Several names were floated for the Organization and the

Greater Lake Palestine Council was chosen. At this meeting an Interim Steering Committee was chosen to write a mission statement, look into nonprofit status, draw up a constitution & By-laws, contact other subdivisions, and set meeting times.

From September until the first truly general meeting on November 10, 1998 the interim Steering Committee met several times and drew up the Mission Statement and outlined what was needed to make the organization go forward. At the November meeting we selected interim Officers and set up several committees to pursue getting the organization up and running by May, 1999. At this point it was discovered that there are more than 90 subdivisions on and around Lake Palestine and many of these had expressed an interest in joining.

From November, 1998 until May 11, 1999 committees were busy working on drafting the Constitution & By-laws, achieving non profit status, getting tax certification, etc. Additionally numerous people were involved with problems affecting the HOAs/POAs and some of these are enumerated below. On May 11, 1999 a general meeting was held and the Constitution & By-laws adopted a board of directors elected, committees established. 24 associations signed the original documents and were off and running officially.

## **Projects**

1. Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether (MTBE) – Even before the organization had official status our group joined with the cities of Tyler, Longview, Kilgore & Marshall to oppose the TNRCC imposing MTBE into gasoline in East Texas. MTBE is a known carcinogen that once introduced into water cannot be removed. We helped win this battle and continue to pressure the U.S. Congress to remove this from all gasoline.
2. Animal Control in Smith County – This project was also begun before we were an official organization and was successfully completed in 1999 with the addition of two Animal Control Officers in the Constables' offices. We packed the Commissioners' Court on several occasions with well over 100 people.
3. Animal Control in Henderson County – This project was begun in July 1999 and continued to be pressed for until the initial ordinance was passed in January 2001. The County has two animal control officers under the direction of the Sheriff's Department. We are presently working on revising the ordinance to insure that animals that are strays are picked up and taken the Humane Society Shelter in Athens. In December of 2008 the Henderson County Commissioners' Court appointed ten citizens to review and update the 2001 ordinance which was proving to be inadequate for the task. Four members of the committee are active members of the GLPC. In April of 2007 a new ordinance was presented, followed by 13 public hearings and finally passed by the Commissioners' Court in July 2008.

4. Water Quality Testing on Lake Palestine – This group began working on setting up a group to do the testing at 5 different locations. Testing has been ongoing since 2000. Under normal water conditions GLPC Volunteers run tests at 5 different locations on Lake Palestine.
5. Investor Owned Water/sewer Companies – Since 1998 the GLPC has been involved in water rate battles with Tecon (now Monarch/SWWC), Aqua Sources (now Aqua Texas) and Southern Utilities. Some of these we have won, some have been a draw but the battle is ongoing. Should you want more information about this simply ask any of the GLPC's board members.
6. Highsaw (Roller Coaster) Road – Since 1998 we have been involved in fighting for an upgrade to a very dangerous road. Beginning in 2004 the road is being rebuilt and should be finished in 2005. Several of our members have devoted many hours to working with TXDOT and the county commissioners. As you know the road is now complete and has been renamed FM 3506. On October 17, 2006 the formal opening of the road was held and Commissioner Jerry West and GLPC member Herman Vibrock were honored for their hard work of getting the road completed and for working with TXDOT.
7. Brownsboro ISD Bond Issue – The GLPC was asked by numerous residents to work on the pending bond issue. The GLPC provided Poll workers for a new voting station at Coffee City and continues to this day to do so. We also worked with the school Board to build a new intermediate school in Chandler and therefore eliminate a more than 2 hour (each way) bus ride for K-6 grade students. The bond issue passed in 1999 after being defeated twice and the new school was built in Chandler.
8. Sewerage Sludge Dumping – Objected to sewerage sludge being dumped on land draining into Lake Palestine. Lost this battle. However, we are now working with the TCEQ to provide better guidelines on how this material is placed on the land.
9. Pan-Canadian Energy Services – This Company was going to build a peaking power plant near the intersection of FM 317 & FM 314. While our group was not opposed to the power plant we did have some environmental and water questions. The wells that they were going to put in could have caused two small community wells to run dry. Pan-Canadian withdrew their application when we pointed out the problems.
10. Two members of the GLPC were selected to work on East Texas Council of Governments Water Resource Study Committee. This group had input into the regional water plans developed by the State of Texas.
11. Ground Water Conservation District – The GLPC in conjunction with Senator Staples worked long and hard to get a district started in our area. This came to

- pass with Anderson, Henderson & Cherokee Counties forming a district and it is up and running. The GLPC had one member of the board. Other counties are considering joining the district.
12. The GLPC was successful in placing one of its members on the board of the Angelina & Neches River Authority (ANRA) in 2001 and we still have a member on the board. This authority controls the Neches River above and below Lake Palestine.
  13. Drafted legislation for the 2003 legislature that would allow HOAs/POAs to change their Restrictions & By-laws in a much easier manner. The bill was sponsored by Representative Leo Berman; however it never made it out of committee due to opposition by the Texas Association of Realtors.
  14. The GLPC joined Texas Neighborhoods Together (TNT), a statewide organization of groups like the GLPC. We have two members on the board and continue to work on issues common to all associations, as well as lobbying in Austin.
  15. Successfully worked with the Henderson County Commissioners' Court and the Sheriff's Department to get a Lake Patrol Unit onto Lake Palestine and Cedar Creek Lake in 2003. Presently the Lake Patrol is not functional.
  16. Successfully fought and got Proposition 13 passed in Smith & Henderson County, City of Chandler, Trinity Valley Junior College and several school districts.
  17. Worked with Senator Staples and his staff to provide two bills into the 2005 legislative session. One bill is to allow HOAs/POAs to more easily change their Restrictions & By-laws. This bill is drafted and although it will not give us all we want, it is a start in the right direction. The second bill will change the way that private and public water companies are allowed to increase their rates and how they do business in Texas. Both passed in 2005 Legislative session. Copies are available on request.
  18. Henderson County Commissioners' Court appointed Orville Bevel of the GLPC to chair the Henderson County Jail Committee. This committee reviewed all data, selected the size of the jail expansion, pinpointed costs and presented a completed study to the Court. This was accomplished in 2005 and the bond issue passed in November 2005. Construction on the new Jail will began in 2006. The new portion of the jail and the renovation of the old jail should be completed in mid-2009 with the formal ribbon cutting to follow. The construction was completed and the new facilities as well as the renovations are in use.
  19. Beginning in August 2007 the GLPC Board helped form a group named Texans against Monarch's Excessive Rates (T.A.M.E.R.) to fight the outrageous rate increase. TAMER consists of 58 HOAs/POAs in 17 counties. We won a settlement in December of 2008 that saved all users over \$4.5 million through

early 2011. If you would like more information, please contact your GLPC board members.

20. Currently are working with several state senators and representatives to have 13 bills passed that will change how the major water companies can raise rates, secure life-line rates, etc. Have spent numerous days lobby for these bills.

## **Programs & Services**

1. The first program presented in 1999 was by Tom Mallory, General Manager of the Upper Neches River Municipal River Authority (UNRMWA) to tell us about the authority, explain the rules and regulations, and inform us of who could take water from Lake Palestine. The City of Tyler may take up to 60 million gallons per day, the City of Palestine may take up to 25 million gallons per day, and the City of Dallas may take up to 115 million gallons per day. Additionally numerous other entities such as Exxon, Lakeway Harbor & individual property owners remove water on a daily basis. Presently both Tyler and Palestine are removing water from the lake. Mr. Mallory spoke to us again in 2002. His successor Monty Shank again presented a program in 2010.
2. The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department of Texas has presented four programs concerning Lake Palestine, the Athens Fish Hatchery and their plans for the future.
3. The Texas Attorney General's Office, Financial Crimes Division presented a program on the Texas Nuisance & Abatement Statute and how the AG's office can work with your association.
4. An informational brochure was designed and printed outlining the GLPC and its functions and put into use in September, 1999. It has been updated every year and is available to you to solicit new members.
5. The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary has presented two programs on boating safety and the formation of a flotilla on Lake Palestine. To date we have not accomplished this due to inadequate numbers of volunteers.
6. A program was presented by members of the GLPC on HB 2224 & SB 434 to provide our members with information on new forms that must be filled out by the associations when property is being sold by a realtor.
7. The GLPC presented its first Newsletter at the July 2000 meeting and it is published on a quarterly basis. Articles are welcome from all members.

Sean Healy presented a program on "How an Attorney can help your HOA."

8. Dr. James Wright, Zoonosis Department, Texas Department of Health has twice presented programs on rabies.
9. The GLPC prepared and distributed booklet on proper septic system installation and the rules used by the State of Texas and by UNRMWA. These are currently out of print but will be updated following this session of the legislature.
10. The GLPC lobbied in Austin during the 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009 & 2011 legislative sessions both for and against bills that affect HOAs/POAs and water issues common to all.
11. Have had Representative Leo Berman & Senator Todd Staples speak about the legislative sessions of 2001 & 2003 concerning items that affect HOAs/POAs.
12. Have had two programs on Homeowners Insurance presented by Ricky Watkins, of Watkins Insurance.
13. Have had a program on Electric deregulation by both power companies serving our area.
14. Have presented several "Meet the Candidates Forums" prior to elections.
15. Twice have presented the "GLPC Boot Camp," which was a one day seminar on how to operate your HOA/POA.
16. Provide Member & Nonmember Directories & Legislative Directories on an annual basis.
17. Provided Donations to injured deputies and their families in Smith & Henderson Counties.
18. Program presented by the Angelina and Neches River Authority (ANRA) on what authority does and how it affects our members.
19. Had a program presented by the Henderson County Sheriff's Department and Drug Task Force on Methamphetamines.
20. Hosted a special meeting of the GLPC in 2003 where U.S. Congressman Jeb Hensarling gave us a Washington Update.
21. Judge Carter Tarrance, 392 Judicial District Court, spoke on the functions of the various courts, from JP Courts thru State Courts and what their duties are.

This in not all of the projects & programs that we have been involved in, however it should give you an idea of how important our organization is to this are and some insight as to where you want us to go in the next five years.