

## Bayou barging ... up or downstream to ruin?

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Last Wednesday, there was a meeting of the Cedar Bayou Navigation District Board. Our appointed Baytown representatives faced being stripped of their voting rights by a bill in the Texas Legislature proposed by State Rep. Craig Eiland of Chambers County. Mark Fleming's report in Thursday's paper filled me in, and made me madder than hell and even more curious as to how our government really works; and does it work in our best interests?

The Cedar Bayou Navigation District was created by the state legislature to support economic development along the bayou. What it has done is to create a monster as this seemingly innocent bill passed in 1997 did not create any community questions or concerns, no community involvement, or any thoughts as to the future detriments which were not noticed or anticipated.

Now we have the "proposed" barge terminal across from Roseland Park, and the looming possibility of the dredging and re-alignment of Cedar Bayou to facilitate the business interests, all at our expense. This has happened right under our noses and we are seemingly powerless to do anything about it. Was that the plan from the get-go?

Dad and I used to read the newspaper together every morning. I have continued reading as well as watching the TV news. Does this happen anymore in our society today? Where do we, the citizens, get our information about what is going on around us? Do we rely on the computer, or do we rely on word-of-mouth? Big cities pay a lot of their taxpayers' dollars to be aware of what is going on in Austin and how it might affect them. The noise from the pipe yard across the bayou from Roseland Oaks and Kilgore is an example of unregulated growth with no respect to adjacent residents' health, well-being, and their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. Being uninformed is a severe detriment to our community because those with personal motives to enhance their causes at our expense is not only dangerous, but against our will unless we know about it and act to "head it off at the pass." But how and where do we start to become informed? The late Paul Harvey referred to it as, "The Rest of the Story."

The original legislation set up the district and determined its five-member board would be appointed by the Chambers County Commissioners Court. It seems to this writer the fox is guarding the hen-house and has been given the key to the lock. Where was any Baytown community input? Was our council at the time asleep at the switch or could it not fathom what could possibly lie down the road (or bayou) in the future? And by the way, half of Cedar Bayou is in Harris County, or didn't that occur to anyone along the way?

In 2007, two voting Baytown appointees were added to the board thanks to the efforts of our State Rep. Wayne Smith as all of Cedar Bayou lies within Baytown's extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Now they want to strip our appointees of their voting rights (and perhaps a board chairmanship). Maybe it's just a way of checking to see if the fox still has the right key. Apparently, the board's majority cares very little about the concerns of Baytown residents, even when they show up for a scheduled meeting.

We all need to wake up, pay attention, stay informed, and get involved! You can start by attending a called board meeting this Friday (Apr. 8) at the Cove Community Center on FM 565.

See you there!

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