Report to the Parks & Recreation Board
Regarding the 14 May 2012 Navigation Committee Meeting

The Austin Lake Patrol attended the 14 May meeting of the Navigation Committee and we discussed several issues that require coordination and cooperation with the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) and the Planning Development and Review Department (PDRD) to address.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- **Swimming in Lady Bird Lake.** The Lake Patrol is receiving many complaints but has a difficult time enforcing the ban on swimming in Lady Bird Lake because it usually takes them 45 minutes to an hour to respond from their location on Lake Austin. It's also difficult to pursue any enforcement because of the lack of No Swimming signs (they keep getting removed).
  Possible Considerations: Can PARD look into how and where it can post the proper signage in a way that it is not easily removed? Could the Park Rangers possibly cooperate with Lake Patrol to help reduce the response time for catching offenders? Could PARB lake concessionaires help inform the public that there is no swimming allowed in Lady Bird Lake? How can PARD work with Lake Patrol to increase compliance with the ban?
- **Enforcement of Navigation Zones:** Since September 2010 (Tropical Storm Hermine) most of the buoys in Lake Austin have been lost or displaced from their proper location. The Lake Patrol cannot enforce No Wake zones without the proper signage being in place. We have had numerous discussions about the lost buoys in the NavComm meetings, and the latest update (a couple of months ago) was that PARD had acquired some buoys and is storing them at Emma Long pending figuring out who could install them. The buoys not only help the Lake Patrol enforcement efforts, but provide important public safety information to boaters about hazardous objects and special purpose zones.
  Possible Considerations: Could PARD expedite a process for replacing lost buoys and resetting displaced buoys to their proper locations?
- **Hydrilla in Lake Austin:** As was reported in the Feb 2012 committee report to the PARB, there is an exceptional amount of hydrilla growing in Lake Austin this year. Many boats are getting stranded after their prop becomes jammed with the hydrilla and the police are having to tow them to prevent the disabled boats from being a navigation hazard for other boaters.
  Possible Considerations: Could PARD work with the PIO, Watershed Protection, and Lake Patrol to develop a message and strategy for informing boaters of the hydrilla conditions?
- **Non-Compliant Lighting and Structures:** There are many docks and piers that are not properly lit at night, dilapidated posts and abandoned structures that could injure the public or break apart in heavy current and cause damage to other structures or create a navigation hazard, and abandoned dock projects that have no electricity or lighting. Improperly lighted structures in waterways create a navigation hazard, and improperly maintained and abandoned structures in the critical water quality zone pose many threats.
  Possible Considerations: Could PARD work with DPDR to inventory the docks, piers, and structures on Lady Bird and Lake Austin for safety hazards, compliance with the LDC and project durations, and initiate enforcement to bring violations into compliance? The Lake Patrol is willing to provide water access from the lakes to city staff as needed and can be accommodated. What is the process for Lake Patrol staff, which have daily insight to activity on the lakes and shorelines, to work with city staff regarding compliance and safety issues?

Lady Bird Lake and Lake Austin provide significant recreational opportunities for our Austin citizens and visitors. The upcoming Memorial Day holiday marks the onset of another popular recreational boating and swimming season. As these issues threaten the safety of a large number of citizens and visitors who recreate in Austin's lakes, the Navigation Committee urges immediate attention to them, and requests that PARD provide a monthly update to the PARB until these issues are resolved.