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Bastrop County supports community-wide cleanup in Stony Point

[Mary Huber](#), Austin Community Newspapers Staff

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Stony Point residents ask Bastrop County commissioners on Monday, May 22, 2017 to approve a contract with Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative to place lights at Stony Point Park to help deter crime. ([Mary Huber / Bastrop Advertiser](#))

Alma Lopez has lived in the Stony Point neighborhood in western Bastrop County most her life. She spends Monday mornings handing out food and watching kids play at Cedar Creek Park as a volunteer with the Christian organization Mission U-Too. Other days, she walks and rides her bike through the neighborhood.

On some evenings, she has seen people selling drugs at the park and doing other illegal things.

“It makes me mad because that is my neighborhood and my friends and family don’t want those things happening there,” she told Bastrop County commissioners on Monday, pleading with them to make improvements to the park.

“My family and friends, your neighbors, deserve to have a welcoming place to come together,” she said.

Lopez is one of about 15 residents in Stony Point to join the new Bastrop Interfaith Alliance, which came together last year to institute changes in the long-neglected neighborhood. On Monday, several members approached commissioners to ask them to support clean up efforts at the park and in the surrounding area.

After their testimony, the Commissioners Court unanimously approved a contract with Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative to install lights at the county-owned park, which will help cut down on crime, officials said. The electric company will donate the lights free of charge, and the county will be responsible for paying the monthly electric bill at a minimal cost, County Judge Paul Pape said.

Commissioners also agreed to direct \$1,500 toward a community-wide clean-up effort scheduled this summer in the neighborhood. It will pay to bring large dumpsters to collect trash in the area off Texas 71 near the Travis County line with money from the Precinct 3 road and bridge fund.

The two decisions come two months after an assembly at San Juan Diego Catholic Church in Stony Point, where dozens of residents addressed Bastrop County officials about problems in the neighborhood, among them sewage, trash, wild dogs, drugs and dead bodies (nine have turned up in Del Valle, some in Stony Point since September).

Two months ago the grass at Cedar Creek Park was two-feet high, residents said.

Finally, the county came to mow and clear the trash and remove some barbed wire fencing. Since then, the county has vowed to keep the park maintained.

“It’s a small cost to pay,” resident Maria Vargas told commissioners on Monday in Spanish.

Vargas has lived in Stony Point more than 30 years. She spends afternoons playing with her granddaughter outside and says she doesn’t always feel safe. The streets are dark, and garbage piles up on the roadside, attracting roaches and flies.

“The children are growing up in this kind of environment,” Vargas said. “It’s not because the people are lazy or irresponsible, but outsiders come and dump things in the neighborhood and get away with it.”

The community-wide cleanup is the first step of many to help clean up the area, Pape said.

“Anything we do is a giant step from doing nothing,” he said.

The date for the community-wide cleanup has not been set but should take place this summer at the park, officials said. Bastrop Interfaith will plan the event as well as a second assembly with Bastrop County leaders scheduled for June 25 at 3 p.m. at San Juan Diego Catholic Church in Stony Point, to track the progress of improvements.

“Over the years that part of our county has been neglected,” Pape said. “We need to do better for our citizens and for ourselves. You are no better than the way you treat other people.”