

Super Neighborhood Alliance
Minutes from Meeting held April 9, 2018



Guests

Andy Icken, Chief Development Officer COH
Neil Golightly, Recovery Houston
Kimberly Hatter, Mayor's Office
Alanna Reed, PWE
Alyce Coffee, Solid Waste
Jack Valinski, Department of Neighborhoods
Dylan Osborne, COH Planning Dept.
Margarita Dunlap, METRO
DeAnna Roberts, HCSO
Veronica Lamb, H-GAC
Linda Scurlock, Kerwick Place-Ramblewood
Park Civic Club, Inc.
Bessie Mansfield
Gareth Morgans, Magnolia Place Civ. Club
Oscar Vega, Preserve Houston Northside
Samantha Lopez, Univ. of Houston
Gladys House-El, Freedman's Town
Daniel Teal, Freedman's Town
Joseph Smith, Freedman's Town

Greg Sergesketter, SNC 16
Michael Huffmaster, SNA Chairman, SNC 18
Judson Bryant, SNC 18
Jane West, SNA Secretary, SNC 22
Mike Van Dusen, SNC 22
Kay Warhol, SNC 24
Sherry Weesner, SNC 24
Doug Smith, SNC 25
Sandra Rodriguez, SNC 27
M. Kay Swint, SNC 31
John Nienhuser, SNC 32
Cheryl O'Brien, SNC 32
Marcy Williams, SNC 36
Marcia Hartman, SNC 37
Cindy Chapman, SNC 37
Jeff Peters, SNC 38
Juan Sorto, SNC 49/50
Albert Coleman, SNC 49/50
Randall Baxley, SNC 51
Jeff Trevino, SNC 51
Amy Dinn, SNC 64/88
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66
LeRoy West, SNC 71/76
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Curtis Curley, SNC 06
Ed Browne, SNC 10
Mark Klein, SNC 12
Pedro Ayarzagotia, SNC 15

I. Introductions and Approval of Minutes for March 12, 2018:

Doug Smith moved, and Tomaro Bell seconds approval of minutes for March 12, 2018 meeting; **motion carried.**

II. Announcements: Chairman Michael Huffmaster

A. Recovery Houston: Chairman Huffmaster stated that 12 recovery centers are now open, and that addresses for them are on the Houston Recovers website. For additional information: www.houstonrecovers.org.

B. I-45 Coalition: Chairman Huffmaster reported that the I-45 Coalition headed by Michael Skelly is still working with TxDOT, and encouraged representatives from SNCs bordering I-45 to stay engaged.

C. Complete Communities: Chairman Huffmaster reported that Draft Plans for each of Complete Communities are starting to be released and can be accessed via Planning Dept. website: www.houstontx.gov/planning

D. Political Primaries: Chairman Huffmaster reminded representatives that primary season is full swing, he encouraged members to vote and to educate candidates about issues, but discouraged SNCs from endorsing individual candidates as the SNA and the members SNCs strive to work cooperatively and productively with all elected officials.

III. Scenic Houston – Streetscape Resource Guide for Houston: Sherry Weesner (40 minutes)

Sherry Weesner, Executive Director of Scenic Houston, handed out copies of the updated Streetscape Resource Guide. Sherry stated that Scenic Houston began as an entity that sought to reduce or eliminate billboards, then focused its attention on signage, and now focuses on improving public and private spaces by helping to insure that everything in the public ROW works together. Scenic Houston's belief is that a better street can be created by implementing improvement thoughtfully. The difference is the planning. The COH has lots of organizations working to improve regulations and ordinances, but waiting until they're all perfect will mean that opportunities for improvement will be missed. Accordingly, Scenic Houston wrote a streetscape guide that reflects the city's existing regulations, i.e., the plans shown in the guide could be implemented now without variances. The updated version includes pictures and text identifying where each picture was taken. Each page describes the goal to be accomplished, e.g., providing pedestrian lighting, reducing light pollution, spacing and positioning of trees relative to lighting. The majority of concerns about the public rights of way tend to focus on the following issues: above ground utilities, drainage; signage; transit access; bicycle and pedestrian safety, sustainability, and parking.

Above ground utilities: Ms. Weesner explained that adverse impacts of poles needed for utilities can be reduced or eliminated by careful planning, e.g., by placing poles in the landscape area not in the sidewalk, by lining poles up with trees so they are less obtrusive.

Drainage. While there's no solution to Harvey-level flooding, streets can be better designed to plan for run off. For example, storm sewer inlets can be moved away from corner ramps to prevent mud and debris from collecting at the base of the ramps.

Signage. If poles are considered multi-taskers, then the numbers of poles can be reduced and signs can be moved from the sidewalk to the landscape area by using street light poles signs.

Transit. Designing a good transit stop makes people want to use transit. Places to sit. Shade. Attractive. Ms. Weesner showed photos comparing a standard metro stop to a fancier metro stop in Uptown. The fancier stop works better than the standard stop because its accessible to all, including people in wheelchairs. Trails are great but only if they are accessible via a comfortable street to trail connection. When you get off the trail, is there a place to park or stand your bike.

Bicycles. Bicycling is becoming more important, and where bikes are parked matters. Parked bicycles should not block sidewalks and they should provide easy access to streets. B-cycle does a good job of this. Bikeways have become more common and the Streetscape Guide has some information on how to implement safe bikeways on streets of various widths.

Pedestrians. Upper Kirby didn't think about making a rest stop/median in wide streets for pedestrians to shelter while crossing the street. Can cars see pedestrians so there's no conflict. Can pedestrians reach buttons on cross walk sign/signals. Medians provide space for greenery and a stopping place for people crossing wide streets. Pedestrian easements can be accomplished to expand the width of the pedestrian realm.

Sustainability. Sustainability encourages use of native plants, and keeps light away from places where it shouldn't be. Medians provide space for greenery and a stopping place for people crossing wide streets.

Parking. Parking has to work with the cars and the people by providing enough space for people to get in and out of the cars and into businesses.

The book provides a section to show where the city's rules and regulations are, a cheat sheet if you will. And a checklist. The COH has a commitment to have a pre-engineering meeting with community members before streets get rebuilt. The book allows communities to think about these issues before those meetings and Scenic Houston will come and meet with smaller groups prior to the pre-engineering meeting. This book

is referenced in the COH IDM so it can appropriately be used by developers and community members alike. New projects typically recreate everything from the curb to the building face. If you're having discussions with private developers working in their neighborhoods, this book is an appropriate guide to be used and referenced. Make sure that they're planting trees and planning landscaping. An example of such a project is the Houston Airport Corridor is a project where Scenic Houston has a joined forces with Houston First, Management Districts, and TIRZs that have land in and/or next to these corridors. TxDOT cuts the grass three times a year along freeways. But there are management districts that have funds that can be used to increase the number of times maintenance is performed so that the corridors can be nicely mowed and maintained. It's a pilot project. If it works, it can be expanded to other areas of town. More information can be accessed via Scenic Houston website. Please feel free to schedule smaller group meetings.

Q&A: When asked if the Streetscape Guide addresses the possibility of using permeable pavement for bikeways, Ms. Weesner responded maybe in the next edition

Pedro Ayarzagotia commented that Airline was redone a few years ago and a problem at Airline and 610 is prostitutes and sterno bums. nice medians and sidewalks were created for the criminals. The community asked not to have cookie cutter streets so as not to facilitate crime. Ms. Weesner responded that new underpasses have rough cobble stones, a specific design to discourage specific behaviors.

Curtis Curley stated that in his SNC there are a lot of roadside ditches and some streets are too narrow for cars to pass in opposite directions. He asked how best to advocate for proper streets. Ms. Weesner responded that when she was a CM's chief of staff she would respond to similar questions thusly: Elected official can't pay attention to more than three issues at a time; pick three specific issues and meet with your CM to work out a plan to address each of the issues.

Amy Dinn asked who to contact re the Airport Corridor District. Ms. Weesner said to contact person.

M. Kay Swint mentioned that biking is a priority in Greater Meyerland where there are bike groups whose members often park in public parking, and asked about partners for planning bikeways. Ms. Weesner responded that she doesn't plan bikeways, that Bike Houston is working to address bike parking in bikeways. Ms. Weesner opined that as biking grows the problems are like to be addressed.

IV. Old Business

A. Chapter 19 Recap

(5 minutes)

Chairman Huffmaster reported on City Council's consideration and passage of amendments to Chapter 19 of the City Code governing flood plain management. Chairman Huffmaster reported that two amendments were moved by CM Robinson and CM Cohen, and approved to the amendments brought forward by the administration; representatives of the SNA, Greater Houston Builders' Association ("GHBA"), and the Houston Association of Realtors ("HAR"), HBA and others spoke at city council and made recommendations for and against requiring raised, open (i.e., pier and beam foundations) for new houses constructed in the flood plains), and for eliminating the use of fill to raise new structures in the flood plains, but these comments were not acted upon. The new requirements approved by city council take effect on Sept. 1, 2018. The new requirements regulate the 500-year flood plain. New houses will have to be elevated to 500-year flood level plus two feet, all foundation types will be allowed. New construction in the 100-year flood plain will be subject to a "no net fill" requirement, but new construction in the 500-year flood plain will not be subject to the "no net fill" requirement, if the city engineer finds that the new construction will not impact sheet flow. New elevation requirements do not apply to additions that are 1/3 or less the size of a foundation slab; detached garages are not taken into account in the formula for calculating when an addition must be elevated; and the "flooding" used to justify the Chapter 19 amendments was both under- and over-stated. Substantial damage to an existing structure will require the existing structure to be elevated.

Questions: Greg Sergesketter asked where one would need to be in the permitting process on September 1st to be grand-fathered? Chairman Huffmaster responded that one would need to have a permit in hand by September 1st to be grand-fathered.

Pedro Ayarzagotia asked role the SNA would have in the production of new flood plain maps. Chairman Huffmaster responded: Community engagement.

John Nienhuser commended Tomaro Bell for her presentation to City Council on April 3, 2018, regarding Chapter 19.

Tomaro Bell commented that many communities suffered significant flooding during Hurricane Harvey but are either not represented or are under-represented in impact analyzes because community members have not sought help. As an example, she cited comments made by CM Laster at City Council during the Chapter 19 discussion expressing disbelief of the COH's information about the number of houses impacted in his district. Ms. Bell stated that because his district has a large international population, many impacted residents were afraid to seek public assistance.

Kimberly Hatter from the Mayor's office stated that neighborhood recovery centers are still open, and that they have case managers and other resources to help people.

Chairman Huffmaster stated that the impact maps distributed to CMs under-represented the number of houses impacted. He also emphasized the importance of having good data to produce future maps, and urged SNC members to check and correct city data for impact in each of their SNs.

Albert Coleman expressed concern that the city used to provide flyers to be used to get information out to the community, but now expect SNC officers to do it ourselves. Ms. Hatter responded that DON has been canvassing neighborhoods but the recovery centers have received less traffic than expected, especially in the NE area of town where the impact was significant. Ms. Hatter offered to help Mr. Coleman make copies for distribution.

Gladys House commented that a large number of flood victims have sought but not received aid. Tomaro Bell responded that aid for housing repair is now available through the city.

Vice-Chairman Juan Sorto commented that many people in impacted areas have lost their vehicles and are, therefore, unable to reach the recovery centers because neither they nor their neighborhoods are served by METRO. He suggested that perhaps the city could work with METRO to provide transportation so people can get to the recovery centers to insure that recovery centers are on bus lines.

B. Boarding House Ordinances Recap

Doug Smith reported that in boarding house ordinance approved by City Council includes a passive notification provision pursuant to which the Administrative and Regulatory Affairs Department ("ARA"), will maintain on its website a means for community members to check and track boarding house permit applications. Mr. Smith reported that falsified statements on applications can be prosecuted, and that communities that keep up with this activity may be able to stop permits from being issued in some instances.

C. Annual Report, Survey: No update.

V. New Business: Neighborhood Council Formation: No update.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Standing Committees:

1. Finance Committee: Tomaro Bell reported that she met w/ City Controller Chris Brown who told her that he's been doing audits, e.g., of Rebuild Houston and the city's 380 Agreements, and that the General Land Office ("GLO") has provided the COH \$424M for housing relief. He said that up to \$60k is available for repair of individual homes; funds are available to help house people while their homes are being repaired either in trailers on their property or as rent of up to \$1,300/per month for up to 12 months.

2. Public Safety: Ms. Bell reported one of the assailants who recently shot little boy in the Third Ward has been arrested but that the gang problems in Third Ward appear to be escalating.

B. Advisory Committee Updates

1. Housing Work Group: Vice-Chairman Sorto reported that Local Initiatives Supporting Communities (“LISC”) is spearheading a Housing Working Group, composed of people representing banks, developers, and various interest groups including academics and public entities all of whom are interested in advocating for affordable housing, not just low income housing but also working class housing. Vice-Chairman Sorto emphasized that this initiative is a work in progress aimed at developing principles for implementation as a city-adopted policy. Vice-Chairman Sorto represents the SNA in this effort. The group initiating an effort to meet with council members, and recently sent a letter to the federal government expressing concern that recovery funds have yet to come to Houston from the General Land Office (“GLO”).

2. Walkable Places: Jane West reported that there will be no Walkable Places Advisory Committee meeting in May so that city staff can work on draft ordinance language expected be released in draft form in June. In the meantime, Muxian Fang from the Planning Department is available to make presentations about the Walkable Places initiative to interested SNCs. For more information: www.houstontx.gov/planning/commissions/committee_walkable-places.html.

3. Complete Streets: No Update.

4. H-GAC Mobility: Veronica Lamb announced that she attended the meeting from HGAC to promote the 2045 regional transportation plan, and to distribute packets of informational material that included details on all priority projects for transportation, including the need to plan for expected growth, and the opportunity for members of the public to attend five public meetings before the end of April.

3. Bicycle Advisory Committee: Mike Van Dusen reported that the Bicycle Advisory Committee (“BAC”) held its first meeting in April. The presentation there focused on six recommended projects, five of which are on Bike Plan, and one of which is a newly proposed project along Elysian and Hardy to be funded by CM Cisneros and County Commissioner Rodney Ellis. The other projects include three in SW Houston on Westward, High Star, and DeMoss all of which will be implemented as dedicated on-street bikeways; one in District D on Tierwester, Austin, and Caroline N of 59; and one on Polk Street. Mr. Van Dusen said that there will be community engagement, but exactly what and when is yet to be determined. The presentation is available on-line via the Planning Department’s website. The next BAC meeting will be in June.

Mr. Van Dusen also gave an update on dockless bike sharing. He reported that B-Cycle representatives said share many of the concerns expressed by SNA members and CM Gallegos in December; that there’s likely to be a city initiative to have B-Cycle oversee dockless bike sharing, and that the city is developing a model RFQ or RFI to send out to dockless vendors. There are several different vendors with different business models. Jeff Trevino asked if B-Cycle’s involvement with dockless bike sharing represents a conflict of interest. Chairman Huffmaster responded that the city is looking for ways to insure that dockless bike sharing is managed so as to eliminate or mitigate problems being experienced in other cities.

VII. Announcements and Open Comments (5 minutes)

Jane West announced that Blueprint Houston would like to schedule Next Million presentations individual SNC meetings. She asked SNC leaders wishing to schedule such a presentation to contact her.

Tomaro Bell announced that Mayor Turner had decided not to seek removal of revenue cap but instead to seek approval for tax increase for public safety.

Marcy Williams announced that the Willow Water Hole Music Fest will be held April 21-22, 2300 Dryad. Free music. Sixteen bands.

John Nienhuser announced that a candidate forum for the special election to fill the seat held by CM Larry Green will be held on April 24th at 6:30 p.m. at Westbury High School.

VIII. Adjournment: 8:15