

Super Neighborhood Alliance

Minutes of Virtual Meeting Held 11 January 2021



Guests

Sylvester Turner, Mayor of Houston
Sallie Alcorn, CM At-Large 5
Tarsha Jackson, CM Dist B
Carlos Delgado, Staff for CM Dist H
DiDi Chavis, Staff for CM Dist K
David Abraham, Rice Univ
TaKasha Francis, Dir DoN
Margaret Wallace Brown, Dir P&D
Jack Valinski, DoN
Rhonda Sauter, DoN
Raymundo Beltran, Staff for Commissioner Pct 1

Edidlong Obot, Staff for Commissioner Pct 1
Julian Ochoa, Staff for Commissioner Pct 1
Francisco Castillo, Staff for Commissioner Pct 2
Roger Bridgewater, Staff for Commissioner Pct 3
Nicholas Ton, HHD
Dexter Handy, HCCS
Lynden Rose
Barbara Blue
C Falcon
Mark Fairchild
Daveon Houston

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Mark Klein, SNC 12
Leigh Killgore, SNC 14
Pedro Ayarzagoitia, SNC 15
Randy Jones, SNC 16
Jeff Baker, SNC 17
Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22
Mike VanDusen, SNC 22
Kay Warhol, SNC 24
Greg LeGrande, SNC 24
Doug Smith, SNC 25
Barbara Quattro, SNC 25
Kathie Easterly, SNC 28
Terry Cominsky, SNC 31
Sylvia Rivas, SNC 36
Marcy Williams, SNC 36
Cindy Chapman, SNC 37

Becky Edmondson, SNC 37
Jeff Peters, SNC 38
Lynae Novominsky, SNC 38
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38
Sharon Hamilton, SNC 40
Rev David Smith, SNC 46
Ivory Mayhorn, SNC 47
Jackie Mayhorn, SNC 47
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNC 49,50
Keith Downey, SNC 52
Joetta Stevenson, SNC 55
Bridgette Murray, SNC 57
Amy Din, SNC 64,88
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

Meeting convened at 6:30pm.

I. Presentation by Mayor Sylvester Turner

“2020: The Mayor’s Year in Review” video presentation was made. Highlights included public safety, complete communities, services and infrastructure, and sound financial management. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a Health Equity Response Task Force was created to specifically address vulnerable communities. The city also opened 3 COVID-19 testing sites. Masks and hand sanitizer were given to more than 2 million people, and food distribution was started to underserved communities. A mental health hotline was also started, and five neighborhoods have been added to the Complete Communities Initiative.

Chair Sorto thanked Mayor Turner and CM Sallie Alcorn for their support in having the SNA general meetings covered on Houston Television. Sorto went on to ask Mayor Turner how the super neighborhood volunteer organizations can collaborate with the city administration to help

address COVID-19 issues. Mayor Turner acknowledged the continued support of the city from the alliance for the last 20 years, and that the recent HTV support from the city is a means by which the alliance can continue its support.

Mayor Turner acknowledged the increase in COVID-19 cases, following the holidays, and encouraged everyone to wear masks, social distance, and get tested. The city opened a vaccine supersite at Minute Maid Park, and distributed 3,850 injections on January 9. Mayor Turner indicated another supersite would be set up on the north side of Houston, and that the city is providing vaccines to neighborhood clinics. The city is also considering using mobile distribution vehicles and individual vaccinations for residents that are transportation challenged. Mayor Turner asked the SNA to encourage anyone meeting the vaccination criteria to get vaccinated.

Mayor Turner also acknowledged four flood mitigation projects in Kingwood, Inwood Forest, West Houston/TIRZ17, and the Buffalo Bayou North Canal, have been funded by FEMA and are moving forward.

City Council passed a bond initiative that is to build 1,000 single-family homes within the identified Complete Communities.

Keith Downey, SN52, acknowledged the reopening of the Kashmere Crane Library. Keith also reported 15 dumping sites in SN52 and asked for more cameras to help identify those dumping and to follow through with prosecution of the individuals.

Stacie Fairchild, SN22, acknowledged the mayor's support, along with that of CM Alcorn and CM Kamin, in finding a solution to the noise problems experienced in some parts of Houston.

Chair Sorto asked about the economic impact the pandemic was having on the city, given the loss of jobs. Mayor Turner responded that the loss in fees collected and reduction in sales tax amounts to about \$150MM, and he indicated the city budget deficit is \$192MM; the largest in the city's history. The city has implemented a hiring freeze for all departments except police, fire, and solid waste. Mayor Turner said the city was expecting to get \$65MM in federal rent relief, and that the city was focused on creating high-tech job opportunities for those people who have lost their jobs.

Amy Dinn, SN64&88, asked that the city legal department better enforce and support property owners with deed restrictions when industrial and commercial businesses obtain permits to build and operate in neighborhoods with covenants. TaKasha Francis indicated she would follow up with the issue raised.

Jackie Mayhorn SN47 stated that if the city had trash facilities that were easier to access, illegal dumping might not be as big a problem as it is. Mayor Turner indicated the solid waste department is under-funded, and that Houston is the only major city with no garbage fee.

Amy Dinn asked about issues with train noise in her SN is negatively impacting quality of life. Mayor Turner indicated the railroads are federally regulated and the city has no jurisdiction.

Chair Sorto asked about the North Houston Highway Improvement Project. Mayor Turner responded that the city has proposed changes to the project to minimize the impact of the project on nearby communities, and to mitigate the flooding in the immediate vicinity of the highway. He indicated TxDOT has issued a proposed environmental impact study, but no record of decision has been issued by the federal government, and the city is still negotiating with the project with TxDOT.

Keith Downey asked about a 45% increase in homicides. Mayor Turner stated that increases in homicides in all major cities have occurred during the pandemic, and that the city has increased funding for the homicide investigative unit. Chair Sorto asked how the city's cultural affairs department is interacting with minority communities where crimes may be under reported. The mayor responded that the respective department heads interact routinely with community and business leaders in international communities in Houston.

Sylvia Rivas, SN36, asked about the use of outdated traffic data in the Fondren Road paving and drainage project; furthermore, significant greenspace has been removed, and sidewalks tend to have no buffer adjacent to streets in the proposed design. She indicated a scheduled meeting with Public Works has been canceled, and has not yet been rescheduled. The mayor responded that he would speak with the Public Works director about the project.

Rev David Smith, SN46, asked about a possible CIP to overlay Jensen Drive. He also mentioned the lack of grocery stores in his area. Mayor Turner indicated that Jensen might be able to be repaired within the street rehabilitation program more quickly than a CIP. He indicated the city may have federal money available to incentivize businesses to locate in underserved communities.

Kathie Easterly, SN 28, asked about the repair of homes damaged during hurricane Harvey. Mayor Turner indicated that funds are available through the Texas General Land Office. Kathie asked about telecom companies installing 5G equipment without consideration to neighborhood residents. The mayor indicated the state usurped municipal oversight of the 5G deployment, and that a new legislature is being sworn in, and he encouraged the super neighborhood leadership to contact their state legislatures and ask they address the problem.

Chair Sorto thanked Mayor Turner for his presentation and responding to questions from the super neighborhood leadership.

II. Introductions

CM Sallie Alcorn and CM Tarsha Jackson introduced themselves and spoke about how their respective offices were working with neighborhoods.

III. Super Neighborhood Alliance Election of Officials

Tomaro Bell stated the election committee, comprised of herself, Cindy Chapman, Scott Cubbler, and Jane West, has recommended Juan Antonio Sorto for President and Philip Salerno for Vice President of the Alliance. There were no floor nominations. Tomaro stated that each council would have a single vote, and to represent a super neighborhood, the person voting would have to be an elected official.

Mike VanDusen indicated the quorum requirement of 14 super neighborhoods present in the meeting had been met, and that a roll call vote would be taken in ascending super neighborhood numbers. Juan Antonio Sorto and Philip Salerno were reelected unanimously by representatives of the 26 super neighborhood councils present in the meeting.

IV. Statewide Default Speed Limit

Leigh Killgore, SN14, stated she was working with Dexter Handy, President of the Greater Houston Coalition for Complete Streets, to ask the state legislature to lower the default speed limit of 30mph to 25mph. Research has shown that pedestrians and cyclists struck by a motor

vehicle traveling 25mph are significantly more like to survive, compared to vehicles traveling 30mph or greater, and that lower speed is relevant to the city's recently adopted Vision Zero Initiative.

State House Bill 442 and Senate Bill 221 are being submitted that lower the default residential speed limit for many municipalities in Texas. The state is being asked to make this change because it would save municipalities the size of Houston about \$25MM in roadway signage if the city were to adopt a lower speed limit under the current traffic code.. If the state were to lower the default speed limit, Houston neighborhoods would be subject to the 25mph limit without the signage expense.

Leigh asked that several SNCs join in this initiative and start a letter writing campaign directed at state officials to support these bills. Several SNC leaders indicated their support.

V. SWOT Analysis and Creation of a General Plan for the Alliance

Chair Juan Sorto stated that one of the outcomes of the SWOT analysis in 2019 was to create more effective communication within the Alliance. Having HTV carry the SNA general meetings, and to have the meetings archived on the city streaming service, satisfies much of that need.

The next step is to create a general plan within the current Alliance structure that will facilitate better engagement of public officials on behalf of neighborhoods. Juan indicated he would be working with Dr. David Abraham, Rice University, to develop a process by which a plan can be created by the super neighborhood councils.

VI. Open Comments and General Announcements

Roy Lira, SN 63, announced the Flores Library in 2nd Ward would be reopening, thanks to a generous contribution from the United Arab Emirates.

Tomaro Bell, SN 83, noted that most of the city COVID-19 testing sites are not walk-up sites, and require access by motor vehicle only. Juan acknowledged that SNs should work with the city to create sites accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists.

Mike VanDusen, SN22, asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the December 2020 meeting. Tomaro Bell made said motion; Leigh Killgore seconded. The minutes were accepted without amendments.