

Super Neighborhood Alliance

Minutes of Virtual General Meeting Held 8 November 2021



Guests

Sallie Alcorn, CM At-Large 5
DiDi Chavis, Staff for CM Dist K
Jack Valinski, DoN
Rhonda Sauter, DoN
Teresa Geisheker, P&D
Klingerman, Staff for HCC Pct 4
Scott Packard, HHD

Lydia Osinowo, HHD
Iyin Ojekunle, HHD
Raymonda Patterson, HHD
Abner Lyons, Staff for State HD 142
Christina Walsh, Staff for State HD 148
Alan Watkins, Houston Housing Collaborative
Shawn Arrajj, CI Newspaper

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Ricky Miller, SNC 05
Latisha Grant, SNC 06
Mark Klein, SNC 12
Leigh Kilgore, SNC 14
Pedro Ayazagoitia, SNC 15
Jeff Baker, SNC 17
Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22
Mike VanDusen, SNC 22
Kay Warhol, SNC 24
Barbara Quattro, SNC 25
Doug Smith, SNC 25

Kathie Easterly, SNC 28
Terry Cominsky, SNC 31
Cheryl O'Brien, SNC 32
Sylvia Rivas, SNC 36
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38
Paula Parshall, SNC 45
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNC 49, 50
Bridgette Murray, SNC 57
Roy Lira, SNC 63
Amy Dinn, SNC 64, 88
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

Meeting convened at 6:30pm.

- I. **Minutes of the October 11 General Meeting** – A motion to accept was made by Doug Smith; Cheryl O'Brien seconded. Minutes were approved without amendment.
- II. **Houston Housing Collaborative, Alan Watkins** – Mr. Watkins began by referring to a newspaper article on how to stop neighborhood displacement. The article describes a neighborhood in Rhode Island, where residents of a distressed neighborhood came together to affect change that transformed their neighborhood into a thriving community without the displacement normally associated with gentrification. The article used that community as an example of what could occur in Houston's Third Ward.

Mr. Watkins went on to say that the Third Ward has started changing due to recent development activities. This raised concerns in the community that the activity may produce gentrification and displacement. The residents want to preserve their community, feel replacing the existing affordable housing with more expensive homes will result in displacement.

The Housing Collaborative advocates alternate forms of development, like community land trusts that can provide affordable home ownership without resulting in gentrification. Another tool available is mixed income neighborhood trusts administered by neighborhood leaders. Middle-income tenants rent market-rate residences held by the trust. The rental profit is used to subsidize less-affluent residents in the same neighborhood. The Collaborative also advocates for livable

wages of \$15 or more per hour, and is willing to work with stakeholders to create a comprehensive strategy to build affordable mixed-income housing in Houston.

Juan Sorto stated the Collaborative has been working since 2016 with stakeholders to formulate a plan for future development, and asked why this effort took so long. Mr. Watkins mentioned he is the second executive director of the Collaborative in as many years. Last year the organization met with Mayor Turner about implementing a comprehensive housing plan, and found the city had no interest in suggestions offered by the Collaborative. Mr. Watkins indicated they are hoping the next administration will be more receptive.

Tomaro Bell mentioned she lives in a stable mixed-income neighborhood developed more than 40 years ago. She mentioned her neighborhood recently opposed a housing development on Dixie because it was to offer a pre-school for resident's children, but was located next to a liquor store. She also mentioned neighborhoods can use the minimum lot sized designations offered by the city to prevent high-density development, and preserve their communities. Ms. Bell closed by saying that Houston is a city of very diverse housing needs, and that a master planned city will not serve the needs of most of the people in Houston. Mr. Watkins responded that the Collaborative does not function as an outsider, but engages local communities to develop a plan and desired outcome. The Collaborative functions as a facilitator and not as a leader.

Doug Smith commented that 1/3 of TIRZ funding is supposed to be dedicated to affordable housing development. In a recent meeting, the city's chief development officer mentioned those funds offer a degree of flexibility as to how they are spent. Doug asked if the Collaborative was able to track the funds to help ensure that were appropriately spent. Mr. Watson mentioned they were not tracking the funds at this time.

CM Alcorn thanked Mr. Watson for pointing out the development initiatives promoted by several of the previous mayors, and that this approach does not yield a comprehensive development process. She mentioned she understands the Collaborative does not support some of the proposed changes to building code because they may increase building costs. Mr. Watson mentioned the proposed increase in minimum side setback from 3' to 5' could increase housing costs.

III. Update on COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Distribution – Houston Health Department Communications Officer, Scott Packard, stated the rate of infection has dropped lower than October, with a positivity rate of 4.9%. Hospitalizations and deaths have decreased, proportionally. Mr. Packard showed almost 79% of eligible Houstonians have at least the first dose of vaccine, and 68% are fully vaccinated. The wastewater virus load is 82% of the 6 June 2020 baseline, down from a high of 400%; the lowest in quite a while.

Mr. Packard mentioned the Pfizer vaccine is now authorized for people 5 years of age and up. The vaccine booster shots for Pfizer and Moderna are authorized for everyone over the age of 65 that received their second dose at least 6 months earlier. The boosters have also been authorized for other at-risk individuals over the age of 18. The Johnson & Johnson booster is authorized for people over the age of 18, two months of the initial vaccination. The CDC has also authorized mixing brands of vaccines, if a person's initial type of vaccine is unavailable.

The City of Houston is still offering vaccination site throughout the city. Locations can be found online at HoustonHealth.org, or by calling (832) 393-4220.

Juan Sorto asked if the city was still recruiting neighborhood ambassadors. Scott replied that the 1st round of recruiting has closed, but that he would notify the alliance if a second round opens.

IV. **Super Neighborhood Alliance Executive Elections** – Tomaro began by thanking those individuals in the current elected positions for their time and efforts. She mentioned the nomination committee is comprised of herself, Scott Cubbler, and Jane West. Individuals, elected to a position in their active super neighborhoods, who wish to serve as chair, vice-chair, or secretary of the alliance, should submit their resume and cover letter to the committee before the December meeting. Nominees will be introduced at the meeting, and voting will occur in the January meeting. Floor nominations will also be accepted at the January meeting.

V. **Open Comments** – Tomaro Bell expressed an interest in holding an in-person meeting in December. Juan Sorto indicated the executive committee would explore an in-person meeting option.

Bridgette Murray, SN 57, informed the alliance of meeting to be hosted by the Health Port Communities Coalition regarding a dredging project being undertaken by the Corp of Engineers to deepen and widen the ship channel so as to accommodate larger ships. The goal of the meeting is to inform people of the scope of the project, and the potential impacts and benefits.

Doug Smith mentioned that the fire fighters have prevailed in three lawsuits against the city regarding funding of their pension plan. He mentioned the current liability is about \$700MM, and grows daily because of interest being accrued. He suggested super neighborhood leaders engage their respective district council members to discuss how the city might address the outstanding debt.

Pedro Ayazagoitia the Greater Heights SN 15 will be holding their meeting on Nov 16, where the city will inform residents of the proposed reduction in motor vehicle lanes on 11th Street.

DiDi Chavis invited everyone to visit the City Council District K website to learn about the partnership between the City of Houston and the Houston Galveston Area Council to create a Livable Center Study for Southwest Houston.

Stacie Fairchild mentioned that Mark Wilfalk is the newly appointed director of the city's Solid Waste Management department. She also mentioned the city would be holding a Veterans Day celebration on the steps of city hall on Thursday. The celebration will begin at 10am and the parade at 11am.

Christina Walsh, with Texas House District 148, announced the state redistricting was approved.

Barbara Quattro announced Alief SN 25 will be hosting a tree planting activity and the corner of Kirkwood and Bissonnet on November 13 and November 20. Everyone is invited to join in.

Tomaro Bell commented that Harris County has new commissioner precincts and that because of the staggered elections, some residents may not be able to vote for a commissioner for the next six years.

Stacie Fairchild mentioned the Houston Open golf tournament is being held this week, and that access to Memorial Park will be restricted. Traffic on Memorial Drive should not be impacted.

VI. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:01pm.