

Super Neighborhood Alliance Minutes of Virtual General Meeting Held 10 January 2022



Guests

Sylvester Turner, Mayor of Houston
Sallie Alcorn, CM At-Large 5
David Robinson, CM At-Large 1
Martha Castex-Tatum, CM Dist K
TaKasha Francis, Dir DON
Margaret Wallace Brown, Dir P&D
Teresa Geisheker, P&D
Jennifer Ostlind, P&D
Bryant Quiroga, Office of the Mayor
Mary Benton, Office of the Mayor
Jeff Syptak, Office of the Mayor
Janice Weaver, Office of the Mayor
CeCe Scott, Staff for CM At-Large 4
Mary Moreno, Staff for CM Dist B
DiDi Chaves, Staff for CM Dist K
Diana Caicedo, Staff for CM At-Large 2
Rhonda Sauter, DON
Jack Valinski, DON
Alyce Coffey, SWD
Mark Wilfalk, SWD
Jack Cagle, Commissioner HC Pct 4
Odalys Sivils, Staff for HCC Pct 4
Pamela Dora-Thomas, HC
Roger Bridgewater, Staff for HCC Pct 3
Bert Keller, Staff for HCC Pct 3
Edidiong Obot, Staff for HCC Pct 1
Nelson Espitia, Staff for HCC Pct 2
Christina Walsh, Staff for State HD 148
Sherri Cortez, HC DA's office
Edward Chuter, HISD
Scott Packard, HHD

Kyle Maronie, HCTax
Linda Trevino, METRO
Marie Carlisle, Baker Law
Cheryl Harris, HPW
Valerie Luna, HPW
David Wurdlow, HPW
Joy Sewing, HouChron
Craig Brann, KPRC
Ashley Johnson, LINK Houston
Ken Fountain
Marlee York
Deb Bonario-Martin
Diego Degenhart
Emily Patterson
Molly Cook
Chris Ochterbeck
Kevin Strickland
Ana Hernandez
Sharon LaDay
Bryan Lopez
John Geiss
Randall Baxley
Kennedy Henderson
Mark Fairchild
Jim Saye
Bessie Mansfield
Kim Perry, Urban Harvest
Shiv Srivastava
Lenora Sorola-Pohlman
George Frey
Gilbert Garcia

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 5

Leigh Killgore, SNC 14

John Zavala, SNC 14

Pedro Ayarzagoitia, SNC 15

Jeff Baker, SNC 17

Michael Huffmaster, SNC 18

Mike VanDusen, SNC 22

Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22

Jane West, SNC 22

Kay Warhol, SNC 24

Doug Smith, SNC SNC 25

Barbara Quattro, SNC 25

Sandra Rodriguez, SNC 27

Kathie Easterly, SNC 28

Natasha Butler, SNC 29

Terry Cominski, SNC 31

Harold Eaton, SNC 31

Cheryl O'Brien SNC 32

Cindy Chapman, SNC 37

Becky Edmondson, SNC 37

Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38

Jackie Mayhorn, SNC 47

Juan Antonio Sorto, SNC 49, 50

Rosalyn Francis, SNC 49, 50

Sylvia Cavazos, SNC 51

Keith Downey, SNC 52

Joetta Stevenson, SNC 55

Bridgette Murray, SNC 57

Kay Walton, SNC 62

Roy Lira, SNC 63

Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66

Tomaro Bell, SNC 83

Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

Meeting convened at 6:30pm.

- I. **Minutes of the December 13 General Meeting** – A motion to accept was made by Tomaro Bell; Doug Smith seconded. Minutes were approved without amendment.
- II. **Sylvester Turner, Mayor of Houston** – Juan Sorto began by asking Mayor Turner if his notion of community engagement had changed since becoming mayor. Mayor Turner began by thanking Juan for his leadership and community advocacy, and mentioned that meetings like the SNA general meeting are good ways for elected officials to engage communities.

Deb Bonario-Martin mentioned her neighborhood is opposing gentrification and asked for help in creating a food farm. Mayor Turner responded that he would ask Shannon Buggs, Director of Complete Communities, to assign someone to work on the issues mentioned.

Pedro Ayarzagoitia asked about noise and crime centered on some bars in the Greater Heights SN that have persisted for longer that Mayor Turner has been in office. The mayor responded that Houston is a growing city without zoning, which requires balancing the interests of competing parties in a state with strong property rights. He mentioned that ARA and city legal are working with residents to determine what changes in city code could be made.

Barbara Quattro thanked the mayor for BARC neutering 1000 animals by July because adoptions alone don't adequately address the stray animal problem in Houston. She asked if this will continue after in July and beyond. Mayor Turner responded he will propose to city council to increase funding for neutering.

Tomaro Bell attended an ARA meeting on noise and suggested ARA issue noise citations. This would relieve HPD from noise enforcement, and better focus on serious crime issues. She also suggested having popup satellite offices in the parts of Houston experiencing higher rates of COVID-19 infections because many residents in the communities don't have motor vehicle transportation. The mayor stated that in addition to the 5 mega sites in the city, various clinics are

being used, and there are mobile testing units. He said the mobile testing units are being deployed into areas of Houston where the vaccination rate is low. He said the city wants to have a noise permit mandate, and will buy more sound meters.

Stacie Fairchild asked about collaboration between HPD and county law enforcement officers for better noise ordinance enforcement. Mayor Turner mentioned the HPD chief Larry Satterwhite was heading a unit investigating working with constables to expand their powers within the city. The city is also trying to increase the fine for noise violators, and to have noise permits issued to the establishment rather than an individual.

Kathie Easterly asked if anything has been done to mitigate the impact communication companies are having on neighborhoods when deploying 5GHz technology. Mayor Turner responded that the bill passed in 2017 preempted the ability of municipalities from local regulation.

Emily Patterson commented regarding the city noise ordinance that the property rights of the bar owners creating the noise is given more weight than the rights of the residential property owners being impacted. She asked the mayor to require businesses creating the noise to mitigate the impact of the noise, and that it be done in an administrative proceeding rather than a municipal court proceeding. Mayor Turner responded that the people of Houston have decided they don't want zoning, and that establishes the city they choose to live in.

Roy Lira mentioned a 2nd Ward resident made a 311 request for a 4-way stop and was denied because of insufficient incidents at the intersection. He asked if there were additional steps to be made to make streets safer in Houston. The mayor said he would refer the problem to HPW.

Joetta Stevenson said the heavy trash and large tree pickup schedule followed by SWD is not working well in 5th Ward because the area does not have much tree waste but does have a lot of junk caused by illegal dumping. Mayor Turner responded that residents should not be placing more than 8 ft³ of junk waste for curbside collection. SWD reports large amounts of construction waste are put out for pickup, in violation of city code. He said the city is looking into increasing the penalties for these types of violations. And that there is a 14% vacancy rate within SWD that is contributing to collection problems.

Bridgette Murray asked about the city initiative to add air monitoring devices and the proposed locations for the monitors. The mayor responded the city has added some monitors during his administration and plans to use federal money to add more.

Keith Downey stated that popup COVID testing sites in his neighborhood have not be responsive in returning results. Mayor Turner suggested residents contact the city health department to learn where the closest city recognized testing site is located.

Kay Walton commented that bars in Midtown generate sufficient noise to vibrate windows and floors, and that the bars are getting priority treatment from the city over the welfare of residents. The mayor responded there are residents in Midtown that are supportive of the bars and moved to Midtown to be close to the bars.

Mark Fairchild stated that after meeting with ARA and CM Sallie Alcorn, a stakeholder group drafted and submitted to the mayor's office a roadmap of proposed changes to address noise issues Houston residents are experiencing. Mark asked the mayor to respond to the roadmap. Mayor Turner responded that the roadmap does not represent a consensus opinion of residents and businesses in the city.

Doug Smith observed that the city struggles to balance the annual budget and that the mayor had indicated the possibility of a solid waste fee. He mentioned the city housing authority's public facility corporation program has allowed large developers to avoid paying property taxes. The mayor responded that public facilities corporations are allowed by state statute. He further commented that the biggest problem faced by his administration was \$8.2BB unfunded pension liability, and through reforms and investments has been reduced to \$1.49BB. Mayor Turner mentioned his administration has balanced the budget each year.

Terry Cominski asked about the plans the city has for gunshot detection. The mayor responded city council approved the ShotSpotter device in the last session. He mentioned the city faced an increase in homicides in 2020 and 2021. The city responded by adding new HPD cadet classes and authorized additional overtime. The ShotSpotter program is expected to assist HPD in locating the sources of gunshots. The mayor noted that in mid-summer of 2021, the homicide rate was up 40% over the previous year, but by year end, had trended down to 17%.

John Zavala thanked the mayor for the support given to the Lazybrook/Tembergrove super neighborhood regarding drainage.

Jane West mentioned the senior housing facility at 2100 Memorial Way was being demolished, and asked what type of flood mitigation was planned to avoid the problem that caused the previous facility to close. She also asked what the city would do to curtail illegal dumping, when the city plans on proposing a solid waste fee. Jane stated she supports the suggestion of a previous speaker to move noise enforcement to an administrative venue, and suggested the building codes be changed to require businesses generating loud noise to mitigate the impact on adjacent property owners. Mayor Turner responded that the 2100 Memorial project is a FEMA funded project and requires flood mitigation. Next, he mentioned the waste fee being considered should help all waste collection issues and not focused on just illegal dumping.

Jackie Mayhorn asked that the policies regarding waste management be relaxed to minimize illegal dumping. She mentioned super neighborhoods in northeast Houston have formed a flood mitigation group and are working with Harris County Flood Control. The mayor responded that he has directed Director Haddock to create a comprehensive plan for better maintaining the 2,500 miles of open ditches in Houston.

- III. **Update on COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Distribution** – Scott Packard, with the Houston Health Department, said that waste water analysis shows the city's viral load is 1,435% based on the 100% base established July 2020. This has resulted in a positivity rate of 38%; the highest of the pandemic. This demonstrates how contagious the Omicron variant is.

Of the 281 COVID deaths in Houston in 2021, 265 were unvaccinated, 7 were partially vaccinated, and 9 were fully vaccinated. Scott mentioned the city has over 30 testing sites and more than 20 vaccination sites throughout Houston.

Christina Walsh asked to confirm the percentage of break through cases, which were 1.1%.

- IV. **Recognition of Elected Officials** – Commissioner Cagle thanked Juan and the outgoing leadership for their efforts in the previous year. CM Sallie Alcorn acknowledged noise is a major issue affecting neighborhoods, and that the city will take steps to help mitigate the problem. CM David Robinson mentioned the city is working on step to reduce solid waste in Houston. CM Martha Castex-Tatum mentioned her district has 9 cameras to mitigate illegal dumping and will be

producing a video on the issue. She mentioned the city is looking at strengthening city code regarding convenience stores to minimize some of the negative events happening at those locations. Roger Bridgewater said he was impressed with the outgoing SNA leadership and with Juan Sorto's ability to foster community engagement with elected officials. Nelson Espitia commented he has seen the leadership skills in the SNA grow during the last year. Christina Walsh also thanked the SNA for neighborhood leadership work they are doing. Edidiong Obot reported the Harris County grant program will open soon, and anyone wishing to apply will need to do so by February 22. CeCe Scott mentioned CM Plummer was available to help neighborhoods in any way possible. Sherri Cortez mentioned the Harris County DA's office will be focusing on child neglect in January. Mary Moreno thanked Juan for his leadership.

- V. **Super Neighborhood Alliance Executive Elections** – Cindy Chapman ran for president, Roy Lira for Vice President, Stacie Fairchild for Secretary, and Scott Cubbler for Communications Director. These candidates ran unopposed, and were elected by a unanimous vote of the recognized and active super neighborhood present in the meeting.

Takasha Francis thanked Juan Sorto for his leadership and the achievements over the last two years.

VI. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 9:18pm.