



Super Neighborhood Alliance Minutes of Virtual General Meeting Held 9 August 2021

Guests

Gareth Morgans, Staff for CM At-Large 2
Jordan Frazier, Staff for CM At-Large 5
Mary Moreno, Staff for CM Dist B
Julia Retta, Staff for CM Dist C
Kimberly Hatter, Office of the Mayor
Jack Valinski, DoN
Rhonda Sauter, DoN
Margaret Wallace Brown, P&D
Anna Sedillo, P&D
Eddy Roberts, P&D
Misty Staunton, P&D
Jennifer Ostlind, P&D
Carvana Cloud, HPD
Francisco Castillo, Staff for HCC Pct 2
Bert Keller, Staff for HCC Pct 3
Roger Bridgewater, Staff for HCC Pct 3
Scott Packard, Houston Health Dept
Christina Walsh, Staff for State HD 148
Desmine Allen, SWD
Alyce Coffee, SWD
Thomas Lambert, METRO

Tanya Washington, METRO
Margret Dunlap, METRO
Christine Moreno-Conner, METRO
Luis Garcia, METRO
Linda Trevino, METRO
Wilfredo Santamaria, METRO
Sofia Simien, METRO
John Geiss
Linda Scurlock
Blanca Ortega, Scenic Houston
Kim Perry, Urban Harvest
Tracy Jackson
Barbara McGuffey
Kiara Cabrera
Chena Karega
Sonia Gonzalez
Melissa Lujan
Elena Penso
Edward Chuter
Jessica Georges
Evalyn Krudy

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Ricky Miller, SNC 05
Mark Klein, SNC 12
Leigh Killgore, SNC 14
Chris Ochterbeck, SNC 14
Pedro Ayazagoitia, SNC 15
Jeff Baker, SNC 17
Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22
Mike VanDusen, SNC 22
Kay Warhol, SNC 24
Doug Smith, SNC 25
Kathie Easterly, SNC 28
Natasha Butler, SNC 29
Terry Cominsky, SNC 31

Cindy Chapman, SNC 37
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38
Deb Bonario-Martin, SNC 45
Larin Counciler, SNC 45
Paula Parshal, SNC 45
Maria Montes, SNC 46
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNC 49, 50
Roselyn Francis, SNC 49, 50
Kay Walton, SNC 62
Elena Penso, SNC 63
Amy Dinn, SNC 64, 88
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83

Meeting convened at 6:34pm.

- I. **Minutes of the June 14 General Meeting** – A motion to accept was made by Kathleen O'Reilly; second by Doug Smith. Minutes were approved without amendment.

- II. **Presentation by METRO President, Thomas Lambert**– President Lambert presented a state of METRO. The current daily ridership on METRO is 141,000 passengers. In 2019, voters of Harris County approved the METRONext plan that will help meet the needs of the 50% increase in population expected by 2040. The long-term plan is multi-modal, and will result in 500 miles of travel improvements.

The plan being implemented is based on over 50 community outreach meetings hosted by METRO, and attended more than 1,200 community events to ensure the \$7.5B plan meets the needs of the region. The plan will implement 75 miles of rapid bus service (METRORapid) that is bus based, but operates like a light rail system in dedicated busways. The Silver Line in the Galleria is an example of METRORapid, and there are plans to expand into the Inner Katy corridor, and from the Westchase Park & Ride, through 3rd Ward and the East End, to the Tidwell Transit Center.

The existing Green and Purple METRORail lines will be extended to Hobby Airport, and the Red line will be extended from the Northline Transit Center, through Acres Homes, to the North Shepherd Park and Ride facility.

Many existing station amenities are being enhanced to make them ADA compliant, and new stations are being added, with attention focused on first mile/last mile access. Circulator services are being added to provide better transportation within neighborhoods.

Chair Juan Sorto thanked Mr. Lambert for the support METRO has shown the SNA in the past. Juan asked if METRO is continuing to engage neighborhoods as the 2015 plan is implemented, because some communities are experiencing a reduction in service. Mr. Lambert responded that METRO is continuing in its community engagement, and offered several examples of that continued engagement. Stacie Fairchild said the recent meeting SN22 had with METRO regarding the Inner Katy BRT stations was very good. Deb Bonario-Martin stated SN45 would like to meet with METRO regarding some minor bus amenity enhancements in the Northline area. Mr. Lambert responded that Luis Garcia would contact her about the issues. Pedro Ayazagoitia mentioned there were still vagrant issues at the Fulton and North Central light rail stop. Mr. Lambert mentioned METRO was working with the Coalition for the Homeless to better address this type of issue. Kay Warhol thanked Mr. Lambert for the meeting SN24 had with Linda Trevino and Priya Zachariah regarding the proposed University BRT. Juan asked why several shelters and stops along Wayside had recently been removed. Tanya Washington said this was probably the ongoing amenities upgrade, and Tom Lambert reiterated that several hundred upgrades are scheduled for completion by year end.

- III. **Presentation by Houston Planning Department Director, Margaret Wallace Brown** – Director Brown provided an update the Livable Places initiative. She stated the purpose of the Livable Places Action Committee is to identify changes in the building and development code that promote housing variety and affordability. The proposed changes are to land platting code in chapter 42, parking code in chapter 26, and planning code in chapter 33.

Director Brown made it clear that none of the changes being considered would override active deed restrictions; meaning that neighborhoods that prohibit higher density development will not be impacted. The proposed changes will allow higher density, infill development in communities that want the development.

Screening and buffering are being looked at to better protect neighborhoods from light pollution. Neighborhood character protection is being considered, as well as ways to facility higher density small scale development, such as duplexes and fourplexes. Enhancing multi-modal transportation to better support higher density development is being looked at.

The planning department has been using the “Let’s Talk Houston” website, and virtual meetings, to solicit input from residents regarding the changes being recommended by the Livable Places Action Committee. Feedback from the communities, along with the recommendations of the action committee, will be given to a technical advisory group of professionals to review. This review will consider how the proposed changes will effect infrastructure, such as drainage, roadways and transportation, etc. Once city ordinance changes have been made, the planning department will engage communities before the changes go before city council for approval.

Tomaro Bell asked if the code changes being considered would eliminate or weaken the minimum lot size/minimum build line platting code that currently helps neighborhoods avoid densification. Director Brown stated these platting codes would remain as an effective tool for neighborhoods, and would be supported by the planning department.

Kathy Easterly asked for clarification the potential effect the code changes, that are likely to change the definition of “single family residential”, might have on deed restrictions. Ms. Brown responded her department is reviewing the proposed code changes to ensure they will not weaken deed restrictions.

Leigh Killgore asked how the changes being considered might impact lot size and build line designation applications in the future. The director stated her department still supports the designations and that anyone considering a designation could contact planning and development to learn the best way to proceed.

IV. Houston Police Department Update by Community Affairs Deputy Director, Carvana Cloud –

Director Cloud announced HPD began implementing a strategy to combat the rise in violent crime being seen in Houston. This strategy is making more resources and officers available. Ms. Cloud mentioned the various methods of relational policing HPD is adopting.

Juan Sorto asked if national night out was going to occur. Ms. Cloud responded the subject would be discussed in an executive session later in the week.

Deb Bonario-Martin asked about virtual or hybrid PIP meetings. Director Cloud mentioned she would make the lieutenant coordinating PIP meetings aware of the need and that HPD would reach out to SN45.

Stacie Fairchild mentioned that a recent incident in SN22 has damaged the relationship HPD has had with the super neighborhood, and would like to discuss the issue after the SNA meeting.

V. Update on COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Distribution – Scott Packard stated the Delta variant of COVID-19 is spreading rapidly, resulting in a surge in infections and hospitalizations with many hospitals at or near capacity. Breakthrough cases of vaccinated people becoming infected with the virus is rare, but usually results in a much less severe reaction. COVID related deaths in Texas have typically occurred in individuals who were not vaccinated. Therefore, the city is suggesting people wear masks and socially distance in indoor settings.

The 14 day positivity rate has increased to 17.4%, and is supported by a 320% increase in the virus found in city waste water. Mr. Packard mentioned that an increase in waste water virus detected usually results in an increase in the number of confirmed cases within 2 weeks. The increase in the number of cases results in an increase hospitalizations within an additional 2 weeks.

The city has a new Super Saturday vaccination initiative that has supported an uptick in the rates of vaccinations. The city also has a \$25 incentive program to encourage people to get vaccinated.

Tomaro Bell mentioned the Children’s Museum has “vaccination nights” on Thursday to provide normal school vaccinations, and that it might be an opportunity for the health department to partner to get more COVID-19 vaccinations.

Philip Salerno asked if the lamda variant was detect in city waste water. Mr. Packard responded it had not, and that reporting in the future would have breakout data by variant.

VI. **Open Comments** – Juan Sorto asked Rhonda Sauter and Jack Valinski the status of the new 311 system. Rhonda mentioned the system was still being worked on, and was not yet ready for use.

Deb Bonario-Martin mentioned she had recommended the mayor’s office to have the department of neighborhoods work with the SNA on issues experienced by people with disabilities.

Tomaro Bell mentioned Scenic Houston was starting to make presentations on changes to the large billboard code being considered by the city. Juan mentioned they would make a presentation at the September meeting.

Desmine Allen mentioned the solid waste phone app from city is named “HTX Collects” is available for Apple and Android smartphones. He mentioned the app shows collection schedules for all types of waste collection, and can send up-to-date notifications. Doug Smith asked if the new app would give actual pickup times, because many collections are not happening at the scheduled time. Mr. Allen responded that the app could be configured to push the latest updates to the app users. Stacie Fairchild asked if the new app would replace the Roll Out app. Desmine indicated it would. Linda Scurlock said her neighborhood’s normal collection day is on Monday, but the city collected on the prior Saturday. Mr. Allen said he would put his contact information in the chat, and asked Linda to contact him to resolve the issue.

Blanca Ortega, with Scenic Houston, mentioned the city is partnering with a billboard company to install 52 LED billboards along the city’s busiest thoroughfares. This will undermine the 40-year old sign code that currently prohibits new billboard signs. Juan informed Ms. Ortega that Scenic Houston will be on the SNA September agenda to make a presentation. Stacie Fairchild asked when the sign code change would likely appear on the city council agenda. Ms. Ortega said her organization suspects is will be in September. Kathy Easterly thanked Scenic Houston for their work in helping to keep Houston a desirable place to live.

Tomaro Bell announced a job fair in Council District F on Saturday, August 14, from 10am to 2pm.

Keith Downey asked people stay vigilant regarding their surroundings. We know crime is increasing, and people need to be extra careful regarding their personal safety.

Juan Sorto announced earlier in the meeting that Council Member Sallie Alcorn sponsored a budget amendment to continue funding the SNA general meeting recordings, available Houston Television.

VII. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:21pm.