

Super Neighborhood Alliance
Minutes from Meeting held June 10, 2019, at City Hall Annex



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Guests

David Robinson, At-Large 2 CM
Jordan Thomas (At-Large 4 CM A. Edwards)
Teresa Geisheker, COH-Planning & Development
Rhonda Sauter, DON-COH
Alyce Coffey-COH-SWM
Francisco Castillo, Harris Co., Pct. 2
Bert Keller, Tony Buzbee Campaign
Daphne Scarbrough, City Council Candidate

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Rain Eatmon, SNC 06
Christina Walsh, SNC 10
Mark Klein, SNC 12
Leigh Killgore, SNC 14
Pedro Ayaragoitia, SNC 15
Jeff Baker, SNC 17
Judson Bryant, SNC 18

Michael Huffmaster, SNA Past Chair, NC 18
Jane West, SNA Secretary, SNC 22
Mike Van Dusen, SNC 22
Doug Smith, SNC 25
Terry Cominsky, SNC 31
Cheryl O'Brien, SNC 32
Marcy Williams, SNC 36
Cindy Chapman, SNC 37
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38
David Smith, SNC 46
Huey German-Wilson, SNC 48
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNA Vice-Chairman, SNC 49/50
Keith Downey, SNC 52
Jessica Hulsey, SNC 63
Amy Dinn, SNC 64/88
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

Meeting called to order at 6:35 p.m.

I. Introductions

II. Acceptance of Minutes from Meeting Held on May 13, 2019 (05 minutes)

Philip Salerno (SNC 05) moves, and Amy Dinn (SNC 64/88) seconds motion to accept the minutes. Motion carries.

III. CM David Robinson: A.I.A. Houston's Houston 2020 Visions: (10 minutes)

Call for Visions - Submissions deadline, August 26th

Observing that the 2-year anniversary of Hurricane Harvey is only two weeks away, and that the city has limited resources and unlimited demands, CM Robinson asked the meeting participants to think about how these facts of life impact each of our individual neighborhoods. Acknowledging that every neighborhood has projects to be prioritized, he said that he serves as chairman of City Council's Transportation, Technology, and Infrastructure ("TTI") Committee which has oversight of the city's Public Works and Information Technology Departments. Asserting that some city projects are being done

in close coordination with Harris County, he recognized former District G Councilman Bert Keller as a colleague of his on the Houston Galveston Area Council's ("H-GAC") Transportation Policy Council ("TPC"). He said that Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Adrian Garcia has a 12-point response to TxDOT's I-45 project, and emphasized that although the TPC recently approved some funding for the project, that the project is not yet fully funded as it is planned to be an \$8 billion project. CM Robinson said that he came to this meeting to make sure that SNA members were aware of the Houston 2020 Visions competition sponsored by the Houston chapter of the Architecture Institute of America ("A.I.A."). He said that the Houston 2020 Visions is a competition for forward-looking, long term plans for the city and its neighborhoods. Mayor Turner welcomed and allowed this first-ever collaboration between the city and the Houston chapter of the A.I.A. A link on A.I.A. Houston's web page leads to a story map that recounts a brief history of the city as well as some specifics about Hurricane Harvey, and then describes the challenge inherent in the competition. The Houston 2020 Visions is intended to be participatory, broad, and competitive. He said that over 200 groups, individuals, firms, non-profits, etc. have already responded with plans that include things such as the "Ike Dike" — a mid-bay solution proposed by the Rice University Storm Center; a Third Reservoir — a proposal that groups like the Katy Prairie Preservation lead by Mark Klein oppose; community mitigation programs; rain barrels; and other things that the city could do on a proactive basis. Asserting that small, medium, and large projects are all welcome, CM Robinson encouraged the SNA and its members to submit proposals for each of their areas and for ways to enhance and grow the SNA and the Super Neighborhood initiative.

Michael Huffmaster (SNC 18) asked how the Houston 2020 Visions competition would "mesh with" the city's resilience effort and the general plan? CM Robinson responded that the city's Chief Resilience Officer, Marissa Aho, is submitting the city's draft Resiliency Plan as a visionary document. He said that the jury that will be judging the submissions in late September and October is composed of professionals with hurricane experience. He also said that an exhibit crafted from the submissions will be displayed at the A.I.A. headquarters in April of 2020 during the American Planning Association's national conference which will be held here in Houston. CM Robinson invited anyone with questions about the competition to call his office at 832-393-3013 to speak with his Deputy Chief of Staff Julia Retta.

IV. Old Business

A. SNA Communications Update:

Juan Antonio Sorto (SNC 49/50) for Stacie Fairchild (SNC 22) (05 minutes)

Vice-Chairman Sorto (SNC 49/50) reported that Ms. Fairchild (SNC 22) has been working hard to improve the delivery of information to SNC representatives and others. He reported that the SNA now has an active facebook page, and he invited each active SNC to link to it at SNA Houston.

B. SNA S.W.O.T. Analysis: Juan Antonio Sorto, SNA Vice-Chair (SNC 49/50) (15 minutes)

Observing that in March and April the SNA held two workshops, and that in May the SNA dedicated the majority of its monthly meeting to initiating a S.W.O.T. analysis intended to assess the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, Vice-Chairman Sorto reported that although the Super Neighborhood program is 20 years old, this is the first time an internal assessment has been done. He recommended that each SNC undertake its own internal assessment and plan to revisit that assessment every year to tackle issues that all organizations experience. He said that the practice of maintaining an "evergreen" S.W.O.T. analysis allows organizations to continue improving their internal operations and relations with staff and community. Vice-Chairman Sorto recognized Mr. David Smith and his Jensen SNC has one of the SNA's member organizations that has recently undertaken its own S.W.O.T. analysis. He said

that each of the next SNA meetings will include time to address one aspect of the S.W.O.T. analysis. Recognizing that the analysis could be done all at once, he said that conducting the analysis at a slower pace allows for more deliberate, thoughtful results.

The SNA's strengths were discussed during the June meeting. Strengths identified included: New leaders, city recognition, continuity, voters, city council advocates, grass roots/ subject matter experts, communities, knowledge about the issues, and dissemination of information.

The SNA's weaknesses are the subject of this month's discussion. The subject of weaknesses is the most difficult for any organization to undertake. Weaknesses identified during the May break out sessions included: avoidance of sensitive issues, lack of continuity, lack of a central repository of information, disorganization, lack of consensus, not sticking to agendas at meetings, and the size and number of people attending SNA meetings. As was done last month, a link to an on-line survey will be distributed for SNA members that will allow them not only to see the complete list of identified weaknesses but also to vote for the top three most important weaknesses needing to be addressed.

Vice-Chairman Sorto proposed devoting the SNA's January or February meeting next year to reviewing the entire S.W.O.T. analysis and to start the discussion of how all everyone can contribute towards addressing each aspect of the analysis. Alternatively, the SNA could hold an extraordinary meeting, perhaps on a Saturday, to undertake the exercise of reviewing how everyone can contribute towards addressing each aspect of the S.W.O.T. analysis.

C. 2018 Survey. Michael Huffmaster (SNC 18) (10 minutes)

Mr. Huffmaster (SNC 18) reported that since the last SNA meeting he has received one more completed survey. He said that approximately half of the active SNCs have responded to the survey. Emphasizing that the survey needs to be closed by the end of August so that the results can be summarized by the end of the month, he said that he would prepare a list of the SNCs that have responded so that representatives of those SNCs that have not responded can be notified and invited to do so.

V. Presentation Jeff Peters: Near Southwest SNC (SNC 38) and Its S.W.O.T. Analysis. (15 minutes)

Mr. Peters was unable to attend the meeting so this presentation will be rescheduled.

VI. New Business

A. Discuss and Consider Holding Candidate Forums (10 minutes)

Vice-Chairman Sorto reported that Ms. Fairchild has confirmed that all the currently registered mayoral candidates have confirmed their availability to participate in an SNA-sponsored mayoral candidate forum on Saturday, October 5, 2019, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The first hour of the forum will be a meet-and-greet during which light refreshments will be available. The bulk of the forum will be devoted to questions and answers that Mr. Isiah Carey of Channel 26 News has agreed to moderate. Ms. Fairchild is working to secure a centrally located venue for the event, and is investigating the venue used for a similar event held in 2015, i.e., the auditorium at the Houston Community College Central Campus. (* Note that since the meeting Chairwoman Cindy Chapman has helped to secure the H.C.C. venue for the mayoral candidate forum.)

Vice-Chairman Sorto invited SNC representatives to submit proposed questions for use during the forum to the SNA's gmail address: snacoh@gmail.com.

Michael Huffmaster (SNC 18) asked if other organizations will be co-sponsoring the mayoral forum. Vice-Chairman Sorto said that the SNA will be the sole sponsor for this forum, and observed that this forum

will represent the first time that the SNA has been the sole sponsor of a mayoral candidate forum. It was also observed that the last day to register to run for city office is August 19, 2019, and that all candidates who register to run for mayor will be invited to participate in the forum.

Jessica Hulsey (SNC 63) opined that the SNA acting as sole sponsor is a good thing and a positive accomplishment for the SNA.

Chairwoman Chapman asked for show of hands of SNCs that are planning to holding their own candidate forums. Almost all hands were raised. Vice-Chairman Sorto observed that the municipal election process with large numbers of candidates running for office has become a burden to some communities. He also recognized that holding objective candidate forums can be a challenge that calls for observance of best practices aimed at insuring that the sponsoring organizations do not endorse and do not appear to be endorsing any particular candidate(s). He emphasized that organizational objectivity is imperative because SNCs need to be able to work with whomever wins. He said that Ms. Fairchild has created a toolkit with information about how to contact candidates and remain objective. The tool kit has examples of letters and communications tools to use. The toolkit will be shared with representatives of all active SNCs.

Scott Cubbler (SNC 84) observed that it is a challenge to know who's running because neither the city nor the county tracks it.

Mark Klein (SNC 12) observed that Charles Kuffner, an on-line blogger, tracks and interviews the candidates.

Rhonda Sauter (DON) reported that the city's website experienced an outage over the weekend, but is back up and running. She also said that the city website tracks all people who have registered to run for office, and that candidates are not officially running until they have registered to do so.

B. Discuss and Consider Holding Event to Commemorate 20th Anniversary of the Super Neighborhood Program (10 minutes)

Chairwoman Chapman opened the discussion of what, if anything, should be done to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the SN program by stating that the program was initiated by former Mayor Lee P. Brown in the summer of 1999.

Cheryl O'Brien (SNC 32) suggested that perhaps a city council member could issue a proclamation in honor of the anniversary. It was also observed that milestone anniversaries are often celebrated all year, so the exact date of the anniversary may not matter much.

Marcy Williams (SNC 36) observed that the first SN councils recognized were Ray Washington's Fondren Gardens/Central SW SNC 39/40, and her, Brays Oaks, SNC 36.

Keith Downey (SNC 52) suggested that a commemorative logo be designed. It was also suggested that the SNA reach out the Houston Arts Alliance, to see if a competition could be held for developing a new logo that could be unveiled during a proclamation at city council. The logo could be used to print T-shirts and other items.

Marcy Williams (SNC 36) encouraged SNA members to look for photos taken at the time their SNCs were initially recognized that could be used to prepare an exhibit and/or commemorative publication.

Rain Eatmon (SNC 06) asked where such photos are kept? Rhonda Sauter (DON) responded that photos for all of the recognized SNCs can be found on the list of recognized SNCs maintained by the Department of Neighborhood on its Super Neighborhood Webpage.

VII. Committee Reports - Moving to WRITTEN Reports

(10 minutes)

- A. Internal Standing Committees - Moving to WRITTEN Reports
 - 1. Liveability, Transportation, and Parks: S. Ashy
 - 2. Infrastructure: M. Klein
 - 3. Growth: J. Sorto
 - 4. Finance, Health, and Public Safety: T. Bell
 - 5. Transition/Regulatory Affairs/Bylaws: J. West
 - 6. Environmental/I-45: K. O'Reilly

- C. External Advisory Committees - Moving to WRITTEN Reports
 - 1. Housing Work Group: J. Sorto
 - 2. Houston Coalition for Complete Streets: M. Huffmaster
 - 3. Complete Communities: J. Sorto
 - 4. H-GAC Mobility: S. Ashy
 - 5. Bicycle Advisory Committee: M. Van Dusen
 - 6. Houston Permit Center Advisory Board: C. Chapman and P. Salerno
 - 7. Planning Department's I-45: J. A. Sorto and P. Salerno

VIII. Open Comments

(05 minutes)

Rhonda Sauter (DON) announced that her staff is now down 30% because she's lost three people. She said that although schedules are tight since everyone on her staff is working more than 8 hours a day, the situation is temporary. Ms. Sauter also announced that Jack Valinski's last day at the city would be Friday, August 16th. She said that Mr. Valinski resigned his position with the city to assume a new position as general manager for radio station KPFT. She also said that she and her staff are all busy working on the city's various back to school fairs.

Keith Downey (SNC 52) reported that a farmer's market will be held on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Kashmere Gardens Elementary. The farmers market will be a joint venture of Urban Harvest and Common Market.

Cheryl O'Brien (SNC 32) reported that Linkwood Park Renovation Phase 1 has been completed. The Houston Parks Department and the Parks Board worked together with the Friends of Linkwood Park to bring the project to fruition. Ms. O'Brien invited anyone looking for ideas about how to renovate a neighborhood park to swing by and check it out. She said that the community is very excited about the renovations, and very pleased with the work done by both the Houston Parks Department and Parks Board.

Terry Cominsky (SNC 31) reported that Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher would be speaking at the next SNC 31 meeting scheduled to be held on Monday, August 26th, at 7:00 p.m. at the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center, 5601 South Braeswood, Houston, Texas 77096. Ms. Cominsky also reported that SNC 31 would be holding a candidate forum for the race to fill the District C seat at city council on September 25th at 7:00 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center. She said that both events are free and open to the public, but that there is an Eventbrite listing for each event that people can use to register to attend in order to insure sufficient seating.

Rain Eatmon (SNC 06) extended an invitation to all to attend the Second Annual Garden City Music Festival to be held from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on September 21, 2019, at the Acres Home Multiservice Center, 6719 W. Montgomery Road, Houston, Texas, 77091. She said that this year's event will include more genres of music than last year's event, e.g., the event has been expanded to include Lone Star College's Jazz Band, and Stovall Middle School's school ensemble.

Written reports were distributed by Mike Van Dusen for the Bicycle Advisor Committee, and by Steve Ashy for the Transportation and Parks Committee.

IX. Adjournment: 7:45 p.m.