

Super Neighborhood Alliance

Minutes of Virtual Meeting Held 10 May 2021



Guests

Lina Hidalgo, Harris County Judge
Letitia Plummer, CM At-Large 4
Jordan McGinty, Staff for CM At-Large 5
DiDi Chavis, Staff for CM Dist K
Mary Boneno, Staff for CM Dist B
Jack Valinski, DoN
Rhonda Sauter, DoN
Teresa Geisheker, P&D
Betsy Varghese, HPW
Samir Solanki, HPW
Carvana Cloud, HPD
Francisco Castillo, Staff for HCC Pct 2
Doug Peterson, Staff for HCC Pct 2

Roger Bridgewater, Staff for HCC Pct 3
Scott Packard, Houston Health Dept
Christina Walsh, Staff for State HD 148
Ashley Johnson, LINK Houston
Stacey Jenkins, LINK Houston
Matt Dulin, Kinder Institute
Donna Espadas, Baylor College of Medicine
Kim Perry, Urban Harvest
Margret Dunlap, METRO
Linda Trevino, METRO
Andret Rayford
Linda Scurlock

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Ricky Miller, SNC 05
Ed Browne, SNC 10
Mark Klein, SNC 12
Pedro Ayarzagoitia, SNC 15
Greg Sergesketter, SNC 16
Jeff Baker, SNC 17
Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22
Mike VanDusen, SNC 22
Kay Warhol, SNC 24
Doug Smith, SNC 25
Barbara Quattro, SNC 25
Kathie Easterly, SNC 28
Natasha Butler, SNC 29
Terry Cominsky, SNC 31
Cheryl O'Brien, SNC 32
Barbara Hite, SNC 36
Cindy Chapman, SNC 37
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38
Jeff Peters, SNC 38
Deb Bonario-Martin, SNC 45

Dora Campa, SNC 45
Jesus DeAnda, SNC 45
Larin Counciler?, SNC 45
Anna Chuter, SNC 45
Paula Parshal, SNC 45
Tebben Lewis, SNC 46
Jackie Mayhorn, SNC 47
Ivory Mayhorn, SNC 47
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNC 49,50
Keith Downey, SNC 52
Eric Thomas, SNC 55
Bridgette Murray, SNC 57
Kay Walton, SNC 62
Jim Honey, SNC 62
Roy Lira, SNC 63
Joy Jones, SNC 63
Armeo Justane?, SNC 64
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

Meeting convened at 6:30pm.

- I. **Minutes of the April Meeting** – A motion to accept was made by Philip Salerno. Second from Tomaro Bell. Minutes were approved without amendment.
- II. **Presentation by Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo** – Judge Hidalgo said the county has taken steps to become more resilient by creating a community board to provide neighborhood feedback on

flooding issues. The budget for the county's veterans' services department has been doubled. She stated the organized neighborhood input on the I-45 design affected the county's position on the highway project.

Judge Hidalgo mentioned Harris County is applying for almost \$1B in stimulus funds through the American Rescue Plan, and that the funds should be available in a matter of weeks. The county will use the funds to focus on health, housing, and jobs.

Pedro Ayarzagoitia asked about the process of replacing Ed Gonzalez as sheriff if he is confirmed as ICE director. Ms. Hidalgo indicated Commissioner's Court would name a replacement to fill the vacant seat for the remainder of the outstanding term.

Mike VanDusen asked about the drainage and detention policy jointly adopted by Harris County and the City of Houston. Judge Hidalgo responded that growth in the county and the city should continue, and that it should be done in a responsible way. The position of the county is that developments should detain as much rain water as they are displacing. The county stipulated that to share in flood bond partnership funding, the city would be required to adopt the more stringent detention requirements.

Keith Downey asked why the Harris County Flood Control maintenance budget is only \$5MM in his neighborhood. Ms. Hidalgo said the drainage development budget did not adequately determine the maintenance expense required by new construction, and this will probably require another bond election.

Juan Antonio Sorto asked about just settlements in environmental lawsuits. Judge Hidalgo said the lack of an adequate regulatory framework favors bad actors that pollute. She stated the environmental lawsuits are capped a \$1MM, which does not seem adequate. Because of the legal limitations, Harris County has sought injunctive relief, in addition to financial compensation. The county is also asking courts to allow the county to have access to industrial sites to learn what is present. The county is starting to acquire and install pollution monitoring equipment. A notification framework is being developed to provide information to communities what types of industrial facilities are nearby.

Doug Smith asked about Judge Hidalgo's position on voting rights in Texas. He asked about transferring the responsibility of election administration from the county clerk (an elected position) to a newly created appointed position. Judge Hidalgo countered the county voter registration people were not keeping pace with the number of eligible voters. Tomaro Bell stated voter registration and turnout was very high in the last election, and the candidates were well known to voters. In her opinion, voters understood the voter responsibilities of the county clerk and the tax-assessor collector and there was no reason to assign those duties to an unelected appointee.

- III. **Update on City COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Distribution** – Scott Packard, with the Houston Health Department, showed 48.8% of Houstonians have received their 1st dose of COVID-19 vaccines, and 36.7% are fully vaccinated as of May 5th. Furthermore, 78.2% of at-risk Houstonians are fully vaccinated.

The city is operating 22 vaccination sites in Houston, 10 of which are pop-up sites that move periodically. The site locations can be found at the houstonemergency.org website.

Tomaro Bell thanked the city and Harris County for using prizes to create an incentive to get vaccinated.

Roy Lira asked what neighborhood organization could do to help get people vaccinated. Scott responded the city is starting to work with faith based leaders to get vaccine information to their followers. The city maintains outreach materials at www.protecttheh.com website that neighborhoods are welcome to use.

Keith Downey asked if the city would consider having medical personnel come into the communities to encourage vaccinations. Scott indicated the city has produced a series of virtual speaking engagements with health professionals, and that they were helpful in starting the vaccination campaign.

Juan Antonio Sorto suggested targeting grocery stores in underserved communities as vaccination sites. Scott responded that the city is working with two grocers operating in underserved communities to serve people who may not have limited transportation.

Francisco Castillo indicated Harris County no longer required appointments to get vaccinations. Scott responded the city has a similar policy.

- IV. Houston Police Department Update** – Carvana Cloud, Director of Community Affairs with HPD, mentioned Chief Troy Finner is focusing on building trust with the communities HPD serves. Ms. Cloud stated crime has increased in Houston, with homicide and sexual assault up in some communities, and illegal dumping and street racing in others. The goal is to tailor police response to the needs of individual communities.

HPD is increasing spending on mental health and mobile crisis outreach teams to help deescalate confrontations.

Greg Sergesketter expressed concern about the person out on bond for murder allowing a tiger loose in a nearby neighborhood. Mr. Cloud responded that HPD is working with the district attorney's office and the court system to get the courts fully operational.

Deb Bonario-Martin asked for more details on wraparound services provided by HPD. Ms. Cloud indicated HPD policy is to have clinicians available to assist with mental health issues, rather than take the individuals into custody. This includes assisting with shelter placement, food, and long-term housing.

Kay Warhol asked about HPD neighborhood storefronts closed down during the previous administration. Cloud mentioned that the department wants to be sensitive to community needs, but no policy has been set on this issue as yet.

Stacie Fairchild mentioned that she has noticed better police response since Finner took office.

Jesus DeAnda asked if HPD has any afterschool programs to engage students transitioning out of high schools. The community affairs division has programs for elementary, middle school, and high school students. Ms. Cloud mentioned that HPD does not have a program for students leaving primary schools, but offered to talk off-line about the need.

- V. SWOT Analysis Update** – Juan said the strategic planning meetings are going well, and that the committee meets at the last of the each month to move the SNA General Plan forward.

VI. Open Comments

Juan Antonio Sorto asked Samir Solanki, with Houston Public Works, about the newly proposed waste water fee. Mr. Solanki responded that the proposed fees are the first increase since 2010, with the goal of making Houston more resilient. These fee increases will be implemented over the next 5 years. He mentioned the impact fee to new development has been updated, and will come before council in the next few months.

Stacie Fairchild asked if there was brief materials that would better explain the proposed rate increases. Mr. Solanki mentioned that he would work with the HPW communications team to prepare such information.

Jordan McGinty asked for clarification that the impact fees would be for new development and water and waste water fee increases would be for existing customers. She mentioned she heard HPW was creating a FAQ page, suitable for distribution.

Doug Smith asked that Mr. Solanki put his contact information in the chat log.

Tomaro Bell mentioned she wants to hold another job fair to help graduating seniors get employment. She mentioned 380 have been hired to date, and there are 766 positions left to fill. The next fair will be centrally located.

Ashley Johnson mentioned LINK Houston will be hosting a Safer Streets Summit on June 3. He also mentioned a roadway expansion in the 3rd Ward area proposed by TxDOT.

Roy Lira mentioned a park event hosted by Buffalo Bayou Partnership in Tony Marron on Saturday, May 15, from 9-11am. The meeting will be to gather feedback about the future of the park.

Mary Boneno said Council District B will be hosting a monthly community meeting at 10am on Saturday.

Juan Antonio Sorto mentioned HTV normally broadcasts the SNA meeting in the afternoon of the Saturday following the general meeting.

Tomaro Bell thanked everyone who appeared in the previous City Council meeting to speak about the sidewalk kiosks. Kathleen O'Reilly concurred the turnout was timely and broad.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:07pm.