

Super Neighborhood Alliance

Minutes of Virtual General Meeting Held 13 September 2021



Guests

Gareth Morgans, Staff for CM At-Large 2
Sallie Alcorn, CM At-Large 5
Rain Eatmon, Staff for CM Dist B
DiDi Chavis, Staff for CM Dist K
Alexa Aragonez, Office of the Mayor
Bill Kelly, Office of the Mayor
Jack Valinski, DoN
Rhonda Sauter, DoN
Teresa Geisheker, P&D

Francisco Castillo, Staff for HCC Pct 2
Abner Lyons, Staff for State HD 142
Alyce Coffee, SWM
Margret Dunlap, METRO
Linda Trevino, METRO
John Geiss
Heather Houston, Scenic Houston
Susan Rogers, UofH
Barbara McGuffey

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Ricky Miller, SNC 05
Rain Eatmon, SNC 06
Mark Klein, SNC 12
Leigh Killgore, 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
Sandra Rodriquez, SNC 27
Kathie Easterly, SNC 28
Bert Ruiz, SNC 30
Terry Cominsky, SNC 31
Cheryl O'Brien, SNC 32

Cindy Chapman, SNC 37
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38
Eleanor Bradley, SNC 41
Mike Ballare, SNC 41
Paula Parshall, SNC 45
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNC 49, 50
Abner Lyons, SNC 49, 50
Jeff Trevino, SNC 51
Vicky Salinas Colorado, SNC 51
Keith Downey, SNC 52
Joetta Stevenson, SNC 55
Roy Lira, SNC 63
Amy Dinn, SNC 64, 88
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66
Gareth Morgans, SNC 82
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

Meeting convened at 6:34pm.

- I. **Minutes of the August 9 General Meeting** – A motion to accept was made by Leigh Killgore. Minutes were approved without amendment.
- II. **Houston Community Design Resource Center Presentation by Susan Rogers** – The Community Design Resource Center (CDRC) has worked in 37 of Houston's super neighborhoods. It achieves its design goals in four ways: 1) bringing people together in a collaborative environment, 2) providing residential leadership with data and mapping information, 3) researching cultural history of areas of Houston, and 4) providing a design process for community enrichment.

The desired goals include making spaces multipurpose. The Houston Parks Board's Bayou Greenways program is good example of a transformative approach to resource utilization. Utility easements also offer a multiuse opportunity.

Chair Juan Sorto asked the status of the program. Ms. Rogers stated the CDRC website provides an interactive map showing the neighborhoods where their design work has taken place over the last 17 years. She mentioned she was on sabbatical, and that the CDRC would be dormant until the fall of 2022. Doug Smith asked what the relationship is between CDRC and the City Planning Department. Ms. Rogers stated CDRC collaborated with the city on some of the Complete Community project. Keith Downey thanked Ms. Rogers for the work CDRC has done in the northeast Houston communities.

III. Scenic Houston Presentation on Billboards by Heather Houston and Jonathan Day – Scenic Houston was founded in 1980 by concerned citizens to fight billboard light. As a result, City Council adopted an ordinance to reduce the number of billboards. In 2008, City Council prohibited billboard companies from converting the static billboards to LED billboards. Beginning in 2014, 66 billboards were permanently removed from Houston highways. Since 1980, Houston’s billboard inventory has been reduced from 13,000+ to 1,309 today.

Mr. Day stated the city solicited billboard companies to construct about 50 LED billboards in City rights-of-way. The proposal requires the removal of 3 static billboards for each dynamic billboard constructed. The City targets a \$10MM one-time fee, and an annual fee of \$2MM, or 40% of the advertising revenue, whichever is greater. This amounts to less than 0.05% of the City budget. And considering the recent federal funding, the money is not needed.

The current proposal involves one billboard company. The concern is that if one company is allowed to convert to digital billboards, all the billboard companies present in Houston could not be prohibited from converting to digital billboards. Scenic Houston asks that neighborhood organizations inform the mayor and council members of their opposition to this proposal.

Leigh Killgore stated the distraction caused by dynamic LED billboards is contrary to the principals of Vision Zero, which the city has enacted. Juan Sorto commented that the lack of notification given to the public regarding this proposal is similar to the lack of communication regarding the increase in water rates, and notified Mayor Turner of the concern being express by many neighborhood leaders. Stacie Fairchild commented that this proposal is similar to digital kiosk ordinance recently passed by city council, and asked why the mayor and council would pass an ordinance that many Houstonians opposed. Mr. Day commented there was insufficient time for people to understand the kiosk ordinance and respond. Kathy Easterly commended Scenic Houston on their efforts to oppose LED billboards, and stated her opposition to reversing the 40-year trend of billboard reduction in Houston since many of the billboards were advertising sexually oriented businesses. CM Sallie Alcorn commented Houston has become a model for other cities in handling public signage, and commended Scenic Houston for their outreach. Bert Ruiz asked what next steps need to be taken. Ms. Houston said the timing is not known, but the council agendas are being closely monitored. She suggested writing a letter to the mayor and council opposing the billboard proposal.

IV. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Presentation, Houston Director of Government Relations, Bill Kelly – Mr. Kelly said ARPA was signed into effect on March 11, 2021, as a \$1.9TT measure to offset the effects of COVID-19 on the country. \$350BB are reserved for state and local governments to prevent government worker layoffs and lapses in service.

Houston will be receiving \$607.8MM in local fiscal recovery funds (LFRF) over the next two years. The city received \$303.9MM on May 20, with the remaining half becoming available in May of 2022. ARPA allows the LFRF funds to be used in four ways: 1) a response to the public health emergency related to reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, 2) provide premium pay to essential workers responding to the pandemic, 3) for the provision of government services that

would be reduced due to a reduction in tax revenue, 4) and to make investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure that would help to better combat the pandemic.

On June 2, city council approved using \$198.624MM of LFRF funds to provision continued city services, with \$119.2MM being spent on police and \$65.5MM on fire services, to help replace the 30% loss in general fund revenue due to the pandemic. Mr. Kelly mentioned the \$3.125MM vaccine incentive program launched by the city has resulted in a 5-fold increase in vaccines delivered. He also mentioned the city is identifying priority projects related to public health for city council to consider funding.

One proposal being considered is to spend \$25MM over the next 3 years to expand five programs within the police department. These include: 1) expansion of the 911 Crisis Call Diversion Program for mental health calls, 2) increase the number of Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams that rapidly respond to mental health calls, 3) increase the number of Crisis Intervention Response Teams to effectively de-escalate crisis, 4) implement a Clinician-Officer Remote Evaluation program that provides for telehealth support to first responders, and 5) create a citywide Domestic Abuse Response Team to better support victims of domestic violence.

Mr. Kelly asked neighborhood leaders to provide feedback to the proposed priority projects, using the city's ARPA website: <http://www.houstontx.gov/arpa>.

Juan Sorto asked how ARPA funds are being tracked, once they are allocated, to ensure the needs of the communities are being well served. Mr. Kelly responded that he oversees compliance with federal requirements, but community leaders should engage their city council members. Jeff Trevino commented that his neighborhood is experiencing issues, like street racing, that require more fundamental law enforcement intervention. Mr. Kelly responded that expanded mental health capability would free police officers to better respond to unlawful behavior.

V. **Open Comments –**

DiDi Chavis mentioned that CM Castex-Tatum will continue to lead the city's anti-litter campaign. She is working with the solid waste department to better address illegal dumping and dumping issues in some neighborhoods. Ms. Chavis announced a town hall meeting on September 25 to discuss changes to the Texas property management code.

CM Sallie Alcorn announced she and CM David Robinson would be hosting a virtual sidewalk summit on September 25, and asked that participants register to attend.

Joetta Stevenson mentioned she and other community leaders appeared at city council to voice opposition to a city planned homeless facility on Jensen Dr in an underserved area of Houston. She mentioned she has about 800 signatures on a petition opposing the facility because it would not benefit residents in the historic Fifth Ward.

Stacie Fairchild mentioned that National Night Out will be on October 5.

Pedro Ayazagoitia mentioned the Monte Beach civic club held a meeting to discuss issues the neighborhood is having with the Main Street Tap and Bar. State and local officials were present. The issues are noise and violence.

Alyce Coffee, with the solid waste department, announced that no trash would be collected on Tuesday, due to the weather event. Ms. Coffee encouraged everyone to download and use the HTX Collects phone app to keep better informed of the solid waste department.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:18pm.