



# Super Neighborhood Alliance Minutes of Virtual General Meeting Held 14 February 2022

## Guests

Margaret Wallace Brown, Dir P&D  
Muxian Fang, P&D  
Hector Rodriquez, P&D  
CeCe Scott, Staff for CM At-Large 4  
DiDi Chaves, Staff for CM Dist K  
Diana Caicedo, Staff for CM At-Large 2  
Mike Watkins, Staff for CM At-Large 5  
Rhonda Sauter, DON  
Jack Valinski, DON  
Allen Desmine, SWD  
Alyce Coffey, SWD  
Bert Keller, Staff for HCC Pct 3  
Miriam Laeky, Staff for HCC Pct 1  
Maria Bolanos, Staff for HCC Pct 2  
Christina Walsh, Staff for State HD 148  
Kristin Robinson, HCDD  
Scott Packard, HHD  
Lydia Osinowo, HHD  
Edward Chuter, HISD  
Kyle Maronie, HC Tax  
Sofia Gonzalez, Community Impact  
Cory Stottlemeyer, BARC  
Linda Trevino, METRO  
Travis Leamons, HTV

Toni Mascione, Constable Pct 1  
Marie Carlisle, Baker Law  
Valerie Luna, HPW  
Kim Perry, Urban Harvest  
Deb Bonario-Martin  
Kevin Strickland  
Mark Fairchild  
Bessie Mansfield  
Charles Rogers  
Ines Sigel  
John Geiss  
Jo August  
Katherine Thomas  
Stephanie Leota  
Linda Scurlock  
Macy Williams  
Margaret Dunlap  
Melissa Morris  
Michael Williams  
Sean Haley  
Regina Gardner  
Sharon LaDay

## Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 5  
Mark Klein, SNC 12  
Leigh Killgore, SNC 14  
Pedro Ayarzagotia, SNC 15  
Michael Huffmaster, SNC 18  
Mike VanDusen, SNC 22  
Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22  
Kay Warhol, SNC 24  
Doug Smith, SNC SNC 25  
Barbara Quattro, SNC 25  
Sandra Rodriquez, SNC 27  
Kathie Easterly, SNC 28  
Natasha Butler, SNC 29  
Terry Cominski, SNC 31  
Cheryl O'Brien SNC 32  
Naomi Ostfeld, SNC 36

Cindy Chapman, SNC 37  
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38  
Jackie Mayhorn, SNC 47  
Ivory Mayhorn, SNC 47  
Vicky Martin, SNC 49, 50  
Randall Baxley, SNC 51  
Keith Downey, SNC 52  
Joetta Stevenson, SNC 55  
Bridgette Murray, SNC 57  
Kay Walton, SNC 62  
Roy Lira, SNC 63  
Rosa Guzman, SNC 63  
Amy Dinn, SNC 64  
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66  
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83  
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

**Meeting convened at 6:30 PM.**

- I. **Minutes of the January 10, 2022 General Meeting** – A motion to accept was made by Tomaro Bell; Doug Smith seconded. Minutes were approved as amended adding Paula Parshall as attending the January general meeting.
- II. **Margaret Wallace Brown, City of Houston Planning & Development Director** – Director Brown gave a presentation on the case for sidewalks and the benefits of connected walkability. Sidewalks are critical infrastructure routes for pedestrians. The City is responsible for providing safe, adequate passage for pedestrians. The goal of Vision Zero is to end fatalities and serious injuries due to automobile crashes by 2030 by fixing our multimodal transportation network.

Director Brown gave a few statistics: Streets with sidewalks on both sides have the fewest reported injuries and deaths. Pedestrian risk is reduced by 28% when streets are redesigned to support walking. Residents are 65% more likely to walk in areas with sidewalks. Walkable neighborhoods have residents that do 35-45 more minutes of moderate physical activity per week. Also, property values are 1-5% higher of homes with sidewalks on their side of the street, and homes sell in less time.

Director Brown shared that after the Walkable Places project in 2020 concluded, suggested changes to the sidewalk requirements were made. The administration of the sidewalk rules now takes place in Planning instead of Public Works. As a side note, maintaining sidewalk standards has been in place since the 1970s whereby property owners build and maintain sidewalks in front of their property. In addition, a review committee was established to look at the specific circumstances around a sidewalk and make recommendations for exempting that property owner from having to build a sidewalk. The Planning Department receives on average 70 applications per month for exemptions. In 2020, the new standards for sidewalks widened the sidewalk to increase the buffer in all areas of Houston. In the Central Business District, the minimum is 8-feet with a 4-foot safety buffer. A local or neighborhood street the minimum width is 5-feet with a 4-foot safety buffer, and a major thoroughfare has a minimum requirement of 6-feet wide with a 4-foot safety buffer. These dimensions give Houstonians a much safer place to walk.

There have been some implementation challenges – 65% of Houston streets have open ditches leaving no place for sidewalks and buffers, some deed restrictions prohibit sidewalks, and the cost for modifications are high. The fees are established by the Planning and Finance departments. A request for an exemption from the rules cost \$1,170 with no guarantee of getting the exemption. Director Brown thinks they have figured out three ways to create cost savings and they will be presented to City Council in late February 2020. 1) Reducing the application fee for an exemption or modification from the standards. 2) In lieu of building a sidewalk, a fee can be paid similar-or-equal-to the cost of building the sidewalk. 3) The fee charged would then go into a sidewalk fund to build a sidewalk in another location to promote a complete sidewalk network. Director Brown is working with the Legal department on where the money could be spent in an equitable way.

Tomaro Bell said she is glad to hear there will be options for homeowners and neighborhoods where sidewalks do not work, such as historic districts, 50-year old trees and some property owners do not want them.

Leigh Killgore is encouraged by the options and would like to see the Planning Commission stand behind these changes when considering variances. A suggestion for the fees charged could be that they go towards greenspace in the same sector the fee is taken. Director Brown replied that the problem is lots of money is given to parks and green spaces and not in other sectors at all. So, she is talking to Legal about spending 80% of the fee in the same sector and 20% in a sector where little to no money is given.

Pedro Ayarzagoitia asked if the property owner is charged a flat fee by the contractors for a sidewalk or if the property owner has to pay the contractor each time if they have to rebuild the sidewalk because of mistakes. Director Brown was unsure but said it probably depends on the contract agreement.

Cindy Chapman asked Director Brown to discuss the comment period and the timing of the process. Director Brown said once the process is agreed upon internally, she will make a presentation to the Planning Commission which would open a 30-day public comment period. After that, it would go to committee either the RNA or QOL depending on which one Mayor Turner wants Director Brown to present to and then it will go City Council for a vote. So, there will be three opportunities for public comment. Director Brown offered to communicate where she is in the process with the SNA. Cindy felt that was a good way forward.

Keith Downey pointed out that one size does not fit all particularly in minority communities where you have open ditches, and there is more than one way to design sidewalks. The ordinance as it stands now leaves little room to make adjustments onsite and Director Brown is hoping the changes will give contextual flexibility to address these types of situations for the community and Houstonians.

Doug Smith asked what the proposed buffer would consist of and how does it protect pedestrians. Director Brown said it could be just green space, trees and/or bushes could be planted or anything that would prevent a vehicle from coming onto the sidewalk.

**Nikki Cooper, City of Houston BARC Deputy Shelter Director.** Nikki Cooper made a presentation that included Chapter 6 Revisions pertaining to animals and fowl that were approved by City Council and gave a Shelter Operations update. BARC chose to adopt state law language requiring animals to always have access to food and water. Animals must always have adequate shelter, meaning protection from the elements such as rain, wind, providing a warm place during cold and shade when it's hot. Animals must not be on a chain but may be on a tether that is at least three times the length of your pet so they have adequate space to move around.

Mandatory microchipping was also approved. Mandatory Microchipping is required in place of license tags now. It will be a part of the registration process. A rabies certificate will still be required.

Another item approved is the requirement of pet stores to sell only dogs and cats sourced from a humane organization or a municipal or county animal shelter. The change is effective immediately for new businesses. Existing businesses must comply within one year. This only applies to six pet stores inside city limits. Two of the six stores are already working on converting to rescues in their facilities. Petco and PetSmart already work with rescues.

New requirements for aggressive and dangerous dogs. Bite cases may be home quarantined. Trained Animal Enforcement Officers are allowed to evaluate in the field for rabies. The sterilization

loophole has been closed. If your animal has been impounded and it is not spayed or neutered, it will be spayed or neutered before leaving BARC. The pet owner will have to pay for the spay/neuter fee of \$75 and the \$20 registration fee. The category for dogs attacking other dogs has changed from a public nuisance to aggressive dog designation. All changes mirror state law and were passed by City Council unanimously.

BARC is currently running at an 18% deficit in staff. With the shortage, BARC cannot take on as many pets as if they were fully staffed. A staff shortage shelter survey in 2021 found that 87% of shelters nationwide are below normal staffing levels, and 71% have not been able to recruit, hire and maintain staffing levels. The difficulties in recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff has had significant impacts on remaining shelter staff. Deputy Director Cooper shared a graph showing the staff shortage impact to the remaining staff – 75% of the remaining staff are more stressed.

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters recommends every sheltering organization has a max capacity for care, and the population in their care must not exceed that level. For example, 160 animals is recommended for a staff of 10 to provide quality care. BARC's goal is to house 250-275 animals at any given time. BARC currently has 320 animals in the shelter.

Kay Walton thanked CM Sallie Alcorn and her staff for getting the ordinance passed. Kay mentioned that the retail sales applies to cats and dogs, however, pet stores sell guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils. Does any of this apply to them? Deputy Director Cooper said that the ordinance and changes only apply to cats and dogs but she is happy to look into it further. Kay mentioned that these small types of animals are held in cages too small, they are not given the proper diet and retail staff are not educated about their care in general. Kay said it's a big concern and she asked that it be explored further so they are protected also.

Stacie Fairchild thanked BARC for presenting the information and agreed with Kay that other animals are not given the level of care that dogs and cats are including birds. Stacie asked how BARC plans to enforce the mandatory microchipping. Deputy Director Cooper said it will be difficult to enforce but if the animal is impounded, it will be microchipped before it leaves BARC.

Doug Smith asked if HPD can enforce the ordinance specifically chains. Deputy Director Cooper said BARC enforcement officers work closely with HPD's Major Defenders division to handle animal abuse calls. Residents can also call the Harris County Cruelty Task Force at 713-927-PAWS. The task force is comprised of multiple jurisdictions that work together to investigate all calls for service or reports of abuse.

Vickie Martin asked for clarification about the response by BARC. Vickie saw four stray dogs in her neighborhood and happened to see BARC two streets over and asked them to pick up the dogs. The BARC employees replied they have to response to 3-1-1 calls first even though they only had one dog in their truck. Deputy Director Cooper asked Vickie for more information offline as she would like to educate the employees about the importance of capturing the strays in the immediate area they are in instead of focusing on 3-1-1 calls for service as priority.

[Click here for statistics and reports going back 10 years.](#) This section is updated monthly.

- III. **Update on COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Distribution** – Scott Packard, with the Houston Health Department, said the numbers are trending in the right direction. The wastewater analysis

shows the city's viral load is 126 based on the 100% base established July 2020. The 14-day average positivity rate is 15.9%; down from 38% in early January.

Scott mentioned the city has over 30 testing sites and more than 20 vaccination sites throughout Houston. Residents can find a location near them by visiting [houstonhealth.org](http://houstonhealth.org) or calling 832-393-4220. Residents can also visit [houstonemergency.org/covid19](http://houstonemergency.org/covid19) for education resources in many languages. Please follow the Houston Health department on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram for frequent updates.

Cindy Chapman said this will be the last monthly COVID-19 update but she will keep an eye on the numbers in the event they do trend upward.

IV. **Announcements** – Kris Robinson, a senior planner with HCDD, announced two public hearings on March 31 and April 6. She asked everyone to pass it on to their networks and is willing to share the agenda. Roy Lira announced two events in the East End – On Saturday from 9:00 AM – 1:30 PM, Link Houston and Baker Ripley will help Second Ward with a sidewalk audit and the information will be uploaded into the 3-1-1 app. The second event is the Eastwood Park beautification on March 5<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 – 10:00 AM.

V. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.