

# Super Neighborhood Alliance

## Minutes of Virtual Meeting Held 8 February 2021



### Guests

Martha Castex-Tatum, CM Dist K  
Letitia Plummer, CM At-Large 4  
Na'Shon Edwards, Staff for CM Dist F  
DiDi Chavis, Staff for CM Dist K  
Jordan McGinty-Frazier, Staff for At-Large 5  
Tom Ramsey, Commissioner Pct 3  
Rene Ruiz, DoN  
Jack Valinski, DoN  
Teresa Geisheker, DoN  
Marilyn Burgess, Harris County Dist Clerk  
Francisco Castillo, Staff for Commissioner Pct 2  
Roger Bridgewater, Staff for Commissioner Pct 3

Morgan Yates, Staff for Commissioner Pct 4  
Noel Baldovino, Staff for State HD 148  
Christina Walsh, Staff for State HD 148  
Jie Wu, Urban Harvest  
Katie Wang, Kinder Institute  
Kim Perry, Kinder Institute  
Oni Blair, LINK Houston  
Jonathan Brooks, LINK Houston  
Ashley Johnson, LINK Houston  
Kirk Jackson, LINK Houston  
Joally Canales, Kinder Institute

### Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05  
Ricky Miller, SNC 05  
Mark Klein, SNC 12  
Tanya Debose, SNC 13  
Leigh Killgore, SNC 14  
Pedro Ayarzagoitia, SNC 15  
Greg Sergesketter, SNC 16  
Jeff Baker, SNC 17  
Michael Huffmaster, SNC 18  
Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22  
Mike VanDusen, SNC 22  
Kay Warhol, SNC 24  
Barbara Quattro, SNC 25  
Sandra Rodriguez, SNC 27  
Kathie Easterly, SNC 28

Cheryl O'Brien, SNC 32  
Sylvia Rivas, SNC 36  
Cindy Chapman, SNC 37  
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38  
??, SNC 46  
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNC 49,50  
Keith Downey, SNC 52  
Bridgette Murray, SNC 57  
Kay Walton, SNC 62  
Roy Lira, SNC 63  
J Joy, SNC 63  
Amy Din, SNC 64,88  
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66  
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83  
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

### Meeting convened at 6:30pm.

#### I. Minutes from the January Meeting

Minutes of the January 11 meeting were accepted as submitted.

#### II. Update on City COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Distribution

Chair Sorto stated that the Houston Health Department will be providing pandemic updates at future SNA general meetings.

Scott Packard stated the Health Department analyzes data to determine the best locations for testing and vaccination sites. Services of the department include contact tracing, in-home testing, and support a COVID hotline and human services call center.

Statistically, the summer positivity rate peaked around 28%, dipped as low as 5% in early October, and surged to 18% during the holiday season. The positivity rate at the end of January was still too high, but trended downward during the month.

Scott mentioned the state health services department identified two groups of people eligible to receive vaccines. The Phase 1A group is comprised of health care workers and residents of care facilities. Phase 1B is made up of people 65 years and older, and those with medical conditions putting them at greater risk of severe illness.

The department is providing about 9,000 vaccinations per week to individuals on the city's wait list, which currently has about 70,000 people on it in vulnerable communities. Persons wanting to get vaccinated can register with the Houston Health Department to get on the wait list.

People that received the 1<sup>st</sup> dose of vaccine from the Health Department will be notified by text message and email to make an appointment to receive their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. Individuals without Internet or cell phone access can contact the COVID call center to make an appointment to get their 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccination.

Betsy Mansfield asked how homebound persons are being considered for vaccinations. Scott replied that these individuals would be served through the Harris County Agency on Aging.

Tomaro Bell suggested having walk-up testing sites for people without vehicular transportation.

Juan Sorto asked if operators of the vaccine sites are cooperating to develop best practices to operate the sites. Scott indicated his department contacts the vaccine sites on a weekly basis to help coordinate vaccination activities.

Keith Downey asked if the health department were educating people on the symptoms of the new strains of the virus. Scott mentioned the UK strain had been identified in Houston, and the South African strain was recently identified in Fort Bend County.

### **III. Equity in Transit**

Jonathan Brooks, Director of Policy and Planning with LINK Houston, and Ashley Johnson, Director of Community Affairs with LINK Houston, made a presentation on transit equity. Ashley Johnson stated LINK Houston advocates for a just and equitable transportation system that enables all people to reach opportunity. Ashley indicated their "Equity in Transit: 2020" report analyzed data from many sources to better understand the role of transit in Houston, with a focus on public transit.

Jonathan Brooks stated that LINK Houston has worked to empower many communities to achieve better transportation through interviews, presentations and holding roundtable discussions. Working with Keith Downey in Kashmere Gardens where 20% of households don't own vehicles, more frequent and reliable bus service was achieved.

The current METRO network was presented, and it was noted that transit ridership has declined by 55% due to the pandemic. Even so, ridership is still significant.

The report addresses community equity of the transportation environment; sidewalks, accessibility, streets, drainage, and transit stops. Jonathan showed how 15 demographic indicators are used to identify areas of high transportation demand. This analysis identified 3 areas of high demand in the southeast, southwest, and north sides of Houston.

Improvements to bus service center around 4 principals: 1) Frequency (how often a bus comes), 2) Span of Service (when is the service offered), 3) Reliability (does the bus come on time), and 4) Accessibility (is the bus accessible by people of all ages and abilities).

Juan Sorto asked what lessons have been learned from the NHHIP engagement of TxDOT by communities. Jonathan responded that the best time to have engaged would have been about 10 years ago when the planning environmental linkage (PEL) studies were taking place.

Leigh Kilgore asked how transportation is considered in affordable housing proposals, and if LINK Houston participates in the city's decision process. Jonathan responded that his organization has not participate in the decision process because they are primarily focused on transportation; not housing. But he welcomed any opportunity to engage with communities to better understand their perspective.

Tanya Debose acknowledged LINK Houston's support of Independence Heights SN13.

#### **IV. Houston Food Insecurities**

Katie Wang, Program Manager at Kinder Institute, and Paula Balbontin, Program and Development Manager at Urban Harvest, made a presentation on access to food in Houston.

Paula Balbontin stated Urban Harvest started to make neighborhoods aware of their ability to access quality food from community gardens. The support 140 gardens in Houston, and operate a farmers market. The Double Up Houston program was started, allowing SNAP card holders to receive a 50% discount on produce bought at farmers markets. Urban Harvest also started offering mobile markets at locations throughout Houston. These market operations allows the collection of consumer data, and is partnering with the Kinder Institute to use the data to determine a strategic direction for Urban Harvest that would best serve communities.

Katie Wang explained how Kinder Institute collaborated with Urban Harvest to develop a decision support tool based on data provided by Urban Harvest. The tool is used to identify areas of food insecurity and determine where to place mobile markets.

The COVID pandemic caused a spike in food assistance requests to Harris County. The Kinder team used vendor and customer reports as the basis for developing a mobile market outreach strategy for Urban Harvest.

Keith Downey commented that the market in northeast Houston has increased activity and is providing quality food at prices people can afford. He pointed out that HISD does not adequately announce the availability of food at school sites.

Kirk Jackson thanked Urban Harvest for their help in creating Blodgett Urban Gardens. Tomaro Bell concurred that Blodgett Urban Gardens is provide valuable service to Third Ward residents.

Juan Sorto suggested expanding the data set to include Fort Bend and Alief super neighborhoods.

Roy Lira asked if the mobile market program will continue after the pandemic and expand into more neighborhoods. Paula indicated they would continue to collaborate with Kinder to expand the program.

#### **V. SNA-HTV Funding Resolution**

Tomaro Bell made a motion to vote on a resolution asking the city to continue funding the presentation of SNA general meetings on Houston Television. Leigh Kilgore seconded the motion. There were no dissenting votes and no abstentions.

## **VI. Old Business**

Leigh Kilgore reported 9 super neighborhoods formed a task group to review the proposed Senate and House bill on reducing urban speed limits. The group is drafting letters of support for each bill, and making the letters available electronically.

Juan Sorto provided an update on the development of a strategic plan for the Alliance, based on the SWOT analysis done in 2019. He asked for volunteers to participate in an advisory committee that will create the strategic plan. A set of meetings have been defined that will guide the committee in producing the plan in September.

## **VII. Open Comments**

Greg Sergesketter thought the language with the House bill for speed limit reduction was flawed and need correction. He also stated the Senate bill was a waste of effort.

Pedro Ayarzagoitia said the Woodland Heights and Norhill neighborhoods are protesting the proposed building of a large storage building near 11<sup>th</sup> and Studewood, with the support of Sheila Jackson Lee.

Tomaro Bell said that Commissioner Tom Ramsey will sponsor a job fair on March 27, and updates will be provided at the next SNA meeting.

Juan Sorto mentioned that he would be speaking at city council on the proposed affordable housing tax-credit projects being considered by the city administration. Feedback from community leaders indicates many projects are still being disproportionately located in low-income neighborhoods.

Chair Sorto mentioned that HPD Chief Art Acevedo will speak at the March SNA meeting, along with Andy Kahan with Crime Stoppers.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.