

Super Neighborhood Alliance

Minutes of Virtual Meeting Held 8 March 2021



Guests

Martha Castex-Tatum, CM Dist K
David Robinson, CM At-Large 2
Sallie Alcorn, CM At-Large 5
Rain Eatmon, Staff for CM Dist B
DiDi Chavis, Staff for CM Dist K
Kate Dentler, Staff for CM Dist C
Gareth Morgans, Staff for CM At-Large 2
Tom Ramsey, Commissioner Pct 3
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
Bert Keller, Staff for Commissioner Pct 3
Morgan Yates, Staff for Commissioner Pct 4
Al Ortiz, Staff for District Clerk
Scott Packard, Houston Health Dept
Christina Walsh, Staff for State HD 148
Ashley Johnson, LINK Houston
Margret Dunlap, METRO
Linda Trevino, METRO
Desmine Allen, City Solid Waste Department

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Mardie Page, SNC 13
Leigh Killgore, SNC 14
Pedro Ayarzagotia, SNC 15
Greg Sergesketter, SNC 16
Jeff Baker, SNC 17
Nick Kornuda, SNC 17
Michael Huffmaster, SNC 18
Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22
Mike VanDusen, SNC 22
Kay Warhol, SNC 24
Barbara Quattro, SNC 25
Doug Smith, SNC 25
Kathie Easterly, SNC 28
Bert Ruiz, SNC 30
Terry Cominsky, SNC 31
Sylvia Rivas, SNC 36

Cindy Chapman, SNC 37
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38
Carol Klieber, SNC 45
Paula Parshall, SNC 45
Tebben Lewis, SNC 46
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNC 49,50
Keith Downey, SNC 52
Eric Thomas, SNC 55
Joetta Stevenson, SNC 55
Bridgette Murray, SNC 57
Kay Walton, SNC 62
Jim Honey, SNC 62
Roy Lira, SNC 63
Amy Dinn, SNC 64,88
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

Meeting convened at 6:30pm.

- I. **US Representative Sheila Jackson Lee** – Rep. Lee reported the \$1.9T American Rescue Act would be passed on Tuesday and Wednesday. \$28B will be allocated to restaurants, additional support for COVID vaccine distribution and testing will be provided, and individual support for freeze victims will be provided. \$300 unemployment benefits will be extended until September, and the \$1,400 stimulus is limited to individuals earning less than \$80,000, or \$160,000 for a 2-income family of 4.

Rep. Lee mentioned individuals suffering damage due to the recent freeze will be able to apply for aid from FEMA. She stated schools will get additional aid to incorporate social distancing in class rooms.

Juan Sorto mentioned home supplies needed for freeze recovery are difficult to find. Ms. Lee said she is working with FEMA to expedite aid to Houston residents. Roy Lira asked what more can be

done to have TxDOT reconsider their proposed IH-45 project. Rep. Lee stated she was working with the Secretary of Transportation to stop the project from moving forward. CM Sallie Alcorn asked what cities could expect from the COVID relief bill. Rep. Lee stated that \$141B would be provided to cities.

- II. **Houston Police Chief, Art Acevedo** – Chief Acevedo stated violent crime has increased during the last year, with Houston experiencing 100 more homicides in 2020 than 2019. Additional shootings and stabbings are occurring throughout the country because of social isolation. Chief Acevedo stated the criminal justice system needs to be victim-centered. Victims of violent crimes and witnesses are less likely to report these crimes to police when the individual committing the act of violence is likely to be released to await trial. He also said that because of COVID, only six jury trials were held in 2020. HPD has responded by moving more officers into homicide, and support officers will start being assigned patrol duties.

Mr. Acevedo mentioned that street takeovers and racing have become an issue, because unless someone is killed or injured, this is a misdemeanor infraction. A recent death as a result of street racing has caused Harris County to allow people involved with street takeovers to be booked into jail facilities.

Chief Acevedo commented that because of actions of Mayor Turner, other elected officials, and medical and community leaders, a Washington Avenue bar that was to host a “mask off” party decided to remain closed. HPD took action to suspend off-duty patrol activities at the businesses owned by the bar owner.

Juan Sorto asked about the emotional well-being of officers. Chief Acevedo responded the department was doing a better job of organizational wellness, and that an additional staff psychologist has been added to the force.

Tomaro Bell asked to consider reinstating community policing. The chief responded that “community policing” is evolving into “relational policing”, where each contact event between an officer and the public is an opportunity to create a positive relationship with law enforcement. The records management system used by HPD is being updated to capture relationship information.

Leigh Killgore asked the chief to support the effort being taken by a group of residents to lower the speed limit in residential neighborhoods to 25mph. Chief Acevedo said he supports lowering the prima facie residential limit to 25mph, because the cost of signage to cities wanting the lower limit is too great.

- III. **Andy Kahan, Crime Stoppers** – Mr. Kahan said Crime Stoppers is working with Chief Acevedo to reform the felony bonding system. He stated that 99 victims in Harris County have been murdered in the last two years by people released with multiple felony bonds pending. Mr. Kahan said he and Crime Stoppers are supporting 2 state senate bills that would correct the inadequacy of the current felony bonding program in Harris County.

Juan Sorto commented that after 12 years in law enforcement, he left because of this issue.

- IV. **Tom Ramsey, Harris County Commissioner** – Commissioner Ramsey began by voicing his support for the efforts of Chief Acevedo and Andy Kahan in reducing crime in Harris County. Mr. Ramsey then announced, with the help of Tomaro Bell and others, that a job fair would be hosted on March 27 at the HCC campus at IH-10 and Beltway 8. He mentioned that Daikin has more than 600 job openings available.

Commissioner Ramsey mentioned he was working with the Corp of Engineers to mitigate flooding on Buffalo Bayou.

- V. Al Ortiz, District Clerk's Office** – Mr. Ortiz stated the clerk's office is proposing an increase in juror compensation and free parking to help increase jury participation. He mentioned if Commissioner's Court approves an increase in compensation, his office would like the support of the SNA in spreading the word to potential jurors.

VI. Update on City COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Distribution

Scott Packard, with Houston Health Department, reported the daily infection rate fell to 318 for the last 2 weeks, down from over 1,000 in the prior 2 weeks. Six COVID related deaths occurred over the last month. He mentioned the positivity rate is still trending downward from the most recent peak in early January.

Scott stated the U.K. variant has been widely detected in the city's waste water. He mentioned the city has opened a second vaccination site at Bush Airport, and will target 1,000 2nd dose patients per day. The Delmar site is shifting to focus on 1st dose.

People can sign up for vaccinations on the city health website. People without Internet access can sign up by phone.

Tomaro Bell asked how someone could ask for the single-dose vaccine. Scott responded the city maintains 2 wait lists; one for Johnson & Johnson, and a second list for Moderna and Pfizer, and people can specify the list they want to be on.

Michael Huffmaster asked what could be done to get vaccines delivered at local pharmacies. Scott responded a portion of the city allocation is being directed to neighborhood health providers.

VII. Minutes from the February Meeting

Philip Salerno made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 8 meeting as submitted. There were multiple seconds.

VIII. Old Business

Juan Sorto mentioned he will be reaching out to those who signed up to participate in drafting a strategic plan for the SNA before the end of the month.

IX. Open Comments

Desmine Allen, Solid Waste Department, asked that any resident having junk debris as a result of the recent freeze should call 311 to identify themselves. The current garbage cycle is for tree waste, and junk debris would normally be ignored and could cause a citation be written. Residents should identify the debris as disaster related junk.

The solid waste department is asking residents to become better aware of what items may be placed in the green recycling cart to avoid contamination. Specifically, plastic bags should not be recycled and items should not be put in plastic bags and placed in the green cart.

Francisco Castillo, Staff for Commissioner Pct 2, said his precinct joined with CM Gallegos to hold a legal aid symposium on tenant eviction. They helped >200 households file for the CDC eviction moratorium.

X. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:13pm.