

Super Neighborhood Alliance

Minutes from Meeting held February 12, 2018



Guests

Alma Sanchez, Congresswoman S. Jackson-Lee
Shandenia Piper, CM Edwards At-Large 4 Office
Andy Icken, Chief Development Officer COH
Teresa Geisheker, Planning & Development Dept.
Gary Norman, PWE
Jack Valinski, Department of Neighborhoods
Rhonda Sauter, MCAO, DON
Margarita Dunlap, METRO
DeAnna Roberts, HCSO
Ken Fountain
Jim Blackburn, Bayou City Initiative
Annie Hutson, Bayou City Initiative
Natalia Garson, Rice student
Demien Pourit, Rice student
Gustavo Chavez, Rice student
Neil Brenner, Houston Bike Share
Linda Scurlock, Kerwick Place-Ramblewood
Park Civic Club, Inc.
Roberto Everardo Barrios, Southern Illinois Univ.
Abner Lyons, East Houston EDC

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Julie Marinucci, SNC 05
Roger Gingell, SNC 10
Ed Browne, SNC 10
Mark Klein, SNC 12

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Pratim Patel, SNC 15
Pedro Ayarzagoitia, SNC 15
Randy Jones, SNC 16
Greg Sergesketter, SNC 16
Steve Ashy, SNC 17
Michael Huffmaster, SNA Chairman, SNC 18
Judson Bryant, SNC 18
Jane West, SNA Secretary, SNC 22
Mike Van Dusen, SNC 22
Kay Warhol, SNC 24
Doug Smith, SNC 25
Harold Harris, SNC 31
John Nienhuser, SNC 32
Marcy Williams, SNC 36
Cindy Chapman, SNC 37
Jeff Peters, SNC 38
Bessie Mansfield, SNC 39
Albert Coleman, SNC 49/50
Juan Sorto, SNC 49/50
Randall Baxley, SNC 51
Bridgette Murray, SNC 57
Gladys House-El, SNC 60
Thomas Wang, SNC 62
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84
Dave Durham, SNC 84

I. Introductions and Approval of Minutes for January 8, 2018:

Cindy Chapman moved, and Marcy Williams seconds approval of minutes for Jan. 8, 2018 meeting; **motion carried.**

II. Announcements: Chairman Michael Huffmaster

- A. Service Recognition:** Chairman Huffmaster recognized and thanked outgoing vice-chair, Kathy Blueford-Daniels (SNC 55), who served one year, and outgoing secretary Steve Ashy (SNC 17) who served two years.
- B. Recovery Houston:** Chairman Huffmaster announced that twelve Neighborhood Restoration Centers are now open to help with flood recovery Monday - Friday from 9:00 AM-6:00 PM. For information: www.houstonrecovers.org
- C. I-45 Coalition:** Chairman Huffmaster reported that the I-45 Coalition headed by Michael Skelly is scheduling meetings with TxDOT on specific issues including: multi-mobility and connectivity (Feb. 15th); air quality (TBA);

and water quality (Feb. 23rd). A meeting on visual impact has already been held, but follow-up information is not available. Chairman Huffmaster encouraged representatives from SNCs that border I-45 to stay engaged.

- D. Political Primaries:** Chairman Huffmaster reminded representatives that primary season is full swing, he encouraged members to vote and to educate candidates about issues, but discouraged SNCs from endorsing individual candidates as the SNA and the members SNCs strive to work cooperatively and productively with all elected officials.
- E. Annual Survey:** Chairman Huffmaster announced that the SNA executive committee will soon be starting to compile the SNA's Annual Report and that in order to accurately reflect the state of the SN program, will be sending out surveys for representatives from each SNC to complete and return.
- F. Blueprint Houston Luncheon with Mayor Turner:** Chairman Huffmaster reported on he, Vice-Chairman Juan Sorto, and Secretary Jane West all participated in Blueprint Houston's Luncheon with Mayor Turner on Tuesday, January 23rd. Blueprint Houston rolled out its new mission to promote the evolution and implementation of Plan Houston as the basis for planning the city's future. With Houston's population expected to grow by one million people in the next 20 years, Blueprint Houston asked Mayor Turner what is being done to plan for this growth. Mayor Turner responded by reiterating his call for a paradigm shift in transportation, noting that our highways are at capacity, and a more pedestrian friendly, multi-modal system with rail and bike lanes is needed. Asserting that "Harvey permanently changed how we should think about the future," Mayor Turner said that how the city rebuilds post-Harvey will be critical to the future as Houston needs to become a more resilient city. He touted the Complete Communities initiative as a means to serve communities that have been overlooked and under-resourced. The Mayor closed his remarks by saying that if there was ever a need for Blueprint Houston the time is now, as Plan Houston has to be implemented.
- G. Complete Communities:** Chairman Huffmaster reported that the COH's Complete Communities initiative is developing Action Plans for each of the five pilot neighborhoods and that the COH has either held or will be holding public meetings in each community for the purpose of receiving public comment as follows: (Acres Homes (held Tues., Jan. 30th), Neat Northside (Tues., Feb. 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Clemente Martinez Elementary, 901 Hays St., Houston, 77009), Second Ward (Mon., Feb. 26, 6:30-8:30 p.m., East Early College High School, 220 N. Milby St., Houston, 77003), Third Ward (held on Wed., Feb. 7th), and Gulfton (Sat., Feb. 17th, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., Burnett Bayland Community Center, 6000 Chimney Rock Rd., Houston, 77081). Additional information about each plan is available at the COH's Complete Communities website: www.houstontx.gov/completemunities.
- H. Walkable Places Committee:** Chairman Huffmaster reported that the February meeting for the Walkable Places was cancelled and that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 7th, from 4:00-6:00 p.m., in the council chamber in the City Hall Annex. For more information and access to past committee presentations: www.houstontx.gov/planning/commissions/committee_walkable-places.html.
- I. Complete Streets:** No update.
- J. Joint Meeting of City Council's Transportation, Technology and Infrastructure and Regulations and Neighborhood Affairs Committees:** Chairman Huffmaster reported that earlier in the day a joint meeting of the two referenced city council committees met to receive a report from Public Works Director, Carol Haddock, and the Chief Resiliency Officer, Stephen Costello, regarding the administration's proposals for amending the COH's Flood Plain Ordinance, i.e., Chapter 19 of the City Code of Ordinances. Although the draft amendments have been distributed to industry groups, the public comment draft had not been released in time for the committee meeting and is expected to be released sometime on Tuesday, February 13th. The public comment period will be exceptionally short lasting only until the close of business on Monday, February 19th. Chairman Huffmaster reported that he asked for the public comment period to be extended and he urged others to write to the mayor and to their district and at-large council members asking for the public comment period to be extended. Gary Norman from the Public Works Department stated that the COH is putting together a mechanism to make submitting public comments to the proposed amendments easy and convenient.

III. Jim Blackburn: Living with Houston Flooding - A Call for Civic Participation

Mr. Blackburn has been a practicing environmental lawyer and planner since 1973. He is co-director of the Severe Storm Prediction, Education and Evacuation from Disaster (SSPEED) Center at Rice University, and founder of Bayou City

Initiative (“BCI”), a new non-profit organization of community partners dedicated to developing a flood literate public and a flood resilient Houston. Houston’s future hangs in the balance of response to flooding and climate change. Like Chicago after the fire and San Francisco after the earthquake, Houston needs a vision for a future that differs from the past by making room for waterways and electing officials who will implement the new vision. There are 22 watersheds in our community. Everyone needs to know the watershed in which they live; and elected officials need to know which watersheds they seek to serve and represent. Issues in urgent need of being addressed include:

(1) A need for honesty, equity, and transparency about flood risks. The 100- and 500-year standards and flood plain maps are out of date and obsolete. The region has experienced four 500-year storms since 1994; that’s one every 6 years. New accurate flood maps are critically important because the 100-year standard applies to how everything is built, homes, water treatment facilities, facilities that contain hazardous materials, etc. Streets are the city’s secondary drainage behind storm sewers but the population is largely unaware of that fact. Over 50% of the structures flooded during Hurricane Harvey were outside the mapped flood plains. Historically, access to flood-related information has been suppressed to facilitate real estate sales. Governmental entities need to prioritize protecting people above facilitating real estate sales.

(2) A need for new development and detention regulations. The COH is considering moving from the 100- to the 500-year standard as a proxy for what is expected to be the new 100-year standard once current data is fully available and new flood plain maps are adopted. While NOAA Atlas 14* data is expected to be available later this spring, production of new flood plain maps is expected to take years. Data from Louisiana suggests that the 100-year standard will increase from 12"-13" to 16"-17" per 24-hour period. The 100-year standard actually reflects rainfall that has a 1% chance of occurring in any year. Notably, Harris County was the first county to seek and obtain permission from FEMA to draw its own flood plain maps meaning that FEMA subcontracts task of preparing flood plain maps to Harris County. Governmental entities need to stop grandfathering old practices, and do as The Netherlands has done, i.e., make room for waterways.

(3) A need to assess of transportation relative to potential flooding. Warning systems and automated barriers are needed to protect people from deep water. The technology to do so exists and has been deployed in the medical center. Estimated cost to protect all of Harris County is \$5-\$10M. **(4) A need to assess governmental readiness to respond to flooding.** Evacuations were called in the middle of the night without identified routes through flooded streets. Warning systems and maps showing people when and how to evacuate are needed. Hurricane evacuation zones should be identified and the population warned and informed about them in meaningful ways. **(5) Funding for improved flood-related infrastructure.** Funding is needed from all levels of government. Harris County is expected to hold an election for voters to approve bonding capacity of \$1 - \$3 Billion for flood mitigation projects. Date of election has not been determined but is likely to be in November. Problem is a lack of public trust and whether voters should be asked to approve particular projects or a process for allocating funds. Projects previously planned and waiting to be implemented are all obsolete as they are all based on outdated data. People living the flood plains will not receive the relief they expect even if all planned projects are implemented. Links to articles with more detailed information and analysis of these and other flood-related issues can be found on website: www.bcinitiative.org. (* NOAA Atlas 14 is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (“NOAA”) atlas of rainfall frequency estimates).

In response to questions Mr. Blackburn explained that retention ponds keep a set elevation of water and have capacity to add water during rain events; while detention ponds can be used for other purposes during dry times. When asked if new development policies will pressure ability to keep housing affordable, Mr. Blackburn said that past development policies subsidized the low cost of housing by flooding people downstream. As an example he pointed to the White Oak Bayou flood plain inside Loop 610 which widened over a mile because of upstream development. When asked what development standards should be outside of mapped flood plains, he said that every house should be raised and should have a yard that holds water. Researchers at Rice University are modeling to see what standards are needed to make a difference. When asked if area soil will actually absorb water, Mr. Blackburn said that has been tested by his colleague Phil Bedient who found that land with deep rooted prairie grasses can absorb 11"-15" of rain an hour. Shallow rooted St. Augustine grass has much lower infiltration rate. When asked about the Army Core of Engineers, he said that it only works on main stem bayous and not on tributaries; he suggested that a 23rd watershed should be recognized by separating Halls from Greens Bayou. When asked about transparency he said that Harris County’s practices are very non-transparent and need to be improved to make the population more flood literate.

IV New Business: Bayou City Initiative:

Tomaro Bell (SNC 83) moved that the SNA join the Bayou City Initiative as a community partner; Kay Warhol (SNC 24) seconded the motion; **motion carried.**

V. Old Business and Committee Reports

A. Flooding and Drainage Resolution: Hurricane Harvey

Infrastructure Committee Chairman, Mark Klein, lead discussion of the proposed resolution drafted in response to Hurricane Harvey. Earlier versions were distributed to SNC representatives prior to each of the last two meetings. Most recent version (attached hereto) was distributed on the day of the meeting. Mr. Klein read through the list of 7 priorities; suggestions for minor revisions were made and discussed during the reading, e.g., to revise local standards for new development to pose no adverse impact, to tie COH detention requirements to the 100-year rate of rainfall, to urge the COH to maintain rainfall data in open record format, to urge Harris County to improve maintenance of bayous (e.g., by regularly desilting and extracting submerged vehicles), to urge all governmental entities to predesignate shelters before a storm hits, and to direct the resolution to all levels of government. Pedro Ayarzagoitia (SNC 15) moved approval of the resolution with the minor revisions discussed; Harold Harris (SNC 31) seconded the motion. Following concern that the revised resolution was only distributed hours before the meeting, Chairman Huffmaster tabled the motion to the next meeting. **Motion tabled.**

- B. Dockless Bike Pilot Program: Proposed authorization for SNA to advocate for regulated introduction of dockless bike sharing to Houston:** Doug Smith (SNC 25) moved, and Thomas Wang (SNC 62) seconded motion that the SNA urge the city to insure that any dockless bike sharing program include the following terms: (1) Regulations to insure users' safety and require operators to manage their fleets to prevent public nuisances; (2) Regulations to preserve clear paths for pedestrians and mobility devices used by the disabled; and (3) No more than a one year term with a specific sunset provision requiring city council action to continue.

Motion Carried.

Discussion included comments from Neal Brenner from Houston Bike Share who said that Houston Bike Share is working with the COH's Administrative and Regulatory Affairs Department to identify appropriate technology for the program. Mr. Brenner asked the SNA to recommend a candidate to help with the steering committee. Mike VanDusen (SNC 22) who is the SNA's candidate for the Bicycle Advisory Committee volunteered.

- C. Houston High Speed Rail Connectivity: Proposed Endorsement for Connection Between Downtown and Proposed High Speed Rail Station at Northwest Mall:**

Philip Salerno moved, and Ed Browne seconded motion to approve the following endorsement:

After review of the High Speed Rail ("HSR") - Downtown Connection presentation provided to the SNA by Houston High Speed Rail Watch ("HHSRW"), the SNA has voted to endorse HHSRW's position that IF HSR plans move forward, there be an elevated connection (light rail or bus rapid transit) down Interstate 10 to connect HSR's proposed ending point at or near Northwest Mall with downtown. The SNA believes that a connection to downtown Houston along I-10 would be most beneficial to all users if it traveled above the center of the corridor.

Motion carried.

Discussion included announcement that public comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been extended to March 9th, and that the Federal Rail Administration has still not agreed to host a public meeting in Houston.

- D. Standing Committees and Advisory Committees: See § I, above, updates provided by Chairman Huffmaster**

VI. Announcements and Open Comments (5 minutes)

Tomaro Bell stated people visiting the Neighborhood Restoration Centers ("NRC") for assistance recovering from flooding to bring documents with them when they go to the NRCs and to appeal any and all adverse determinations.

Chairman Huffmaster announced that the next meeting will be March 12, 2018.

VII. Adjournment: 8:20 p.m.