

Super Neighborhood Alliance
Minutes from Meeting held June 10, 2019, at City Hall Annex



Guests

Jordan Thomas (At-Large 4 CM A. Edwards)
Misty Staunton, COH-Planning & Development
Rhonda Sauter, DON-COH
Alyce Coffey-COH-SWM
Ashley Lawson, COH-Housing & Comm. Dev.
Francisco Castillo, Harris Co., Pct. 2
Cheryl Parker, Quail Run Civic Club
Eleanor Bradley, Quail Run Civic Club
Emma Sims, Quail Run Civic Club
Sallie Alcorn, City Council Candidate
Jackie Dozier, Harvest CDC
Shelia Griffith, Harvest CDC
Dr. Kyle Shelton, Kinder Institute

Stacie Fairchild, SNC 22
Doug Smith, SNC 25
Jim Saye, SNC 31
Cheryl O'Brien, SNC 32
Sylvia Rivas, SNC 36
Stephen Polnaszek, SNC 38
Ray Washington, SNC 39/40
Bessie Mansfield, SNC 39/40
Sharon Hamilton, SNC 40
Avis Ballare, SNC 41
Mike Ballare, SNC 41
Barbara Blue, SNC 41
Carolyn Poole, SNC 41
Jessica Fuentes, SNC 49/50
Erika Cantu, SNC 49/50
Juan Antonio Sorto, SNA Vice-Chairman, SNC 49/50
Joetta Stephenson, SNC 55
Tina Sullivan, SNC 63
Amy Dinn, SNC 64/88
Kathleen O'Reilly, SNC 66
Tomaro Bell, SNC 83
Dave Durham, SNC 84
Scott Cubbler, SNC 84

Super Neighborhood Representatives

Philip Salerno, SNC 05
Ricky Miller, SNC 05
Ashley Stubbs, SNC 14
Pedro Ayaragoitia, SNC 15
Judson Bryant, SNC 18
Michael Huffmaster, SNA Past Chair, SNC 18
Jane West, SNA Secretary, SNC 22
Mike Van Dusen, SNC 22

Meeting called to order at 6:35 p.m.

I. Introductions

II. Acceptance of Minutes from Meeting Held on May 13, 2019

Cheryl O'Brien (SNC 32) moves, and Ricky Miller (SNC 05) seconds motion to accept the minutes. Motion carries.

III. Old Business

A. SNA Communications Update: Stacie Fairchild (SNC 22) (05 minutes)

Ms. Fairchild reported that since the last meeting she has reached out to other cities to see what they're doing with regard to neighborhood communications, and the biggest difference she's noticed is that other

cities have robust communication teams; Houston does not. The people with whom she has spoken have all suggested Facebook as the best social media tool for groups like the SNA to use. The SNA does have its own Facebook page called Houston Super Neighborhood Alliance to which she is going to begin posting events of city-wide interest. Ms. Fairchild asked all SNC representatives to visit the page and share the postings that she makes there to their own Facebook pages. That is how the SNA and the participating SNCs can easily begin using Facebook to improve communications and share information. Hopefully in the future the SNA's Facebook page will become more of a two-way communication tool.

Juan Antonio Sorto (SNC 49/50) asked which cities were contacted? Ms. Fairchild said that she had contacted Seattle and Phoenix, and she emphasized that she had contacted Seattle because Houston's SN program is modeled after Seattle's neighborhood planning program. She said the city staff in both places emphasized that communications is a big piece of the issue.

Dave Durham (SNC 84) asked if each SNC should have its own Facebook page, and if such pages could be linked to the SNA's Facebook page, to which Ms. Fairchild responded, "Yes." Ms. Fairchild also said that the SNA Facebook page can be joined as a group, and she encouraged people to "like" the page.

Randy Baxely (SNC 51) asked who owns the SNA Facebook page. Ms. Fairchild explained that CM Robinson's office created the page and gave her the right to post to it. Vice-Chairman Sorto (SNC 49/50) added that how the SNA Facebook page should be used will be a subject of discussion at the next executive committee meeting and that that information will be brought back for discussion at the next SNA meeting. In terms of posting to the SNA Facebook page, Ms. Fairchild and Mr. Sorto both asked that postings be confined to events of city-wide interest

B. SNA S.W.O.T. Analysis: Juan Antonio Sorto, SNA Vice-Chair (SNC 49/50) (15 minutes)

Vice-Chairman Sorto thanked everyone for staying through all of last month's S.W.O.T. analysis exercise. Observing that all people and organizations have strengths and weaknesses, he explained that the point of the exercise is to strengthen the SNA and its constituent SNCs by creating a plan to strengthen the entire SN program. He noted that while the plan was to discuss one of the four points at each of the SNA's next four meetings, and that tonight's discussion was to be about the SNA's strengths, he proposed instead to distribute the S.W.O.T. power point presented at the May meeting to all SNA representatives together with a request for each recipient to identify the top three items from an attached list of identified strengths. He explained that the strengths in bold print on the accompanying slide strengths most often identified on the lists developed by the various groups formed at the May meeting's break-out session.

Doug Smith (SNC 25) asked if it would be more meaningful to vote only on the top three bolded items?

Ray Washington (SNC 39/40) suggested that a vote on the top three items be taken at the next SNA meeting. Vice-Chairman Sorto reminded attendees that this exercise is intended to lead to creation of a plan to strengthen the SNA.

C. 2018 Survey. Michael Huffmaster (SNC 18) (10 minutes)

Mr. Huffmaster distributed blank survey forms related to the city's effort to develop a resilience plan. In response to a question about whether the survey form could be accessed on-line, Kyle Shelton from the Kinder Institute said that he would provide an electronic version of the form for distribution to attendees.

IV. Presentation: Kyle Shelton, Kinder Institute: Neighborhood Gentrification Across Harris County 1990 to 2016 (30 minutes)

Vice-Chairman Sorto introduced Dr. Shelton and passed around his book published in 2017: Power

Moves: Transportation, Politics and Development in Houston, noting that most of the data contained therein continues to be relevant.

The Kinder Institute's report titled *Neighborhood Gentrification Across Harris County 1990 to 2016* may be accessed on the Kinder Institute's website. Dr. Shelton began his presentation by stating that neighborhoods identified as "gentrified" exist both inside and outside Loop 610. Neighborhoods identified as susceptible to gentrification include neighborhoods east of Loop 610. "Gentrification" is difficult to define; gentrification is separate and distinct from "displacement." "Displacement" is an outcome of gentrification. Redevelopment is also an outcome of "gentrification." "Gentrification" is usually defined as higher income white residents moving into neighborhoods, and the cost of housing rises to be greater than county median. Gentrification has been accelerating quickly. As an example, the Washington Corridor started gentrifying in 1990s and has since completed the process in terms of definitions that require figures greater than county averages. Dr. Shelton showed slides showing areas with their probability of change. He said that he would provide a copy of his presentation for sharing with SNC representative.

Jackie Dozier (Harvest CDC), asked why gentrification and displacement are happening? Dr. Shelton responded that the lack of control over where gentrification is occurring is one of the issues that the Kinder Institute is trying to understand. He said that displacement is difficult to track because it's it's difficult to know why people move and where they move. The Kinder Institute does not yet have any policy recommendations, but he said that there are national strategies that haven't been pursued here. Dr. Shelton also said that some groups have been taking advantage of existing tools like minimum lot sizes and deed restrictions, but that there aren't many such tools. He said that if deed restrictions aren't being enforced, once gentrification starts, it's generally too late to start using deed restrictions..

Tomaro Bell (SNC 83) observed that there are many public policies that seem to threaten neighborhoods and encourage gentrification. Examples include: (1) Changing infrastructure, the reconstruction of Highway 288 promises to exacerbate flooding and the planned reconstruction of I-45 promises to eliminate public housing without mitigation; (2) tax policies such as those that provide no grace period before back taxes are due on property occupied by seniors who die; (3) Hurricane Ike that damaged low value rental structures that are being replaced with higher value new construction. Dr. Shelton responded that all of our communities deserve investment and development but that the challenge that needs to be addressed is how to manage change in neighborhoods without displacing traditional populations.

Dave Durham (SNC 84) was at meeting w/ TxDOT at which it was reported that 86% of the people moving to Texas are moving to places that are east of I-35 meaning that East Texas is growing more than the rest of the state. He asked: Is it low taxes that's driving people from other states to Texas? Stacie Fairchild (SNC 222) asked who's managing all of this development? Is there one group or entity that's advising? Dr. Shelton answered that no one is managing all of this development. He said that the city's effort to create a resiliency plan offers one such opportunity as housing and development is influenced by governmental entities and policies. The Kinder Institute has done some research on the crisis of affordable housing, and that one way to address that crisis is to keep people where they are.

Amy Dinn (SNC 64/88) observed that one of the biggest risks for gentrification is "FEMA-fication" which she defined as the influx of large amounts of federal disaster relief funds that are used to improve neighborhoods to the point at which long term residents can no longer afford to pay the property taxes required to continuing living in their neighborhoods. Dr. Shelton responded that the city's housing department is both aware of the opportunity and the challenge that comes with the federal recovery funds.

Stephen Polnaszek (SNC 38) suggested that use of minimum and maximum lot sizes, as well as height restrictions could help to guard against gentrification. He also suggested that neighborhoods could seek deed restriction help from various groups. Dr. Shelton said that this area now has more 400k residents who spend over 30% of their income on housing.

Michael Huffmaster (SNC 18) observed that two ways to combat gentrification could be for Harris County to change its practice of appraising housing on the basis of “highest and best use,” and for the homestead exemption to be expanded. Dr. Shelton agreed that there are multiple tools that could be used to combat gentrification and that it is incumbent on all to recognize that there isn’t one tool that will fix all problems.

Jordan Thomas (CM Amanda Edwards’ Office) comment that neighborhoods that are 40% and above African-American are less at risk to gentrification than neighborhoods that have lower percentages of African-American residents. Dr. Shelton responded that the Kinder Houston Area Survey has a question that historically asks when 50%, 90%, or 10% of the neighborhood looks different from the responder; and he believed that the answer to those questions bear out Mr. Thomas’s comment.

V. New Business: Vote on whether to meet in July (05 minutes)

Cheryl O’Brien (SNC 32) moves and Pedro Ayaragoitia (SNC 15) seconds a motion for the SNA not to meet in July. Motion carries; the SNA will not hold a meeting in July.

VI. Committee Reports - Moving to WRITTEN Reports (10 minutes)

Vice-Chairman Sorto commented that written reports may not be available every month.

A. Standing Committees

1. Liveability, Transportation, and Parks: S. Ashy
2. Infrastructure: M. Klein
3. Growth: J. Sorto
4. Health and Public Safety: T. Bell
5. Transition/Regulatory Affairs/Bylaws: J. West
6. Environmental/I-45: K. O’Reilly
7. Bicycle: M. VanDusen
8. Communications: Stacie Fairchild

B. Advisory Committees - Moving to WRITTEN Reports

1. Housing Work Group: J. Sorto
2. Walkable Places: M. Huffmaster/J. West
3. Complete Streets: M. Huffmaster
4. Complete Communities: J. Sorto
5. H-GAC Mobility: S. Ashy

VII. Open Comments (05 minutes)

Tomaro Bell (SNC 83) stated that SNC 83 recently held a public meeting with representatives of the Harris County Flood Control District, TxDOT, METRO, HISD, and the City of Houston Fire, Public Works, and Planning and Development Departments about the Ardmore Bridge in response to public concern with public safety while the bridge is being reconstructed. The agencies refused to share a recently completed traffic study on which they are relying to conclude that the community’s request for two-way traffic on McGregor during reconstruction is not feasible because the grade on McGregor would go from C to F. Tomaro said it’s just paint and cones. She said the relevant agencies all met with Braeswood and Stella Link communities multiple times, but never met with the only community of color impacted by the project. They also neglected to disclose that the Almeda bridge would also be taken out of service simultaneously. As a result of the recent meeting the plans have now changed so that the two bridges will not be reconstructed

simultaneously but, instead, will be reconstructed one at a time. Once these two bridges are reconstructed, the Calhoun bridge will be rebuilt. Community engagement matters!

Vice-Chairman Sorto (SNC 49/50) reported that a meeting was recently held with respect to plans for widening of I-45 at which it was reported that TxDOT plans to work with the city and other entities throughout the project. Recognizing that communication will be a huge factor for this project, Vice-Chairman Sorto said that TxDOT started public engagement with the Fifth Ward last year, and was expected to share comments and concerns received from the Fifth Ward with other impacted neighborhoods, like Near Northside and Greenspoint. But that TxDOT has, instead, been denying knowledge of such information. Vice-Chairman Sorto observed that if this is any indication of how TxDOT plans to handle this project, it will likely have detrimental impacts throughout the city. Vice-Chairman Sorto also announced that the next round of Complete Communities is expected to be announced next Monday morning; stay tuned.

Michael Huffmaster (SNC 18) reported that the final meeting of the Walkable Places Subcommittee of the Planning Commission would be held on Tuesday, June 11th from 4:00-6:00 p.m., in the same room where SNA meetings are held. He said that the recommendations expected to be approved at the meeting related primarily to reduced setbacks and revised parking rules for property owners who opt into the program. He stated that the market-based parking initiative for Mid-Town and EaDo is a separate initiative.

Barbara Blue (SNC 41) encouraged everyone to google and read about the city's new Community Land Trust. Surprise surprise surprise. She said that she was livid when she read about it.

Stacie Fairchild (SNC 22) reported that a person named Denzo from Missouri City is renting Air B&B's for parties. He has been known to lie to homeowners, commit to paying cash for the rental instead of working the transaction through Air B&B, and then invite hundreds of people to attend a "party" for which he charges a cover and encourages attendees to bring whatever they want: liquor, drugs, guns, etc. On his 21st birthday in May he had a party in Sugarland at which there was a drive-by shooting. Everything about these events is illegal and terrorizing to neighborhoods. HPD and the Harris County Sheriff's Office is aware of his practices but rely on community members to alert them to new events. Rice Military and other neighborhoods have successfully intervened to prevent such parties by following him on Twitter and Instagram (partywiththewinningteam), and reporting his plans to law enforcement.

Jim Saye (SNC 31) said that Meyerland shut Denzo down and chased him out, but that it took lots of money in attorneys fees to do so.

Phil Salerno (SNC 05) reported that a special meeting of City Council's Transportation, Technology, and Infrastructure ("TTI") committee would be held on Thursday, June 13th at 10:00 a.m. in the City Council Chamber on the second floor of City Hall to address TxDOT's plans for reconstruction of I-45. He also reported that the City of Houston will hold a public hearing on proposed amendments to the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan on Wednesday, June 12th from 5:30-7:00 p.m. at the United Way Building, 50 Waugh Drive.

Stacie Fairchild (SNC 22) said that there are several meetings related to TxDOT's plans for reconstruction of I-45 coming up in the near future. She said that she would post information about those meetings on the SNA Facebook page.

Kathleen O'Reilly (SNC 66) observed that Bob Eury and Central Houston have been working to improve TxDOT's plans for I-45 and encouraged people to take advantage of the upcoming meetings to seek benefits and take advantage of what they can.

VIII. Adjournment: 8:00 p.m.

Vice-Chairman Sorto (SNC 49/50) moves adjournment at 8:00 p.m.; Tomaro Bell (SNC 83) seconds; Motion carried.