

Minutes from the meeting of Sept 8, 2021 of Super Neighborhood 17 – Eldridge/West Oaks

- I. Call to order at 7:00 p.m. President Baker opened the meeting. The meeting was held online through Zoom.

- II. Though not expressly acknowledged in the meeting, we thank the following officials for their presence and participation:
 - Commissioner Tom Ramsey – Harris County, Precinct 3
 - Claudia Morales – Office of Rep. Lizzie Fletcher, US Congress, TX District 7
 - Deanna Harrington – Office of Rep. Jim Murphy, TX House, District 133
 - Roger Bridgwater – Office of Comm. Tom Ramsey
 - Rene Ruiz – City of Houston, Department of Neighborhoods
 - Katie Shelton – Chief of Staff for Councilman Greg Travis
 - Margarita Dunlap – Houston METRO
 - Commander Reece Hardy – HPD West Side Command
 - Ofc. T. Whitaker – HPD West Side Command
 - Cpt. N. Mac – HPD
 - Lt. J. Lui – HPD
 - Sgt. T. Parkerson – HPD

- III. For Community Safety **Ofc. Whitaker from HPD** first announced the monthly PIP meeting scheduled on the third Thursday at the Westside station, Sept 16. He briefly introduced the new West Side Commander, Reece Hardy. Ofc. Whitaker was thanked for his service to SN17 and the community.

Capt. Mac then reviewed the crime statistics for the area. While there have been no murders in the period, they remain up substantially from last year. Speaking to aggravated assaults, she noted that some of the YTD increase can be attributed to road rage and not to honk or wave at other drivers. She also reminded everyone to lock vehicles. She included some success from the night & gang unit, where in one case a serial auto-theft suspect was caught in a vehicle that was later determined to be stolen.

A resident asked about finding persons laying on the ground, when is it appropriate to call 9-1-1? Calling is the right thing to do. “Person Down” is a high priority call for HFD. The call will then be relayed to HPD. Unless you saw something specific or noteworthy it is not necessary to wait for responders. If you do see a crime, “please, please” stay – find a safe place to stay, but stay. Also, dispatch has a list of specific questions, in a specific order to help set priorities. But if there is anything extra, be sure to relay that to the dispatcher who can make adjustments.

Next was a discussion of homeless, vagrants, and prostitution near SH6 and Piping Rock. There are two families camping behind businesses on the west side of SH6. The city is

working with the Star of Hope for relocation and property owners to fence off unused property. The city's COVID street cleaning team is hitting hotspots in the area every other Wednesday, though that is sometimes adjusted slightly to keep from being too predictable.

Should residents continue to report encampments? HPD is following up, but new encampments should be reported. Asked about recent catalytic converter and gun legislation, the officers present did not have information on that.

IV. Community Leaders

a. **Claudia Morales**, Office of Rep. Lizzie Fletcher, noted that Rep. Fletcher is working on approximately 600 cases for repatriation from Afghanistan. Details are not available due to security concerns.

V. **Comm. Tom Ramsey, Harris County, Precinct 3**, began with discussion of the recently cancelled Elevate Strategies contract. Despite the contracts canceling, he still requires a discussion of trust and transparency. He provided a quick update of the 2018 Harvey Bond, noting that every project passed and is ahead of schedule. He also noted that crime rate, especially homicides, and the need for more officers. He also noted the issue with low bonds and highlighted a recent murder involving an individual on a PR-bond.

In response to new laws on human trafficking and with Ed Pollard (Houston City Council, District J) added signs near Bissonnet, BW8, & US59 advertising the upgrade of solicitation to a felony. He discussed progress made with support from community sponsors, cameras, law enforcement, the DA. This progress includes support for victims as well.

On setting tax rates, he explained his focus on controlling existing expenses before adding new expenses.

While committing to not raising taxes and cutting expenses, he noted his exception of flood control. Of the general tax rate of 0.40, 0.035 goes to flood control. He noted that 181 projects passed in 2018 which includes 0.5M dump trucks of new detention and 2000 homes permanently removed from the flood plain. He also discussed the tunnel diversion concept and the county report on a 40' diameter tunnel diverting 15000 cu ft / sec. He also discussed the inclusion of other watersheds, notably, Hall's, Hunting, and Greene's Bayou. He alluded to Boston's "Big Dig" and the need to big and also compared this to the 1930's Houston Ship Channel expansion.

Asked about parking for Barker reservoir, Noble Rd, Roger will check.

Asked about the tunnel, he added the route would necessarily run close to the bayou. The concept as currently exists would contain siphons that would naturally take in water when the specified water-level is reached. The tunnel depth would be about 100', all predicated on geotechnical studies. Houston is the only major city in Texas without a similar tunnel. Asked about preservation of habitat he noted that the original USACE report called for concreting the full channel, from SH6 to downtown. Asked if this could be funded by the new infrastructure bill, he acknowledged it would be a good candidate.

Asked about ROW mowing and noting specific areas that were not being kept up, he noted that there are gaps in coverage between City, County, and HCTRA records where some wind up in “no-man’s land.” Between 61 parks and 15000 acres of park land, workers need to make sure they have permission to perform maintenance.

Asked about possible lawsuits regarding the Elevate Strategies contract, he noted that he first needs to work with the other commissioners to get answers.

Asked about COVID cleanup units, it was noted this was a COH activity which would be best addressed by HPD, who were already off the call.

VI. Community Leaders, cont.

- a. **Deanna Harrington, Office of Rep. Jim Murphy** – briefly summarized bills passed in the 2nd special session and the upcoming 3rd special session. The 3rd session will include redistricting and allocation of Federal COVID relief funds. She advertised house.texas.gov for getting involved to provide citizen feedback for both.

Asked about bond reform, she noted it had been passed in previous session. She will forward details.

- b. **Katie Shelton, Chief of Staff for Councilman Greg Travis**, – announced that Kirkwood would switch sides at the end of September. Speed enforcement is planned for the new pavement. Due to shipping delays, Kendall reconstruction is currently delayed with completion expected in March. This does not include time needed by Houston Public Libraries to formally open. Unfortunately, the mobile library option has yet to come together. Asked about the city libraries impacted by Harvey, she noted that though Kendall will be one of the last, if not the last, to be reopened - it was the only library subject to long term flooding and was the most damaged.

Mr. Travis’s office was thanked for the fence at SH6 and I10, for which she passed thanks to HPD and TxDOT. Asked about vacant properties near SH6 & Westheimer, she asked that constituents send an email to districtg@houstontx.gov .

Asked about traffic around the Village School, she noted that it will take time to complete the traffic study. Lane restriping of Eldridge near I10 & Memorial will use discretionary funds and should be completed in weeks. They are continuing to look into Memorial lane striping near SH6.

- c. **Rene Ruiz – City of Houston, Department of Neighborhoods** – noted that code inspections are delayed as well as abatement. Email Rene if something is urgent.

Asked about a new app for trash pickup, Rene noted that it will provide better service alert. This will especially mitigate complaints for scheduled holidays as well as general

service delays miscategorized as missed collections.

Asked about the new 3-1-1 app, several residents conveyed disappointment. Abilities that were previously trivial or ordinary seem difficult, if not outright impossible. He noted that phone and email remain as options and to email him if something isn't being addressed. He also noted there have been issues internally with geocoding requests and that there are staff members working on the current app's effectiveness.

A delegate asked about the recurring encampment behind the hospital on Richmond. They noted that homeless quickly return and asked if any brush clearing might reduce the attractiveness of the area. He will check the trespass affidavit to see what options are available.

- d. **Margaret Dunlap, Houston METRO** – discussed COVID cleaning protocols and the Westheimer line Boost project. Asked if drivers are facing mask issues with passengers similar to airlines, she noted that if passengers do not comply they will be asked to leave. Most issues are settled before MPD arrive.

VII. Old Business

- a. The June minutes were approved.

VIII. New Business

- a. The chair recognized Alief SN and Barb Quattro for leading cleanup of dead shrubs in front of Westside Station. Also thanked were John Auman, his children, and Gail Canny. He also requested suggestions for other opportunities to engage the community.
- b. Bryan Dotson asked to report "Projects to improve access to federal lands" which includes trails in both Addicks & Barker Reservoirs. He is asking for input for establishing connections with the reservoir South of Briar Forest. Of note to him is connecting with Bishop Fiorenza Park.

VIII. Committee Reports

- a. **Nick Kornuta – Flooding** – No Report
- b. **Jeff Baker – Crime** – Noted that catalytic converter theft is still a problem. He also noted that it might be prudent in some areas to complete business before nightfall.

IX. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

NEXT MEETING: Oct 13, 7:00 PM, via ZOOM