

**SUPER NEIGHBORHOOD 22 COUNCIL DRAFT MINUTES
AUGUST 10, 2009 MEETING**

I. Meeting Called to Order at 6:40 p.m. and Introduction of Guests:

Ron Green: At-Large Position 4 Houston City Councilmember and Candidate for City Controller. Question: Do you think that the current head of BARC should be replaced or reassigned? What should be done to resolve the BARC issue? Response: BARC is now part of the Health and Human Services Department, but may need to be its own stand alone department. Alternatively, the tasks performed by BARC may need to be outsourced.

Steve Costello: Candidate for At-Large Position 1 on Houston City Council. Mr. Costello identified himself as an engineer who specializes in flood control, and hopes to bring that expertise to city council. He's also a specialist in new development. Mr. Costello has served as chairman of the Memorial Park Conservancy (MPC), and stepped down from that position to run for city council. The MPC is in the midst of an \$11M capital campaign to improve park amenities. The City of Houston gave the MPC funds to complete the pedestrian bridge now under construction. In response to the BARC issue Mr. Costello stated that BARC poses a unique problem to the city which may need to consider both outsourcing the responsibility for animal control, and working harder to educate the public about the importance of spaying and neutering pets.

Oliver Pennington: Candidate for District G Position on Houston City Council. Mr. Pennington is an attorney whose practice focused on municipal law and now hopes to use that experience to "hit the ground running" if elected to serve on Houston's City Council. Mr. Pennington stated that he is resolved to get things done and to work with the community. Mr. Pennington has a demonstrated interest in W/Ave that has been evidenced by his regular attendance at SN 22 and other community meetings.

Carlos Armando: Candidate for At-Large Position 5 on Houston City Council. Mr. Armando stated that he is particularly interested in how the city will develop in terms of transportation and infrastructure. Mr. Armando stated that Houston needs mass transit, but also needs a "happy medium." For example, Houston may need some monorail and some light rail. Mr. Armando stated that another issue dear to his heart is the issue of homelessness. He stated that other cities have come up with smart solutions to the problem of homelessness, and suggested that Houston could improve it's approach to this issue by supporting shelters instead of giving money to people on street corners.

II. Consider and Approve Minutes from July 13, 2009 Meetings (5 minutes)

Tom Dornbusch moves and Paul Nicosia seconds approval of the minutes. Motion passes unanimously.

III. Presentation by Matt James, MaJa Design Group, Plans for Boutique Hotel on W/Ave (15 minutes) Mr. James presented a proposal for the development of a boutique hotel in the building that houses Soma Sushi and Crew Health and Fitness on the north side of W/Ave between Shepherd Dr. and Durham St. The proposal is being promoted by his company, the MaJa Design

Group, in partnership with EDI, an architectural firm with national experience in hotel development. The proposal is to develop a 15-suite hotel serving up-scale clients that will be developed pursuant to a long-term lease of 25-30 years. Each suite would have a specific theme. The hotel will include two small conference rooms seating 14 and 20 people, respectively. The hotel will also include a small restaurant that is expected to seat approximately 40, provide room service to hotel guests, and breakfasts and lunches for conferences and business meetings. The hotel will not have a gym, but guests will be able to use the facilities at Crew Health and Fitness. He explained that the building's basement would be used for the suites and service areas of the hotel, the ground floor would be used for the lobby and conference rooms, and the roof would be used for an outdoor pool. Rates for the hotel's suites are expected to be approximately \$350 per night, and the lobby area is expected to include high end retail establishments including a jewelry store like Diamond International.

When asked, "Why that particular location?" Mr. James answered: "Opportunity." Mr. James explained that city parking requirements for a hotel would be less than for a restaurant, bar, or other type of business. Mr. James acknowledged that the provision of sufficient parking for a hotel at the proposed location is an issue, but that preliminary talks with city officials suggest that the amount of parking currently available on-site should be sufficient for a 15-suite hotel. When asked if the proposed hotel would have a bar and/or a lounge, Mr. James answered, "Yes." When asked, "How does parking play into that equation?" he explained that the available parking would be used mostly by hotel guests. He explained that the hotel would not be open to the general public, but qualified that statement by saying that the hotel's restaurant might be open to the general public for late night food service. When asked how many people the hotel would employ and if there would be sufficient parking for guests and employees, Mr. James acknowledged that the preliminary assessment of sufficient parking was based on the anticipated number of hotel guests and not on the anticipated number of hotel employees and stated that he did not know how and/or if employee parking is considered by the city. When asked who would operate the hotel, Mr. James stated that had not yet been decided. When asked if the proximity of the train and the noise posed by train horns might jeopardize the hotel's ability to attract guests, Mr. James stated that the hotel would be sound proofed to prevent guests from hearing the trains. When asked about the threat of flooding, Mr. James stated that flood is not a big concern for the developers because the proposed location is not in the flood plain and the proposed plans call for weatherproofing the basement.

Mr. James explained that a hotel cannot be developed on the proposed site without a variance from the city because of the proposed site's proximity to a church, and that for that reason he was seeking a letter of support from the Super Neighborhood Council. A church representative present at the meeting stated that the church is in conversation with Mr. James and his partners, but had not yet decided whether to support or to oppose Mr. James' proposal.

Jane West thanked Mr. James for his very detailed presentation and the candor with which he answered questions from the audience, and suggested that since there are still many important, outstanding questions such as how to accommodate employee parking and who would operate the hotel, and since the church was still considering the proposal and not yet prepared to offer an opinion, that any position the Super Neighborhood Council might take at this meeting should be provisional pending the receipt of additional information, and an opinion from the church.

Jenna Taylor moved, and Paul Nicosia seconded a motion for the Super Neighborhood Council to write a letter of provisional support for the proposed boutique hotel conditioned upon the receipt of additional information and an vote of support from the church. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Old Business (45 minutes)

A. Recycling Drop Off Facility: (J. West and P.McIlvain, 5 minutes)

District H CM Ed Gonzalez and a member of his staff, Carlos Doroteo, explained that during the first city council meeting in which CM Gonzalez participated he moved for a two week delay, and that when the issue returned to council, CM Gonzalez moved to refer back to the administration the proposal to sell to Admiral Linen the city owned property at Harvard and Center Street, part of which is now used as a recycling drop off facility. Mayor White agreed to support CM Gonzalez's two motions and the issue had now been referred back to the administration. The vote to refer the issue back to the administration tabled the issue for at least 90 days, but does not mean that the issue may never come back to city council for approval. Community members expressed their desire that the city NOT sell the property to Admiral Linen but, instead, agree to lease space to Admiral Linen, and use the proceeds from such a lease to build a structured parking garage that would continue to house a recycling drop off facility on the first floor, parking for Admiral Linen on the second floor, and parking for W/Ave destinations on upper floors.

B. Spec's Controversy: (R. Landa and J. West, 5 Minutes)

Ruben Landa, Community Liaison from State Senator Mario Gallegos' office, and Tim Brookover, Community Liaison for At Large Position 2 Houston City Councilmember Sue Lovell, explained that efforts to persuade Mayor White to amend the alcohol-free school zone ordinance to exempt package stores like Spec's and efforts to persuade Spec's to alter its merchandise offered at its W/Ave location to bring it into compliance with the alcohol-free school zone ordinance have failed, and all parties are now allowing the issue to work its way through the legal system. Mr. Landa and Mr. Brookover also acknowledged that Spec's has removed the initial action from state to federal court and filed a second federal lawsuit against both the city and the county.

C. Safety Zone/Quiet Zone (R. Taylor, 5 minutes)

Rich Taylor stated that the City's Public Works and Engineering Department is planning to hold a Second Public Meeting on the proposed Quiet Zone later this month on a date that has yet to be announced. Mr. Taylor stated that additional information is always available on the website, www.washingtonquietzone.com, and that as soon as the city decides on a date for the second public meeting, that information will be posted there and broadcast by email to all who have signed up there for notices of new information. In response to comments received at the First Public Meeting, city engineers have decided to leave the RR crossings at Parker and Roy OPEN, and to move forward only with a notice of intent to close the RR crossings at Thompson and Bonner. The city has also abandoned plans to make Allen Street one way.

Mr. Taylor stated that additional work need to complete the First Ward safety zone has started

and that the Safety Zone is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year. Street closures that have occurred there over the last few years will remain in place and no new ones will be needed to complete the Safety Zone.

D. Planning Department's Matrix: (J. West, 5 minutes)

No update on the SN 22 Matrix was provided by either the planning or the public works department. J. West reported that she had invited the city's Bikeway Coordinator, Dan Raine, to make a presentation at a future SN 22 meeting about progress on the MKT bikeway through the First Ward, and plans for expanding the bikeway program, but that he was not willing to make any commitment to attend any SN 22 meeting at any time. Mr. Doroteo from CM Gonzalez' office offered to contact Mr. Raine and clarify issues concerning the MKT bikeway, e.g., the bikeway has been paved, but no bollards have been installed to prevent vehicular traffic from using the bikeway and cars and trucks have been spotted on it. Also, no signs and/or lights have been installed along the bikeway through the First Ward. TJ Marks from the city's Parks and Recreation Department stated that lighting may not be in the scope of services contracted for the MKT bikeway, but that bollards are in the scope of services and that the Parks Department has also asked for them to be installed. Mr. Marks stated that the target date for opening the bikeway is October 3, 2009.

E. Fashion and Car Museum Proposals of Joanne King Herring and Posey Parker

J. West stated there is no update or new information on this issue.

F. Proposed Amendments to Chapter 42 (T. Dornbusch, 15 minutes)

Tom Dornbusch reported that the proposed amendments to Chapter 42 are scheduled to be considered by City Council's Regulation, Development, and Neighborhood Protection Committee on Thursday, August 13, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

G. W/Ave Residential Parking Permit Initiative (J. West and Neighborhood Representatives 5 minutes) Phyllis Thomason reported that Rice Military plans to petition for the first three blocks south of W/Ave which is an area that includes 399 homes. Paul Nicosia stated that Magnolia Grove is close to starting a petition for inclusion in the RPP, and Carol Limperos stated that Camp Logan would like the entire neighborhood to be included in the RPP.

V. On Going Project Updates (45 minutes)

A. Area Business Owners Committee (P. Nicosia, D. Van Delden, 5 minutes)

Rene Zamore reported that the Business Owners Group held a meet and greet wine social on July 29 at the Corkscrew that was attended by approximately 35 people, including District H CM Ed Gonzalez, and At Large Position 1 CM and Mayoral Candidate Peter Brown. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 9th at 3:00 at a location TBA. CM Gonzalez attendees updated the attendees on his work including the conversation that he has initiated with METRO about creating a trolley system that would connect the Central Business District (CBD) with W/Ave. CM Gonzalez also announced that he had opened a satellite office in the Heights Fire Station at 11th and Yale. CM Brown spoke about his efforts to work with a group of area developers to effect infrastructure improvements to W/Ave. Later that evening, Ms. Zamore was told by an HPD officer working in the area that W/Ave has 47 pending applications for liquor

licenses. Ms. Zamore expressed the concern of area business owners that increased enforcement deters people from coming to the W/Ave destinations, and that at the September 9th meeting the committee plans to discuss next steps towards initiating a management district.

B. Olivewood Cemetery (M. Williams, 5 minutes)

Margott Williams provided an email stating that the Odd Fellows will hold a clean-up event on Saturday August 15th from 9:00-12:30.

C. Candidate Forums: (15 minutes)

Kathleen Vossler stated that she's heard from the mayoral candidates that they are all tired of attending candidate forums because there are no new questions, no new answers, and no new people. Ms. Vossler explained that even though there are still almost three months before the November election, that the candidates are already bored. Ms. Vossler suggested that instead of holding another candidate forum where the attendees listen to the candidates, that SN 22 should plan to host an event at which the candidates listen to the attendees. Ms. Vossler proposed that SN 22 develop presentations from knowledgeable people, and plan to showcase the diversity of SN 22 restaurants by asking them each to bring an appetizer tray to the event. All agreed that Ms. Vossler's ideas are good, and that a committee meeting should be held to consider how to incorporate them into planning for a candidate event.

D. Transportation Committee Meeting: J. West reported that the first meeting of the SN 22 Transportation Committee was held on Monday, July 27th, and that the committee planned to meet on the fourth Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Dow School at 1900 Kane Street. The Transportation Committee's goal is to study and develop community consensus for how multiple modes of transit can best be accommodated and/or implemented through the W/Ave Corridor, and to create a professional-quality document expressing the community's consensus that can be presented to the newly elected mayor and city council in January of 2010.

E. Development Forum: Forum Planning Committee (5 minutes) No update.

VI. Announcements, Community Reports, and Open Comments (5 minutes)

SAVE THE DATES: Blue Print Houston Leaders Workshop, Saturday, September 12th and Citizens Congress 3, Saturday, October 3rd.

VII. Adjournment at 8:40 p.m.