

SUPER NEIGHBORHOOD 22 COUNCIL AGENDA
April 12, 2010 MEETING

I. Meeting Called to Order 6:40 pm

J. Martinez, P. McIlvain, and M. Perry (First Ward); J. West (Old Sixth Ward); P. Nicosia (Magnolia Grove); R. Taylor (briefly, West End); P. Thomason (Rice Military); T. Dornbusch (Woodcrest); F. Herrera and M-J. Buschlen (Cottage Grove); M. Christ (Crestwood); S. Johnson, J. Simmons, M. Schnau (Camp Logan), S. Dike (At-Large Position 1, CM Costello's Office); T. Ramirez (At-Large Position 3, CM Noriega's Office), J. Valinski (At-Large Position 5, CM Jones's Office) J. Moss (District G CM Pennington's Office), R. Vela and Elaine Gaskampe (Mayor's Office), A. Nuzzie (State Representative Jessica Farrar's Office), Connie Roebuck, Metro,

II. Presentation (60 minutes): Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan

Modern office of county attorney started in 1956, but historically it began in 1880s when the county attorney was both a criminal and civil attorney. Houston has the strongest strong mayor form of government. Only the mayor can fire dept heads and assistant city attorneys. Only the mayor can nominate the dept. heads. City Council can only approve the nominations. County government's system of checks and balances has broken down. He has a good relation with Pat Lykos. Another big difference between city and county govt. is that the city can pass laws that are conceivably legal; the county is a more limited form of govt. it can only pass regulations in conjunction with some area of the law that state law allows the county to regulate. The Harris County Attorney's office is doing some environmental work and ramping up that area up. The County Attorney also handles special prosecutions. A brochure about special prosecutions for nuisance activities is available for distribution.

Q: What are other categories of special prosecutions?

A: For example if people allow trash to be dumped on their property for money. Any illegal activity can be subject to a special prosecution.

Q: Who can come to the county attorney with a request to investigate a possible nuisance?

A: Anyone. Linda Geffin is the assistant county attorney in charge of this area.

Q: Does SOB business enforcement deal only with obvious SOBs or also hot sheet motels?

A: The county attorney's office can investigate any potential illegal activity. In such a situation the hotel operator may be criminally liable.

Q: Is the site on Winter Street in the First Ward a Superfund Site and, if so, what is being done to clean it up?

A: The site is owned by Akema Inc. It is not a superfund site and it now in a voluntary clean up program supervised by TCEQ but is under investigation for not following the plan. The contamination there was caused by, petroleum hydro carbons, organic compounds, and metals in the soil. It is easier for the county attorney's office to get involved and take action if the site is not a superfund site.

Q: Is a superfund site and brown field the same?

A: A superfund site has gone through an official federal designation that a brown field has not gone through, so the answer is, no, a superfund site and a brown field are not the same. Harris County has over 3,300 designated leaky gasoline stations. A great compromise was reached in the 1970s that allowed leaky tanks to be left in ground as long as the dirt wasn't being used for anything. Such sites are not generally cleaned up until the value of the site is justifies the cost of the cleanup. A recent example is a site near St. Paul's United Methodist Church where a site needing to be cleaned up was recently purchased for redevelopment into a high end apartment complex.

Q: If bars are investigated and the County Attorney's office works closely with HPD, HPD officers work extra job there, who's doing the investigation?

A: It depends on the circumstances. It is true that lots of HPD officers work extra jobs at these bars, and that such officers have deep contacts at HPD. The county attorney's office will look at the history of violations at the location at issue. Often HPD officers paid to work at these sites only check IDs and stop fights. The new mayor has reached out the county in ways that no former mayor ever has; joint county-city activities including criminal justice enforcement are being considered. Mayor Parker visited with the county commissioners in their offices in an effort to improve the working relationship between the city and the county.

Q: Are there any historical instances of the county funding urban transportation projects?

A: The county has two appointees on the METRO board. He's meeting with the new board members to create dialogue.

Q: Is there an update on the Spec's situation?

- A: Spec's store on W/Ave is too close to Memorial Elementary. The county attorney's office was asked by the state to enforce the city's alcohol free school zone law by taking action to close the Spec's store on W/Ave. Before the administrative process started there had been a serious of "errors" and the store was closed. Closure of the store was supported by HISD and city council. Nevertheless, city council can grant variances but that's a very slippery slope. He understands Specs is lobbying the new administration for a variance and has invested substantial resources in the effort.

III. Consider and Approve Minutes from March 8, 2010 Meeting (5 minutes)

Paul Nicosia moves and Tom Dornbusch seconds approval of minutes with correction to the date which is mistyped. Motion carries unanimously

IV. New Business:

- A. **Arts District:** Patrick McIlvain moves and Paul Nicosia seconds support for effort to create a Cultural District in the First and Sixth Wards, i.e., in the area between IH-45 and Heights Blvd. Letter of Intent to proceed with such an application will be sent to the Texas Commission on the Arts by a steering committee headed by MultiCultural Education and Counseling through the Arts (MECA), and a group of area stakeholders, including SN 22.
- B. **Crime Prevention:** Jim Simmons moves and Tom Dornbusch seconds creation of a crime prevention committee. Motion carries.
- C. **Flooding and drainage:** Tom Dornbusch moves and Patrick McIlvain seconds creation of a flooding and drainage committee. Motion carries.

V. Old Business:

- A. **SNAP/CIP Update (10 minutes)** 2010 SNAP responses are posted on the city's website: http://pdinet.pd.ci.houston.tx.us/snap_public/index.asp. Status of SNAP requests will be updated every 30-45 days. The database shows the 2008 through 2010 SNAP responses per participating SNCs.
- B. **Area Business Owners Committee and Quiet Zone Update** @. Taylor, 5 minutes)
P. Nicosia reported that the Business Owners Committee is in the process of reorganizing and will hold its next meeting on Tuesday, April 20th at Dharma Café. J. West reported that creation of the QZ is moving forward as planned regardless of opposition from a few business owners on Heights Blvd.
- C. **Committee Reports (20 minutes)**
- (1) **Transportation Committee** (S. Johnson and T. Dornbusch, 15 minutes)
Report on HGAC presentation to join meeting of SN 15 and SN 22 on March 16th
Pick a date for a SN wide meeting about the transportation committee report Monday May 3rd
- (2) **W/Ave Task Force: Subcommittees:**
- (A) Infrastructure @. Taylor): R. Taylor reported that the infrastructure subcommittee is considering the possibility of creating a municipal management district to address infrastructure needs.
- (B) Mobility (P. Nicosia and P Thomason):
P. Nicosia reported that taxi operators would like taxi stands identified; stops have been identified for the jitney; discussion of trolley/streetcar has been opened with the city - an issue which entity would operate it: metro or a private entity? Other issues on the table are whether valet zones should be created, whether the bike lanes should be maintained on W/Ave or moved to another street, e.g., Center Street. Metro is to bring their plan for the area to the next meeting and SN has been asked to bring the SWA Group presentation. The next meeting has not yet been scheduled.
- (C) Quality of Life (T. Dornbusch):
T. Dornbusch reported that this committee has held two meeting, one last month and one on Friday, April 9th. At the first meeting Andy Icken from the mayor's office has told

committee members to focus on “low hanging fruit.” T. Dornbusch reported that he is concerned about the committee’s title, because some people’s perception is that QOL means standard of living and the real focus is Quality of Place - how do we go about getting there, especially with the influx of businesses that W/Ave is now experiencing? The challenge will be how to maintain the good business and make W/Ave a destination.

The discussion at the second meeting focused on how best to use off-duty HPD officers at area nightclubs. Membership has been expanded to include M. Paolucci from Eig8t, Josh Sanders from Houstonians for Responsible Growth, Betty Heacker from Wabash Antiques and Feed, Captain Holloway fro HPD, a representative from the city’s legal dept., and Tom Davis, the city’s liaison to the downtown management district. Discussion centered on extending off-duty officers’ responsibility to patrol outside the clubs after they close. M Paolucci stated that he thinks he can persuade other bar owners to agree to help pay for that extended service, but that unless all bar owners agree to do participate that the officers will prefer and agree to work only for the bar owners who don’t require outdoor patrols. P. Thomason commented that brighter street lights and crosswalks are needed to improve the QOL on W/Ave.

M. Poissant expressed concern that (1) bar owners are represented on the subcommittee, but residents who live across the street from the bars are not included; and (2) W/Ave is a five lane street and there are crowds of people going back and forth across W/Ave creating a hazardous situation. HPD says that W/Ave has to be kept clear so that traffic can move, but the committees are discussing increasing the ability to park on W/Ave which will squeeze all the traffic into two lanes. Her suggestion is that officers with experience working W/Ave be included on the committees instead of the ranked officers like the captain who does not have experience working on W/Ave. She also expressed strong support for the expanded use of decal parking permit program to include all streets bordering W/Ave regardless of whether they are residential because the owners of small neighborhood businesses like her gallery are suffering from the loss of parking for their patrons and the QOL for their businesses.

(D) Parking (J. West):

J. West reported that the parking subcommittee is considering the establishment of the city’s first parking benefits district (PBD) along W/Ave. If established the PBD would house approximately 460 metered parking spaces on W/Ave.

(3) **TxDOT Drainage Ponds** (T. Dornbusch, M. Perry, J. Martinez, M. Barre)

R. Taylor reported in absentia that the project has been delayed for 180 days for design revisions, and that there might be a funding opportunity to do a detention pond this year. An outstanding issue concerns which public entity will be responsible for maintaining the ponds. A. Nuzzie from State Representative Jessica Farrar’s office reported that construction of frontage roads is moving forward, and that work is underway between Patterson and Studemont. The first phase of work is underground work, *i.e.* sewer and sanitary lines. Work on the bridge at Studemont may start at the end of April. T. Dornbusch asked if work on the detention ponds be conducted together with the road work. A. Nuzzie responded that the detention pond project is expected to be let in August.

(4) **Bikeway Plans** (F. Herrera, S. Johnson, T. Dornbusch)

F. Herrera reported that the bikeway committee met on April 9th and discussed how best to make neighborhoods more aware of the bikeways, specifically the MKT ROW through Cottage Grove. At the meeting were T. Dornbush, S. Johnson, L. Mercer, J. Reid, and F. Herrera. Committee members have met with a writer from the Leader to discuss the MKT ROW in an effort to educate the public and let the voters and the public bring pressure to elected officials at a future meeting, *i.e.* public works, Sheila Jackson Lee is now aware of the project; the MKT ROW provides an opportunity to connect the bikeways from downtown to Memorial Park. F. Herrera is working to have an article about this issue published in the Heights Tribune and Near Northside community paper.

- (5) **Capacity Building** (J. West, P. Thomason, F. Herrera)
P. Thomason reported that the purpose for this committee is to explore leadership techniques and best practices for increasing membership and participation in area civic clubs and other SN constituent organizations. P. Thomason invited others to participate in the committee. M. Poissant expressed interest in participating and in gaining SN support for organizing a civic club in her area.

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

Tuesday, April 20th, 7:00 p.m.: Public Meeting of City of Houston Term Limits Review Commission, City Council Chamber, City Hall. PUBLIC COMMENTS WILL BE RECEIVED. Alternatively please send comments to

Wednesday, April 21st, 5:30-7:30 p.m.: Off-Street Parking Ordinance Community Meeting, United Way of Greater Houston, 50 Waugh Drive. Community members are invited to join the discussion and be part of the parking solution. If you can't attend, please send ideas/comments to parkingcomments@cityofhouston.net.

Wednesday, April 21st, 7:00 p.m.: Central Positive Interaction Program meeting, HPOU building, 1600 State St.

Tuesday, April 27th, 6:30-8:00 p.m.: Community members are invited to attend the meeting of City Council's Flooding and Drainage Committee at the West End Multi-Service Center, 170 Heights Blvd. Hosted by Chairman Stephen Costello and Vice-Chairman Ed Gonzalez.

Saturday, May 1st, 3:00-9:00 p.m.: Support local artists by participating in Inner Art Corridor's Fifth Annual Open Studio Tour. For information see www.innerartcorridor.org, or contact Jeanette Chinelli at 713-869-2727 or jchinelli@sbcglobal.net.

Monday, May 12, 2010, 6:30 p.m.: Next SN 22 Meeting, guest speaker with be Jeff Taebel, Director, Community and Environmental Planning, Houston-Galveston Area Council.

VII. Adjournment: 8:30 p.m.