

Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council Meeting
FINAL MINUTES
June 9, 2010

The meeting of the Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council (EWOSNC) (17) was called to order at 7:01 pm, June 9, 2010 by President Diane Guillerman. A quorum was present, with eleven stakeholder delegate representatives attending.

I. Speaker.

Captain Mary Lentschke, HPD's Westside Command Station captain, spoke to the SNC. She gave a brief description of her career with HPD, which began in 1983; she has been serving as a captain since 2005. Initially, as a captain, she was assigned to HPD's special operations, which involves patrols for protests, downtown parades, etc. Captain Lentschke was assigned to the Westside Command Station in June of 2009. She has received great support from west side residents, stating they often ask what they can do to help HPD, rather than asking what HPD can do to help them. Captain Lentschke noted that HPD's budget is very tight this fiscal year, which means HPD and citizens need to work together even more to stay on top of crime.

Captain Lentschke gave crime statistics for the city overall and the west side. Citywide, non-violent crime is down 2.78% and violent crime (sexual assault, murder, and robberies) is down 8.92%. Property crimes are down 1.5%. For the west side area, which covers 68 square miles (the second largest area in the City), non-violent crime is down 22%, violent crime is down 11%, and property crimes are down 3%. These statistics are in comparison to the previous year. A resident noted that current crime statistics are available on the City's website. Captain Lentschke stated the Westside Command Station is focusing on burglaries and robberies, but they also focus on narcotics. As of June 2009, there had been 17,400 calls for service, but in comparison, in June 2010, there had been 15,000 calls for service, a significant reduction. She also said HPD has a sufficient number of officers. In response to a question, Captain Lentschke described the boundaries of the Westside Command Station's purview: from George Bush Park to Westpark Tollway, juggling on the east side down to Gessner. It subsumes districts 19 and 20. Captain Lentschke stated that residential and commercial burglaries are happening in our area right now, and it is frustrating because HPD catches them and they are soon released. One resident commented that her neighbor received a letter from State Farm stating his homeowners' insurance was being raised because 77077 is a "high crime" area for burglaries. Captain Lentschke said she was not aware of anything like that and didn't think the statistics supported that action. She stated Westside was the third highest in calls for the City. She added that she has been taking a proactive approach to crime by looking at ways to keep officers on patrol where they need to be, such as eliminating 911 prank calls made from apartment complexes by removing excess pay phones in the 5 apartment complexes with the most 911 hang-ups.

Responding to questions, Captain Lentschke stated it is difficult to catch individuals responsible for graffiti. When asked if HPD focuses on areas with graffiti problems, such as around Westpark Tollway on Synott, Captain Lentschke stated HPD can, but it is difficult because it is important to have HPD's limited resources responding to calls for service. She agreed graffiti, if unaddressed, is a crime that can "invite" additional crime to an area; but she noted that not all businesses report it. She said it helps to report it to 311, because 311 does send the information to HPD and a gang unit officer will go out to document the graffiti, keeping track of what is being done and where. Captain Lentschke requested the phone number of the resident concerned about the graffiti so she could make sure it was addressed. There was a question about the vagrants and homeless in the area, and one attendee stated residents in the Highway 6/Westheimer area were getting harassed by the homeless there. Captain Lentschke said the crime involved with homeless is trespassing, and her officers do try to work with businesses and other establishments to get the no trespassing affidavits, needed for enforcement. The ordinances that are enforced downtown are "no dumpster diving" and "no sleeping on the sidewalks," but otherwise, there are no particular ordinances preventing the homeless from being downtown. Another attendee questioned whether HPD works closely with Precinct 5. Captain Lentschke responded that the two law enforcement agencies, along with the Sheriff's Department, had just completed working together to address the weekend racing in the Westheimer/Highway 6 area and they were planning on doing some bike patrols together.

II. Guest Introductions.

Ms. Guillerman welcomed the guests and invited them to introduce themselves. Mark Kirschke, the representative from Council Member Pennington's office, spoke briefly to the SNC advising that no CIPs were being granted due to the City's budget issues, which he stated was impacting all departments and services. He also stated there is 1-2 years of schedule creep, adding that length of time to current projects. There was some discussion regarding the reconstruction of Dairy Ashford and Mr. Kirschke noted it is still being evaluated, but there may be an overlay of that street. He also advised that the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program is back up and running. Briarhills is the only neighborhood within EWOSN that is still scheduled for speed humps. All other speed hump requests must be started anew. He briefly touched on the requirements for speed humps, which include in part that

20% of the cars using the street must be “cut through.” Mr. Kirschke noted that the City’s budget is very tight and it will only get worse, stating that next year will be very tough and a lot of things may become “pay-as-you-go.” He stated the Fiscal year 2012 budget is being released in September of this year to prepare for the “shock” of it. Mr. Kirschke also requested input from delegates regarding crime for the July meeting of the area SN presidents with Mr. Pennington and his staff, asking that the SN presidents bring suggestions of specific actions that council and/or HPD can take to address crime in our area. An attendee questioned if Hayes Road was still on the CIP list; Mr. Kirschke responded “yes,” but it may have been pushed out a year or two. Another attendee asked about the west side hike and bike trail, but Mr. Kirschke stated he needed a service number to be able to respond to the inquiry.

II. Old Business.

A. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved with no additional corrections.

B. Committee Reports.

(1) Security Committee: Bob Sumicek, Chair, stated he had nothing additional given Captain Lentschke’s discussion. He reiterated his willingness to come and speak to any neighborhood associations interested in establishing a “Citizens on Patrol” program.

(2) SNAP/Infrastructure Committee: Judy Thompson, Chair, stated that all traffic signs requested were received, but all traffic signals were denied by the City. She said that Eldridge at Westerloch was the worst intersection, but the City still declined installing a traffic signal. Ms. Thompson asked another delegate, Sherry Lamb, if she had made any progress on the school beacon on Parkway Plaza; Ms. Lamb stated she was unable to get any response from HISD, but with no money from the City it probably was moot. Another delegate, Doug Parrish is working with TXDOT on some issues. Mr. Parrish stated he found a contact within State representative Hubert Vo’s office to assist with the TXDot issues and she had emailed him, advising crews would look at the intersections involved. Ms. Thompson asked delegate Richard Rottman if he was still working on the Dairy Ashford esplanade issue; he replied that he was, but he did not need any assistance from the SNAP Committee. Mr. Kirschke was asked about the progress of the intersection turning east onto Memorial from Eldridge and he said it will be redesigned. Ms. Thompson stated all of the safe sidewalk issues submitted to the City were approved and they were just waiting on funding.

(3) Beautification: Ms. Guillerman stated there was still no chair for the committee, but noted that Ruggles Green has established a farmers’ market in the City Centre that is open on Thursday evenings. Bob Sumicek asked if the SNs were still working on a recycling center. Ms. Guillerman responded that it was her understanding they were, though she was unsure of the progress at this point because the focus had been to begin with the farmers’ market. She noted the Westchase District is looking at establishing a farmers’ market that would primarily be open only during the day, except possibly open on Thursday evenings.

(4) Flooding and Drainage: Billie Long, Chair, stated he attended a meeting of the City’s Flooding and Drainage Committee on May 18. They are looking at low impact retention ponds, which are not just big holes in the ground, but have more soil and are more soluble. The Kendall Library parking lot is an example of this approach. Another delegate stated he noticed the parking lot was flooded and not draining quickly after a recent heavy rain. Mr. Long stated that our SN is a very big part of the flooding and drainage issue because the Barkers reservoir and the Brays Project are within the SNs boundaries.

(5) Legislative Committee: Doug Parrish, Chair, stated his contact within State representative Hubert Vo’s office, Karen Loper, was with the Alief SN, and she is assisting with the Highway 6/Briar Forest intersection and the right hand turn lane on Eagle Vista Drive. He also stated that Mayor Parker released the 4.12 billion proposed budget for fiscal year 2011 and that CM Pennington’s newsletter contains the budget workshop schedule. The schedule was also sent to all delegates. The link to the budget can be found at www.houstontx.gov/budget/index.html.

(6) Speakers Committee: Ms. Guillerman advised that the speaker for July is Vince Ryan, the Harris County Attorney. She also suggested the SNC may want to have a representative from the City’s Deed Restrictions department to come and speak about updating deed restrictions (because many neighborhoods had older, outdated deed restrictions) and how the City’s department can help with enforcing deed restrictions. The delegates agreed this would be helpful. Ms. Guillerman will look into getting someone scheduled. Mr. Sumicek stated that it may be something the delegates would like to invite their homeowners’ board members to and that space may be an issue. Ms. Guillerman stated that she would let them know once a speaker was scheduled and they could see if any of their board member were interested in attending. Ms. Guillerman advised she had been contacted by Gavin Dillingham with the City’s Department of Energy, which is funding a weatherization/energy efficiency program for single family residents meeting federal poverty guidelines. Mr. Dillingham had requested an opportunity to speak to the SN about the program. The delegates agreed it would not be beneficial to have Mr. Dillingham speak because no one on the council meets the funding guidelines.

D. Update on Mission Statement.

Ms. Lamb stated she had been speaking with Mr. Taylor, another delegate, about the mission statement, and Mr. Taylor had devised a succinct mission statement: “to maintain, protect and enhance property values and the security of property and residents.” Mr. Taylor will compose the mission statement for a vote at the next meeting of the SNC.

E. Update on Website.

Ms. Guillerman gave an update on the SN’s website, stating that it was up and running, but was still in an “under construction” phase, so please bring any ideas/suggestions to her for improvements. The address: www.sneldridgewestoaks.org. She asked all delegates to go to the website and sign-in and stated that all committee chairs could access committee pages to update/maintain them.

F. Monthly SN Meeting with Councilmember Pennington’s Office.

Ms. Guillerman stated there was no June meeting of the west Houston SNs with Councilmember Pennington’s office.

III. New Business.

A. SN Advisory Board Meeting.

Ms. Guillerman advised she had attended the SN Advisory Board Meeting where Mayor Parker was a guest. The SNs brought issues important to their respective neighborhoods to the attention of Mayor Parker, and she seemed willing to work with the SNs. These meetings will occur periodically and Ms. Guillerman will keep the delegates updated. She stated the meetings were a good way to get things addressed by the City.

B. Officer Elections.

Ms. Guillerman gave an overview of what transpired at the last meeting regarding elections for the SN president and vice president positions. A motion was made to vote for Ms. Guillerman as president and Mr. Sumicek for vice president. All delegates voted in favor. Ms. Guillerman discussed the need for a secretary. Ms. Sharon Zindler, the alternate delegate from Reflections, stated she would be willing to be the secretary after discussing the responsibilities. Ms. Guillerman noted the vote for the position would take place at the next meeting in accordance with the by-laws. Ms. Lamb made a motion to suspend the by-laws and Robert’s Rules for this occasion and conduct the vote for Ms. Zindler at this meeting. All delegates voted in favor of suspending the rules and all delegates voted in favor of Ms. Zindler as secretary.

C. Ms. Guillerman questioned whether the delegates would like her to forward the District G newsletters and the delegates responded affirmatively. She reminded the delegates to advise their respective neighborhoods to sign the petition for RENEW Houston if they supported that initiative because the petition deadline was approaching.

The meeting was adjourned. The next EWOSNC meets on July 14, 2010 at 7:00 pm.