

Minutes from the meeting of March 13, 2019 of Super Neighborhood 17 – Eldridge/West Oaks

- I. Call to order at 7:00 p.m. President O’Connor opened the meeting.
- II. Quorum was established by 7 delegates or alternates.
- III. Acknowledge Guests and Visitors
Margaret Dunlap of Metro, who will be speaking in April on the Regional Transit Plan
Long Nguyen, Community Director for Councilman Le
Sam Pena, Chief of HFD
Steve Richard from the Department of Neighborhoods
Sally Alcorn, running for District 5 at Large position
- IV. Guests Speakers
Cmdr Faulhaber, from HPD spoke on current safety matters. Violent crime over the period was down. He recapped the Family Violence Initiative with the District Attorney’s office as well as the Danger Assessment for Law Enforcement program. They are taking steps to reach out to at risk victims. Crimes that are up included burglary of habitation seen in the apartments on Briar Forest likely due to spring break. He also mentioned auto theft being up. Burglary of motor vehicles was also up, where he mentioned Ashford Park. Criminals are walking areas trying car door handles to make entry into victims’ cars. Cmdr. Faulhaber noted that property crimes are crimes of opportunity and we can take steps to help prevent them that the city currently can’t seem to keep nonviolent offenders in jail, a lot of which he attributed to the new bond system and not the judges or the DA.
From audience questions, he addressed the following. Kim Og has requested over 100 new prosecutors. These are needed to reduce the current caseload estimated at 700 apiece. Video evidence from dash cameras and homes, if it is of good quality, provide much better than eyewitness accounts. Finally the city has established a Citizen Police Academy in part to “dispel false narratives” on how the police department works and witness their activities first-hand. He reminded everyone the next PIP meeting is March 21.

Crime Statistics in the last 30 days:

Aggravated Assault - -35.3%
Burglary Habitation – 43.5%
BMV – 10.9%
Theft - -44.2%
Auto Theft – 240%

Chief Pena from HFD spoke on opportunities to adjust the department and then on proposition B. He noted there are 4000 firemen, and the budget for HPD is \$500,000, 000. The department currently runs on an “All Hazard” strategy. This is appropriate for small communities and low cash communities. The focus is on response time or to “stop the clock.” HFD fields almost 1000 calls per day and this can be inefficient and costly as fire truck and ambulance must respond. Most of those calls are for EMS and are not fire calls.

This strategy requires sending the first unit available regardless of the need. This is not always best in terms of serving the citizens' needs. He is working to make adjustments in the dispatch of units to better reflect the needs of the call based on their years of experience. The first example is in medical calls to jails. These facilities are normally already medically staffed and equipped, where having a fire engine arrive does little beyond stopping the clock. With better dispatch, they are looking at waiting a little longer (up to the 12-minute maximum recommended) where appropriate. The second example was single family 1 and 2 story structure calls. 68% of these are managed by the first unit to arrive. They are looking to reduce the call out from 32 firefighters to 20. Those calls can be elevated back to the original 30 due to details relayed from the scene. Those details could come from the original caller or from the first unit to arrive. This comes back to improving call dispatch to make sure the proper amount of manpower shows up.

On proposition B, Chief Pena noted that one of the biggest issues of proposition B was that it had no funding source. Over 90% of HFDs budget is salary. Of that remainder, over 50% is "mandatory overhead". That is, it cannot be reduced. Combined with the estimated FY2020 \$120M deficit, proposition B includes another \$80M. While this can be addressed by using the city's reserve funds, HFD must find another \$25M reduction, which represents just under 400 firefighters. Chief Pena discussed his plan to adjust the city to 3 shift plan, to reduce overtime expense. He must decrease the number of firefighters by 375.

Based on audience questions Chief Pena noted the following. Were four shifts required by a lawsuit? No, the lawsuit was on a lack of promotion opportunity. Four shifts helped resolve the lawsuit but not as a requirement. With time and change in processes, the conditions it helped resolve are past. Currently on the four shift schedule firefighters have to pick up a "debit day". These are poorly attended, assignments at other stations which introduces risk, and usually requires calling up another firefighter on overtime. The three shift schedule will keep the firefighters at their home station on a more regular schedule by including debit days back into their home station rotation.

Chief Pena was asked about separating EMS from HFD. He noted that in El Paso the departments were actually merged as a cost saving measure. Splitting the departments would actually increase overhead. Areas seen for improvement might be changing employee type to non-uniformed. Additional improvement could be seen from moving EMS staffing to a more dynamic demand schedule and not the current 24 hour model. He noted that on an ongoing basis, ambulances cost half of fire apparatus. 80% of HFD calls were EMS in nature and 60% of those only required a Basic EMS. 25% of callers called over 3x per year. The chief was asked about these regular users of EMS and he noted that the weak link here was between the call and the call-taker.

Finally, it was noted that Chief Pena is NOT in the Firefighters Association. He is for the raise, just not the methods.

- V. The February minutes were approved without objection.

VI Committee Reports

- a) **Jeff Baker, Chair for Public Safety**, reported that the no-bond release is an issue. Most of those are 14-17 year olds in apartments. 20% of the area is responsible for 60% of the crime. He noted that the burglary issues were in Ashford Park and Park Hollow. These were daytime opportunities where burglars are going around pulling on door handles to see what happens. As simple step is to improve safety would to park in the garage and get a camera. Ashford Park, Sec. 6 mentioned an initiative to help neighbors clean out garages.
- b) **Jeff Baker, Chair for the Communications Committee** asked everyone to check out the Facebook site. They are adding volunteer opportunities, neighborhood meetings, and working to rejuvenate the SN17 website.
- c) **Johnny Lozano, Chair for the Panhandling Committee**, reported that typical response from the City was to cite and release, until a warrant was issued, but that even with a warrant the panhandler may only spend one night in jail.
- d) **Cindy Yeglin, Chair for the Beautification Committee**, reported to get business involvement we would need to be a 501C nonprofit organization. A question came up during the committee report “What City department handles trash at a commercial businesses?” That is handled with code enforcement, but 311 is the best way to report the situation.
- e) **Rhonda Kelley, Membership Chair** reported that in response to a discussion amongst the SN17 in the week prior to the meeting, that delegate letters are missing from the file. It was requested that anyone without a letter on file, to get a replacement, signed by the President of their homeowner’s association. Without proper documents the delegate may not be allowed to vote.
- f) **Doug Parish, Chair of New Construction** Ashford Park, {both “Sections 1-5, and “Section 6) in view of recent affordable apartment request the city investigate the Briar West and Westheimer interchange, specifically to add a protected left turn phase on the current stop light, as it is already difficult to get out of the neighborhood and with an additional 200 residents at the apartments, it will be much worse.
- g) **Nancy Scott, Capital Improvements** reported that at the Kroger on Eldridge, the resolution to the traffic issue, may be to widen the cut in the esplanade and she is working with the Councilman to get that done.

VII No old business.

VIII No new business

IX Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

NEXT MEETING: MAY 8, 7:00 PM AT EAGLES TRACE