

Minutes from the meeting of June 8, 2022 of Super Neighborhood 17 – Eldridge/West Oaks

- I. Call to order at 7:03 p.m. President Baker opened the meeting at Eagles Trace
- II. A quorum was established.

We thanked the following officials for their presence and participation:

Andy Kahan – Houston Crime Stoppers

Na’Shon Edwards – Office of Councilwoman Tiffany Thomas, City of Houston, District F

Katie Shelton – Office of Councilwoman Mary Nan Huffman, City of Houston, District G

Kent Clingerman – Office of Commissioner Jack Cagle, Harris County, Pct. 4

Rene Ruiz – City of Houston, Department of Neighborhoods

Margaret Dunlap – METRO

Sgt Stevens – HPD

- III. For Community Safety **Sgt. Stevens of HPD** took some brief questions. Asked if any of the recent prostitution arrests were at hotels, he indicated that it was likely. He noted that the section responsible for the arrests covers more than 5 Super Neighborhoods and covers area between Gessner to SH6 and I10 out to Mason areas along US59. Asked about the One Safe Houston program, while it is still going he does not know how much longer.
- IV. **Andy Kahan – Crime Stoppers, Victim Advocate** – Started with a brief discussion of his personal life and experience. He discussed from 30 years ago starting in the Houston Mayor’s office as a staff of one. He discussed his activities as board-member of Parents of Murdered Children, and Texas EquiSearch. He discussed the background of overcrowding in the 80’s and 90’s with 8/10 parolees released commenting that now we are in a “revolving door.” He discussed the beginnings of Crime Stoppers with a police appeal in Albuquerque, NM and how it led to now over 35,000 cases solved.

Bringing up current issues in Harris County he focused on bonds, and specifically non-misdemeanor bonds [that is felony bonds]. Since 2018 offenders out on bond have doubled. Bonds are issued for those charged with capital murder, which is previously unheard of, with 110 currently out on bond and at least 4 additional murders suspected by those out on a capital murder bond. He also discussed other violent offenses, with suspects being released on personal recognizance (PR Bond). He noted that many are out on more than one felony bond.

He counted specifically over 150 murders where the suspect was already out on multiple felony bonds or a felony personal recognizance bond. He presented stories on Rosalee Cook, Meyerland; Patrick Aikens, Post Oak; Stanley Iskevich, SW Houston; Sgt. Kayla Sullivan, Nassau Bay; Martha Medina, Uvalde Rd.

Mr. Kahan then transitioned to solutions. He discussed new legislation including the restriction of PR Bond for violent offenses. He also discussed the failed constitutional amendment to give judges more discretion on bond. He discussed his belief in crime being issue #1, #2, etc., with an expected emphasis on judicial elections in November. He concluded with comments on voter engagement, especially for younger voters. He asked younger voters to identify their state house representative and state senator. A common response was [US House Rep.] Lizzie Fletcher and [US Senator] Ted Cruz.

Asked about recent bond reform measures, he indicated it is more a “feel good means” and will likely have only a limited, case specific effect.

A resident commented on the judges’ elections in November and noted that some judges are banding together. They also commented on a list of judges released by HPD in 2020. Mr. Kahan suggested watching for a response from the Houston Police Officer’s Union. He also expressed a concern on why public safety has become so partisan.

Asked about one of the incidents which occurred in SN17 and why they were attacked, he noted the record indicated it was a “random.”

Asked about a judge’s comment that they “didn’t have a choice” Mr. Kahan noted that only capital murder permits no bond. Also, he noted that every judge operates their own court and that in some cases they really do not have discretion. Asked how suspects get or do not get PR bond, what is it based on? He commented that is based on the premise of innocent until proven guilty. Asked if the judges are aware, he noted that they are. PR bonds are coming less often though he expressed some cynicism to judges’ focus on elections. Asked how COVID has impacted bonds, he noted that this started well before COVID; that some might be explained by Hurricane Harvey. This peaked in October 2019 and has been improving, slowly.

V. Community Leaders

- a. **Katie Shelton – Office of Councilwoman Mary Nan Huffman, City of Houston, District G** – started her discussion with Kendall Library. Since last meeting the schedule has not fallen any further. The interior should finish in July, exterior in August, with an expected opening in the Fall. They are planning a special event with shuttle service due to the limited parking.

Next she discussed Kirkwood. Phase 1, with the final walkthrough and code check, is weeks away from completion. Phase 2 [Briar Forest to Westheimer] should start by winter. With less front facing homes it should go a bit faster. Phase 3 is currently postponed with a maybe in 2025.

She also discussed summer movie nights at various city parks in District G. Also discussed were license plate cameras where the city is looking to waive permit fees if

installed in locations recommended by HPD.

Asked how long those waivers will go for, she noted the process is still being worked on. She also noted that several council districts are using discretionary funds to buy and install them. Asked about a company contact, "Flock Safety." There are 80 private entities (20 in district G) that have already acquired and installed cameras. She noted that private organizations still need a permit as they are installed in the right-of-way.

Asked about weeds in road and adopted esplanades she noted the city maintains over 5000 acres of right-of-way. A delegate responded that there is no signage, but if it looks nice it is most likely adopted.

b. **Na'Shon Edwards – Office of Councilwoman Tiffany Thomas, City of Houston, District F**

– noted that Ms. Thomas will have 4 interns over the summer. He reminded everyone to use HTX Collects to monitor updates and delays to the Solid Waste Management schedule. He also reminded everyone to first submit requests to 3-1-1 prior to escalating them through Ms. Thomas's office.

For the recently passed budget, he noted funding for more speed cushions, restriping, and sidewalk repair through the CDF [Discretionary Fund]. As city council was in budgetary session no action has yet been taken on parking, but Ms. Thomas is looking to that in the upcoming policy session.

District F is conducting a street lighting survey. He noted that it costs \$100 to replace a light pole. Through METRO, District F will be targeting 15 bus shelters for refurbishment and District F will be installing 40 Flock cameras.

Mr. Edwards discussed upcoming meetings, including a June Public Safety Forum, a bootcamp style event in Woodchase, and the August Career Fair.

Asked about the most recent CIP meeting, he noted that it had just concluded a few weeks prior.

- c. **Kent Clingerman – Office of Comm. Jack Cagle, Harris County, Pct. 4** – Discussed various movie nights scheduled thought precinct 4. He also discussed meetings with Ms. Thomas's office to discuss capital expenditure opportunities on city roads in District F. Comm. Cagle is also providing discretionary funds for Constable Heap, Const. Pct. 5, for additional officers.
- d. Officer Memorial at the Weekley Community Center off Greenhouse and Clay.
- e. **Rene Ruiz – City of Houston, Department of Neighborhoods** – commented on hurricane preparedness pamphlets noting that they are not just for hurricanes. He also advertised the city's website houstonoem.org . Asked about weed control he noted that the city

sprays weed control on city streets. Asked about alternative products, he was aware it has been discussed previously, but had no details on the result of that discussion.

- f. **Margaret Dunlap – METRO** – announced a feedback opportunity with prizes available. She commented on the partnership with District F for shelter refurbishment to bring shelters up to ADA standards, commented specifically on shelters along Richmond Ave. and some on Westheimer.

Asked about shelters in Westchase she noted that was a project with the Westchase Commercial District and will include specific branding elements. Asked about any specific differences she noted that the new design is to encourage sitting and not laying or sleeping.

- g. **Crime Update** – Jeff Baker provided a brief of HPD’s report. Murders and robberies are up, but on Westside it is flat. Month on Month the numbers are generally unchanged, but they are significantly improved Year-on-Year. About a third of the aggravated assaults involve family members.

HPD recommends to get your catalytic converter etched and possibly covered by a protective plate. Do not approach criminals even if you are armed, as all lookouts may not be readily apparent. There is usually more than one suspect also. He concluded remarking that there are a lot of officers retiring or moving on.

- h. **Bryan Dotson – Constituent** – Gave a short summary of FLAP, the Federal Lands Access Program, applying for Federal lands access money. It used to be an 80% partial match, but is now a 100% match of \$9M-\$11M for expansion of the trail facilities within Bush Park. The council took up his recommendation and voted to support it.

VI. Candidate Forum

The following candidates briefly spoke before the Superneighborhood council

- a. Erika Ramirez (D), Harris County Criminal Court #8, Misdemeanor Court

VII. Committee Reports.

- a. Nick Kornuta – Chair of Flooding – spoke briefly on the drainage tunnel initiative.
- b. The meeting minutes for April and May were accepted.

VIII. Old Business

None

IX. New Business

- a. Bryan Dotson – spoke briefly on grant possibilities for trail access to Barker and Addicks Reservoirs. He made an offer of assistance for acquiring grants, noting the deadline for most grants will be the end of October.

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

NEXT MEETING – Sept 14, 7:00 PM, Eagle's Trace