

ELDRIDGE/WESTOAKS SUPERNEIGHBORHOOD

Minutes

March 13, 2013

The meeting of the Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council was called to order by President Doug Parrish.

I. Speakers

A. Tony Daniel, General Manager of the West Oaks Mall, spoke about the changes being made to the mall and anticipated changes. Mr. Daniel has been the general manager since 1985. The Edwards Theatre is currently open, having opened in August 2012. It has reportedly pulled 10-12% of the business from the movie theatre at Memorial City Mall. Edwards's Theatres are the premiere theatre. More people in Houston go to movies than anywhere else in the country.

Currently, most of the West Oaks Mall's tenants have experienced a 25-50% increase in business from January 2012. Toby Keith's Bar & Grill will be opening in April 2013. It will have live music three times a week. A technical school is also going into the top floor of the old JC Penney store in the mall and will bring approximately 350-700 students to the area per month. The mall is, overall, 84-85% occupied.

Mr. Daniel stated that the mall has private, contract security and, although there has been some shoplifting, overall crime at the mall is down. In fact, he cannot recall when the last time a motor vehicle was stolen from the mall. There have been no crime issues when the movies let out. The mall itself does not have cameras on the premises though some of the individual stores do. Some of the individual stores establish their own policies on security, etc. The mall is keen on visibility of security.

Overall, the mall is aiming to be a mid-range type of mall that is clean, safe and is focusing on the restaurant/entertainment aspect. In approximately 1 to 1 ½ years the mall should have implemented most of its current plans.

The HPD trespass affidavit was explained, noting it allows HPD to enter a property owner's premises and in the owner's absence, to enforce all laws regarding the property and to ask all individuals on the premises who are not patrons to leave.

Mr. Daniel noted that there was one homeless individual removed from the Highway 6/Westheimer area who the police said had \$7000 on him when he was removed from the property. Panhandlers can make a lot of money from begging. John Lozano noted that panhandlers at Wal-Mart (and Westpark) were getting very aggressive.

Dianne Williams asked Mr. Daniel if the mall was willing to accommodate/support local organizations. Mr. Daniel said that if the mall has available space, it is willing to allow use of the facilities, but generally, if the mall can use the space to bring in revenue, it will do that.

II. City Representatives

A. Oliver Pennington, District G councilmember, spoke. The City of Houston is considering amending Chapter 42 to allow vacant lots to subdivide to build patio homes as opposed to apartment buildings, and several other changes. The proposed amendments – and all proposed ordinances – can be viewed at the City’s website. The City is also considering strengthening rules regarding sexually oriented businesses citywide.

Mr. Pennington noted that District G’s CIP meeting had taken place. He noted that CIPs are probably less important now with Rebuild Houston in place, but noted it is still important to request street replacements through 311 and to provide input regarding flooding to increase and advise regarding priority of issues.

The City is also working on getting hearings for those experiencing excessive increases in water bills. Currently, there is not much recourse for residents receiving excessive bills. The City is also looking at ordinances regarding payday loans, mobile food units, and Chapter 42 amendments. The backlog of untested rape kits will be addressed.

There is proposed development in the Westchase area involving \$380,000 in reimbursements for developers if ad valorem taxes increase. Trails are also being developed. Mr. Pennington has proposed that the City look at the idea of being “neighborhood friendly” certified much like the LEED certifications available. There is a 311 app for phones that you can get from Google play market or other app store.

B. Nelson Espitia stated that there is free document shredding occurring once a month at various HPD substations throughout the City. The next one is on Saturday, March 23, from 8 am to 12 pm at the HPD South Gessner Station, 8605 Westplace Dr. The next one at the Westside Command Station will probably be in June or July.

He suggested registering on Citizens Net wherein you can receive emails periodically from the Mayor’s office on topics of interest to you and your neighborhood. You can do so by going to www.houstontx.gov, scroll down to CitizensNet box and click on “register now.”

Houston Money Week is from 4/6/13 to 4/13/13 and involves information regarding banking and other practical money issues. Go to www.houstonmoneyweek.org for more information. You can also visit Houston Money Week on Facebook or on Twitter.

There is free tax preparation provided by Neighborhood Tax Centers to families earning up to \$50,000 and single individuals earning up to \$30,000. It is for walk-ins only (no appointments). Call 211 or FreeTaxCenters.org for the various locations throughout the City.

311 is available 24/7.

III. Committee Reports

Beautification – Nothing new except two new areas of graffiti. There is a new homeless camp also.

SNAP – Doug Parrish stated that roads are getting fixed. The SN submitted 2 requests at the CIP meeting, the rebuild of Eldridge and of Dairy Ashford. The latter is getting panel replacements. At the CIP meeting, the Energy Corridor suggested rebuilding Eldridge and widening it to 6 lanes from Memorial to

Westheimer and possibly further. At the District F CIP, it was stated that the west side is getting a hike and bike trail from Eldridge to Westpark.

Mr. Pennington noted that there may be funds available to do work on Memorial, between Kirkwood and Eldridge (removing medians) through the state, specifically TIP.

Flooding – Billie Long stated that, by 2020, existing bonds will be paid down sufficiently to see a greater increase in money for Rebuild Houston projects. He noted that the committee appointed (4 appointed by Mayor, 5 appointed by City Council) to oversee Rebuild Houston questioned their effectiveness because Public Works apparently does what they want anyways. Mr. Pennington stated that a new resolution might be needed regarding the committee.

Homeless – Jack O’Connor stated that Kathy Washburn (with Westside Homeless Partnership) will be speaking at the SN meeting. The committee is contemplating signs regarding panhandlers. Trespass affidavits are being signed and will be presented to Captain Skillern (HPD). The committee’s focus with the affidavits is on the panhandlers, to pressure HPD to enforce laws. The committee is thinking of re-sending the letters that went out to HOAs. It does not seem that all HOAs have forwarded to the residents. Doug Parrish agreed the letters could be resent.

Mr. Espitia will suggest to the Mayor’s Assistance Office that its homeless representative come and speak to the SN after the April meeting.

IV. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn. The next SN meeting will take place Wednesday, April 10 at 7 PM at the AC classroom of the Eagle Trace Retirement Community.