

Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council Meeting
FINAL MINUTES
April 14, 2010

The meeting of the Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council (EWOSNC) (17) was called to order at 7:04 pm, April 14, 2010 by President Sandie Meyers. A quorum was present, with twelve stakeholder delegate representatives attending.

I. Speaker.

John Nunez, Transportation Manager, Energy Corridor District (ECD), spoke about the new bus service, 75 Energy Corridor Connector, which runs (roughly) along Eldridge from Westheimer to Memorial, up to Westlake, Grisby, Addicks Park and Ride, and I-10, Monday through Friday from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. The ECD received federal grant money to fund the new connector route and chose Metro to provide the service, due to greater connectivity and efficiency. The federal grant is for a period of 3 years. Although Metro runs the service, it is administered by ECD. The idea for the new connector service came from the Energy Corridor employers. The employers believed that the area was not well serviced by Metro and there was a need for transportation to and from the Addicks Park and Ride. Mr. Nunez stated that the businesses within the Energy Corridor collectively comprise the third largest employer in the area, having approximately 75,000 employees, and it is predicted that by 2035, over 1.8 million people will be residing in the west Houston area. These numbers present mobility challenges and ECD anticipates the new connector service will help in addressing these challenges. ECD is also involved with a Unified Transportation Plan, which addresses mobility issues through a number of initiatives, including street widening and efficient entrance/exit of business parking lots, as well as walking/jogging trails and alternative methods of transportation, such as buses, bikes, and van pooling. Mr. Nunez noted that all Metro buses are equipped with bike racks. One-third of the connector service riders live along the route and use the Park and Ride. Currently, there are 200 daily riders, which Nunez stated is a very good start, and ECD is hopeful that ridership will increase to 1000 within the next 2 to 3 years. The frequency of the new connector service is similar to the downtown rail, with buses coming every 10 minutes from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, and every 15 minutes from 6:00 am to 9:00 am and from 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm. In response to questions, Mr. Nunez stated that the federal grant is for approximately \$5 million over a period of years and ECD gets reimbursed for 50% of its administrative costs and 80% of its capital costs. Metro is contributing up to \$1.8 million. There are 7 buses on the connector route at any one time, and 30% of the riders come into west Houston from downtown. The full fare of the connector service is \$1.75, but if you are using it in conjunction with other Metro buses (i.e., as a connector), there is no fare. A delegate suggested that ECD partner with the Target at Eldridge and Westheimer to see if riders can use the Target parking lot to park their car, then use the connector service to get to the Addicks Park and Ride or to the Energy Corridor area.

II. Old Business.

A. Ms. Meyers introduced the guests attending from the City of Houston: Mark Kirschke, Director of Communications in Councilmember Pennington's office and City of Houston Super Neighborhood Liaison Elaine Gaskamp. Mr. Kirschke noted that the City's library hours are being cut back in an effort to save money and some libraries will be closed on Saturdays. This was a decision made by Dr. Larson and her staff. Councilmember Pennington's office sees more value to citizens if the libraries are open on Saturday and closed on Mondays, and Mr. Kirschke suggested going to the City's website to get more information and/or to express an opinion on the new hours.

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

C. Committee Reports.

(1) Security Committee: Billie Long gave a report on the Security Committee on behalf of Bob Sumicek, Chair, stating there was a meeting hosted by the Briar Forest Super Neighborhood (SN 16) on March 25, where Captain Lentschke (HPD's Westside station commander) spoke about staffing, stating it was in a critical stage due to retirements and a lack of new recruits, and spoke about gang activity, particularly the development of a new gang "group" called Hou-Stone, which is a combination of bloods and crypts (their "symbol" is in the shape of an Astro's star). Captain Lentschke also spoke about increasing volunteer efforts of citizens. Mr. Long also stated that it is unclear if Officer Bressler or Sargent Ramos could attend our SN meeting due to training and scheduling conflicts, and stated that there is a P.I.P. meeting once a month on Thursday evenings at the Westside Command Station. The P.I.P. meeting begins at 7:00 pm and crime stats are available at these meetings. The beats within our SN are: 20G60, 20G70, and 20G80.

(2) SNAP/Infrastructure Committee: Judy Thompson, Chair, gave a report on the SNAP/Infrastructure Committee. She began by going over the status of the 311 and SNAP items submitted, stating a street sign was approved, 4 traffic signals requested are pending, but turn lanes were denied because they are within TxDot purview. Ms. Thompson asked Mr. Kirschke if contacting Hubert Vo was a viable approach in that case. Ms. Thompson also reported that tree planting for Briar Forest was approved for 2012, repair of the bridge in Briar Village is a CIP issue, overlay of Dairy Ashford is pending, the CIP bike lanes requested are pending, and the safe sidewalk requests near Daly Elementary were approved. The recycling center requested is a pending issue and the right-hand turn

lane from Eldridge to Memorial (heading north on Eldridge) will be done within a year. The overlay on Dairy Ashford is intended only as a temporary solution – it will need repaving.

A delegate, Richard Rottman, raised concerns about a couple of “eyesores” on Dairy Ashford. One is an abandoned building north of the strip center at Whittington and Dairy Ashford. Mr. Rottman asked Mr. Kirschke if the City can do anything to make the owner maintain the building. Mr. Kirschke referred Mr. Rottman to Neighborhood Protection. Mr. Kirschke also stated that the City investigated the building on March 23 and a violation letter was sent. The owner will have 30 days to make repairs or he will be fined. Mr. Kirschke will follow-up with the inspector. Mr. Rottman stated it was a high crime area and that is why tenants are leaving the strip center at Whittington and Dairy Ashford. Mr. Rottman also referred to the linear forest – the esplanades on Dairy Ashford that are being reforested. Mr. Rottman stated that a non-profit organization, Trees for Houston, is willing to replant and maintain the esplanades. Mr. Rottman will get with Greg Daniell, the Briar Forest SN president, to address the situation and coordinate efforts with the City.

(3) Beautification: No report. (No chairperson.)

(4) Flooding and Drainage: Billie Long, Chair, stated he attended a presentation and the City is working on the flooding problem. The City is using a GIS approach and through a study, has concluded that flooding along the bayous is more frequent. Mr. Long also met with Bill Hopkins, who has conducted a study of how the April 28, 2009 flooding event affected west Houston, concluding that Barkers Cypress reservoir is not being used effectively.

(5) Legislative Committee: Doug Parrish, Chair, stated there’s a new Mayor and a new police chief and he will be keeping an eye on developments to report.

(6) Speakers Committee: Maria Galitos, Chair, stated that she is working on getting a new location for our meetings and has been in contact with the new Kendall Library.

D. Update on Website.

Ms. Diane Guillerman gave an update on the SN’s website, stating that the company working on the website – for free – has been very busy with customers and they are still working on it. She is hoping to have something more at a later date. In the interim, the delegates should provide to her the information they want on the website regarding their neighborhoods or organizations.

E. Update on Mission Statement.

There was no update on the EWOSNC mission statement because Delegate A. Turner was not present.

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

Ms. Guillerman stated that she had attended the monthly meeting of the west Houston SNs with Councilmember Pennington’s office and reported that the substation in the old Kendall library building is not going to happen due to budget issues. Mr. Kirschke stated the reason was that Memorial area residents rallied against a substation, particularly the realtors and the moms’ clubs. Ms. Guillerman also reported that the Westchase District is interested in establishing a recycling center and she will keep the delegates posted on that effort.

The meeting was adjourned. The next EWOSNC meets on May 12, 2010 at 7:00 pm in the West Briar Middle School Library.