

Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council Meeting
FINAL MINUTES
May 12, 2010

The meeting of the Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council (EWOSNC) (17) was called to order at 7:10 pm, May 12, 2010 by Vice President Diane Guillerman. A quorum was present, with ten stakeholder delegate representatives attending.

I. Speaker.

Council Member Stephen Costello spoke about RENEW HOUSTON, a charter amendment campaign to create a dedicated pay-as-you-go funding source to repair Houston's streets and drainage. CM Costello is working with RENEW HOUSTON to inform the City's residents about the initiative. CM Costello noted his experience with the issue of drainage and flooding, both as an engineer and as chairman of the City's drainage and flooding committee. According to CM Costello, over 60% of the City's infrastructure is beyond its useful life and there are numerous projects and departments vying for very limited City funds. Currently, streets and drainage are funded through the general fund, which also funds public safety (65%) and parks and recreation, public works, and others. All departments other than public safety compete for the remaining 35%. RENEW HOUSTON is asking the City's residents to decide if Houston should have dedicated funding for its streets and drainage. The funding proposed would be through several mechanisms: (1) a monthly fee (the suggested amount is \$5.00 for a standard lot size); (2) a developer fee; and (3) moving away from bond funding by implementing a "pay-as-you-go" program, in which funds are recaptured to pay for improvements rather than interest payments on debt. The proposal is to establish the pay-as-you-go funding for a period of twenty years with a possible extension for twenty years. Unlike Mayor Brown's storm sewer fee, RENEW HOUSTON is making sure that Houston's residents are involved in this decision by seeking this funding through a charter amendment. CM Costello noted that economic development will not be pursued in an area or city prone to flooding, and the City cannot densify given the current infrastructure, so we need to address flooding and drainage if Houston is to grow economically. Also, flooding poses serious public safety issues because fire trucks, police cars, and ambulances cannot drive through water higher than 18 inches. There are two phases to RENEW HOUSTON: (1) the petition, which essentially says "yes, we want it on the November ballot," – RENEW HOUSTON is trying to get 50,000 signatures (though the legal requirement is approximately 22,000) by June 30, 2010; and (2) voting in favor of the charter amendment on the November 2, 2010 ballot. Once RENEW HOUSTON has acquired the needed signatures on the petition, it will begin a public information program. All signatures must be acquired by June 30, 2010.

In response to questions, CM Costello stated that the developer impact fee has not been determined yet. He also stated that it is anticipated it will take several years before the funds collected can go towards improvements rather than debt servicing and a flooding "needs assessment" is currently underway, but over the course of the program, every area of the City should be addressed. He noted that as Houston's tax base grows so will the revenue collected. One resident stated that his neighborhood had "private" streets and questioned if that neighborhood would see any benefits from the funding. CM Costello stated he would look into how that scenario will be handled. You can contact www.renewhouston.org for more information or you can call 713-528-3335.

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, reported that HPD's Lt. David Fausek stated it is very difficult to have an officer present at all of our meetings due to budget cuts. Based on crime statistics for February and March, personal crimes against individuals are down, as are car thefts, but burglaries of businesses are up. Mr. Sumicek also reported that the incident in the news about the Westside Gang Task Force and a young black male is being investigated by HPD, but other task force members continue to pursue gang activities. Mr. Sumicek is still available to meet with HOAs to discuss establishing Citizens on Patrol programs in SN neighborhoods.

(2) SNAP/Infrastructure Committee: No report (Chair absent).

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

(4) Flooding and Drainage: Billie Long, Chair, stated there was not much to report given CM Costello's discussion of RENEW HOUSTON. Mr. Long will continue to attend meetings and inform the SN of issues/events.

(5) Legislative Committee: No report (Chair absent).

(6) Speakers Committee: Maria Galitos, Chair, stated that she is working on getting the Harris County Attorney to speak at the June meeting and she will contact Councilmember Bradford regarding speaking to the SN.

D. Update on Mission Statement.

Ms. Guillerman stated that she has been unable to get in touch with HISD SN representative Alaina Turner and she requested a volunteer to continue working on the mission statement for the SN. After a brief discussion of the purpose of the mission statement, Ms. Lamb, the John Paul II SN representative, volunteered to continue to work on the mission statement.

E. Update on Website.

Ms. Diane Guillerman gave an update on the SN's website, stating that the website is making progress. She requested contact info for Ashford West HOA, and the representative for that neighborhood verified the correct website for Ashford West HOA.

III. New Business

A. 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. Councilmembers Bradford and Costello were also at the meeting and both agreed that SNs are the service model of the future, allowing for a greater voice for citizens and a more effective way to provide City services. CM Bradford stated that HPD is looking at assigning an officer to be the liaison to all SNs in the City. The officer would be accessible to the SNs, getting to know them and their issues. Another issue discussed at the meeting was the HPD storefront in the Briar Forest/Wilcrest area. It is still being looked at. CM Bradford stated he would like to see HPD increase patrols for the summer and offer more after school programs. He suggested a small reduction in the cadet class size (or eliminating one cadet class) as a method of paying for increased patrols and programs. City Council approved transitioning HPD's radio signal to that used by other area law enforcement personnel, to increase the efficiency of HPD's communications with other law enforcement personnel. CM Bradford also stated that he believes HPD could be more effective if it were neighborhood based rather than call-driven. A member of CM Pennington's staff stated he contacted HPD about the panhandlers (discussed at the last meeting) and was told that citizens should contact HPD's non-emergency phone number for panhandler complaints, and HPD stated they will respond within 24-48 hours.

B. Mr. Richard Rottman questioned what was going on with the esplanades on Dairy Ashford. He reported new signs along the esplanades and wondered how it impacted his contacts with Trees for Houston, an issue discussed at the previous meeting. Ms. Guillerman responded that she had contacted Mark Kirschke, with CM Pennington's office, regarding Rottman's concern and she will let him know as soon as she hears something from Mr. Kirschke.

C. Elaine Gaskamp, the City's SN liaison, reported that the Westchase District's planned Farmers' Market is scheduled to be a daytime market and, if anyone is interested, the Westchase District's meetings may be an opportunity to express our feelings on the issue. She also noted that after December, email for City employees with a cityofhouston.tx address will get bounced back. The City's new email address contains houstontx.gov.

D. New Officers. Ms. Guillerman reminded the delegates that the SN needed a new president in light of Sandie Meyers stepping down. Ms. Meyers resigned the position due to personal and professional commitments. Ms. Guillerman noted that under the bylaws, a special election is to be held for any officer position that becomes vacant. A motion was made (and seconded) for Ms. Guillerman to take the vacant seat of president and a special election would be conducted at the next meeting for the seat of Vice President. All the delegates in attendance agreed. Bob Sumicek stated he would like to be considered for the VP position. Ms. Guillerman stated she will also send an email out to all delegates advising of the special election for VP at the June meeting.

The meeting was adjourned. The next EWOSNC meets on June 9, 2010 at 7:00 pm in the new KENDALL LIBRARY. Go to the Park District's meeting room in the Kendall Library.