

## **ELDRIDGE/WESTOAKS SUPERNEIGHBORHOOD**

### **Corrected Final Minutes**

**October 13, 2010**

The meeting of the Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council was called to order at 7: 05 PM by President Diane Guillerman.

#### **I. Speakers**

Hubert Vo, State Representative and Mr. Jack O'Connor were introduced as guest speakers. They are both running for District 149 State Representative. Mr. Vo is the incumbent. Mr. O'Connor spoke first. Jack O'Connor has lived in Houston for many years. His business career tells him how manufacturing jobs have declined. Jobs are way down in the State of Texas. He is going to be an advocate to bring work back from outsourcing. Some businesses are currently budgeting for 60% outsourcing. An additional interest of his is public safety. A neighbor's door was kicked in on a house close to him. We are having crime problems we need to address. Drug cartels have been infiltrating for a number of years. Property taxes in Houston are too high. The City may have to lower taxes so people can stay in their homes. He sees Homeowners Associations struggling. A private entity is looking at installing cameras in various places, but none are proposed West of Eldridge. He said he is very knowledgeable about business and willing to learn. He can bring conservative fiscal accountability to State government.

Hubert Vo has served on Alief's super neighborhood. He came to America after the fall of Saigon with only the clothes on his back and no knowledge of the English language. The first 2 years he went to work to support his family and then went back to the University of Houston to earn a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He has served District 149 for the past 6 yrs. He believes in the importance of education. He met his future wife at the University of Houston. He believes we must educate children to become productive citizens. There are challenges in funding education, which must be equitable. He believes in funding, plus accountability, and early intervention for failing schools. He introduced legislation to offer career and technical courses so students have options. In higher education, he wants to make sure that when a student transfers from school to another, the course credits transfer too, so that parents are not wasting money. He is interested in tier 1 status for universities in order to retain better students, grow the economy, and retain the best teachers. He is also interested in public safety. He has served on the jurisprudence and public safety commissions. He has worked with small businesses to lower property and franchise taxes. He favors freezing homestead exemptions, freezing the tax rate for seniors, and bringing more businesses into the area. As a State legislator, he brought funds into the district for hike and bike trails. He is supported by the Police Association. He works across party lines to help constituents.

Mr. O'Connor was asked, if he cuts property taxes, what programs will he cut. He stated, this year none, but as budgets increase cost cutting can happen. We need to go back to zero budgeting. People are concerned about taxes and public safety. Rep Vo cited a program in Georgia where high school graduates could attend state school for free if they maintain a B average. He has talked to businesses

about how to get students prepared several years down the road, he is working on it. Another question was how do you keep the universities from raising the tuition every year? Representative Vo stated it is very difficult to change, but we want to remain in the affordable range for our kids. Mr. O'Connor wants to pay as you go in higher education. He does not want to be like New York and California who are lacking funds. He stated that our State has spent a lot of money on education. Representative Vo stated he has heard complaints from parents about the price of textbooks, and he introduced a bill requiring schools to notify students that many textbooks are available online for 1/3 the price.

A question was asked about the red light cameras. The questioner sees the safety issue, but stated that he had to prove to the judge he was not at fault, rather than vice versa. The judge would not hear the case without a fee. Are the candidates for or against the red light cameras? Representative Vo said it was an issue of intrusion but also accountability. Mr. O'Connor said he had not made up his mind yet but recognized that much of the data on the use of cameras was, so far, positive. He also mentioned he would like to see the cameras' placement extended east of Eldridge, and he shared the right of privacy with many, but feels that community safety is also critical.

## **II. Guest Introductions**

Oliver Pennington said city council recently voted on a historic district ordinance, changing the rules to make them more strict. Districts will probably be gerrymandered so some can stay in or out of a preservation district. The Houston city charter requires a balanced budget and Mayor Parker is working on structuring things to save money. For example, council voted on a fuel department, which will save the City 12 million dollars a year. Crime prevention is also a top priority. The City has been talking to the Houston Police Department to foster more cooperation between them and neighborhood security services. They are trying to increase the capacity of HPD by using surveillance cameras. Councilmember Pennington noted that schools where parents take an interest are generally schools with less problems. In the Heights, as young families have moved in, the schools have improved. In the area of economic development, there is a new sustainability director. He wants to brand Houston as a technology center by talking to businesses and working with universities.

Doug Parrish spoke about the traffic management committee for Briar Hills. It is an issue that is better handled thru the City. Oliver Pennington said our Super Neighborhood and 2 others asked for re-doing of Dairy Ashford and money has been spent by the City's engineering department to study it, so it is being pursued. Also there is a Memorial Drive/Eldridge intersection project that needs federal funds. He is working on that.

## **III. Old Business**

**A. Approve Minutes**—The minutes from the previous meeting were approved by the council.

### **B. Committee Reports**

**1. Security** (Bob Sumicek)—absent, no report

**2. SNAP/Infrastructure** (Judy Thompson) –Dairy Ashford esplanades have been weeded and mulched. When driving northbound on Hwy 6, the right turn only lane into Eagles Trace should be completed within a couple of weeks.

**3. Beautification** (Virgie Manning) -- There are still graffiti issues and grass cutting issues. The billboard on Westheimer and Synott needs to be repaired. Homeless people live behind Burlington Coat Factory. For problems with electrical poles, call Centerpoint Energy. Ms Guillerman asked if there are any beautification projects to be done by the committee. A possibility is cleaning up the area West of Dairy Ashford on Westheimer. The committee would like help with the hike and bike trail clean up.

**4. Flooding and Drainage** (Billie Long)—absent, no report

**5. Legislative** (Doug Parrish) – no new report

**6. Speakers Committee** (Maria Galiotos) –absent, no report

#### **IV. New Business**

##### **A. Announcements**

Ozone standards were met last year, but the standards have been raised and Houston is out of compliance again. Asking homeowners to mow their lawns less frequently may help with that.

##### **B. Discussion by the SN Council**

The SN Council discussed the esplanades on Dairy Ashford. Ms. Guillerman asked the Council how – collectively – the SN wanted to address it. It has been an ongoing issue. The City has tried to keep up with cutting and mulching, but the trees are planted too close together, which makes the esplanades look unattractive and facilitates the gathering of debris in the esplanades. Moving the trees is an expense the City does not want to take on. A delegate whose neighborhood abuts Dairy Ashford has tried to address it. The Briar Forest Super Neighborhood has been more vocal about this, and the City appears to be willing to do what the BF SN has requested – weeding and mulching. It was noted that when the re-surfacing of Dairy Ashford takes place, there may be funds available for the esplanades to be re-configured or landscaped so that the trees are no longer an issue. The SN Council decided to take a “wait and see” approach to the esplanades given that the resurfacing of Dairy ashford may change the issue entirely. Ms. Guillerman stated that the Super Neighborhood website has information about the Dairy Ashford resurfacing and also regarding the Operation Westside camera initiative.

##### **C. Adjournment**

A motion was made to adjourn at 8:45 PM. The next meeting will take place Wednesday, Nov 10 at 7 PM at the AC classroom of the Eagle Trace Retirement Community.