

## **Minutes from the meeting of September 9, 2015 – Super Neighborhood 17**

I. Call to Order at 7:09 p.m.

II. Speakers:

A. Bill Frazer – Mr. Frazer introduced himself to the SN. He is running for Houston City Controller. He stated he is the only candidate for City Controller that is a CPA. He stated the City is facing serious financial issues and as Controller he will work to alleviate those issues. He informed the SN regarding his background in financial management. Mr. Frazer also answered questions concerning his plans to address the issues facing the City, such as pension obligations and ensuring that the drainage fee is spent as voters intended it. For more information on Mr. Frazer, go to [www.FrazerForController.com](http://www.FrazerForController.com). Or [Bill@FrazerforController.com](mailto:Bill@FrazerforController.com).

B. Jim Murphy, Texas State Representative - Mr. Murphy gave the SN a legislative update/summary. He noted that the Texas Legislature meets only every other year and the Texas Constitution promotes limited government; the legislature is only required to pass a budget during the legislative session and is also required to have a balanced budget. Texas is the only state to have “Rainy Day Fund” (it takes a 2/3rds vote to spend from the fund). He introduced a bill to give local control to the City of Houston regarding the City employees’ pensions. The bill did not pass.

He stated the legislature put additional money into education: There are approximately 5 million children in K through 12 in Texas. The additional funds go into the classroom, not into buildings; there is also an additional \$3 billion in higher education – to prepare our students for real-world jobs. [A SN member asked if any of that would go towards Houston Community College and Mr. Murphy responded it would not because HCC has taxing authority.] One of the spending programs will ensure that students doing work-study programs are actually working in corporate environments rather than in the schools.

He stated the legislature addressed roads: there will be a constitutional amendment on the ballot (Proposition 7) to dedicate a portion of sales taxes on cars and rental of cars to building new, free roads. The legislature also changed DPS funding so that all of the gas tax will go to DPS.

Also, sales taxes from sporting goods will go towards parks. The legislature also provided tax cuts to businesses across the board by cutting the margin tax and did away with licensing taxes. There will also be a proposition on the ballot in November proposing one-half billion in tax cuts to homeowners. Mr. Murphy voted for all propositions.

His District, District 133, is one of the top voting districts in Texas. If you would like to get a copy of his newsletter, email him at [jim.murphy@house.state.tx.us](mailto:jim.murphy@house.state.tx.us).

Currently, in between legislative sessions, he and other legislators are attending hearings as part of their work on committees. He is examining Texas Department of Corrections. These hearings are where the major bills are crafted.

Members of the SN asked various questions:

- (1) One member asked if an impact study had been done for the apartments at Highway 6 and I-10; a City representative stated that all projects like that require an impact analysis.
- (2) Another member asked if there were any plans regarding transit along Westheimer; Mr. Murphy said the State and METRO have been working together on plans for Westheimer but because METRO has been so busy with the new routes, etc. that there has been little progress; at this point, the only thing is that Westheimer should be something more than a regular bus line; State ownership of Westheimer ends at 610 (so, plans will probably extend only to Galleria area).
- (3) Will the State ever relinquish control over pensions? Only 12 plans are controlled by the State Legislature; right now, only fire fighters are unwilling to negotiate- the police officers and City employees have taken cuts and the pensions are sustainable long-term, but problems arise regarding short-term.

Mr. Murphy ended his presentation by stating that he promises honesty and hard work, but he can't promise results because it's a dynamic process. He has proposed a bill that if an individual commits a certain number of misdemeanors, that individual must go to a state facility. Another bill regarding aerial trespass has been proposed regarding air space (under 50 feet) around sensitive facilities. He only hears from about 1% of his constituents.

### III. Announcements: District G, F, & City:

#### A. District G Representative, Oliver Pennington's office –

Councilmember Pennington's office ("Dist. G") has set aside \$50,000 to the SN's SNAP requests (all districts are getting money to address SNAP issues).

Dist. G has been working on the homeless/panhandler issue; as of the August 31, 2015 count of these individuals "military homelessness" in District G is cured and the "chronic homeless" is almost cured. Regarding "episodic homelessness," Dist. G is committing money to build more facilities, but this is just getting off the ground. Eventually, anyone who truly wants to be off the street will be. Mayor Parker is examining passing an ordinance that will address panhandling. The homelessness initiative resulted in some arrests, citations and referrals to facilities. J. Lozano stated that Maddie Provost has been incredibly helpful in the homeless initiative. Some of the thigs addressed: a family living behind Walgreen's at Westheimer and Highway 6; mattresses along the Academy building were cleaned up; there were a number of individuals living in the old "Payless" building and they were moved out – the building is being refurbished to become a Popeye's.

The Army Corp. of Engineers has given \$72 million to rehabilitate dams; the projects are being determined on the basis of risk and devastation. Work will begin

soon and will end in summer of 2019. Technology will handle monitoring the impact of the work on traffic.

METRO's new routes/service seems to be working quite well. There is an app that can show you how to get to any location. Also, there is now Sunday service. For every bus, 44 cars are taken off the road.

The City is facing budget challenges; it has no more assets to sell and layoffs of City employees and decreases in services will occur. For this reason, it is important to know who you're voting for in the upcoming mayoral election. The first cuts will probably be to libraries and parks.

Because EBay and Craigslist crimes are increasing, HPD will allow individuals to exchange items in their parking lots.

J. Lozano noted that the SN's (successful) homeless committee is going to assist other SNs in developing homeless committees.

District F is also being canvassed regarding homeless and the results are expected soon.

Mayor Parker has tasked the City's legal department to look into prohibiting panhandling. They are waiting a Supreme Court case.

There was additional discussion regarding pension issues. It was noted that none of the mayoral candidates have addressed the pension problem. The fire department received the pension benefits under Mayor Brown because at that time the City couldn't afford to provide raises. There is expected a \$3.5 billion shortfall owed to the police department and the fire department.

B. District F Representative, Richard Nguyen –

Noted City propositions: H.E.R.O. (Houston Equal Rights Ordinance) and term limits.

Certain crime in District F is down over 8% (theft, murder, aggravated assault).

IV. Old Business:

A. Minutes:

1. Approved the minutes from July, 2015.

B. Committee Reports:

No committee reports.

V. New Business:

The Energy Corridor District's Transit Project Proposal was discussed. It is aimed at commuters from Katy into the Energy Corridor. The SN members agreed they would like to invite Clark Martinson to come and speak at the next SN meeting to provide more information regarding the proposal. D. Guillerman will invite Mr. Martinson to speak at the October meeting.

Someone raised the issue of HOA enforcement notices being in the native language of the residents and all agreed it was an individual HOA issue.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:17 pm. Next meeting is October 14, 2015.