

Minutes from the meeting of NOVEMBER 8, 2017 – Super Neighborhood 17

I. Call to Order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was established.

II. Speakers:

A. Mary Schneider, District Director (District 7), John Culberson's office

Ms. Schneider spoke about Washington D.C.'s response to the flooding in the Houston area due to Hurricane Harvey and disaster funding generally. Ms. Schneider noted two disaster funding packages have been presented (both including monies for flooding and infrastructure issues, FEMA and flood insurance); however, next week, Office of Budget will submit a third package that may include funding for infrastructure for all of Texas, including Corps of Engineer projects that have been difficult to obtain funding. The request may well get hung up in Congress. She came to encourage all to contact the following representatives and express the need for this funding:

Speaker Ryan
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-0600

<https://www.speaker.gov/contact>

Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-4000

Majority Whip Steve Scalise
H-329, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-0197

<https://www.majoritywhip.gov/contact>

Ms. Schneider advised the attendees to tell these representatives we need federal money to help recover from Harvey. Encourage these representatives to include the Texas governor's request for funding. Please tell your friends, family and neighbors to contact these representatives and communicate the need for these funds. If you need any help with this request or any help regarding flooding, Culberson's office is available to help. The office address is 10000 Memorial Dr., Houston, TX 77024; 713-682 8828. Governor Abbott will be in D.C. this coming week (Nov. 13-17) to request this assistance.

B. Jim Murphy – Texas State Representative

Mr. Murphy noted less money was spent in this last session; highway funds were deferred and additional money was put into the "rainy day fund." He said that Texas is the only state in the country that has a "savings" account. It was meant for schools and

hospitals, not hurricanes. That is why Texas is lobbying the federal government for funds. They are requesting \$61 billion from the federal government.

This past session, the Legislature spent billions on “gap closing” matters. They funded growth of schools (\$5 billion) because many people are still moving to Texas and money has to be spent to keep up with the growth. Also, Children’s Protective Services (“CPS”) was a “disaster,” so money was spent towards improving the system, such as increasing the number of caseworkers and decreasing the case load each is assigned. He stated they are spending the money “better.” The same approach was used with mental health services. They are using diversion programs (placing people in other programs rather than mental health facilities). Murphy stated that the Harris County jail is one of the largest “mental health facilities” in the state. He also noted there was a lot of gridlock in the last session. He sees that as a good thing because it should not be easy to pass a bill that impacts all Texans.

Mr. Murphy discussed Hurricane Harvey, stating there are forty “charges” relating to the hurricane. For example, it impacted how property taxes are assessed, reappraising properties, and many other matters. So the Legislature is carefully looking at all of the issues impacted by Harvey. He noted that our area was damaged primarily by the reservoirs and thousands lost their homes. They are addressing the operations of the reservoirs, but the Texas Legislature is not in control of the reservoirs. Increased capacity would help and the Legislature is asking for that. Also, the Kingwood area was heavily damaged from the San Jacinto River Authority (an extension of the state government), so they are looking at that. The Legislature is also addressing infrastructure; that can do a lot to help. Murphy noted that the Houston Ship Channel provides 80% of the nation’s jet fuel.

Mr. Murphy stated that additional reservoirs upstream of Addicks and Barkers are needed and Harris County may take the lead on that issue. Texas is still growing and northwest of Houston is a high-growth area. The Legislature is also considering redrawing flood plains, what defines them and their contours. However, it will impact homes by placing them into flood plains. He noted that SBISD has requested reappraisal of the properties within its boundaries and SBISD is a recapture school district, noting it’s hard to tell them their properties – some now destroyed by Harvey – are “rich” and they must pay money to “poor” school districts. The Legislature is also looking at updating required home disclosures to reveal serious flooding, to protect both buyers and sellers.

Mr. Murphy noted that Harvey had at least one good impact – the sales tax is booming from all of the sales and rebuilding efforts. He also stated that FEMA personnel told him they were very impressed with the work ethic of the people in Houston, stating they “rolled up their sleeves” and got busy.

In short, the county, federal, state and city governments are all involved and all are assessing what “piece” they will handle. In sum, they are aware of what the storm means to their constituents. Hearings are just starting and there are lots of bureaucracies involved. They have to learn to work together. He noted some home buy-outs may occur and mentioned the eminent domain suit (which is mostly addressed towards CoE). He thinks the CoE was responsible and that people were wronged.

An attendee asked what can be expected from the Corps of Engineers (“CoE”) and the problems occurring during Harvey. Murphy noted that the CoE operates on its own agenda and a “culture change” is needed. Murphy said that starts at the top – i.e., the president. Regardless, it costs money to fix and that is why they are asking for the \$61 billion in federal dollars. Also, the city and county governments need to be able to “look over the shoulder” of the CoE. He stated the county will be helping out and the state may provide “match” funds – it’s all still being figured out.

Another attendee raised the issue of buyouts. Will there be mass buyouts? Murphy stated “no, it won’t happen.” He encouraged attendees to keep our schools in good condition because “schools sell houses.” He said it should take about a year to figure out the individual responsibilities of the government entities and what “piece” they will handle. All flooding issues should be addressed in five (5) years – such as alternate channels and additional reservoirs.

Another attendee questioned if the obstructions in Buffalo Bayou will be cleaned out, noting it is a “forest.” Murphy stated that the Charting Buffalo Bayou project was not followed through, but he thinks it will go forward. The bayous and channels must be conducive to flow (i.e., straighten it out).

Mark Kirschke thanked Murphy for all he did during Harvey, specifically getting the trucks to pick up debris. A resident of Enclave Lake noted they still had debris. Mr. Murphy ended his discussion by stating he needs constituents to keep communicating and state your needs. (Murphy’s Capitol office address is: P.O. Box 2910, Austin, TX 78768-2910, (512) 463-0514, toll free – (855) 597-0662, Fax – (512) 463-8715. His district office address is 9525 Katy Freeway, Suite 215, Houston, Texas 77024, (713) 465-8800. His email is jim.murphy@house.texas.gov).

III. Government Announcements:

A. Mark Kirschke – District G representative:

Mr. Kirschke also discussed the need for federal funding as a result of Harvey. There is information on District G’s website regarding needs and items the government intends to fund. There is \$12 billion allocated for the Galveston Coastal spine, \$6 billion for Buffalo Bayou flood risk management. Something also has to be done inside the Beltway, but that property is privately owned. He noted that two years ago a flood analysis was done that looked at Cypress Creek reservoir and it is being looked at again. Every ten years it overflows into Addicks; damming that release would help every ten years at least. It’s a \$500 million project. He also stated that there are lots of questions regarding what can be done in relation to the dams. A “218 study” needs to be done under federal law, but the response has been “there is no money” -- \$300 million is needed for that. He also said a Fort Bend County assessment is needed (\$3 million). There is \$457 million needed for the Houston Ship Channel, \$466 million for Harris County community services, \$309 million for homeowner buy-outs, \$ 9 billion for City of Houston housing, \$80 million for damaged schools, \$500 million for local cost shares with FEMA, \$3.8 billion for a single-family repair program, and \$15 million for

emergency repairs along Buffalo Bayou. As he stated, they know the problems, they know the costs, the last critical step is funding. [These numbers are contained on District G's website] Mr. Kirschke emphasized - Please write the letter for this funding.

Mr. Kirschke stated that District G is looking for candidate projects (streets and mobility, bike lanes, overlays, panel replacement, etc.) on which to utilize their METRO mobility money from CDSF. Send requests to District G Office (districtg@houstontx.gov) by the end of next week in Microsoft Word document. Describe/locate the panel or street segments so it is easy to find: for example – not so good – is “on abc rd. between the deli and xyz st.” Instead, use “on abc rd. southbound, approximately 30 yards south of the RST Deli, just north of the intersection with xyz st.” Also, send up a picture of the concrete panel. All submissions will be examined and work will be on the worst (please do not submit if it does not affect mobility).

Mr. Kirschke noted that if you get high water bills, either call 832-394-2455 or email customer.service@houstontx.gov; they are telling people to pay their average or normal bill and that no penalties will be assessed and no disconnections will be made until they get to the bottom of this.

Mr. Kirschke stated that, for Hurricane Harvey storm debris removal and damage claims, you can visit www.houstontx.gov/council/g. The first thing you have to do is file a 311 request (call, email, go online, use smart phone). If you have private streets or live in a gated community, you will need to sign a Right of Entry form for each home and submit to Tetra Tech. If damage is done to either private property or city property (your water or irrigation line, mail boxes, street light, curbs, signs, driveways, and yards) you will need to file a claim against the city. All this information is on the District G homepage. Mr. Kirschke received a number of emails from Briar Hills and he has have forwarded those to the Solid Waste Management Department director's office and asked for pick up ASAP.

As to Harvey Storm Debris Pick-up, you should call 311 to report your storm debris; you can also send an email to 311@houstontx.gov, visit <http://www.houstontx.gov/311/> and click “Report Harvey Debris” or use the smart phone app. If you live on a private street or in a gated community, you will need to download, complete and sign this **Right of Entry form (.pdf)** and then send the fully completed form to Kristyn.Renfro@tetrattech.com. If you wish to report damage done by the debris removal contractors, please visit this page: http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/harvey_09202017_dmg.html. You will need to file a claim with the City of Houston pursuant to Article IX, Section 11, of the City Charter: Go to Legal Department **File a Claim with The City** page.

The Mayor stated in his Mayor's report last week he had testified in the case of the ACLU vs. The City of Houston. Because of the suit, a federal judge enjoined enforcement of the encampment ordinance. However, the City is receiving more and more reports about the dangerous situation of the homeless, especially in the Midtown area where there have been several homicides and people waving guns. Hopefully the federal judge will see the problem is outrageous and has gotten much worse since enforcement of the ordinance was enjoined.

An attendee noted that a homeless encampment popped up behind the vacant CVS store at Eldridge and Westheimer. Mr. Kirschke said the encampment ordinance cannot be enforced. He ended his discussion by noting that if you are dealing with trash, stagnant water, snakes or rats, you should call the Department of Neighborhoods.

B. Rene Ruiz – City of Houston representative:

Mr. Ruiz noted that not much has been happening with the panhandler bill. The Mayor is still stating Houston Police Department (“HPD”) can work to “protect,” but stated they cannot force panhandlers or homeless to move.

Mr. Ruiz stated you can sign up for CityofHouston.news and receive all kinds of information applicable to your zip code.

C. Van Huynh – District F representative:

If you have heavy trash, contact him through District F. There are three recycle centers that can accept heavy trash. He noted that recycling with the City of Houston starts again on November 13, 2017. He advised the Westhollow representative that public works is ready to set a date to install speed bumps. Please call 311 if you have damaged (City) waste cans – make sure no trash is in the waste can, leave it out and trash will pick it up. Call 311 to get a replacement. Mr. Ruiz suggested calling solid waste.

An attendee questioned Mr. Huynh as to why Dr. Le has not been attending the Super Neighborhood meetings and when he will next attend. Dr. Le’s Chief of Staff, Daniel Albert attended this evening and Mr. Huynh stated they will be here to address concerns. Mr. Albert stated he is going to the Shadowlake HOA meeting.

Mr. Huynh stated that the District F council office has district service money left over, so if your area has needs, contact Dr. Le’s office and they will add the projects to their list. Spending on projects is based on priority.

Mr. Huynh noted that if they do not hear from their constituents, they assume all is okay; so contact them with any issues.

D. Marguerite Dunlap – METRO representative:

Ms. Dunlap stated that all veterans ride free on November 11th, Veterans’ Day. Also, METRO is reaching out to veterans to sign them up to be eligible for unlimited free rides on local buses, METRORail, and Park & Ride service year-round. Veterans can go to METRO’s website to apply.

Ms. Dunlap stated that METRO was “overwhelmed” by the number of people riding METRO (bus and rail) to the Astros parade; there were over 395,000 boardings that day. She thanked everyone for their patience during the parade. She also noted that the parade was held on a Friday due to MLB rules (the parade must be held within a certain number of days).

IV. Old Business:

A. Committee Reports:

Jack O'Connor reported on HPD's PIP meeting. He stated that the homeless issue continues to be an issue that needs to be addressed. He suggested the Super Neighborhood continue to pursue that matter because it has had an impact in the area, noting the old gas station at Highway 6 and Westheimer was torn down in response to Super Neighborhood efforts. There were no committee reports.

There were no other committee reports presented.

B. October minutes were approved.

V. New Business:

There was no new business presented.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:31 pm. There is no December meeting. The next meeting is January 10, 2018.