

NEARTOWN ASSOCIATION GENERAL MEETING
Cherryhurst Community Center, Tuesday March 26, 2002
Minutes

NTA Pres., Ed Gonzales, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Bob Bagot moved to accept the minutes of the previous meeting (2/26/02). Robert Graham seconded. The motion was approved.

Ed Gonzales introduced the evening as a discussion of crime in the Neartown area. He said that the Park Civic Assoc. neighborhood had experienced a rash of robberies at gunpoint during the day, including Sunday afternoon, targeting joggers, people out walking dogs, etc.

Representatives from the following constituent groups each reported that they were not aware of any unusual problems in their areas: Westmoreland, Hyde Park, WAMM, Vermont Commons, Mandell Place and Castle Court. Problems with occasional car break-ins, panhandling and a garage break-in were reported.

Ed Gonzales turned the meeting over to HPD Sgt. Johnny Vollert. Sgt. Vollert discussed ongoing police activity and various neighborhood problems, and answered questions. He said that business owners near Westheimer and Yoakum had notified HPD about aggressive panhandling. A tactical bike patrol had been assigned to this but was temporarily moved over to a robbery problem in the Heights.

In response to a question about the recent restaurant fires in Montrose Sgt. Vollert indicated that it did not appear that there was a crazed arsonist on the loose. Without citing specific information he stated that these were separate, unrelated incidents. The Niko Niko's restaurant suffered a second fire (described as petty street mischief) that left the building structurally unstable. Although it was the opinion of the COH Neighborhood Protection that a property owner can't be legally compelled to fence a dangerous property, the owner was contacted and bulldozers and dumpsters took care of the problem.

District D Community Liaison Bridget Jensen noted that LaStrada restaurant at Westheimer and Taft had been granted a variance request to rebuild.

There was some discussion of the Citizen's Patrol program. Bob Bagot of Hyde Park stated that the same small number of people participate and eventually get burned out or lose interest. Sgt. Vollert pointed out that the HPD requirements for supporting these groups, including checking out radios, had become more rigorous.

In response to a question, Sgt. Vollert explained how HPD officers working out of the 802 Westheimer Storefront implement Differential Response Tactics (DRT). Storefront officers work along w/ COH Neighborhood Protection to address neighborhood nuisances such as crack houses, abandoned refrigerators, overgrown yards, etc.

Graffiti was an ongoing problem cited by several attendees and Sgt. Vollert acknowledged that this was a difficult problem to solve. HPD officer Telo is part of a task force working to identify graffiti vandals, as well as working w/ probationers to cover over and clean up graffiti.

Ed Gonzales announced that he had been appointed to the COH Buildings to Standard committee.

The meeting was adjourned.
NTA Secretary, Dana Padgett