

Neartown Association Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2020 – 7:00 PM

Cherryhurst Park Community Center, 1700 Missouri St

President Greg LeGrande called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

1. Introductions— At least 27 people were in attendance

Newly installed District C Council Member, Abbie Kamin introduced herself and spoke briefly about her activities and plans. She is holding office hours in locations around the district twice a month and, beginning the first week of February, will hold District C Super Neighborhood leadership meetings every other month. She is asking for the Super Neighborhood leaders in the District to compile “wish lists” from the civic associations for her reference as she meets with the directors of City departments.

CM Kamin is chair of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee of City Council and vice chair of the Quality of Life Committee. Julia Retta Julia.Retta@houstontx.gov is her Chief of Staff and Ngan Nguyen Ngan.Nguyen@houstontx.gov is her point person for Constituent Services. Office email is districtc@houstontx.gov, look for @abbiekaminhouston on Facebook, @AbbieKamin on Twitter. Her CoH web page includes a Constituent Request Form <http://www.houstontx.gov/council/c/request.html>. She wants everyone to know that Council Members cannot see Nextdoor postings across their districts, so do not rely on that forum to communicate issues to her.

2. Catherine Fraser – Clean Air Associate, Environment Texas — [Environment Texas' Clean Air Project](#)

Catherine spoke about Environment Texas’ clean air project and the Neighborhood Witness program, a collaboration between Environment Texas, Air Alliance Houston, and other advocacy nonprofits. The goal is to help hold polluters accountable, with focus on illegal air emissions by industry. These unlawful emissions doubled from 2017 to 2018 while enforcement decreased, and there were five high profile incidents in 2019. Catherine invited residents to sign up for the Neighborhood Witness program (www.neighborhoodwitness.org). Below is a brief summary of the program provided by Catherine:

Become a clean air champion and hold polluters accountable through Environment Texas’ [Neighborhood Witness webpage](#). In just a few clicks, Neighborhood Witness empowers you to become an on the ground activist, pushing state and local officials to ensure your right to clean air. **Sign up here to receive illegal pollution email alerts for your neighborhood.** We’ll let you know which plants near you are violating the law, then you can report the

polluter to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and urge them to ensure your right to clean air. We need your help to hold polluters accountable and safeguard clean air for all Texans, so [sign up](#) and [follow us](#) today!

3. Commissioner Rodney Ellis Harris County Precinct One — Overview

Commissioner Ellis highlighted Precinct One projects and shared his top priorities for the future. (Refer to his “Talking Points” copied at the end of these minutes.)

4. Other—

- Montrose TIRZ 27 Board Meeting January 13, 2020 – Update

Greg provided highlights of the recent TIRZ Board meeting:

- TIRZ negotiating agreement with Montrose Collective for 100 public parking spaces in planned parking garage
- Increment is over \$5M
- Contract signed with HGAC for Livable Centers study; Asakura Robinson chosen as project lead
- METRO coordinating with TIRZ on first BOOST bus route – Montrose/Airline #56

- SNA Meeting January 13, 2020 – Update

Kay Warhol reported that Mayor Turner was the featured speaker. He shared he priorities for his next term:

- Completing 4 flood control projects, 3 of which have been approved and funded by FEMA; the 4th is pending funding
- Working with State to get appropriate share of HUD Harvey relief funding for Houston/Harris County
- Street rebuilds and panel replacements (with cooperation from HC)
- Addressing homeless issue with shelter + services; asking private entities to step up their commitment; currently 4000 homeless -targeting <3500 by end of 2020, <3000 by end of 2021
- Complete Communities; looking at more mixed income housing
- Parks – has asked 50 companies to adopt local parks with 3-5 year commitment
- Police – goal to add 300 officers over next 4 years

The Mayor also commented that the current footprint of the I-45 expansion project is too big and it needs to reduce flooding and enhance, not destroy neighborhoods.

He noted that delayed CIP projects will be restarting now that reimbursement dollars are coming into the City for Harvey relief expenditures.

- Member Association 2020 Dues – due now.
- Walkable Places Committee – Update
- I-45 North Rebuild – Update
- Other

The meeting adjourned ~8:15 pm.

Recorded by Kay Warhol

Talking Points for Commissioner Rodney Ellis' visit with Neartown, Jan 28.2020

- Just within the last year, we've made significant strides towards opening the doors of Harris County's government to everyone, being transparent and inclusive, and asking more people to be a voice for our community.
- This new decade will be a pivotal time for our community. Our success depends on whether we can transform every neighborhood — especially those that have been historically neglected — into stronger, more resilient communities.
- We have to re-think our approaches to basic infrastructure like reservoirs, sewers and roads — but also consider how housing, development, parklands, public health, environmental conditions and social services are affected.
- As a regional body Harris County is uniquely positioned to help lead on addressing many of these issues.
- We have made strides towards being a strong partner with the City of Houston to leverage resources and solve problems together.

Flooding

- Equitable flood protection and resiliency are top priorities for Harris County as flooding remains one of the biggest threats to our region.
- Our approach to flood control focuses on:
 - Equitable flood protection for every community, especially those that have been historically neglected
 - Mitigating the worsening effects of climate change
 - Green, resilient infrastructure
 - Disaster recovery
- The flood bond program is a great example of our community coming together to fight flooding and make needed equitable investments in flood protection. We are making progress:
 - Harris County Flood Control District has identified 243 projects to complete in the next decade as part of the flood bond.
 - There are 190 flood bond projects already underway across Harris County's 22 watersheds.
 - The flood bond's equity framework helps ensure that resources are directed into areas that have long histories with flooding, but haven't received their fair share of protection.

Transportation

- We should all care about making our community safer, healthier, and easier to move around in. Precinct One is focused how we can make our roadways safer:
 - Houston's roadways are already among the deadliest in the country. According to the Texas Department of Transportation, there were almost 800 fatalities on Harris County roadways last year.
 - Harris County is in the early stages of developing a Vision Zero Action Plan, an internationally-recognized set of policies that would put us on a pathway to eliminating roadway deaths countywide.
- Precinct One is focused on how we can make our roadways more accessible for everyone and safer for pedestrians, transit users and cyclists.
 - Our University Corridor projects at UH and TSU are good examples of this model, which improves the street, sidewalks, drainage, lighting, landscaping and other features.
 - I also successfully advocated for Harris County to fairly allocate its share of METRO funds between precincts, so that Houston residents got their fair share of funds to improve sidewalks, bus stops, and other needs.

- Partnering with the City of Houston, Precinct One has tripled the miles of on-street high comfort bikeways. The new bikeways on Gray Street are nearly complete, and the bikeways on Austin Street from Buffalo Bayou to near Hermann Park are under construction.
- It is vital that Harris County, Houston and other organizations continue these kind of partnerships so that we can leverage resources and expertise to equitably improve quality of life and access to safe, affordable transportation across Harris County.

Safer Communities and Equal Justice

- We are working to create a safer, better justice system that protects our Constitutional rights and our communities.
- Through the historic misdemeanor bail reform settlement, we are taking steps to end mass incarceration, which has harmed and destabilized our communities for decades.
- We can now focus our attention on smart-on-crime strategies that focus on protecting our communities, serving victims and ensuring that our entire justice system treats everyone fairly and equally.