

Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council Meeting
DRAFT MINUTES
March 10, 2010

The meeting of the Eldridge/West Oaks Super Neighborhood Council (EWOSNC) (17) was called to order at 7:02 pm, March 10, 2010 by Vice President Diane Guillerman. A quorum was present, with fifteen stakeholder delegate representatives attending.

I. Speaker.

Houston Police Department Officer Steven Bressler spoke about the HPD's Citizens Patrol program. He stated it is a nationwide program and requires participants to be active, actually spending time patrolling their neighborhoods. Neighborhoods participating must put in a minimum number of hours and those hours are reported to Officer Bressler in a monthly log. He stated there is a minimum commitment of 30 hours per month and it is recommended that at least 8 residents participate. It is beneficial for the neighborhood if more residents participate and there is some flexibility in its structure. Applying to participate in the CP program is a "process" that can take some time. A neighborhood must fill out an application and participating residents must fill out release forms and background checks must be done. Participants must also be trained. Training takes about 1-1/2 hours, including question/answer period. It is easier for a neighborhood if a resident agrees to act as a coordinator, speeding up the process. Bressler was asked if the program worked and he responded it does to the extent that the effort is put into it. Also, the patrolling residents must call the same HPD numbers as do all other citizens, the type of calls made determines HPD response time, and HPD's website has crime statistics: mycityhouston.gov. He stated that the crime stats were updated every 24 hours. Any neighborhoods interested in participating can contact Officer Bressler at steve.bressler@cityofhouston.net.

The Positive Interaction Program (PIP) meetings for residents in the Eldridge/West Oaks SN are held on the third Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Westside Command Station. The next PIP meeting is on March 18 at 7:00 pm.

II. Old Business.

A. Ms. Guillerman introduced the guests attending from the City of Houston: Councilmember Oliver Pennington, City Planner Donald Perkins, and City of Houston Super Neighborhood Liaison Elaine Gaskamp. Other guests were asked to introduce themselves.

B. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved with no additional corrections.

C. Committee Reports.

(1) Security Committee: Bob Sumicek, Chair, reported that he had been talking with security committee representatives from other area SNs about Citizens Patrol and coordinating security efforts. He also stated he had arranged to have an HPD representative at the monthly EWOSNC meetings.

Councilmember Pennington stated that his staff was working to acquire contact information for security representatives within District G neighborhoods to facilitate communication regarding security issues. His office had sent out a security survey to be completed by neighborhood representatives. He is working to improve interaction with HPD and facilitate what SNs and other neighborhood organizations are attempting to do concerning security. Christine Manero is the staff member in Councilmember Pennington's office dealing with the survey and security issues in general.

(2) SNAP/Infrastructure Committee: Ms. Guillerman thanked Judy Thompson, Chair, for her excellent presentation at the CIP meeting on March 3. Ms. Thompson then reported on the SNAP/Infrastructure Committee, stating several of the 311 requests submitted by the SNAP Committee had already been handled by the City. She explained what SNAP items were for the benefit of the new attendees. She also reported on the CIP meeting and reviewed the CIP requests submitted to the City on behalf of EWOSNC.

Ms. Thompson then asked Delegate Doug Parrish to give a report regarding the on-going efforts to acquire speed cushions for the Briarhills neighborhood to alleviate cut-through traffic. He noted that Briarhills had previously applied for speed cushions, but the program was halted due to a lack of funds and a new State notice requirement. Mr. Parrish stated that he was informed funding could be reinstated in June 2010, depending on a City Council vote and asked Councilmember Pennington if he could respond to that. Councilmember Pennington affirmed the possibility of the June vote and stated the City was considering appropriate responses to the new notice requirements, such as publishing a notice in the newspaper and a public hearing. Councilmember Pennington stated he would work to ensure a traffic study was done timely and Mr. Parrish noted that the City had been very responsive. Ms. Thompson then noted some of the statistics from the completed study, such as the estimated neighborhood traffic volume was 4,926 vehicles a day and the total estimated cut-through traffic volume was 1,231 vehicles a day, or 20% of the total traffic volume.

(3) Beautification: Ms. Guillerman reported that no one had volunteered to chair the committee and asked delegates to consider volunteering. She noted that April 10, 2010, is “Keep Houston Beautiful Day.” It is Houston’s largest one-day clean-up and beautification event. Ms. Guillerman explained that she would like to get an event organized for the SN and that she had sent out an email requesting volunteers and a suggested area within the SN that would benefit from a clean-up. If there is no response from within the EWOSNC, she will contact the other area SNs to see if they have any clean-up efforts scheduled for that day. Delegate Maria Galitos volunteered to assist in the April 10 event. Ms. Gaskamp noted that she could get tools to use for the effort.

(4) Flooding and Drainage: Billie Long, Chair, stated he had attended the meeting held by the Army Corp. of Engineers regarding the Barker and Addicks Reservoirs. He stated that the Corp. has classified the Barker reservoir as one of the highest risk structures in the nation based on the size of Houston’s population and the amount of damage that would be done if the structure failed. Because it is high on the list, repairs to the structures will be funded first. Mr. Long noted that the release structure of the dam, at Highway 6, just south of Memorial, was identified as a weak area but it is being shored up, and another weak area identified is the end structure or spillway (close to Cinco Ranch) and that is also being reinforced. Mr. Long stated he also attended the Flooding and Drainage meeting sponsored by Councilmember-at-Large Costello, where (a) a Harris County Flood Control District representative spoke about the history of flooding in Houston, (b) a representative from the Houston Fire Department spoke about how flooding impacts emergency response by the HFD, and (c) a Health and Human Services representative spoke about the impact of flooding on the health and welfare of City inhabitants. He noted that HFD trucks cannot respond if water in a street is over 18 inches. Mr. Long suggested Houston’s residents get flood insurance. In response to a question regarding Buffalo Bayou, Mr. Long stated that the Barker reservoir controls flooding of Buffalo Bayou and there are 2 jurisdictions responsible for channels feeding into the bayou: the City of Houston and the Harris County Flood Control District. He noted that as a general rule of thumb, if a drainage structure is visible, for example a ditch, it is maintained by the HCFCD, but if the drainage structure is below ground, such as drainage pipes, the City is responsible for maintaining. Also, the Buffalo Bayou channel from Beltway 8 to Shepherd is in its natural state, which restricts flow to some extent, but adds to quality of life along the bayou. In response to a question, Mr. Long stated that development contributed to the flooding that occurred in April of 2009. In response to another question, he stated the issue was not with the levee but with the release structure and the spillway.

Another delegate that had attended the Army Corp. of Engineers meeting noted that the reservoir’s critical status is based on what happens should the structure fail. He noted that because 20% of the nation’s petroleum needs derive from Houston, it is an issue of national safety.

D. Update on Website.

Ms. Guillerman gave an update on the SN’s website, stating that an offer had been made to EWOSN by a website company to build and maintain a website for the SN at no cost. They are even willing to pay for the domain name. She noted that they would pay for the domain name annually, but if the SN could do that it would be appreciated. She also stated that the website company had built Briar Forest SN’s website and she passed around a copy of the Briar Forest SN home page, explaining that the EWOSN website would be similar to the BF SN website and would have left-hand menu items such as “Home,” “Upcoming Events,” “Contact Us,” “Committee” links and others. Essentially, the EWOSN website would be structured like BF SN’s website. Ms. Guillerman, Ms. Meyers and Mr. Long, as the Executive Committee, are working with the website company to streamline its set-up. Ms. Guillerman also stated each stakeholder organization will have its own link to a page that will contain information on the stakeholder, an email for that stakeholder, and the delegate from that stakeholder organization will be able to maintain/update that page. Ms. Guillerman said she needs to know what kind of information the committees want included on their pages and what contact info the stakeholders/delegates want on their links. She also stated that the EWOSN will be responsible for maintaining the website with a committee of 2 or 3 members who will have full access to the site as “webmasters.” The committee should include the president of the SN. Ms. Guillerman noted that the website can be up and running in two weeks if all goes well. She will send out the email addresses for the BF SN and other area SN website addresses and asked that the delegates look at the BF SN website and if they have any suggestions to send them to her at the SN email address.

E. Update on Mission Statement.

Ms. Turner gave an update on the EWOSNC’s mission statement. She passed out a sheet listing a mission statement, taken from the EWOSN By-laws, and listing suggestions for overall goals. Ms. Turner discussed the types of goals the SN may want to have and explained what “smart goals” were, stating they are time-bound, meaning they can be completed by a certain date, such as December of each year, and they are measurable, meaning the SN will easily know whether the goals have been completed. Her list of goals included three committees, Safety and Security, Beautification, and SNAP/311 (and including CIP). Due to time constraints, Ms. Guillerman asked if this was something the delegates could give their input on during the next month through email and if it could be further discussed at the next meeting. Ms. Turner stated yes, it could be worked on and she was hoping to have a mission statement and goals that the delegates can vote on at the next meeting.

F. Amending By-Laws.

Ms. Guillerman stated that the By-laws needed to be amended to remove Oaks of Parkway as a participating member of the SN under Section 5.4, as announced at the EWOSNC February meeting. A motion was made to amend the By-laws as proposed, seconded, and all delegates voted in favor.

III. Announcements.

A. John Nunez, with the Energy Corridor Management District, will be speaking at our next meeting, in April, regarding the new bus service in the area and will speak about other projects the Management District has planned.

B. At a meeting with Councilmember Pennington and the other area SN Presidents, it was suggested that the old Kendall building (though it is currently being appraised for sale to Spring Branch Independent School District) could be used as an HPD substation. The delegates agreed it was a good idea.

C. Captain Lentschke is speaking at the Briar Forest SN meeting on March 25 and delegates are invited. The discussion will be how the SNs can best make use of a relationship with HPD. It is not a gripe session. The meeting is at the new Kendall library building on March 25 at 6:30 pm.

D. Ms. Guillerman announced that Councilmember Pennington's office had provided some of the new compostable bags for those neighborhoods that had City of Houston trash pick-up, and three delegates received bags.

E. Mr. Perkins announced that he had brought materials to distribute. Many are those he has brought to previous meetings, but some concerned the census. He discussed the census and its importance to the City, particularly because redistricting will depend on census results. He requested all respond to the census. For more information on the census, you can go to houstoncounts.cityofhouston.net.

F. Mr. Perkins stated that Councilmembers-at-Large Bradford and Costello would like to come out and speak to the SN to introduce themselves and discuss issues they are working on. He stated that the comptroller, Ronald Green, would also like to speak to the SN.

G. Mr. Perkins encouraged delegates to sign-up for citizens.net to receive notice for many important events and issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm. The next EWOSNC meets on April 14, 2010 at 7:00 pm.