

Neartown Association Meeting Minutes

August 27, 2019 – 7:00 PM

Cherryhurst Park Community Center, 1700 Missouri St

President Greg LeGrande called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

1. Introductions— 23 people were in attendance. Janaeya Carmouche, candidate for City Council At-Large position 3 introduced herself, and representatives for Sallie Alcorn, candidate for At-Large position 5, and Letitia Plummer, candidate for At-Large position 4, spoke on behalf of their candidates.

2. Arabic Immersion Magnet School— Mahassen Ballouli, the Principal of the Arabic Immersion Magnet School provided information on the school, which has just moved into the former HSPVA campus located in First Montrose Commons. The Arabic Immersion School opened in 2015 with pre-K and kindergarten classes; it now has up to 4th grade and will eventually go through 8th grade. Enrollment is currently 415 students. Only twenty percent of students are native Arabic speakers.

3. Other—
 - Historic Appeals Board—HAHC Recommendation to Abolish – Steve Longmire spoke about proposed revisions to the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 33). The ordinance has been under review for over a year. A major concern is the recommendation that the Historic Preservation Appeals Board be abolished. This would require applicants to appeal decisions of the Historic Commission via District Courts. Steve requested that Neartown members email comments to planningdepartment@houstontx.gov before the Sept. 21 end of public comment period, asking that the Appeals Board be reformed, not abolished. Members are encouraged to email City Council Members and the Mayor as well. (For more detail, refer to presentation that accompanies these minutes. Proposed ordinance revisions are posted here: https://www.houstontx.gov/planning/docs_pdfs/ARTICLE_VII_HISTORIC_PRESERVATION_REDLINE_Public-Comment-Draft_4.16.18.pdf.)

 - Montrose TIRZ 27 Board Meeting—Update from August 19th Board Meeting. Steve also provided this update. As of the Aug 19th meeting, the Board is meeting at the Havens Center at St. Stephen's, beginning at 6:30 pm, and there are now two public comment sessions – one at the beginning and one at the end of each meeting. Actions at this meeting included authorizing the replacement of sidewalks associated with the Waugh/Commonwealth repaving project to meet ADA and Code standards and establishing public speaking guidelines for the TIRZ Board. The Board discussed progress

on the formation of a Redevelopment Authority, which is necessary to handle receipt and disbursement of TIRZ funds and management of projects. The Livable Places Study that is planned for Montrose should begin this year. (For more detail, refer to the presentation that accompanies these minutes.)

- METRONext – Update. Kay Warhol asked attendees about the possibility of using the September Neartown meeting on the 24th for Neartown to host a presentation on METRONext at the Montrose Center so that Neartown residents could be informed about the Moving Forward Plan and the bond measure on the November ballot. There was general agreement on that proposal.

- Other
 - Steve spoke about the plan for the Neartown District C Candidate Forum on Wednesday, October 16. The Montrose Center is making rooms 106/107 available to us at no charge. Ideas for questions for the candidates should be emailed to officers@neartown.org.
 - The Central PIP meeting on Tuesday, Sep 3rd features a speaker from the Robbery Division.
 - A METRONext presentation is planned for the Sierra Club meeting on Thursday, Sep 12.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Submitted by Kay Warhol