

South Lamar Neighborhood Meeting Minutes

Thursday 17 April, 2014

Willenberg Hall of Faith United Methodist Church, 2701 South Lamar

The meeting began with each person identifying themselves by name and general location and longevity in the neighborhood.

Agenda items and discussion:

1. Cheyenne Krause from City of Austin presented information about Project Connect, a decades long project to improve transportation in the city. Components of this overall plan is to include trains, bendy buses (2 bus carriages connected with an articulated section) and regular buses. The intention is to get a schedule that has more frequent arrivals and departures all along the routes. There is a bond election in November to raise money for this plan. There are 2 new proposed bus routes near us, namely 801 and 803. This website: projectconnect.com has more detail, including maps and an introductory video.

2. Sunshine Mathon of Foundation Communities and Michael Gatto from City of Austin presented a proposal to help South Lamar Neighborhood Association get sidewalks on Del Curto between South Lamar and the new park, which is just north of Lightsey. There is a COA program run by Public Works called Neighborhood Partner program that allows us to tap into funding for Improvement projects. It requires some cost-sharing between the city and the neighborhood requesting a project. On an accepted project the city would contribute between 60 and 75%, The remainder might be by sweat equity, contribution or grants obtained from an outside source. Foundation Communities has grant-writing expertise and they has experience in making these sorts of projects happen (example in the St. Elmo area). Of course with the proposed project to create about 100 Single Room occupancy units at the corner of Del Curto and South Lamar FC is a stakeholder themselves in improving the walkability to the park from that site. They advised us to think a little bigger than "just a sidewalk" -- because something a little sexier is more likely to get the city's attention. President Mario Champion (mario@mariochampion.com) will designate a subcommittee of interested neighbors to pursue this.

3. Our neighbor Carol Gibbs who also works for the City of Austin as a Neighborhood Advisor explained the CodeNEXT project and the next scheduled activity in it. CodeNEXT is a project to re-write the Land development code. For the inexperienced the Land Development code is the body of rules called "zoning rules" that are supposed to bring order and prevent some over- or inappropriate development, not just in residential neighborhoods. On the way to that massive effort the city has asked neighborhoods to participate in an activity called Character-in-a-Box -- where the participants identify things in their neighborhood that are 1. assets, liked as-is and reflect the character of the neighborhood that is desirable to keep; 2. an opportunity to expand/ grow/ revise/ redesign/ rethink etc., OR 3. a bad thing: dangerous, unhealthy. And submit the information to the city. Some how this is supposed to shape the CodeNEXT in developing a new Land Development code. (post-meeting update: Kathleen Shaw agreed to head the committee and the exercise took place with a sufficient number of volunteers.)

4. Park Naming -- the Parks Department tried to get SLNA and 2 other parties (supporting other n park Names) to work out a compromise. Despite a brilliant compromise proposal by our designated negotiator Bruce Evans no one was budging. So Bruce returned to the Parks department that SLNA submits the name "Del Curto Park" (eliminating the other alternative we proposed "South Lamar Neighborhood Park"). So the next Parks Board meeting they are supposed to recommend a name and

then it goes to council.

5. PSW Realty, the developer of one or two projects near the intersection of Del Curto and Lightsey are talking about what they might do about sidewalks in the area of the PSW developments. They have some proposal to present at the next meeting June 19.

6. There was a discussion of the noise produced by the Train's frequent passage through the neighborhood, specifically the horn. Since the road work has been done to prevent cars from driving around the drop-down barriers on Oltorf and West Mary in theory the Trains should not have to sound through those intersections.. But maybe the crossing at Bannister is still vulnerable to drivers who think that it's smart to dodge around the barriers which clearly signal the approach of a train, but who apparently would be stopped from such foolishness by hearing a train horn. So I guess that is why we have a whistle within our neighborhood boundaries? BUT if you look at the proposed ProjectConnect map [<http://projectconnect.com/connect/project-connect-interactive-map>] mentioned in item 1 above, you can see that someone has a plan to displace the freight train traffic with a dedicated Regional Commuter Rail. All they have to do is convince the Missouri Pacific folks who own the rails to move elsewhere.

7. The heavy parking activity on Thornton near the near Beer Garden ABGB on Oltorf prompted discussion of possible usefulness of a Residential Parking Permit Program on that section of Thornton. Discussion only. No action taken.

8. Also it was mentioned that with heavy parking on Del Curto there is often not room for trash can to be placed at the street side.

We are all urged to take the SLNA Survey: <http://bit.ly/1fg3xE8>

Here is our SLNA website: <http://southlamar.org>

And thanks to Laurie Filipelli for organizing an easter egg hunt 19 April, in the park.

Submitted by Nancy Maclaine, substituting for Kassi Oliver,