

Braeburn Valley Civic Association

Sections I & II

Minutes

July 25, 2023

Braeburn Valley Civic Association Meeting

Location: Bayland Park 6400 Bissonnet St

Board Members: Bert Ruiz President (present)

Darren Spriggs Treasurer (present)

Johnathan Soffar Interim Vice President (present)

Barbara Haney Secretary (present)

Christine McKeon At Large

- I. 6:35 pm Welcome
President's Call to Order. Bert Ruiz introduced the board and guest speaker Councilman Pollard along with his summer interns and council aids Caylin Graham and Yesenia Vicente. Brian Pendleton from County Commissioner Lesley Briones office was also in attendance.
- II. 6:45 pm Approval of April 2023 Minutes. motion to approve by Ted Holubec and seconded by Rita Willhite
- III. 6:50 pm Treasurer's Report:
- IV. Budget Update – 2023 YTD. Reports are Filed with the Minutes
 - Total revenue collected from homeowners \$28,350
 - Year-end revenue anticipated from city and Braeburn country Club and Late Fees total \$8,004
 - Total anticipated expenses for the year: \$39,031.
 - Darren Spriggs anticipates that based on the calculations above, there will be a net \$677 for 2023.
 - Things that can skew this projection in a positive direction:
 - 16 homeowners haven't paid their dues for 2023 which accounts for a total of \$5,600 missing revenue.
 - 12 of those who have not paid their dues are occupied homes and we are hoping that we will collect those annual fees by end of year.
- V. 7:00 pm Traffic Speed and Volume Control Project
 - Update: temporary barrier has been put up. Two Issues: 1) someone hit and damaged the Road Closed sign and 2) there's concern that people are trying to move the barrier so that cars can get in and out.
 - Next Steps: As soon as school starts in Sept or Oct, devices that count traffic will be put back up for 7-10 days. They will track the traffic info, report the data back to residents and then there w be another meeting where the city will share their findings and another vote will be taken about whether to make the barrier permanent. With regard to voting, it was noted that there was a lower turn out to approve the temporary barrier but city went forward with implementation anyway. The feeling is that it is important to vote either yay or nay on the next vote. Several residents said they feel that traffic has decreased since putting up the barrier.
- VI. 7:20 pm New Business/Announcements/Presentations
 - Neighborhood Resilience Initiative: resident Jeanie Spriggs is on the Neighborhood Resilience committee and provided a high-level overview for the meeting that took place a couple of weeks ago. Braeburn Valley and two other neighborhoods were picked for resiliency (flood), beautification and safety. Jeanie says the city is very receptive to us pointing out areas that need to be improved and while they have not made promises, they have listened. The city encouraged us to organize write-ups of the issues we see and the solutions we offer so that when grants are available, we can take advantage of the resources available.

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- Activities of the task team: flood mitigation, safety issues (area crime, traffic and gun shots), beautification (planting wildflowers along the bayou), addressing the homeless animals issue. Jeanie says it was a positive experience and says she believes there will be a fall meeting.
- Neighborhood Safety: Residents reported several instances of gun shots recently. It was a big problem a few months ago that had been addressed by having HPD increase patrols especially at night, however the last couple of weeks it has been observed that people are driving into the neighborhood and shooting their guns off into air, into the golf course, into the retention pond, the two parks and elsewhere. Bert is requesting that residents report any gunshots they hear to 911 or to the non-emergency line. Residents are encouraged to send any video they might capture on their cameras to the board. The board is exploring all avenues that can act as a deterrent. Some of these possible solutions include:
 - Flock cameras to take photos of the cars and scan license plates. The flock cameras cost \$2,500 per year per camera. The activity recorded is shared with HPD. Funding could potentially come from the city or area businesses.
 - Turning the community into a gated one. It might not be feasible, but we will explore to see if that is a future option.
 - Seeking support for the two parks and getting area business like the Braeburn Country Club, the condos in front of the neighborhood and the United African Church involved as well as any other businesses to help fund cameras.

The meeting was then paused for resident comments. Rita Willhite commented that she has collected 11 shells from Braeburn Valley Dr, Jeannie said she has found shell casings in front of other houses on Braeburn Valley, Nairn and Hideaway Circle. Another attendee said there was another shooting occurred at Wanda and Bonham Acres last night. Several attendees nodded in agreement that they heard 9 shots in a row last night. John Loe mentioned gangs often use multiple gun firings as part of initiative into the gang.

One resident mentioned that HPD response time has almost doubled (for an emergency) in the last year. Another resident mentioned the need for a ring chatroom so that we can make reporting gunfire a more cohesive and collaborative effort.

Jeannie offered to record and take notes from all the neighbors of all the gunshot instances and take photos of the shell casings and hold onto video.

Other items: A tree at the front of the subdivision has been tagged with the number 13 which is believed to stand for MS 13, a Houston-area gang. Last update on burned out house is that the owner intends to tear down and sell but has not offered any timeline for doing so. The unoccupied home on Valley View is in the process of being purchased by an investment company. The individuals occupying the house on Nairn are still inhabiting it while the ownership of the property is in dispute.

VII. 7:30 pm Guest Presenter – Council Member Edward Pollard.

- Pollard is aware of the issues in this neighborhood (with regard to high numbers of gunshots and tree tagging) and is trying to find creative solutions. Additional manpower at HPD is not an option but buying technology to support the dept, such as Shotspotter (records gunfire) and Flock Cameras is an option. When it comes to finding shell casings, Pollard encouraged and advised residents to put the casings in a plastic bag and to report it to district j patrol. He mentioned that a lot of effort has been put into this initiative. They are only going to

respond to what we submit, and they only get paid for the work that they do so it is important that residents take advantage of this resource. On the website, www.Districtjpatrol.com, there is a form where residents can report non-emergency crime or neighborhood issues. Or you can call and report it: Number is 832 393-3015. They will then report it to HPD. Submissions can be tracked online because HPD has to answer to the reports.

- Pollard mentioned there is an app called GroupMe chat is a way in which neighborhoods can have group chats as a closed community and encouraged Bert Ruiz to set that up. Pollard says he is a big proponent of lighting, Shotspotters (records gunshots) and Flock Cameras (license plate reader cameras) and mentioned we have over 100 cameras in the area. All of these things are a great deterrent to criminal activity and is a way to track criminals after the fact. Pollard is going to see if he can fund some of the cameras (with our tax dollars) or work with businesses to fund and says he will get back to the neighborhood within 30 days.
- Regarding gated community, Pollard says it's a very tall task and is doubtful that can happen. Says the neighborhood would have to buy the streets within the neighborhood and advocates instead for creative urban design that deters unwanted traffic from entering the community. Creative urban design includes one-way entrances and exits.
- Pollard mentioned he has heard that there has been a noticeable decrease in traffic since installation of the temporary barrier which mirrors the statements of the attendees earlier in the meeting.
- For the tree that was tagged, Pollard mentioned getting a can of brown paint to cover up the number or get an artist to paint something.

Pollard then asked attendees about any other issues and responses include the following:

- Residents along Nairn mention continuing issues with Sharpstown Gardens Apts on Bissonnet with regard to loud music, fencing in a state of disrepair, apartment kids jumping over the fence into their backyards, trash thrown over the fence into backyards, as well as a dumpster that isn't getting emptied.
- Residents mentioned Braeswood is a nightmare to drive on because it needs so many repairs with regards to potholes and speed bumps.
- Bike trail that crosses Stein Park needs stop signs for the bikes because of close calls between bikes and vehicles.
- Rita Willhite commented that the bike trails have not been repaired from Hillcroft to Gessner and pointed out that trees need to be planted along the bike path as well.
- John Loe pointed out that the area where the apts were torn down on Fondren near Braeswood, the city was supposed to turn it into a detention pond. Pollard said that is still the plan but doesn't know when it is going to happen. He says he will see what kind of updates he can pin the city down to provide an answer, he agrees that the city has not been progressive on that issue. He said the city is trying to address the public dumping and homeless encampments but that's about it.

Pollard mentioned the parks in the area, saying the city is aware of issues, however, these are county parks so is the county responsibility not the city's. Pollard agrees that the guns are being tested at these small pocket parks and says he gets lots of calls about gunfire, some of it is gang initiation, some of it is young kids being dumb.

Pollard mentioned something to consider is paying constables to patrol the neighborhoods and splitting the fees among several neighborhoods like Bonham Acres and Larkwood. Pollard mentioned again the technologies of Shotspotter and Flock Cameras. That with the Flock cameras are the best solution he can come up with to deal with the gunshots and act as a crime deterrent and provide help to the limited resources of the HPD.

The rep from Lesley Briones office gave out pamphlets and information about County Parks and said he will go around and look at some of these county parks, with issues such as trespassing. Will work with constables and commissioners to curb some of this illegal activity.

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VIII. 8:00 pm Adjourn. Motion to adjourn by Dick Akkerman and seconded by Lance Roseborough.