

SHNA Meeting minutes
March 4 2014

Meeting begins 7pm
Sean Garretson, SHNA Vice President presiding

A. Approval of February SHNA meeting minutes
Charlie Reckson: Motion to pass
Paula Reckson: Seconds motion
Motion passed.

Announcement regarding Swede Hill Park as a “pets on-leash” park
Notable comment from Sean: There's perhaps a movement to have an off leash park in Swede Hill.

Agenda Item #1:
Update on the Dell Medical School construction by Jim Walker, Director of Sustainability for the University of Texas
Phone: 512-475-6549
Website: uttexas.edu/operations/construction, click on Dell Medical School to see the most current information.

Jim Walker:

We were here several months ago. I'm a sort of neighborhood liaison - I'd like to come every few months, or every month to give you all an update.

In early Feb, UT accepted the vision and the price range for the buildings. That was the last hurdle to moving forward. Now, we'll be moving fast to open Winter 2017. The first activity you will see will be March 24 with the Red River realignment. We're straightening out Red River.

We will straighten Red River all the way out by 2019. Red River will be closing for several months beginning soon, and then reopen by the new year in 2015.

In April, you will see major site work. We will be relocating trees along the creek. Some heritage trees are not viable to move, so there will be trees lost. (Check the UT website for more information on the trees along the creek.)

In June, the tennis courts will go out along Trinity. Then, there will be major construction zone until 2016 or 2017.

Aundre Dukes is responsible for making sure that all parking for crews is in UT garages. We do not expect to see crews parking outside the garages.

Our main contractors will be required to tell their subs where to park. They are not allowed to park in your neighborhood. Look for cars parking here, and people hopping in a truck and driving back across the highway.

The Erwin center will come down. I don't know when. That will be Phase Three of the construction of the medical school. We're currently in Phase One. We've known it had to come down; it's 40 yrs old, and it costs too much to maintain. But, there's not another place to play UT basketball - so it will be a while before it comes down. It could be 6-12 years. It will come down when UT Athletics has a new place to play basketball.

Sean: By the way, I heard there will be a major league soccer stadium near Disch Faulk field.

Jim: That's the first I've heard of that. That's LOT 104. There's another major structure garage on the horizon for construction and that's one of the primary spots.

So, keep your ears to the ground. I don't work in Athletics, but the first flag for knowing when the Erwin Center is coming down will be when Athletics announces that they have a new place to play basketball.

On our construction projects and parking in the neighborhoods, we had a pilot project in Blackshear. APD gave out 30 parking tickets, for parking too close to intersections and other violations, and that was very successful there. We're thinking of extending that to Swede Hill for UIL.

We realize it's going to be a major traffic problem on Red River for a while. Red River will be closed from March/April to the end of this year. The reason for that is that we're putting in a ton of utilities, and upgrading utilities at 15th Street. We'll be taking up the northernmost lane for much of the time. And moving some of the trees. Also, there will be something closing all of 15th for an extended period of time.

Rob: The northern most lane is a major arterial for those exiting I-35.

Jim: Yes, but construction equipment needs to exit from the site into that lane, so that adds some hassle. We're also working with the Erwin Center on how people can continue to use the Center during this construction. We have tons of traffic, pedestrians, and ADA compliance issues.

Louisa Brinsmade: Is there any talk of providing housing for your medical students?

Jim: No. We're launching a new housing study to see what the university's direction should be for housing students. We're looking at West Campus, and at what our moral and ethical responsibilities are for undergraduate students. We don't have any graduate or medical residence housing.

People at the Blacklands Neighborhood Association brought that up – the issue of medical resident and faculty housing.

The new Dean of the medical school will lead the effort on that, and we don't know yet whether he will take that on, or what direction he will want to move in.

Question: What about protecting or improving Waller Creek?

Jim: As for Waller Creek, we're going to be in the creek replacing the bridges and working on it. It will be a large construction zone. What it looks like now is not what it's going to look like in the end. We're going to restore the creek, doing "green" landscaping to restore Waller Creek to a good eco-system state.

Question: What about the historic buildings at 19th Street?

Jim: All the historic buildings there will stay.

Question: What about the height of the new hospital and the view of the capitol building?

Jim: The hospital will get taller in the future. The old hospital is owned and run by Central Health. They've started their strategic plan about what will happen to it. I don't know what that is yet.

Item #2:

Update on the City Council approval of the sale of Tracts 3 and 5 to Butler Equity by Louisa Brinsmade and Hunt Andre

No notes here since the SHNA Secretary, Louisa Brinsmade, was giving the presentation.

Important Note: The URB may be finalizing the sale contract with Butler Equity at their meeting on March 24.

Item #3:

CODE Next update by Kris Bowen

Kris: This is the second time I've brought this to the neighborhood meeting. We'll be able to directly send our comments, pictures, and maps, to the CODE Next team, who will alter the city's Land Development Code throughout the City of Austin. I went to the Community Character in a Box workshop. They gave us the neighborhood's DIY box, and put it into three different steps:

Step One: We were given a large map - we are to put colored dots on it to signify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in Swede Hill. We can also mark things outside of our neighborhood on this map. Then, we turn that map in to the CODE Next team.

Step Two: We get groups of 3-4 neighbors together to take photos of interesting locations in our neighborhood. Using a Smart Phone, activate your location service for your photos and take pictures. When you upload those photos to the CODE Next email address, your photos and where you took them will be sent to them.

Step Three: We are to send our comments from groups and individuals on the CODE Next Comments form. We will put our names and addresses and contact information on those forms, and submit it to make sure our data is taken in by the CODE next team.

Due date: April 27, photos, maps, and comments are due before that date. Let's break off after this meeting, and compile all the information I've gotten, and I'll answer questions.

The photos can be pictures of homes from a lawful viewpoint, structures and businesses that identify your neighborhood. Take pictures of streetscapes and sidewalks - our neighborhood has a big opportunity to have a voice on that aspect. For instance, the power lines on East 11th and East 12th Street prevent us from becoming a walking corridor. If we can signal to them that burying these power lines are a huge priority for us, that would be good for the neighborhood.

Item #4: Action item on rezoning case at 1307 Waller St.

Toria English (Applicant): In January I requested a letter of support from the neighborhood for our rezoning application from SF-3 to SF4a which would increase our impervious cover limits from 45% to 65%. The (SHNA) Board has expressed their opposition for the reason of setting a precedent. My lawyer expressed that another owner would have to go through another application.

I want to apologize that my gathering letters of support prompted my Board members to cancel the absentee ballot for this vote. And that's something we should discuss at another general meeting. That was a negative externality that happened.

Sean: The bylaws committee will definitely address the voting issue.

(Sean calls for a voice vote)

Vote Count

Ayes (to support): 4

Nays (not to support): 24

The SHNA Members vote not to support the zoning change.