

Austin Neighborhoods Council
General Meeting
June 28, 2006
721 Barton Springs Rd.

7:00pm Call to Order—President Laura Morrison

7:01pm **Panel Discussion: Working Together to Keep Our Central Neighborhood Schools Viable**

- Mark Boyden, Windsor Park NA and AISD Bond Oversight Committee member—Moderator
- Mark Williams – President of the AISD Board of Trustees,
- Cheryl Bradlee – AISD Board of Trustees – District 1 Member
- City Council Member Brewster McCracken
- Kathie Tovo – President, Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association

Discussion of the challenges of managing public schools in Austin.

Q: What makes schools attractive and useful to parents?

Mark Williams cited several attributes: Safety—parents want a school environment that's safe, family-friendly. Academic performance—parents want schools where there's a good, nurturing learning atmosphere and good teachers. There are economies of scale—you want schools of enough size that you can have full art, music, PE programs. Is the neighborhood someplace where you want to live.

Q: Why do we close schools?

Williams noted that we have not yet closed any schools recently. One, Porter, was repurposed as a plan to reopen Lucy Reade as a pre-K center, while moving Professional Development Academy to Porter. He said, we sometimes need to look at whether we can afford to keep a school open, as was the case this year with Becker and Oak Springs Elementaries.

Cheryl Bradlee said she does not support closure of schools. Sometimes you may have to consider whether there's a "value add". When you saw the test data, over 3 years 30% of 3rd graders passing TAKS test to 69% of 3rd graders passing TAKS, that shows improvement, leading to a desire to keep them open.

Q: Where do we go from here? How is AISD proceeding?

Williams said the discussion around the proposed repurposing of Becker and Oak Springs Elementaries showed that there were a many factors not being adequately considered—the impact to the neighborhoods, the range of alternatives, the costs of the repurposing. In February then-board member John Fitzpatrick had proposed a task force to study older schools called SUCCESS—Supporting Underenrolled Central City Elementary and Secondary Schools. This would be a Blue Ribbon Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools, under the auspices of the Joint Subcommittee of the AISD Board of Trustees and Austin City Council. It would recommend criteria and an appropriate decision-making process that will be used by AISD its Facilities Use and Boundary Task Force. The Facilities use and Boundary Task Force is charged with making recommendations to the AISD administration and board on whether, which, and when to close schools.

SEE APPENDIX at end for info from handouts from Kathie Tovo.

8:00pm Updates on Issues and Discussion Items

- Changes in Plans for the Pfluger Bridge Extension—Lorraine Atherton, Zilker NA
The Pfluger Pedestrian Bridge Community Advisory Group met June 14. Lorraine of Zilker and Bob Sessa of Bouldin Creek NA attended.

This is the pedestrian/bike bridge over Town Lake just east of Lamar Blvd. The city had previously planned the north extension of the bridge across Cesar Chavez, with an alignment to build an underpass of the UP rail line from the Gables development north to Bowie St. at 5th St. This was much discussed in connection with the

SEE APPENDIX BELOW for complete text of report.

- ANC Representatives on City Council Committees
Clean Water Task Force—Donna Tiemann, Barton Oaks NA. This group, initiated by Council Member Lee Leffingwell, is studying how to manage development and growth in the Barton Springs Zone to protect water quality for Barton Creek and Barton Springs. Jeff Jack, Zilker NA—Open Government Task Force. This group will study how the city make information available to citizens. Requests or comments should be passed to Jeff Jack.

- ANC Workshop on Cap Metro Streetcar Alignment and Design—Bo McCarver, Blacklands NA
Capitol Metro has proposed a streetcar line from downtown northeast to Robert Mueller development to the vicinity of 51st St. August 5, from 9am-noon, there will be a workshop to gather neighborhood input on planning routes, station locations and neighborhood issues relating to them. Location TBA.

- Discussion to Explore Ideas and Opinions of Single Member Districts for Austin City Council—Bo McCarver, Blacklands NA
There has been ongoing interest in creating single member districts for Austin City Council elections. There will be a discussion meeting July 10, 8:00am, Denny's on N. I-35 between 12th St. & MLK Blvd.

- Consideration of Voting by ANC Officers
Andrew Clements of Downtown Austin NA had raised a question regarding ANC officers' voting on ANC business. Currently under ANC bylaws, ANC officers are given one vote on questions before the ANC general membership. There are 7 officers and approximately 65 member associations eligible to vote currently. The question is whether that is a good idea. Should officers be allowed to vote or not? Danette Chimenti of SRCC moved that ANC bylaws changes not be studied or considered at this time. Motion seconded. There was discussion on the motion. Motion passed. No bylaws changes will be pursued at this time.

- Update on VMU and Neighborhood Options—Laura Morrison, Commercial Design Standards Task Force Member

The city Commercial Design Standards Task Force has been studying new regulations and allowances for Vertical Mixed Use for developments. This combines 2 different uses on one property. The regulations have been being codified by the Clarion consultants group. The city sponsored a design charette last week to apply the regulations to test projects and get more input on their workability. Council will consider approving these soon. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on July 11, and the Council on July 27.

The VMU regulations may greatly affect neighborhoods along “core transit corridors” through their areas. Development bonuses may be given for the incorporation of VMU. Once the regulations are adopted, neighborhood planning teams (or NP Contact teams) will have the opportunity to make recommendations on the adoption of density bonuses in their area, which will include a requirement for affordable housing (details still being worked). Until the final version of the regulations are adopted, there is an interim code regulation in place to allow VMU, and rather than review and recommendation by neighborhoods as had been foreseen, the city is supposed to instruct developers desiring to use VMU to contact the relevant neighborhood associations to discuss.

- Update on Local Historic Districts; Consideration of Land Use Commission Review—Laurie Limbacher, Heritage Neighborhood Assn. and Chair of City Historic Landmark Commission.

A provision for local (city) historic districts had been pursued for years. City Council finally passed the provisions for local historic districts last week. One last-minute change in the program was to route new applications for a district to the Zoning and Platting Commission, as opposed to the Planning Commission. This routing for applications was not recommended by any citizen group or staff. Subsequently, there has been discussion of whether ZAP is most effective body to consider historic districts. Laurie proposed a resolution advocating routing applications through the Planning Commission.

Resolution: In order to achieve appropriate review of local historic district applications by the Land Use Commission most familiar with each of our neighborhoods, ANC supports the routing of Local Historic District applications to the proper Land Use Commission as determined by neighborhood planning areas, consistent with the handling of all other zoning and planning changes in Austin, and consistent with the recommendations of the Historic Landmark Commission and the Historic Preservation Task Force.

Laurie Limbacher of Heritage NA moved to approve this resolution. Motion seconded. Motion passed.

9:15pm Meeting adjourned.

APPENDIX

Report to ANC on the June 14, 2006 meeting of the Pfluger Bridge CAG

From Bob Sessa, Bouldin Creek rep on the Pfluger Bridge Community Advisory Group
"Earlier this year, an agreement was reached on the alignment of the extension and other details. Part of the details included building an underpass (below UP rail line and 3rd street) to connect Bowie St with the Gables project/bridge extension.

"The estimated costs to move the utility infrastructure (both water and electric) came well above initial estimates. Therefore, they have proposed 4 alternatives. The first three would veer the path to the east and build an underpass (under the UP rail line) and avoid the cost of moving the utilities. The fourth option would have the same alignment as originally agreed upon but not build an underpass. Instead they would build stairs and elevator for pedestrian use only. Bicyclists would be routed due east (near Seaholm). Most members completely disagreed with the fourth option due to the fact that pedestrians and bicyclists would be separated. It would take away from the whole project.

"An additional note is that the project will now be done in two phases. The first will be the actual bridge extension and the other will be the connection to Bowie St.

"They [staff] are still investigating the costs of the original underpass and applied for state funds to help fund this project. Not sure what will happen."

Website: www.ci.austin.tx.us/publicworks/pflugerbridge_default.htm

Staff contact: Renee Orr, 974-7241, or Greg Kiloh, 974-7836

Lorraine's take: The first hour and a half of the two-hour meeting was spent on the "design concept" for the bridge extension. It's going to be a metal chute, 14 feet wide, lined with metal panels 4'6" high, inspired by a Frank Gehry ped bridge in Chicago-- that's the architect who does the loopy crumpled metal structures. It's a complete break from the existing Pfluger bridge, and the dimensions are inadequate to carry the combined foot and bicycle traffic that the Pfluger bridge was originally designed for.

Background: This all goes back to March 1997, when council decided NOT to expand the Lamar Bridge but go ahead with pedestrian improvements, so we're coming up on the 10-year mark.

My prediction: The fourth option that Bob says most CAG members rejected is the option that staff will recommend, because it's closest to their original eastward recommendation, and now they need to build support for the private redevelopment of Seaholm, just as they needed to support the Spring and Gables developments.

The bridge extension will never be built.

Lorraine Atherton

Zilker rep on the Pfluger Bridge Community Advisory Group