

HNA regular meeting, December 8, 2021

President Coan Dillahunty called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Coan summarized the online meeting the Parks and Recreation Department led on December 2 about the Hancock Golf Course. The course has made more than a \$70K profit in 2021, which the department surmises is due to people's activities changing during the pandemic and increased interest in golf across the board. The 2022 fiscal year is also off to a good start. PARD began by recapping the process it's gone through; the focus on Hancock Golf Course began with a revenue shortfall and the city putting forward the idea of a concession agreement to bring in more money. Most recently PARD had said it would reevaluate its options after analyzing 2021 revenue. Now that those numbers are in, PARD has decided to continue running the course as it is, without a concession agreement. PARD wants to enhance the hybrid model and partner with other nongolf uses in the space. There are still challenges with equipment needs and safety corridors and a continued emphasis on financial solvency. There was some discussion at the meeting about concerns about the methodology of the survey PARD distributed about the future of the space. Timeline going forward: PARD plans to provide a memo to council, likely in January, about revenue improvement for the golf division and Hancock in particular, and include ideas about shared use.

The Parks committee did not have any updates at this time.

Officer nominations: Coan explained that our bylaws state that nominations need to be made 30 days in advance of the January meeting. As we did last year, we can take nominations via groups.io. If you're interested in serving, you can volunteer/nominate yourself, or have someone nominate you by December 19. If folks are interested in meeting to talk about the experience of being an officer, we could hold an 'open house' at Jo's during happy hour.

Due to increasing work and family obligations, Coan is not running for a second term. For similar reasons Robyn Ross is not running for a second term as secretary, but she will continue running the newsletter. Robyn encouraged people not to assume they're not qualified to run for office simply because they haven't been involved in a committee before.

Coan moved to adopt the minutes from the September 15 meeting, Hugh Bender seconded, and his dogs thirded the motion. The group voted to adopt the minutes.

Denise Cavanaugh, recreation programs specialist from the Hancock Recreation Center, gave an update on the Rec Center. She has worked with the city six years and oversees after-school programs, toddler programs, day camps and summer programs, and special events like the candlelight trail on the golf course. The Rec Center is not doing the trail this year but instead will host a virtual gingerbread-house-building contest (the Rec Center provides the kits). The Rec Center is also hosting virtual storytime with Mrs. Claus at 11 am on Saturday, Dec. 18 on Zoom. Staff will also be at this Saturday's art fair at Fresh Plus.

Ms. Cavanaugh would like Hancock neighbors age 50 and older to complete a survey about programs they'd like to see at the Rec Center. Staff are planning to expand the number of programs for this age group. The survey is at this link:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=9hleXKumRUux0L5GCKmmf6wJ8XVSAFVKpElhd9FcgIJUNUpXVktLODVPVTRPMFpNMlc4R05TS0VaSyQIQCN0PWcu>

Coan asked when we might be able to meet at the Rec Center again, and Ms. Cavanaugh said they're hoping in 2022. She shared her email address: Denise.Cavanaugh@austintexas.gov

The Transportation Committee gave an update about I-35.

Hannes Mandel explained that the committee submitted the statement HNA voted to adopt in September to TxDOT. In mid-October we received a response that just said, "We received your input." TxDOT held another public meeting in September but didn't offer new information.

Hannes said he hopes there has been progress between the city and TxDOT as council members have become more outspoken on the issue of I-35.

He shared information about an upcoming virtual meeting (visit this page any time between December 15 and January 15): austintexas.gov/atxcapstitch

The cap-and-stitch plan is good for downtown, but we would like to see those efforts in our area too.

Next steps: We plan to invite representatives from TxDOT and Project Connect to present in January or, if that's too soon, perhaps at a special meeting in February or at our March meeting. The idea is to get past the standard TxDOT presentation and have these two experts talk to one another about TxDOT incorporating (or, thus far, not incorporating) Project Connect ridership projections into its model. Having both of them in the room at the same time would increase the chance of actually getting answers. To do this successfully, we will need to determine the best possible questions to ask them. Hannes will share a few ideas via groups.io in the next couple weeks. Some other ways to approach the argument are by scrutinizing TxDOT's logic about the amount of local traffic on I-35 and its refusal to consider sending some traffic to SH 130, and to scrutinize TxDOT's approach to traffic modeling, which has produced some inaccurate results in the past.

Project Connect: At this point, most meetings are about the Orange and Blue lines that are not in our immediate neighborhood. Hannes encouraged people to continue to be involved. Right now PC is holding meetings about the design of stations along the Drag. At some point the Gold Line (on Red River) will be part of the conversation.

Kitten Holloway said that we first need to get TxDOT and Project Connect to agree to attend a meeting, and then the task will be to develop specific and structured questions so we don't get same canned responses we've gotten before. If you have questions, ask via groups.io "re: transportation committee." Kitten said that her team could use some help figuring out how to structure these questions – if you would like to help with this project, please post to groups.io and we'll get in touch.

David Guarino asked whether anyone has asked the US Department of Transportation about its position on I-35. Hannes said that in the past, Brendan Wittstruck (the leader of the North Central I-35 Neighborhood Coalition) has been skeptical that USDOT would intervene. It has intervened in the proposed expansion of I-45 in Houston, but the conditions are a bit different. But we should investigate this; the idea of removing highways instead of adding them is gaining traction nationally.

Leila Levinson announced that the art fair would be held Saturday. It's officially called the Hyde Park Art Fair because it's physically in that neighborhood, but it's for both neighborhoods and has been organized by Leila L and Mary Trahanovsky, both HNA members. The fair will have 34 booths with 31 artists (including David Guarino), mostly from Hyde Park and Hancock, and a literary table.

Hugh Bender reported on a zoning issue pertaining to parcels of land on the frontage road north of Concordia. It has resurfaced after coming before the Zoning Committee in the past. The Zoning Committee, then consisting of Hugh, Bart Whatley, Linda Guerrero and Carolyn Palaima, met with the developer over six months, researched the issue, and last August brought it before HNA. Members voted that we would support a height of 90 feet, not 120 as requested, and we wanted to see firm commitments to including affordable housing since the current PUD was written so poorly that builders can get around complying with affordable housing requirements. HNA also asked for conditions regarding the use of reflective glass; parkland; and green buffering with the neighborhood, with the additional height. There's been no news since then, and the Planning and Zoning Commission and Austin Water rejected the height increase. The developer is still requesting the additional height and offering nothing in return – this will be considered at the Planning Commission on December 14, which Hugh said earned a strong 'no' vote from him personally. Coan will relay the previous HNA resolution to the commission.

Proposal to increase HNA dues:

HNA Secretary and newsletter editor Robyn Ross explained that our newsletter is designed, printed and mailed by a company called Neighborhood News. NN charges \$250/issue, or \$1500/year for six issues. Paper and postage costs have been increasing, but our current contract goes through May 2022. Our current dues of \$5/household are not sufficient to cover this cost. This year we dipped into our savings to support the newsletter, but a sustainable model would be better going forward.

Therefore, the following changes are recommended:

Charge dues per member, not per household, which also facilitates easier recordkeeping: one person, one membership fee, one vote.

Charge \$7/person.

We currently have about 250 members. If we retained this membership, \$7/person would generate \$1750, more than enough to cover the newsletter. If we went this route, most households would pay \$14 rather than \$5. However, we are not limited to 250 members – we can encourage others to join, which is good for a number of reasons.

Robyn said that similar neighborhood associations charge a bit more than we do (and we haven't raised dues in at least 10, maybe 20, years).

A motion was made to raise dues to \$7/person and passed unanimously.

Robyn reminded people to contribute their stories about Little Free Libraries and about Lee Elementary for the January newsletter.

Coan adjourned the meeting.