



MPNA General Meeting Minutes

Date: January 03, 2024
Location: Covenant Church, 4949 Caroline. 50+ participants
Call to Order: 6:02 pm

Introductions: Sandy Stevens

- District D, Council Member Carolyn Evans-Shabazz
- Houston Police Department, Southcentral, Sgt Brian Alms. (832)394-0241, brian.almshoustonpolice.org. Statistics compare last year for December to this year for December. Several types of crimes increased: robberies from 1 to 6, thefts from 29 to 52, burglaries from 6 to 12 (half businesses and half residential), all others were down.
- Houston Planning Department, Lynn Henson and Abraham Zorilla per CoH Presentation on the CoH Civility Ordinance.

Note: **The following is taken from the following presentation that was not used during the meeting in efforts to accurately report the facts:** [Slide 1 \(houstontx.gov\)](#) Article XVI, CH. 40, Code of Ordinances. Passed in 2002 (Ord. No. 2002-504, June 12, 2002).

What is the Civility Ordinance?

- *City Code Section 40-352: Between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. in a designated area, it is unlawful for any person to:*
 - 1) *sit or lie down on a sidewalk or on a blanket, stool, or any other object placed upon a sidewalk;*
 - or
 - 2) *place or deposit any item of bedding materials or personal possessions on a sidewalk.*
- *Prior to enforcement, an officer observing a violation of § 40-352, must notify the person engaged in the prohibited conduct that he or she is in violation of the ordinance.*
- *Affirmative defense that upon notice, person stopped engaging in prohibited conduct within a reasonable time.*

Affirmative Defenses

- *It is an affirmative defense to prosecution of § 40-352 that the person is:*
 - *Sitting or lying down due to medical emergency;*
 - *As the result of a disability, utilizing a wheelchair, walker, or similar device to move about the sidewalk;*
 - *Operating or patronizing a commercial establishment or service or government function conducted on the sidewalk;*
 - *Participating in or attending a parade, festival, performance, rally, demonstration, meeting, or similar event lawfully conducted on the public street or sidewalk;*
 - *Sitting on a chair or bench located on a sidewalk that is supplied by a governmental agency or the abutting private property owner; or*
 - *Sitting or has placed materials on a sidewalk while waiting for public or private transportation or waiting for access to enter any building.*

Creation of Designated Areas

- *Designated areas are added through a citizen petition process pursuant to § 40-353. Petition must:*
 - 1) *Describe proposed boundaries and indicate that signers desire the proposed area to be subject to § 40-352;*
 - 2) *Contain signatures from property owners whose property represents 20 percent of the total area designated;*
 - 3) *Contain signatures of at least 100 citizens over age of 18 residing in the proposed area;*
 - 4) *Contain signatures collected within 60-day period; and*
 - 5) *Be Submitted to City Secretary within 90 days of the date of first signature.*
- *HPD investigates proposed area and reports to City Council regarding existence of conduct prohibited by civility ordinance and other criminal misconduct in the area.*
- *City Council conducts public hearing within 45 days of filing of valid petition.*
- *City Council adds proposed designated area to civility ordinance if:*
 - 1) *petition meets all requirements;*
 - 2) *proposed area exhibits the type of conduct and adverse impact on sidewalks and adjacent properties that civility ordinance was intended to address; and*
 - 3) *designation of proposed area would best serve the health, safety, and welfare of the public.*

Discussion

- MPNA is not specifically advocating that a designated area be created for MPNA; however, it is being presented so the neighborhood is informed. It should be noted that there are designated areas that currently bound MPNA (with the exception of Hermann Park which has its own restrictions and guidelines for public use). HPD noted that the civility ordinance offers them “another tool” to be able to engage and is generally perceived as a positive tool. HPD notes that the ordinance hours are an issue. Concerns were expressed that this tool could be considered uncompassionate to un-housed individuals or misused. It was specifically noted that our local HPD DRT team has been dealing with un-housed individuals for years to positive effect. About 25% of individuals who are dispersed accept resources offered by HPD. The overall concern for not adopting this ordinance for a Museum Park designed area is that it will leave MP as an island without the ability to enforce the same ordinance as surrounding areas.
- Lynn will research and report back on quantity of signatures needed based on (presumably) the area bounded by other designated areas.
- If this is to move forward, someone in the neighborhood will need to volunteer to spearhead the effort.
- This conversation on this topic will continue at a future General Meeting.

President’s Report: Sandy Stevens

- See above

MPSN Report: Sandy Stevens/Bill Powell

- No report

Vice President’s Report: Pam Campbell (not present)

- No report

Secretary’s Report: Greg Quintero

- No report (November 1, 2023, General Meeting Minutes posted to MPNA website)

Treasurer’s Report / Green Team Report: Cynthia Tang (not present)

- No report

Parliamentarian: Bill Powell

- No report

Committee Reports

1. Safety & Security: Joselyn Thomas
 - No report
2. Community Engagement: Cathy Ehlinger, Cindy Woods-co-chair
 - No report
3. Quality of Life & Infrastructure: Holly Beery
 - No report
4. Membership: Lynn Dahlberg
 - No report
5. Preservation: Kathy Thomas
 - No report

Announcements: Sandy Stevens

- CeCe Scott, representing CM At-Large, Position 4, Letitia Plummer
- Next General Meeting February 7, 2024

Adjournment

Time: 7:09 pm

End of Notes by Greg Quintero

The notes above represent the Author's understanding of the meeting discussion. Please provide any comments or corrections to the Author within 5 days of distribution of these minutes, otherwise the notes will remain as a factual recordation of the discussion.