**NACA MONTHLY MEETING**

Thursday, 17 September 2020

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Introductions:**

Melinda Schiera called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

**General Announcements:**

The August meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.

The following statement of Land Rights was read by Melinda Schiera:

“The North Austin Civic Association (NACA) would like to acknowledge that the land boundaries of NACA are original territory of a number of Indigenous peoples–– specifically the Numunuu also known as Comanche Nation and the Tonkawa Tribe. We honor and thank the Indigenous peoples connected to this territory where we gather, and give gratitude to this land on which we meet. NACA will work towards decolonizing our practices, and make our Civic Association an inclusive space for all.”

Isa Boonto-Zarifis has resigned as Co-President. NACA and its leadership team intend to continue her efforts to increase diversity and inclusivity within NACA.

Melinda Schiera reminded members that after seven years, she will be stepping off of the Executive Committee. The positions of President, Vice-President, and Secretary position are permanent and required by NACA Bylaws. These positions are all open.

All membership will be invited to future planning meetings where we plan out upcoming meetings and discuss priorities.

Any member can participate in NACA’s work to advocate and improve our neighborhood however they want, and we can form subcommittees to address specific issues.

Members need to pay their dues in January to be able to vote for the officers.

October meeting will be a Candidate Forum for AISD At-Large Board Trustee Place 8 candidates

Other future meetings may include information about aggressive animal ordinances and maybe information about COVID Vaccination Rollout Plan by Binh Ly from Austin Public Health. Additional meeting ideas are welcome.

**Austin FC—Jordan Enke, Director of Stadium Operations**

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The most common issues that neighbors have typically been asking about the stadium center around traffic impact, security, communication, and stormwater drainage impacts.

The stadium is scheduled for substantial completion and the first event held there for the end of spring 2021.

Working with Austin Center for Events on traffic, as well as the Austin Transportation Department, including work related to the 2015 Mobility Bond, such as the soon-to-be-constructed dual left turn lanes from eastbound Braker.

The facility will have 800 parking spots on-site. The Austin FC management team continues to work closely with Capital Metro, because the best way for fans to get to and from the stadium will be through mass transit.

Drafts of Life Safety and Emergency Management Plans are underway, including crowd management and safe egress in case of emergency. The plans will be reviewed by first responders, like Austin Police and Fire. They and other city departments have been out on site multiple times, and Austin FC has been working closely with them for several years, even before construction started.

Stormwater management plans will be rolled-out and communicated to the community, in co-ordination with the city and civil engineers. Offsite stormwater will be routed through an on-site bio-filtration pond for water quality. The pond will allow for slower release than before the site was developed and should help with flood mitigation. That pond and the vault over the stadium and other civil engineering aspects of the facility are designed to be more than adequate to withstand a 500-year storm event.

Neighborhood associations will also be in real-time communication with the stadium command center, so any issues can be addressed immediately. There will be signage to prohibit and discourage stadium spectators from using neighborhoods for parking, etc. Event schedules will be shared in advance as well. Austin FC is interested in making sure that the impact on neighborhoods is all positive.

Although the loop of streets (Donnelly-Delta-Denton, near Metric by the KBVO TV station and across from 4th Tap Brewing Co-op) seems a good place for Uber drop-offs, but so far, there are concerns that it is too dangerous to cross the railroad tracks to the stadium grounds. As a result Capital Metro and Austin FC will probably be putting up fences to discourage that. Conversations are ongoing with Austin Transportation to make sure concerns like this are addressed. Austin FC wants to keep parking and other transportation issues like this as close to the site as possible to minimize the number of pedestrians on surrounding streets.

A member commented that they were glad that Austin FC is trying to help out, as with the soccer pitch being built at Wooldridge Park Schools. Jordan replied that Austin FC is ready to help with neighborhood clean-up days, and similar things. We can use resources from the stadium, like rolling trash carts. Project such as these are all managed and run with the Community Impact Team from Austin FC.

John Green pointed out that there will be a flood mitigation project coming soon from 4th Tap Brewing Co-Op to a retaining pond across the street from the YMCA on Rundberg, and it may be that Austin FC should double-check to make sure that their drainage plans with the City of Austin have been co-ordinated with that project.

Kevin Michael Foster requested that Austin FC be aware of neighborhood impact issues, such as making sure googlemaps and waze apps avoid routing through quiet streets, and controlling impact of sounds and lights blasting in neighborhoods.

Jordan said it will be an evolving situation that will involve adapting as time goes by. Austin FC wants to build a relationship whereby they are seen as a good neighbor and the neighborhoods can help by being the eyes and ears for issues and problems. Austin FC intends to also influence fan behavior at the start rather than having to deal with problems after the fact.

**Announcements**

Last weekend, a gaga-ball pit for below-the-waist dodgeball for little kids was installed at Wooldridge Elementary by NACA volunteers after first applying for a grant 2 years ago.

**Austin ISD Board of Trustees, District 3—Candidate Kevin Michael Foster**

Kevin Michael Foster, introduced himself as a UT Professor and Educational Anthropologist, and parent of two students at home, one at Garza Independence and McCallum. As he’s running unopposed, he’s watching candidate forums for the other seats. It is grueling and a lot of people vying for unpaid positions facing righteous interrogation. I just have a plea for grace—even if we disagree with someone, we need to honor them for caring enough to make the effort to run. Our school district is in a really fractured state, and we need to find our shared humanity to move forward together. I want us to see the best in each other.

Q

What role do you think school resource officers and police should play in our schools?

A

The reality depends upon the school and the setting and the officer. It should be serving child development needs, but we have circumstances that are more like “cops in schools.” We should orient away from “use of force” in a school setting. That is a sign of a system failure. We need to be oriented towards child development and the health of schools as ecosystems without laying hands on people or having physical altercations.

Q

When and how should kids be returning to school, considering health, safety, and equity?

A

It needs to be a balancing act. I teach in person at UT, one of a few professors doing so, because I think we need a safety valve. There are students who have situations that require them to be on-site at UT. I respect and honor those reasons. We have a small percentage of in-person courses as a “safety valve” with the majority of courses online to allow for a mostly vacant campus and slowing the spread of the virus. I think AISD needs to consider a similar approach.

Q

What changes and improvements are you planning to make?

A

It’s all about equity. All students, wherever they live in the city, should have access to advanced academic programs, career and technical offerings, and so on. We need to make sure dynamic programs are supported and have pipelines for that kind of programming from the feeder schools. The rest of the city doesn’t always see us and our needs in D3, and we need to draw attention to them.

Q Thank you and Ann Teich for your service on the school board. What kinds of additional unpaid roles on task forces, etc. will D3 benefit from?

A

I’d like to see some reforms on how AISD runs task forces. It’s part of a bigger picture of rebuilding trust, so you can see the impact of your service and partnerships, rather than being witness to a dog-and-pony show. The integration of the local community in the school can create a symbiotic relationship that benefits everybody, not just the school and school families. You can actually build curricula around that—math and small business lessons around a neighborhood food truck.

Kevin asked for input and members talked about how much they like the notion of engaging the community to participate in the school and bringing teachers and students to be involved in the community. Appreciation was voiced for the Family Resource Centers and the Restorative Justice programs.

**Austin City Council, Place 4—Incumbent Greg Casar**

I hope to keep lifting up the voices of people in District 4, because the city has neglected it for a long time. We’ve been able to do hard stuff, like getting people from neighborhood involved, even having high school students testify about traffic dangers in crossing Lamar. Now, we’re seeing construction to add sidewalk and crossing lights. Now we’re investing in the Cook Elementary playground and the Little Walnut Creek Library renovation and more. I can be an advocate for the district, and for the city-wide work, like mass transit, affordable housing, protecting immigrant families, and saving lives during COVID-19. It could be that after the pandemic, we wind up more unjust and unfair, and I’m running to raise those voices and making sure we prevent that by having the city focus on justice.

[Note: Statements, Questions, and Answers alternated between candidates. For clarity’s sake, they are all from each candidate are collected under the same heading.]

Q

How do you plan to proceed with changes to the APD budget in order to focus on safety and reducing conflict in the community?

A

Our focus remains on safety and civil rights. We have to do both. It’s been a challenging issue across our country. This has been a multi-generational problem. It’s always hard to change something where there’s strong feelings, hurt, and pain about these things. We heard testimony from cadets who were dropping out of the police academy because they felt it was not the right thing for them because of the approaches being used. While we make improvements to that program, let’s move that $20 million into community health and other underfunded things that are really badly needed.

Q

What are the next steps in tackling the homeless issue?

A

It’s a very challenging issue because shelter capacity has been cut in half by COVID-19. The city has underinvested in permanent supportive housing for decades. So we are partnering with hotel owners for us to buy the unused hotels and get people into housing while providing the services that they need. We can be a leading city in the country to end homelessness. It seems hard now, because we see so many more people experiencing homelessness on the streets. But we can’t think that jailing people or clearing encampments and just moving them around is going to solve homelessness. We need to solve the root issue.

Q

What would you do help employment and small businesses in District 4?

A

Tonight City Council is voting on the SAVES resolution, which would pull money from everywhere we can, including the rainy day fund, to try to save as many of our local businesses as possible. A key part of that is having our local businesses a part of the COVID relief effort, such as having them provide the meals when the school district could no longer do it. If you haven’t been to the Highland Campus, it’s going to be a real hub of small business development. The Workforce Solutions training center will be moving to District 4, just south of East Rundberg, so that people in our area will have a way to get trained for the job of the future.

Q

How did you vote in 2016 and/or plan to vote in 2020?

A

I voted for Clinton, and I supported Bernie Sanders, but now I’m whole-heartedly supporting the Biden-Harris ticket.

Q

Is there a middle ground where we can require a camp that is well-kept and not having trash sprawling everywhere?

A

Absolutely. The city is increasing its trash pick-up and its violet trash-bin program in order to try to help with that. It’s not possible to hold everybody accountable for following rules on keeping an encampment clean, so it’s better to spend the money to make relationships with the homeless people, and try to help them get permanent housing that takes care of the situation over the long term.

**Austin City Council, Place 4—Candidate Louis Herrin**

I’ve lived in the district for almost 30 years. I’m a registered civil professional engineer. I think that problems have gotten worse not better since the move to a 10-1 city council. I’m seeing increases in crime, so I’m against the defunding of police. Want more community policing and more police, instead of less. Want to get away from talking about problems and convincing people they are victims who can’t succeed, and help lift people up by working together with them. I’m running to put the city back on track, and run it like a city, and get rid of the pet projects before we get taxed out of our homes. I worry that CodeNext would harm neighborhoods, and its impact on roads, electricity, water, and power systems has not been fully accounted for.

Q

How do you plan to proceed with changes to the APD budget in order to focus on safety and reducing conflict in the community?

A

I think the defunding went through because it was the “hot” thing to do. We need to sit down and look at what is working and what is not working, rather than having a knee-jerk reaction of decreasing 150 million from the budget and cancelling the three cadet classes.

Q

What are the next steps in tackling the homeless issue?

A

We need to be working with these people like Mobile Loaves and Fishes and the veterans’ groups. This is crucial for those who don’t want to be homeless. A lot of what is being done by the current city council is just band-aids on the problem. The city is wasting a lot of money on building a downtown bathroom, and paying for its cleaning and maintenance, and buying these hotels for too much. We need to get with the State to help us with those experiencing homelessness who have mental problems. We need to discourage those who just want to be homeless. I’m for training and working with businesses for those who want to move away from being homeless.

Q

What would you do help employment and small businesses in District 4?

A

We have a lot of need for small business. I’d want to encourage small-business growth by making it easier for small business to start-up and work. That requires streamlining the City’s permitting and review process. Small businesses are the backbone of the country and the city, so they need our support.

Q

How did you vote in 2016 and/or plan to vote in 2020?

A

I voted for Trump because I could not stand the socialist agenda of the other party.

Q

Is there a middle ground where we can require a camp that is well-kept and not having trash sprawling everywhere?

A

It’s shocking to see the trash piles 10 feet high when there’s a clean-up. We can’t let them keep littering. The city is trying. It won’t be solved overnight, but it’s a situation we need to work on. We need to help people who want to get off drugs and alcohol and are willing to get treatment. It won’t work for those who don’t want to go.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm by Melinda Schiera.