**NACA MONTHLY MEETING**

Thursday, 15 April 2021

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

**Introductions:**

Matt Myers called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

The following statement of Land Rights was read by President Matt Myers:

“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.”

**Announcements**

At the March meeting, there was discussion of the park that NACA dedicated a few years ago as "Heron Hollow." However, the City of Austin set up a sign naming it "Payton Gin Pocket Park." NACA member Susie Milam and other have contacted the city to protest that this is inappropriate. Ann Teich pointed out that it was named Heron Hollow in keeping with all the neighborhood street names referencing birds and that it is an ongoing problem that the City staff is not always aware of the history as much as those who have lived in the neighborhood for decades.

On April 28 from 4:00–5:30 Austin Parks and Recreation Department will hold a Zoom meeting to discuss the process of having the park re-named, including an application for submission to the City Council to consider.

NACA's participation in Keep Austin Beautiful Day on Saturday, April 10 involved 17 volunteers working on many different streets, and resulted in about 25 bags of trash, about 375 pounds' worth, along with 10 bags of recycling.

**Treasurer's Report**

The General Fund contains $3,006.64 and there are currently 99 members.A significant upcoming expense will be the annual charge for liability insurance. The Beautification Fund totals $12,771.20, with nearly $10,000 invested.

**Approval of March 2021 Meeting Minutes**

The March meeting minutes were approved, with corrections, by the membership.

**Austin ISD Panel**

**Cook Elementary Principal Priscilla Sanchez-Emamian**

There are only six and a half weeks left in school, with 210 kids on campus out of 483 total enrolled. Modernized furniture will be coming over the summer. A $4,000 grant will augment this with outdoor furniture, wagons, and other equipment. In addition, an outdoor learning classroom with 14 slabs of limestone delivered recently. The gaga ball pit installed by NACA volunteers last summer will be officially complete with the rubber mulch that is coming soon. It is great that the school playground and facilities are shared with the neighborhood.

In the Fall, Cook will be a two-way dual language campus, starting with pre-K4 and Kindergarten. This program has generated a lot of interest in the community.

**Wooldridge Elementary Principal Sheri Mull**

As with Cook, every piece of furniture in the campus will be taken out and replaced with modernized furniture. Wooldridge is also improving its outdoor classroom with the addition of more outdoor furniture. In addition, the Austin Parks Foundation will be mulching some of the trees on the campus on Saturday. Soon there will be a ceremony for dedicating the mini-pitch soccer field that was partnered with Austin FC, the new Major League Soccer team.

Enrollment is at 471 with about 230 on campus. Almost all staff is fully vaccinated. Already efforts to boost registration for the Fall of 2021 are underway, especially for pre-K. A bilingual pre-K3 classroom is being added for next year.

This is STAAR testing season with 4th grade Writing this week, and Reading, Math and Science coming up.

To celebrate the end of the school year, Wooldridge will hold its track and field celebration—probably spread out across multiple days to make it safe.

Ann Teich pointed out that these are neighborhood schools and they are good schools. Want to make sure that neighborhood is aware of events and have a chance to see how great they are, because there are other outdated narratives that must be dispelled by those of us who know better.

**Burnet Middle School Principal Marvelia De La Rosa**

Our parent support specialist, Yuri Trevino has been a key person helping keep our families involved and engaged even during times when so many are learning remotely.

As for building improvements, the most important one is the resolution of the drainage issues in the back lot where the portables are, which should no longer become a meandering river whenever it rains.

Austin FC has been an amazing partner and has shown up with a $10,000 grant to the staff, and that helped lift spirits up for the faculty as they were struggling to re-think education in a pandemic. Austin FC also partnered with the Boys and Girls Club twice a week to practice soccer with students, bringing all the necessary equipment. The students LOVE it.

There are 217 students on-campus, and as conditions improve, the cafeteria will be available for the first time since the start of the pandemic, and students may be able to eat outdoors. Navarro's construction teacher was able to get some picnic benches built, and the Burnet community took care of getting them finished.

Much of the garden plants and the front entrance landscaping was destroyed by the winter storm, but the goats Captain and Sailor and all the chickens survived and are faring well.

May 8 is the 4th annual Spring Fiesta at Burnet, organized in partnership with Austin Voices. It will be an outside event for the community, but particularly targeted at rising 6th graders. There will be two cohorts/grade levels of students who are in middle school, but many of whom haven't been in the building yet, so the building will be open for tours that day. There will be resources and we're trying to have vaccinations on-site, if at all possible. There will be activities and the mariachi group will perform as well as the dance team (which was only started two years ago).

**Navarro Early College High School Principal Steven Covin**

Navarro is working with Walgreens to get 900 Pfizer vaccines on Saturday for students over 16 and their families. Half of the appointments were filled in just a few hours. There may be even more opportunities moving forward. The second dose of the Pfizer vaccine will be made available on campus on May 8. The hope is to continue with similar vaccination events for Burnet and other schools in the area during the coming weeks.

Of Navarro's upcoming graduating class, 50 students will either earn Associate's degrees or be certified as electricians upon graduation.

We have a lot more students on campus, and we're making a huge outreach to bring more back. This week, 800 end-of-course exams and SAT tests have been administered in person on campus. We're also looking at expanded summer learning opportunities to help students who may have fallen behind. This year, our academics have been augmented by grants from Subaru and Austin Education Fund.

It's been a really challenging year, but we're excited to see some change and light at the end of the tunnel and get our students back in the building because that's where they need to be to be successful.

All varsity sports seasons were completed this year, but it was more difficult to maintain Fine Arts given that many of their events are intended to be indoors, so we're trying to offer more opportunities. Our Agriculture and Career and Technology Education teams have begun competing again in statewide competitions. We're going to be able to do a safe and socially distant prom, partnering with Prom Rack. This helps students get assistance for prom dresses.

There are a number of building improvements, including a design studio modeled on the one at IBM's facilities near the Domain, as IBM is a partner supporting our P-Tech program, which includes ACC courses in Computer Programming or User Experience Design, so that students who graduate have the skills to be "first in line" for job interviews at IBM.

In addition, new carpeting has been installed in the library and new flooring installed in the foyer.

Finally, Navarro is exploring some beautification projects for the athletic fields with the help of Nancy Lehman and the North Austin Rotary Club. Navarro is always looking for additional community support for projects such as this.

Ann Teich elaborated on the plans—as a school project, students will design a plan to make the area around the athletic fields more welcoming in ways that are sustainable. Then Austin ISD and community partners such as the Rotary Club and possibly others who are interested in beautifying the neighborhood can pitch in to raise funds and provide "sweat equity" to build out the plan. She wants Navarro to be a showpiece for the community—it's a 24-hour 365-day campus with so many community members using it and supporting it by helping take care of the gardens in the summer when students and faculty aren't there and so on.

**Austin ISD Trustee Kevin Michael Foster, District 3**

He began by noting that there's always an open invitation to having field trips for any groups of Austin ISD teachers and principals to come to UT-Austin and visit classrooms to help students imagine themselves being successful in college.

He showed some maps from a KVUE news report on a UT study which confirmed the serious disparities in the response to COVID from east to west. But the "half of the city" isn't really just only AISD Districts 1 and 2 and the parts of the city on the east side of I-35. NACA and AISD District 3 has challenges more like East Austin rather than the rest of the city. We need to make sure that we aren't lost in the shuffle when conversations of equity arise.

The vaccination opportunity at Navarro was an example of this. The initial conversation recognized that equity was an important consideration for where to vaccinate, but nobody thought about Navarro being an appropriate site. Once Kevin suggested Navarro, there was no resistance, but it wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been brought up. Once that happened, the community took charge and made it happen.

He related a campus visit to Guerrero-Thompson Elementary (near Rundberg and Lamar) and related the story of a young boy, Damian, who saved lives by raising the alarm in the middle of the night to a fire in an apartment complex. Several families at the school were displaced. The principal celebrated this boy's actions with a ceremony involving the Fire Chief, the Acting Police Chief, and several AISD trustees, rather than focusing on the pain and the horror that was caused. When one of the displaced families needed support because they spoke only Arabic, the EMTs first thought was to get language support from the school. Another girl Kevin met at the ceremony who was displaced was a student at Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders who had come to the USA from Nigeria just a year ago.

Kevin said that this is the way we should we doing schooling. We are setting the table for academic outcomes to occur by insuring the health of the community by the way we take care of each other.

Other priorities for Kevin as a trustee are: Health and vaccinations and safety; transportation; and School Resource Officers on campus.

Students who were going to Dobie were walking from the west side of I-35 to get to Dobie because AISD didn't use to provide transportation for students who lived within 2 miles of the school. Now, where someone demonstrates the need for transportation—whether because of dangers intersections, or hot-spots for crime—the district will provide buses for students 4/10 of a mile from their campus.

Many of our School Resource Officers are amazing and wonderful. But there are some who are the wrong ones, and that's hugely problematic. Clarity of the role of SROs on campus is required so that they do the job the way they're supposed to, and so that teachers don't call when they're not supposed to. That way we have an ecosystem where the SROs are a huge benefit to our kids.

These are some of the things on my mind. It's all about a cultural-ecological sysem. To achieve the goal of student excellence, you need content and knowledge, but you need all of the surrounding supports in place. Our strongest principals understand this, and know the apartment complexes and the neighborhood groups well. It is a system. In this neighborhood, we have everything we need to have excellence and amazing diversity.

He encouraged the community to go to his Facebook page as a trustee "TrusteeKevin," with a lot of information. His personal Facebook page also contains essays about his opinions.Twitter handle is @FosterintheATX.

In answer to questions raised by members:

Furniture that is being replaced but still in serviceable condition will be recycled as part of a plan by the Chief Operations Office Matias Segura. It will be taken to an AISD warehouse, where it will be offered to students, their families, and faculties. After that, what remains may be donated.

Many of the Campus Advisory Councils (CACs) at NACA-area schools have openings for "Community Member" representatives, i.e. neighborhood residents who do NOT have children at the school. The CAC is required by state law to review and comment on the Campus Educational Program, the Campus Performance, the Campus Improvement Plan, the Campus Staff Development Plan, and the Campus Budget, as well as providing input to the Principals, who ultimately have the decision-making responsibility for their campuses.

The meetings for schools who need a "Community Member" representative are:

* 1st Thursday of the month in the afternoon at Cook
* 2nd Monday of the month in the afternoon at Wooldridge
* 2nd Wednesday of the month at 5 pm as an online meeting at Burnet

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm by President Matt Myers.