



# Southgate News

February 2006

## **February Meeting Tuesday February 28, 2006**

7:30 pm, at the Plaza Hilton Hotel, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, on Travis between Swift and Addison. Reception and cash bar begin at 7:00 pm. Free parking is available in the hotel garage!

**-Ms. Asmara Tekle Johnson** from **Citizens Against Eminent Domain Abuse** will discuss her organization and its efforts to preserve and protect neighborhoods. Ms Johnson is a law professor and a resident of Houston's Central City neighborhood where the Texas Medical Center recently used its power of eminent domain.

**-The Honorable Anne Clutterbuck** our new District C Council Member will bring us up to date on happenings at City Hall.

**-Vote on Civic Club Bylaw Amendment (see Page 4 for details)**

**-Other topics of interest**

**Southgate Civic Club Dues for 2006 are Now Due!** See last page for details.

**November Meeting Highlights:** Approximately **40** attended.

### **2006 Officers Elected**

President	Catherine Leachman
VP	Stan Druck
VP	Blaine Hollinger
VP	Veljko Roskar
Treasurer	Bill Burge
Secretary	Andrew McCullough

(Burt Calabro will continue to distribute our newsletter and Bea King will continue to welcome new residents to the community. Andrew McCullough will serve as Newsletter editor.)

### **Hilton Storage Containers**

Richard Merrill discussed the Hilton's placement of storage containers on a Swift Blvd residential lot.

**Background:** *In October of 2005, the Hilton moved storage containers onto the vacant lot at 1902 Swift Blvd: a lot owned by the Hilton's proprietor. These containers were used to store furniture while hotel rooms were renovated. The*

*Hilton was notified that using the lot in this manner constituted a deed restriction violation, but chose to continue the usage. Richard Merrill reported that Swift residents Bob and Sally Shipman filed a complaint with the City of Houston regarding the deed restriction violation presented by the placement of the containers. Mr. Merrill explained that the Civic Club has no authority to assess fines; it can only participate in suits initiated by the City or homeowners to enforce deed restrictions. The City does have the authority to impose a fine of up to \$1000 per day per continued violation. A homeowners association would have the authority to impose fines if that were a provision included in the powers granted in its governing documents. (Editors note: At the time of writing, all containers have been removed.)*

### **Richard Merrill Recognized**

At the close of the meeting, Richard Merrill was thanked for his many years of service as President of our Civic Club.

## **Missing Southgate Civic Club Meeting Signs**

The Civic Club is missing 3 meeting signs. The signs disappeared between October 2<sup>nd</sup> and November 1<sup>st</sup> of last year. If you have them or know of their

whereabouts, please contact any Civic Club officer and we will retrieve them. Thanks!

## **Metrontario Construction Update**

Metrontario has notified the Civic Club that they are ready to begin construction on the site of the old Towers Hotel. This property is on the north side of Holcombe east of Montclair.

Construction fences should start to appear in early March and the ground breaking is scheduled for April 3.

## **Montclair School Zone**

Several members of the Montclair traffic committee met with Mr. Samuel Sarabia, the Principal of Roberts Elementary, to discuss creating a school zone on Montclair. Mr. Sarabia was very receptive to the idea and has spoken with HISD as well as the City of Houston representative for schools. The representative has made the following recommendations for increasing safety on Montclair:

1. Create a school zone on Montclair from Southgate to Dryden
2. Install no parking signs along one side of Montclair (7-9 AM and 3-4 PM)
3. Paint crosswalks at Swift, Addison and Watts
4. Make Montclair and Addison a 4-way stop.

The Civic Club would like to thank Mr. Sarabia for his interest and fast action.

## **University Place Association Meeting Highlights**

Catherine Leachman attended the University Place Association annual meeting on January 26, 2006. A few highlights:

### **Kirby Flood Relief Project**

Mr. Martin Cristofaro updated the community on the status of the ongoing Kirby Flood Relief Project and the associated construction on Kirby Drive. The objective of this project is to relieve flooding in the TMC area and the project involves the installation of 15' X 15' underground concrete boxes to handle runoff water. Mr. Cristofaro reported that the underground work on Kirby is nearly complete south of Dorrington and street

reconstruction will soon start in that area. Rebuilding the street is expected to take about 6 months. The next phase of the project (Dorrington to Swift) is scheduled to begin on February 28. During this phase, Holcombe will be reduced from 6 to 4 lanes at the Kirby intersection, but all Holcombe lanes will be open weekdays from 7-9 AM and 4-6 PM to facilitate the flow of rush hour traffic. Additionally, work will be completely suspended from November 1, 2006 through January 15, 2007 to accommodate holiday shopping traffic in and out of Rice Village and the Upper Kirby District. This phase of the project will take about 1 year, including street reconstruction.

## **Mayor White's Comments**

Houston Mayor Bill White addressed crime in the City. The Mayor noted that crime in the past two years was lower than in the previous two years, but that the current trend is "disturbing". Mr. White would like to see more resources for fighting crime and gang activity in the City. Mayor White reported that 65% of the City budget is for Fire protection, EMS service and Police protection. He is concerned about the high number of Police responses to false burglar alarms and would like to see legislation to make property owners financially accountable for false alarms. The Mayor would also like large apartment complex owners to be more responsible for the security of their properties.

## **City Council Member Clutterbuck's Comments**

Council member Anne Clutterbuck, like the Mayor, is concerned about crime in the City. Ms. Clutterbuck also described initiatives to reduce graffiti in the City. These initiatives include:

1. Removal of the graffiti within 48 hours of reporting
2. Rewards for information about those responsible for graffiti
3. Partnering with The Glassell School of Art to find alternative outlets for those generating graffiti.

Council member Clutterbuck also addressed the status of the previously requested pedestrian light on Greenbrier at Roberts Elementary. She reported that the City has conducted studies and found that the traffic is significant. The City has, however, elected to address the problem with additional guards rather than a new light.

## **Rice University Collaborative Research Center Update**

Diana Randel and Greg Marshall have updated The Southgate Civic Club on the Collaborative Research Center proposed for the land east of Travis and north of Dryden. Mr. Marshall is the Director of Community and Government Relations at Rice University and Ms. Randel is the Program Director for the proposed Center. They reported that Rice is now trying to finalize business relationships with the institutions involved in the project. These institutions are: Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital,

MD Anderson, UT Health Sciences Center and The Methodist Hospital. Rice hopes to complete pre-planning by the end of this year and to open the building in 2011. Rice would like to have about 1.2 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of building, have all of the parking underground and use the first floor for pedestrian friendly retail. The partner institutions are, however, concerned that this will result in an "uncomfortably low" number of parking spaces.

## Proposed Change to The Civic Club Bylaws

At our February 28, 2006 general meeting, the membership will be asked to vote on a proposed change to the Civic Club bylaws. Article VI Section 2 states that *"Withdrawals from funds of this club shall be signed for by two of the following three officers: President, Treasurer, and a Vice-President designated by the President"*. The proposed change states that

*"Withdrawals of \$500 or less from funds of this club shall be signed for by one of the following three officers: President, Treasurer, or a Vice-President designated by the President. Withdrawals of over \$500 from funds of this club shall be signed for by two of the following three officers: President, Treasurer, and a Vice-President designated by the President"*.

## Welcome to Our New Neighbors

**Shakespeare:** Jonathan Adler, Lisa Helfman and Drew (7 months)

Please notify Bea King (713 521-3171) of new neighbors. Bea has welcome packets containing lots of information about our neighborhood and our City.

## Other News

Jerome Gray of Southgate has left Channel 11 KHOU T.V. to join Channel 2 KPRC. He will return to the air sometime this summer.

**Feel free to contact any of your Civic Club officers** with neighborhood information or with your interests and concerns about your neighborhood and Civic Club.

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Vice President	Stan Druck	(713)942-2347
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## **Southgate News**

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