Actually, it was 104 Trees and We have to Wait for the last one

SEMARK LANDSCAPING WASTED NO TIME PLANTING THE 100 REPLACEMENT TREES FOR NSR 467 ONCE FINAL APPROVAL OF SPECIES AND LOCATION WAS OBTAINED FROM THE CITY’S URBAN FORESTER.

We were originally to have received 100 trees from 5 species, but Semark provided 104 trees from six species after negotiating with property owners and the Urban Forester. Some controversies erupted during the planting of the new trees—mostly involving people who chose not to attend the February 19th FMC meeting or to email their preferences before planting began. For the most part, however, folks are very happy with the results, and with the addition of two new colorful species to our canopy: Red Oaks, and Red Maples (which will provide a splash of red in both spring and fall!)

Trees planted by volunteers over the past few months in locations specifically designated for replacement trees were carefully excavated and placed back into nursery containers so they can be replanted by volunteers in other locations that do not conflict with the master tree plan approved by the Urban Forester. Only the trees planted by Semark as part of NSR 467 are covered by the two-year maintenance plan. Anyone who chose to have trees planted by the volunteers instead must care for those trees themselves.

HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT C CANDIDATES Nick Hellyar, Abbie Kamin, and Greg Meyers will attend the March 19th FMC meeting to introduce themselves and answer questions about their vision for District C & Houston following the November City Elections. This is a unique opportunity to meet three of the seven declared candidates running to replace term-limited CM Ellen Cohen. Come make your expectations for your Council representative known to those seeking our votes.
Two-thirds of FMC Residential Members’ Voting Privileges Suspended March 2

FAILURE TO PAY ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES WITHIN 60 DAYS resulted in the suspension of membership and voting privileges for two-thirds of FMC’s residential Members as of March 2nd. Residential dues remain only $10 per person per year and are payable January 1st each year. We offer three methods to pay your dues: online using PayPal, venmo, your credit or debit card; or in cash or by personal check at a monthly FMC meeting.

Payment of your dues will immediately reinstate your membership and voting privileges.

This Week at City Hall

Prop B Implementation Schedule Released

Last week, Mayor Turner shared an open letter with Houstonians on the background and timeline of the controversial Prop B, the voter-approved ballot measure to mandate “pay parity” between Houston’s fire and police departments on the basis of job title/classification and seniority. On Thursday, March 7th, he shared his ongoing plans for the implementation of Prop B.

Per City Controller Chris Brown, the measure was estimated to cost $100,000,000.00 annually, the equivalent of approximately a 29% raise across the board.

Adding the cost of Prop B to our existing projected deficit, Mayor Turner and Council must now eliminate a deficit of $98,000,000.00 for FY2020, which begins July 1, 2019. This is the biggest deficit in the City of Houston’s history. Our city cannot raise property taxes or sales taxes to garner additional revenue due to voter- and State-imposed revenue caps. Council and the Mayor are legally obligated to balance the budget each year. Thus, unfortunately, Council’s only option to cover the deficit is by implementing steep layoffs and cuts to City services:

Fire Chief Pena has confirmed that approximately 400 firefighters are expected to be laid off.

Since the departments differ in terms of education requirements for leadership ranks, Chief Pena noted that, to receive pay parity, firefighters must meet education parity for equivalent ranks. Thus, for instance, if a bachelor’s degree is required for a certain rank in HPD, to receive the “Prop B raise,” a firefighter in the equivalent rank in HFD will also be required to have a bachelor’s degree.

In addition, Fire Department schedules will be converted from a 4-shift paradigm to 3-shifts. These two changes, Chief Pena noted, allow him to reduce the cost of implementation of Prop B from $100M to approximately $80M. With the reduction in force of approximately 400 firefighters, the cost for Prop B implementation is reduced by $25M to $55M.

The Mayor has noted that the following layoffs and cuts will also be necessary:

- An additional 100 municipal employees are expected to be laid off.
- All departments must make a minimum of 3% budget cuts across the board.
- Council will reduce our fund balance (the City’s emergency savings account), to 8%.
- We are legally required to maintain a 7.5% balance but cutting to the minimum may impact our credit rating.

Those three changes will balance the budget for the current FY2019, allowing Council to pay firefighters the Prop B raise from January 1st – June 30th, 2019.

However, because some of those cuts are one-time solutions rather than recurring cost savings, Council must still address a $75M deficit for FY2020, which begins July 1st, 2019.

Steep cuts to City services, including parks and libraries, are anticipated. The details are still being determined.

Over the next two months, the Houston Information Technology Department (HITS), the Human Resources Department (HR), and the Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department (ARA) will be working together to update the City of Houston’s payroll systems to be able to incorporate the changes. The departments must complete a series of technical tasks including creating new HR classifications and wage structures, testing the new system configuration, migrating their changes to our SAP production environment, running a payroll testing simulation, auditing the results, and more.

Firefighters will see the Prop B increase in their paychecks, including retroactive pay from January 1st, beginning on May 9th, 2019.

Mayor Turner has stressed that a solution exists that would negate the above cuts:

If the Houston Professional Fire Fighters’ Association will agree to phase in the implementation of Prop B over five years, no layoffs will be necessary.

Mayor Pro Tem Cohen strongly supports this solution as a compromise that will implement the will of the voters without massive layoffs.
The annual District C CIP Meeting will take place on Thursday, March 28th at 6:30PM at the West Gray Metropolitan Multi-Service Center (1475 W. Gray St, 77019). Our annual meeting focuses on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the City’s master document that prioritizes infrastructure improvement projects that will take place city-wide over the next five years. Information tables and experts will be available before and after the meeting to answer specific questions and provide resources. For those unable to attend, the meeting will be archived online via HTV. We hope to see you there!

Neartown Association Needs Secretary

Neartown Association, the official representative body for Super-Neighborhood 24, needs someone to serve on its Board as Secretary. Any member in good standing of any of Neartown’s 18 constituent Civic Clubs is eligible to serve. Duties include recording the minutes of Neartown’s monthly meetings, held the fourth Tuesday of each month from 7-8 pm at the Cherryhurst Community Center. This position affords the unique opportunity to learn about programs and proposed policies affecting Houston’s Neartown/Montrose area. For more information visit https://Neartown.org

611 West Main is March Yard of the Month

Congratulations to Rob and Elena Northrup, the first winners of FMC’s Yard of the Month post NSR467! Not willing to wait or to trust the workers to complete the restoration of the “government grass”, Ron and Elena spent weekends digging out construction rubble and conditioning the soil in the parkway between the sidewalk and curb. Elena was even spotted atop a ladder carefully sculpting the yaupon tree until it was just perfect.

Why are the Construction Guys Pouring Concrete into the New Storm Inlets?

Several observant and curious FMC residents were puzzled and alarmed last week when they noticed the construction crews pouring concrete into the new storm inlets throughout the neighborhood. Why on earth would they pour concrete into these new drains that have been working so well to prevent flooding?

The answer is as simple as it is brilliant – to level out the bases and reduce the amount of standing water—and breeding zones for our state pest, the mosquito!
April Foolishness returns to First Montrose Commons – this time on a Friday night (so you can’t use the excuse that it’s a “school night”!)

We are sending out this advance notice so you have plenty of time to get your maddest, most creative, most MONTROSE hat together for our infamous Mad Hatter Contest. Of course there’ll be live entertainment and plenty of pot-luck food and drink.

Come celebrate an evening of mirth, music, and mad hats to welcome the coming of Spring!

What’s a Neighborhood Patron?

Like the generous families of the Renaissance who sponsored artists for public benefit, FMC’s Neighborhood Sponsors contribute substantially to our annual budget—enabling us to improve our work for the neighborhood year after year. Their generous support helps us keep your residential dues the lowest of any active Civic Association.
If you own a business and wish to become a commercial member of First Montrose Commons, please contact us via our web page:
https://firstmontrosecommons.org

Strong neighborhood businesses help build strong neighborhoods.
My Dear, you’ve waited too long - I’m afraid now you’ll have to click 4 times to get there ...

2019 FMC Residential Dues are NOW PAST DUE

All Residential Memberships in The Civic Association of The First Mont-rose Commons EXPIRE each December 31st.
Memberships are suspended March 2nd for those who have not yet paid.

Please RENEW TODAY so we can devote our energy to our core mission rather than seeking renewals. YOUR support keeps YOUR neighborhood the best place to live in Houston!

Scan the QRCode above with your smartphone and it will take you directly to our PayPal renewal page. You do not have to have a PayPal account – you can pay by credit or debit card, or your venmo account. Dues remain $10 per person per year. If paying for more than one person please be sure to indicate the names of each person in the instructions to seller field.

Did you Remember
To Check Your Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

You DO have working smoke AND Carbon Monoxide alarms on each floor and near each bedroom, don’t you? The semiannual ritual of checking the batteries in these lifesaving devices each time we switch to or from Daylight Saving Time has been made somewhat less essential now that most manufacturers offer both line-wired and 10-year battery versions, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t press the “TEST” button to verify that each device is still actually working. Some “smart” systems even test themselves monthly – but usually during daylight hours when you might not be home to hear the results. Even these “smart” alarms have a button to test their function.

If you alarms/detectors are more than 10 years old (how time does fly!) – do yourself a favor and replace them all with more modern devices. It is recommended that every residence have at least one line-wired-battery-backup combination detector, and one battery operated combination CO-Smoke detector.
Like patterns? Try this one. There was a rash of BMV's (Burglary of a Motor Vehicle) in late January and evening hours. All were located adjacent to a restaurant. What is one to do? Stop eating at your favorite neighborhood spot? For FMC residents, it’s easy. We just walk.

**FMC Crime Reports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Premises</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>Street</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Always Report Everything!
Police Patrols are assigned based on reports received.

HIDE LOCK REPORT EVERYTHING!

**Buffalo Soldiers National Museum** - [www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com](http://www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com) (Free on Thursday 1-5pm)

3816 Caroline St – in the old National Guard Armory A complete look at African American military history from 1770 to 2000 (Revolutionary War to the Persian Gulf War)

**Houston Center for Contemporary Craft** - [http://www.crafthouston.org](http://www.crafthouston.org)

To Be of Use: The Functional Ceramics of Mike Heike — Through May 12

**Houston Museum of Natural Science** - [www.hmns.org](http://www.hmns.org)

Curator’s Choice: Recent Acquisitions of the Houston Museum of Natural Science: Free with admission.

**Biophilia: A Dialogue of Nature Art and Science** — Opens February 8

**Death By Natural Causes** — Extended by popular demand through Labor Day 2019

**Museum of Fine Arts** - [www.mfah.org](http://www.mfah.org)

**Garden Paradise: The Magnificent Safavid Carpet from the Burrell Collection, Glasgow** — Through March 24

**Vincent van Gogh: His Life in Art** — Through June 27

**Arts of Islamic Lands: Selections from the al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait** — Through December 29

**Contemporary Arts Museum** - [www.camh.org](http://www.camh.org)

Cheryl Donegan: ORIZ + VEILS — Through March 31

**Shapeshifters** - A group exhibition featuring work by over forty Houston-area teen artists. — Through June 16,

**The Menil** - [www.menil.org](http://www.menil.org)

**Richmond Hall: Dan Flavin untitled installation**

**Koni Horn: When I Breathe, I Draw, Part 1** — Through May 19 in the Menil Drawing Institute

**Collection Close-Up: John Cage** — Through May 12 in the Main Building

**Contemporary Focus: Trenton Doyle Hancock** — Through May 19 in the Main Building

**Houston Museum of African American Culture** - [www.hmaac.org](http://www.hmaac.org) Free admission

4807 Caroline CLOSED Sunday - Tuesday

**Timberline Fitness** will be leaving their location at 3939 Montrose just as soon as their new site is completed. That would be on Jack Street right across from Brooklyn Athletic Club. That’s an elevator shaft in the middle of two lots. No completion date yet but they’re aiming for August.

The **Brooklyn Athletic Club** is undergoing a rework. It’s said the chef wants to go in a new direction. No more wieners on a bun?

If you want to have a look at the new mural on the east side of Crooker Hall facing Sullen Hall, there is an elevator to the third location of Memorial Tailors. The photo studio lasted for 70 years — two generations. What are the odds for the tailor?

Don’t Miss the March 19th Meeting of The Civic Association of The First Montrose Commons! We will have three of the seven Candidates running for District C this November. This is your chance to help shape the future of District C for the next six years in a rare close-up meeting with those seeking your vote. It all starts promptly at 7:00pm in Room 106 of The Montrose Center – A First Montrose Commons Neighborhood Patron at 401 Branard at Bute St.
Dues for Membership in First Montrose Commons ARE DUE EACH JANUARY.
Please help us to continue to advocate for our neighborhood by joining or renewing now. – Thank you

IF YOU LIVE, OWN PROPERTY, OR RUN A BUSINESS IN THE AREA ABOVE, WE WANT YOU TO JOIN OUR EFFORTS TO KEEP FMC THE BEST PLACE TO BE!

Residents pay only $10 per person per year.
Businesses can choose from three levels of membership from $50 - $500 per year.

March 19, 2019 FMC Meeting Agenda

- District C CIP Meeting March 28 – Still no work on Richmond or Alabama
- NSR 467 Updates—Time for the Punch List
- S ter C – Meet the Candidates – District C 2019
- FMC Quarterly Financial Report, Membership Suspensions & Renewals
- Parking Enforcement

NEVER LEGAL

1. Parking on any street for more than 24 hours.
2. Parking blocking ANY portion of ANY sidewalk – EVER.
3. Parking between the sidewalks and the curb.
4. Parking within 20 feet of ANY intersection.
5. Parking within 30 feet of STOP sign or crosswalk.
6. Parking facing the wrong way.

Not even for “just a minute!”

The STREET IS NOT YOUR GARAGE

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Grady Cayce
Treasurer

Leslie Turner / Chris Vandewater
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William Stewart
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Dir. of Membership

Bruce Clark
Dir. of Security

Helpful Contact Information

CrimeReports™
https://www.crimereports.com/
LexisNexis® | Community Crime Map
https://communitycrimemap.com

Who You Gonna Call?

Emergencies - Life, Property in IMMEDIATE DANGER – 911
Non-emergency Police
(Parking violation, Crime Report)
713-884-3131
HPD NO DOPE HOTLINE 713-466-3673
All other City Services 311

Best to use smartphone app
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NEXTDOOR.COM
– South Montrose Group –

Join or Renew Your Membership for 2019 ONLINE
The Civic Association of The First Montrose Commons, Inc.

https://firstmontrosecommons.org

Still only $10.00 per person per year!
That’s just 3¢ per day!

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