

# An Excited Chamber Crowd Welcomes One of Its Own

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***By Jawahar Malhotra***

**HOUSTON:** A rebel rousing from the Chairman of the Metro Board energized the crowd that had come together to heap praise on one of its own as the Indo American Chamber of Commerce held a reception for the newest appointee Sanjay Ram this past Thursday evening, July 8 at the HESS Club on Westheimer over cocktails and appetizers, the Indian ones catered by Dawat Catering.

Chairman Gilbert Garcia, not one for pomp and circumstance, in an open-necked shirt (“Why didn’t you wear your jacket?” ribbed Mayor Annise Parker during group pictures later) and egged on the crowd to loud cheers. “This is a celebration!” he shouted, adding “Sanjay, you have to be careful for what you want because you may get it!” He was referring to Ram’s recent appointment to the Metro Board by the Mayor. “We have a new wing man,” continued Garcia, “and that’s Sanjay Ram.” Ram will complete the remaining term (till April 2016) of Board member Allen Watson who resigned earlier.

Ram responded he was ready to be that wing man, as he warmed the crowd up before Parker arrived late, from a later than usual CIP meeting at City Hall. Ram thanked fellow-members Texas Lyceum (a statewide bi-partisan policy group) who had come for the event as the others who had been involved with during his stints with numerous boards and organizations in Houston. ‘In India, public transportation left a big impression in my life,’ quipped Ram. “All I wanted to do was grown up and drive a bus! Now that I’ve grown up, I realize there are other ways to get people to their destinations.”



As he winded down, Parker arrived and took the podium to declare that she was proud of all her appointees to the Metro Board as they had restored credibility with their unique skills. She lauded Ram for his special skills and long list of community involvement. “I have appointed three engineers now, and Sanjay is the most extroverted,” she quipped, “but Gilbert is the best choice I have made,” pointing to the Chairman.

Current IACCGH President Ashok Garg commended Ram, who was the President last year. “We are proud of where you are now, Sanjay,” he said. “You are an outgoing person, brilliant, a born leader, witty, yet always approachable.” Raj Basavaraju, the President of the American Society of Indian Engineers and Architects said the Ram was a shining example for other young professionals.

Dick Huebner, who was head of the Houston Minority Business Council for almost 4 years, lavished more praise. Long-term IACCGH Executive Director Jadgip Ahluwalia complimented Ram for his work with the Chamber and revealed that Ram had just left his firm for other opportunities yet undisclosed.

Indian Consul General Parvathaneni Harish was full of admiration for “the wonderful and unique city of Houston. Diversity and integration is ingrained in the DNA of the City.” He reminded the crowd that “for Indians arriving in the US, the first port-of-call is universities and the STEM disciplines”, alluding to his oft mentioned refrain that they should try to return to their Motherland to teach, on short-term sabbaticals from work, in short-staffed universities in the Old Country. “Your mother’s wait to go back to India,” he added with a chuckle, “will be longer now!”