

Garden District Board Meeting – August 18, 2020 – 7 p.m.

The meeting was held in Anne Trapp's yard, using social distancing. Present were President Claire Pittman, Anne Trapp, Eric Troutman, Mike Schexnayder, Treasurer Ted Magee, Joy Couvillion, Michael Myers, Willie and Mary Fontenot and new board members Babette Schlegel, Michael Helms and Neill Terry.

Claire introduced Jay Gaudet, who is running for the District 10 council seat. He wanted to know about the drainage problems in the neighborhood and drainage was already on the agenda. Katrina brought him from New Orleans to Baton Rouge. He has taught at Southern University and in a couple of high schools. He is a certified realtor, which he uses to mentor young people through his community development organization called Restore the Block. The goal is to teach them to buy run down property, restore it and put it back into use, rather than send it on the path of demolition.

Tom Douhat, a Garden District resident, then spoke about the drainage problems that he noticed after moving here in December 2017. The following June, his house flooded. Part of the problem is that along Dawson's Creek there is more building going on that involves impervious surfaces that will not soak up storm water. There is more water in rivers than there used to be. Culverts are working as dams. The city is planning to fix this, but is waiting for money. The city does have accurate GIS maps. Our water can't get to Dawson's Creek. The pipes are not large enough and more storage is needed. It is harder to fix older areas, like ours, and more expensive. He has met with Mayor Broome and the Director of Drainage, Fred Raiford. He would like to write a letter on behalf of the Garden District Civic Association stating where we are now. While there is a Storm Water Long Range Plan", there is now maintenance plan for the parish. They haven't comprehensively gone through the problems regarding maintenance. They haven't developed a structure to prevent floods. There is a low standard for this.

There was a discussion about the flooding on Cherokee. There is a localized depression that fills up like a bowl, flooding homes, and then empties fairly quickly. But the damage is done. The city is waiting for Federal matching funds to remedy this.

Bike Lanes on Government St.: Claire recommended painting the bike Lanes green, putting warning bumps to help protect bikers from being hit and limit the speed limit.

The new board members introduced themselves and gave a little of their history.

Claire will be sending out an email to the board with two tabs, one with future meeting dates and the other with contact information for the board members.

Ted gave the financial report. Our total membership income is down, but this has been an unusual year. Members received automatic emails before their membership ended, saying if they did nothing, it would automatically renew, but no letter went out to non-members and no signs went up in the neighborhood. Anne wondered if a study could be done to see if the people receiving welcoming packets join. Ted commented that he thought the welcoming packets are a good thing whether they join or not. They contribute to making our neighborhood special. Because of the excessive heat and the champagne in the packet, Anne has not been leaving packets at doors when people aren't home. Since COVID-19 has canceled group neighborhood activities, it was suggested that the newsletter have photos of what people have been doing, including Eric driving through the area in an Easter Bunny outfit, waving to children, the "Chalk the Walk" activity and Ginger's free flowers. In

an E-Blast we could ask the neighbors what they did and for recommendations for best practices. All this would be part of the promotional to encourage membership.

Security was cut back. Security is still where most of our money goes. Money was saved by having no crawfish boil this year. Ted recommended that the extra money be used to double the number of trees that will be trimmed and mulched. There will be promotional information put out before and after to let folks know that the GDCA is behind the tree restorations. The board approved of Ted calling David Benton to secure a good price. If anyone sees dangerous trees on public property, they should report them to 311. A committee of Claire, Mike, Michael, Anne, and Heather was designated.

Eric gave the Utilities and Security report. Utilities are fine, so there was nothing to report. Prior to July we were doing very well. There is a young Black male who is mentally challenged who has been causing some problems. He has been picked up by police. Eric gave a report of all the crimes recorded. The majority of thefts occur between 4 am and 1 pm, so patrols have adjusted to that. There was a recent death at 818 Camellia. The homicide division is handling it, but it hasn't been ruled a homicide. Patrols run for 30-35 hours a month. Seth Gautier, with the police department is overseeing and patrolling our neighborhood. He has been cooperative and efficient.

Mike gave a report about the alleys. The board approved his plan of getting contacts for each alley to work with their neighbors and to go ahead with his plan for working with DPW and the neighbors to maintain the alleys. Babette, Anne and another board member offered to help if their alleys don't have anyone. Mike said that people could read details by going to the Google docx, alley and 2020. The GDCA website also has an alley area under resources. Something will be put on the website about keeping the alleys clean and trimmed.

Events will be discussed next month. If we have a "Champagne Stroll" we will play up ***We're Back!***

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Fontenot