

Garden District Civic Association

Baton Rouge

Garden District Board Minutes – Feb. 21, 2007

President Randy Nichols opened the meeting at 7 p.m. at the Westra's home. Present were John Rice, Suzanne and Mike Schexnayder, David Franz, Heather Westra, Mark Upton, Carolyn Schwarzhoff, Sonya Pickens, Cindy Elliott, Joe Alton, Ana Forbes, and Mary Fontenot. Guests were Jason Day and his wife, Heather Sewell, the owners of 2010 Wisteria Street.

Mike Schexnayder reported that Don Savoie and David Franz have chosen to step down from the board so their vacancies will need to be filled. Nominations can be received from the floor at the annual meeting. The committee has not met and there are no prospects so far.

Sonya Pickens sent the financial report through the e-mail. She will prepare a summary to hand out at the annual meeting. Randy offered to make copies. Mike suggested that the board make an anticipated budget. David, Mike, and Joe offered to work on that.

For the security report, Carolyn said that Officer Don Stone would come to the annual meeting to report on the latest criminal activities. Don Stone said that someone has been sleeping in the garden. We weren't sure if he meant the Community Garden or Garden District Nursery. Joe said a man slept on a porch, took off his boots, and stole a bike.

Mark Upton reported that the historic district committee has met and that the Roseland Terrace guidelines will be very similar to the Drehr Place guidelines. Roseland Terrace is structured a little differently because the lots tend to be smaller and there are more small bungalows. Fire safety and aesthetics were taken into consideration when the committee worked on the setback provisions. The house that is being built on Oleander, near Camelia is an example of being too close to the next-door neighbor's house. John asked if there is anything about scale. Mark said that the guidelines already talk about scale. Mark said he would be ready to report on the guidelines at the annual meeting.

Annual Meeting: Presenters will be Sam Sanders, of Mid-City Redevelopment Alliance and Tom Stevens, from the Department of Public Works, to talk about drainage. Randy will recognize Ben Broussard's efforts to do something about drainage problems. It was reported that at Tulip and 22nd, instead of sewerage going up the manhole, it is now going in the storm drains. At Tulip and Camelia, toilet paper can be found in the street after a rain. Mary will invite Gerald Gaines from the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods. Ana is working on door prizes. She has made a solicitation letter. Carolyn said that Circa loves to donate. Peggy had tickets for door prizes last year. Ana will e-mail her and see if there are enough left over. Randy said that signs need to be made because the meeting will be at the library, not City Park. Because we announced that the meeting starts at 2 p.m. and the library doesn't open until 2 p.m., we will have visiting and refreshments after the meeting. Mike suggested that an e-mail be sent to the neighborhood so that food can come from the neighbors and not just the board. Randy said that he would compose it. Carolyn will put out an e-mail that says the official starting time will be 2:15 p.m.

The Tour of Homes will be April 29, 2007, from 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Cindy asked for help with the brochures and fans. Ana and Heather said that they would see if they could find people to help. Cindy asked for Money. Mark asked to authorize \$1,000. David seconded it.

There was a motion to approve Joe's suggestion to approve Bistro Byronz's advertisement on the GD e-mail

once a quarter. It passed. The board decided to make decisions like this on a case-by-case basis. Last time Bistro Byronz advertised, the GDCA made \$140. Heather wanted to know if anyone had submitted a Traffic Calming petition. Mike recommended that people make a statement about what to study and get signatures from your block. There is a woman in an SUV who races down Drehr. Myrtle has fast traffic too.

Suzanne reported on the live oak dedication, which will be at 10 a.m., on Feb. 24, 2007. Forty-four households adopted 101 trees. Mrs. Holden, the mayor's wife, will be present to name a new tree. Coleen Perrileaux Landry, the representative from the Louisiana Live Oak Society, Peggy Davis, from Baton Rouge Green, and Steve Shurtz and Jerry Juneau, both urban foresters with the city will be present. Media has been alerted. The special guests have been invited to Suzanne's house for a luncheon after the dedication. Suzanne requested \$75.00 to cover the costs of the event and the luncheon. Randy entertained the motion. Mark moved to accept it and Heather seconded it.

Jason Day has been erecting a building behind his house at 2010 Wisteria without first ascertaining a permit. The building is breaking two city codes so he is asking for a variance. There will be a variance hearing in March. The Days came to present their side of the argument. This is what Jason told the board. They bought the house two years ago from Jason's grandmother. It had been rental property for the past 20-25 years. In back there was a storage/garage/utility room with active termites. The slab was cracked so they took it up. The new slab is on the same footprint. The city inspector came with the first stop work order and said they needed a permit. Jason went to get the permit and was told he needed a waiver. Mr. Spillman, a city inspector, said that they could weatherproof it. Bill Moser, a city inspector, came and said they needed to stop. They called Neal Bezet and he said they could finish putting the felt on the roof. They said they needed to put fascia board to protect the felt and wood. It rained. That Monday, Martin Luther King Day, they finished weatherproofing. The inspector came back later and checked that they had stopped working. The POD that had been blocking the sidewalk was removed. An inspector came back a third time. Heather Sewell didn't think they had done anything that they shouldn't have done. They said they had no plans to rent the place. They were just improving it. They said there was already plumbing going out there. The orientation of the roof is not the same as the old roof. Water used to run down the side into their yard. Now it goes into the alley. Jason said he would put gutters on it. When asked where the gutters will drain, he said onto the ground.

The board discussed their concerns, which are that the water would probably run into the alley because it is low. The new roof is much higher than the old, reaching 16.7 feet. The building is 22sq.' over the allowable. When they sell the house, they next owner will probably rent out this building as an apartment. There would be no place off the alley or on the street for more cars. The building is set back 3 feet off the alley, but a new ordinance says it should have a 5-foot set back. John said that the first stop work order was Dec. 15, and the second was Jan. 12th. He said that they were told they could felt the roof not sheath the building. The Days keep saying that the building is for storage. Mary went to the zoning office and spoke to a woman there who said that Jason came in first asking for a permit to build a mother-in-law apartment. When told he couldn't do that he said it was to be an office. When told he couldn't do that he said it was to be for storage. He has stuck with that story ever since. But Mary found out that Jason's parents are paying for the building so they will have a place to stay in town when they come. The lot is zoned A2, which does not allow for apartments. Mary also called Neal Bezet, the city inspector, to ask him what he knew. His story did not match Jason's. Mr. Bezet said that Jason was told he could only put felt on the roof to protect the wood that was up there. Mr. Bezet advised him to do no more work because he would be wasting good money if the building had t come down.

Some board members felt that the board should take a stand and some felt they shouldn't, that they should speak as individuals.

People volunteered to meet at Sonya's house the next day to help stuff the dues envelopes.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Fontenot
Secretary