

Garden District Civic Association

Baton Rouge

February 24, 2008

Attendees signed in and visited. Randy Nichols called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Ana Forbes passed out and collected pieces of paper so people could write their names on them for the door prizes. The membership was given time to read the minutes from the 2007 annual meeting. Carolyn Schwarzhoff moved that they be accepted. Neill Terry seconded it and the minutes were approved.

Before introducing the board's slate of nominees Carolyn Schwarzhoff recognized and thanked the board that is rotating off, especially Randy Nichols who handled the job of president with skill during a tumultuous year. First the new nominees, Anna Hanks, Ellen Steirman Alderman, Ray Mack, Alex Tucker, and Paul Miller stood and introduced themselves. Then the rest of the proposed board who were present, Tim Page, Mary Fontenot, Sonya Pickens, Greta Corona, Ana Forbes, Beverly Arceneaux, and Sandi Lucas did the same. The membership voted unanimously in favor of the proposed board. Randy Nichols turned the meeting over to Tim Page who is the proposed future president of the association. Tim announced that upon checking the by-laws he read that the officers are not supposed to be chosen until the first board meeting after the election of the board. He said he would conduct this meeting and that could be discussed at the board meeting.

Sonya Pickens gave the financial report and had handouts for everyone showing the reports for the past three years and the financial statement in 2007. In 2005 and 2006 the association lost money so they cut back a little on patrols. The goal is to try to break even. More people sent in dues last year than expected so there was some money left over. Patrols will be stepped up some since we have the money. Carolyn recognized Sonya for her hard work and said that we have never had anyone take care of the books as well as she does.

Cpl. Stone gave a security report.

He said that there are no major problems other than the usual shed break-ins and car break-ins. He reminded us to not leave valuables in the car. They are too much of a temptation. There were some drug problems lately, but residents brought it to his attention and Narcotics cleared it up. Carolyn urged everyone to keep him informed. Cpl. Stone said that for immediate attention residents should call 389-2000. If it is something ongoing you may call his cell phone at 571-7244 or e-mail him at dstone@brgov.com. He checks his e-mails about every other day. Cpl. Stone was asked to give an overview of what they do. He said he and two other officers patrol 96 hours a month. It is sporadic, when they can fit it in. They don't do it on Saturday when everyone is out walking or working in the yard. They do it during the weekdays when people are at work or at night.

They charge \$20, which is way below the average rate. Their chief sets the minimum rate. They can go above it, not below. He has no intention of raising his rate unless the chief orders it. A question was asked about the group home on Camelia. Police cars are seen there often. Cpl. Stone said that the home must file a missing persons report when the boys walk away from the home. Since they do that often, the police come often. The boys are allowed to walk away unless the courts put them there. Then it is a criminal activity. Neighbors were urged to keep a record of problems with the home. Cpl. Stone was asked if the alleys are patrolled and are they public alleys. They are patrolled and they are public. On the subject of workman parked in alleys he asked if we couldn't just respect the need for them to be parked there and if at all possible, to please back out and go another way when we see them. That is what the police do. If the worker's truck must be moved because you can't get to where you are going or the garbage truck must get through he asked that we request politely for the worker to move his truck. He asked us to be courteous to the needs of the worker. He was asked about giving tickets to speeders. He said that on occasion he has given tickets. Then he comes to the meeting where the speeder is

and they decide they aren't going to pay dues to get patrols that give them tickets. He was asked how the city determines how much time is spent in the Garden District. Sometimes a patrol car is seen just sitting. He said that they do sit sometimes to deter speeders because they don't have radar. Sometimes they are doing computer work. The city does not decrease patrols in this area because we have off duty patrols. He was asked how much radar costs. He said he didn't know, probably several hundred dollars, too much for the city to afford. He was told that Halloween was a problem because there are too many cars. Could he be hired then? He said that he works in three subdivisions and he would not be able to find anyone willing to work on Halloween for \$20 per hour. He said it would have to be \$35-\$40 per hour with a minimum of four hours and a month's notice. Tim told the membership that the board had been talking about resurrecting the idea of having neighbors volunteer to walk around the neighborhood in red vests patrolling, as they did in past Halloweens. Cpl. Stone was asked if some streets could be blocked off. He said we would have to get a permit and he couldn't see that happening. A Halloween block party for the neighborhood was suggested. Cpl. Stone was applauded for his diligence in taking care of our neighborhood.

Mary Fontenot gave the beautification committee report for Suzanne Schexnayder who could not be present. She had handouts explaining the Live Oak Program and briefly outlined it. A sign up sheet for anyone interested in adopting a tree for Phase 1 was available. She also asked people to sign up to volunteer for the various neighborhood committees, which all need help. A question was asked about the small potted tree on Park Blvd. at Oleander. She told them that the tree was planted, but the mowers were attacking it so Suzanne put a pot around it to protect it. For the newsletter report she asked people to sign up to help collect oral histories and write down anyone's name who might be a good subject for an oral history. Carolyn asked Mary to explain her job with the Office of Neighborhoods after which a neighbor asked for help getting the city to fix the curb at Park and Oleander.

Carolyn Schwarzhoff gave the list serve report. Our mailing list now consists of $\frac{1}{3} - \frac{1}{2}$ of the neighborhood. It was started in 2000 and is the oldest in the city. She asked that people notify her when they are changing their e-mail address so she can take off the old and put on the new. She also asked that people sign their messages with their first and last names so she does not have to take the time to look them up. Messages must be Garden District related. Craig's List was recommended for classifieds.

Tim asked the members to get in touch with Peggy Hilzlim for new neighbor welcoming packets and showed them where to find her contact information on the back of the agenda. Greta gave a brief history and explained the purpose of the Tour of Homes. There have been seven tours. The purpose is not to make money, but to showcase our wonderful, diverse neighborhood. It is a public relations boon. Last year there were four properties on tour. She asked for volunteers to sign up to help.

Samuel Sanders, Director of the mid City redevelopment Alliance, was our next speaker. He brought us up to date on what they are working on and what is happening in Mid City. Mid City is a 1000 block area and the heart of the city. The heart has to be strong for the rest of the city to be strong. The Garden District is one of the strongest of the neighborhoods. He can tell when he drives through and sees everyone working outside. He recommended that we work on the volunteer program to deal with Halloween. He liked the block party idea and said if it can be done we can probably do it, but still recommended the volunteer patrols. Mid City Redevelopment Alliance adopted Government St. as the economic corridor. It co-exists with residences. The Government St. Master Plan was what the residents said they wanted when they came together at public meetings. The Government St. Overlay meets the design standards of the Government St. Master Plan. With the overlay they are acting on the Master Plan. The number one problem on Government St. is Westmoreland. It is selling for \$6 million and is 9 plus acres. The Mid City Redevelopment Alliance is always trying to get businesses interested in developing that. With Rep. Michael Jackson's help they made Westmoreland a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) so it will be a district within itself. This might help it get financing. The downtown Hilton received some of its funding this way. It was suggested that Westmoreland be purchased for Baton Rouge High. Perhaps a walk-

way over the street could be built for the students. Someone asked if the tax goes through could an additional tax be added to buy Westmoreland. Samuel said that wouldn't be possible. It will be a fight to win this renewal. The alumni association is working on the tax renewal and saving Baton Rouge High. Samuel asked us to go to Park Blvd. and look at the picture of what is going to be built at Dufrocq. A beautiful new building, built in the style of the old will be going up.

Mid City follows through on what people want. Their goal was to protect that school. Now it will be beautiful with green frontage on Government St. Baton Rouge High is a very important issue to Mid City. There were three choices of what to do with it, tear it down, restore it, or sell it. Restoring it requires passage of a tax renewal on March 8th. It will cost \$60 million to save the school. The plan is to house the students in Valley Park for two years while the school is renovated. Then Baton Rouge High students will occupy their own school while Lee High students move into Valley Park. Lee High will be torn down and a new school will be built, possibly on a new site. The Go Map is the economic mandate that Mid City focuses on. It is dedicated to what the citizens want. Traffic lights are planned to be replaced. The Foster Government intersection is on the Green Light Plan, although Mid City would like them to take it a step farther and make it a model intersection. Mid City is paying for a traffic study to see what can be done on Government. There is so much traffic that prospects aren't good. One resident went over her vision of what would make Government perfect "in a perfect world."

Samuel said that they took photos of all the utilities and illegal signs on Government and have been sitting down with a committee from the city to talk about it. Tim Page asked if our association can help and said that we would like to keep the conversation open. Samuel said that people may receive their monthly newsletter by contacting Carrie Broussard in his office. He asked people to check out his website at www.midcityredevelopment.org.

Tim Page said that it was time for new business so if there was anything anyone wanted to talk about this was the time. There had been several questions about traffic calming petitions, speeders, more stop signs and such so Samuel Sanders suggested we collect all the complaints together and have a traffic committee deal with them as a neighborhood problem. David Franz said that the National register for Roseland Terrace was last updated twenty-five years ago. He felt that the inventory has probably changed. Some houses that were not eligible are now older and might be. Others have changed. Tim asked for volunteers to help. There were none. Becky Lane asked for someone to take over storage of the lemonade and water containers for the meetings and parties.

Ana Forbes had Carolyn Schwarzhoff pick names for the door prizes. Connie Guillotte won some "Webkin" and accessories from Victoria's Toy Station. David Franz won a gift certificate to Parrain's Restaurant. Sean Healy won a gift certificate to Sunshine Cleaners. George Johnston won a golf game and more at the Sherwood Forest Country Club. Pat James won a bottle of wine from Martin's Wine Cellar.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m. after which neighbors visited and shared refreshments.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Fontenot
Secretary