

Garden District Civic Association

Baton Rouge

GDCA Annual Meeting Minutes March 11, 2007

President Randy Nichols opened the meeting at the Carver Library at 2:20 p.m. Approximately forty people were in attendance. The minutes from last year's annual meeting were formally approved. Carolyn Schwarzhoff thanked Board members Mark Upton, Peggy and Mark Hilzim, David Franz, and Martha Salomon, who are rotating off the Board at this time. Mark will continue to work on Historic Ordinances. Martha will continue to work on Preservation and Peggy will continue to work on New Neighbor Welcoming. After the e-mail and newsletter requests for new Board member nominees, the Nominating Committee received five names. Some of the current Board members stepped down so there would be room for all the nominees. Carolyn introduced Beverly Arceneaux, Sandi Lucas, Ben Broussard, Tim Page, and Becky Lane and asked for comments or objections. The membership voted for all the nominees. Carolyn moved that the slate be approved and Neill Terry seconded it.

Sonya Pickens gave the financial report. More was spent on security than was taken in through dues so this year's budget will force us to cut back on patrol hours unless more people pay their dues. The newsletter was another item that spends more than it brings in. David Franz handed out a summary of the security patrol hours and their costs, explaining that we have more patrols during peak crime times at Christmas and over the summer. She said that the bills for dues should have been received in the past week. If anyone did not get one they may pay her anyway.

Cpl. Don Stone, with the Baton Rouge City Police, has been overseeing the Garden District patrols for the past six years. He said that we are fortunate that we have not had a rash of burglaries. He was asked if violent crimes are a problem in the Garden District. He said that the only crime that we have is the usual shed break in, stolen lawn mower, or car break-in. He explained that only residents are allowed in the alleys, which is why signs are posted in every alley. He asked that people who call the voice mail first give their name and how to get in touch with them because sometimes people are long winded and get cut off. He would rather receive phone calls than e-mails. He works at the computer all day and doesn't want to e-mail when he gets home so his wife reads them for him and lets him know what is going on. His cell phone number is 268-5499. His office is in the 3rd District on Coursey Blvd. There were four off duty patrolmen in our neighborhood, but one retired so there are now three. He was asked about the magazine sales people and whether they need permits. He said that they come through every year but are never arrested. He said it is legal for them to go door-to-door during daylight hours, but not after dark. As for permits, the law is unclear because the Girl Scouts sell cookies. He asked that everyone have their house number clearly on the front of the house and suggested that it would be a good idea to do it on the back alleys too. There was a question about how many people are allowed in a group home. Randy offered to look it up. Cpl. Stone asked anyone going out of town to please let them know and they'll check the house.

Mark Upton spoke about the new Historical Ordinances for Roseland Terrace and Kleinert Terrace. Drehr Place's ordinance has been in effect for one and a half years. He explained that the local historical district is for designated areas, to monitor construction and renovation. Roseland Terrace Guidelines will be slightly different from the Drehr Place Guidelines because the lots are smaller and there are more small bungalows. The new guidelines will replace the old town overlay district with new provisions for drainage and setbacks. The Kleinert Terrace Guidelines will be the same as the Drehr Place Guidelines. The guidelines will go before the Historical Preservation Commission for approval on April 18, 2007. They will go before the Planning Commission on April 23rd and the Metro Council in May. We should all receive a letter prior to the April 18th meeting. The public will be invited to comment when it comes before the Metro Council. When the guidelines are in place,

besides needing the usual permit you will need to get a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) if you want to build or renovate.

Mary Fontenot gave a report about the dedication of the Garden District Live Oaks, which took place February 24, 2007. Eighty oaks in the medians on Park Blvd., Cherokee and Kleinert became members of the Louisiana Live Oak Society. Mayor Holden's wife, Lois Holden, planted a tree for him. The function was well attended.

Carolyn Schwarzhoff said that the Garden District e-mail list is seven years old and is the oldest neighborhood e-mail list in Baton Rouge. There are 422 e-mail addresses, but in some cases more than one goes to the same house. They represent about one third of the residents or owners. She asked that if you have neighbors who are not on the e-mail, please share security information with them. There is free Internet access at the library for anyone without a computer. Anything published must be relevant for the entire neighborhood, with no house sales, car sales, or babysitter requests. They found early on that when those types of items were on it, participation dropped off. Margaret Bach has a web site where those needs can be handled. Carolyn monitors the e-mails, but the Board handles anything that is in a questionable gray area.

Peggy Hilzim had welcome packages to show us and give out if there were any new neighbors in attendance. Sonya Pickens announced that the Green Thumbs Garden Club is going to start up again in May. She also let everyone know that the lot at Oleander and St. Rose, where the Community Garden resides, has been sold and the garden will be closing down.

Margaret Bach reported that there will be three houses and one garden on the Sunday, April 29th Tour of Homes, from 1-5 p.m. The tickets (\$10) will be on sale at the Garden District Nursery and Keepers on Jefferson Hwy.

Carrie Broussard, from Mid-City Redevelopment Alliance, explained that they work with developers and businesses in the Mid-City area. She said that Planning and the Council approved the Westmoreland project last month. Phase 1 will take 18 months. The entire project will take years to finish. On March 18 there will be "Mid-City on Parade," which is a tour of affordable homes. In April there will be "Fix-Up Mid-City," with minor exterior improvements on homes being done by 300-400 volunteers. There was a question about the Government St. Overlay District. It is a specific set of guidelines only for Government Street. In it are suggested additional guidelines for dealing with aesthetics, such as landscaping, parking, and signage that were not in the previous Government St. Master Plan. City-Parish is working on new signage ordinances, which have passed the Planning Commission and will go before the Metro Council in May. Left turn lanes are going to be added to the intersection of Government and Foster as part of the Green Light Plan. The state was not in favor of the idea of making Government three lanes. It is a state road. The capital outlay with the state did not fund sidewalks. Garden District residents said that they would love to be able to get on a bike and ride to the store. Carrie said that they were going to have a driving tour with DOTD this week. She suggested that we should contact our Council Member about getting sidewalks or bike lanes.

Tom Stephens, Assistant Director of the Department of Public Works, was introduced. He is in charge of maintenance, building permits, and drainage. He talked about the intense rainfalls that cause localized flooding in various parts of the city. He met with Lorri Burgess, Ben Broussard, and Hank Harper. As a result, DPW has been cleaning catch basins and will put a camera down the system to see what is happening. Hank Harper, who lives on Cherokee, has drainage problems, and is a civil engineer, put a map of the neigh

orhood's sewer system on the wall. He demonstrated how the drainage starts at S. 16th on the north side of Government, goes to 18th, to Oleander, to Park, to the alley behind Ben Broussard's house, to Tulip, to the infamous manhole at Tulip and 22nd, diagonally under houses, moving NE under BeBop Music Shop at 2560 Government, to straight under Government until it meets the canal under Government that comes from Catholic

High and meets up with Ward's Creek. Hank does not believe the problem with the system is maintenance. He believes that a study might show that if some streets were tied into other parts of the city's system differently it might help and wouldn't have to cost a fortune. He said that there are no catch basins on Wisteria and Oleander between Park and 22nd. Drehr and Terrace tie into a different system that goes to Catholic High. Hank asked that money be budgeted to do an engineering study. Mr. Stephens said that DPW has the manpower in house to do the study. He said that administration now realizes these things are happening and have a new drive toward maintenance. Two street sweepers were purchased last year. Two vacuum trucks will be purchased this year. Mr. Stephens talked about the problem at Tulip and 22nd. He said the system was filling up with water from elsewhere. Pressure got so high that it would pop off the manhole cover, which was a driving hazard. A grate was put on top of the manhole so the cover will stay on. A bypass was made from the manhole to the storm drain. Untreated sewerage is going in there. The new sewer system should take care of it when it is built. They are doing what they can to keep sewerage from backing into houses.

Ana Fogle passed out door prizes that were generously donated by Government St. Hardware, Varsity Sports, Bistro Byronz, Bolton Pharmacy, Garden District Nursery, and Mary Fontenot.

Randy briefly brought up the question of the Board's role in making decisions for the Garden District. John Rice discussed the problem of the building that has gone up behind 2010 Wisteria, which does not have a permit and does not meet code. A variance hearing is coming up March 19, 2007 so he had a petition for people to sign. Margaret Bach entered into the discussion.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m. at which time refreshments were enjoyed.