

# Garden District Civic Association

## Baton Rouge

Minutes – GDCA Board Meeting – March 19, 2008

President Tim Page called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at Heather and John Westra's house. Board members Sonya Pickens, Heather Westra, Anna Hanks, Ellen Alderman, Sandi Lucas, Alex Tucker, Paul Miller, Mary Fontenot, Tim Page, and Ray Mack attended. Minutes of the last board meeting were approved. Since four new board members were present we went around the room, introduced ourselves and said a little something about our history in the neighborhood. Sonya didn't have any new handouts since the annual meeting for the treasurer's report. A motion was approved to reimburse Mary for stakes and tape to rope off the medians for the St. Patrick's Day parade route. There was a discussion about how to improve membership, which included using block captains, giving out lists of who has and has not paid so we could remind friends and neighbors, using "Pay Your Dues Now" signs, and having different levels of membership. Nearby mid-city subdivisions are developing crime prevention districts where every house is billed with their property tax to pay for security patrols. Mary offered to find out more about how Concord Estates got the legislature to approve the tax district and how it works. The GDCA has 308 paying members out of about 820 households that receive the newsletter.

Keeping up the database of who lives in the Garden District so not as many dues letters are returned was discussed. Margaret Bach used to give Sonya data about realty sales. If people are to go door-to-door with returned mail it was suggested that an appeal for help be sent out on the list serve and that a message should go out saying that it is happening so people won't be suspicious. Ray offered to walk Terrace and Kleinert. Anna said that Greta will volunteer. Tim said that he would write up something for the list serve.

For the security committee Ray wants to research buying radar guns since the city only has three. His son's bicycle was stolen yesterday during the day. The garage door was open. Ellen spoke of a car window that was broken and a knife was left on the seat. Ray plans to work closely with Cpl. Stone.

Paul called Cpl. Stone this morning and asked about purchasing a radar gun. They cost \$750 and the police department would have to own it. We would have to ask Chief LeDuff for permission. The question of lowering the speed limit was brought up since speeding is a problem. It was suggested that the speeders are not going to adhere to 25 mph any more than they do to 30mph. Probably getting tickets is what will work. A traffic counter was seen on Park two weeks ago. That suggests the city is looking at traffic calming. There was a discussion about exactly how the off-duty patrols work; is there any internal control system that might let us know that they are really doing what they are supposed to be doing; should we tell them when and where we want them, and has there been a decrease in crime over the years? When it was suggested that they could sit on Park to intimidate speeders someone else reminded us that Cpl. Stone said that stopping crime is their purpose, not traffic control. We were reminded that Cpl. Stone said that it is important to be inconsistent and patrol at different times so criminals can't work around a fixed pattern. In response to whether crime has decreased it was brought out that it says a lot that it hasn't increased since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Carolyn has worked closely with Cpl. Stone for a long time. There is a level of trust that has built up. Board members noted that Cpl. Stone and his officers have been right on top of recent problems in a timely manner. A future meeting for the whole neighborhood could be a Neighborhood Watch/Crime Prevention lecture by the police department.

There was no beautification committee report. Ellen gave the social events report. Since there were some boys misbehaving at the Easter Egg Hunt it was decided that an age limit should be put on the hunt, no pets allowed, and a requirement that an adult must accompany all children. No age limit was decided upon, maybe 7 or 8. Ellen brought out the ideas of reinstating the cocktail stroll through the neighborhood and/or a block party. The block party could have a barbeque contest – bring your own grill. There could be a picnic in City Park. Mary

said that some neighborhoods have a crawfish boil for their annual meeting to draw people. There was an article in the paper that said insurance to cover the Chimes block party cost \$1,600. In an effort to not have the meeting last too late this discussion will be continued later.

Anna gave Greta Corona's report about bulk mailing. It was decided that the mailing list needs to be corrected before bulk mailing is started. We will continue discussing it. Meanwhile everyone agreed that the flyer deliveryman, Glenn Howse, gives us a good price. Making another directory was suggested. Putting it on e-mail so it could be downloaded seemed to make it too available.

Under new business, choosing a Drehr Place representative for the Historic Preservation Commission was discussed. Board member Ana Forbes has offered to take the position, but she will have to resign her GDCA post due to time constraints. It was decided that nominations need to be opened up to all residents of Drehr Place before the board chooses a representative. A description of qualifications will be drawn up and checked by Mark Upton and Martha Saloman. This description, plus a nomination form will be put in a newsletter to go out in two weeks, be put on the list serve and on the GDCA web site. Two weeks will be given for applications to be returned, after which the board will vote either online or by a special meeting with all due speed. Ellen, Alex, and Sandi offered to be on the committee. In the newsletter Alex offered to write an article about the outcome of the Roseland Terrace, Kleinert Terrace historic district efforts. It was suggested that a security article could be in it explaining what Cpl. Stone told us at the annual meeting.

Tim reported on what had transpired at the Historic Preservation Commission Committee hearing this morning. A house to be built at the corner of Oleander and St. Rose, which was expected to pass, was deferred because only the next-door neighbors had been consulted about it. The Commission felt that more of the neighborhood should be notified. There was also some question as to how tall it is going to be and no one could answer that.

Alex explained that the GDCA does not qualify for 501c3 status, but does qualify for 501c4. The 501c4 status was never applied for, but probably should be someday. Since they haven't filed 990 forms all these years the IRS recommended that they continue to file 1120 H forms as they have been doing it. Mary reported that the Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Civic Associations, of which the GDCA is a member, is asking us to find an individual who would be willing to be a liaison between the councilperson and the Federation. There were no volunteers. She also asked for people to look around and find someone good to run for Lorri Burgess' seat, which is term limited.

Re-zoning Park Blvd. was discussed. Two ladies in Bernard Terrace single-handedly got all the property owners in Bernard Terrace to agree to re-zone their properties A1 residential, including apartment owners. They are willing to teach a Garden District committee how to do it. Mary asked for volunteers to be on the committee. Ellen, Tim and Anna volunteered. When we get more, the two ladies will help. Ray and Martha Salomon have zoning maps of the area.

Inappropriate St. Patrick's Day parade behavior has been a recent topic on the list serve. Some residents roped off the median and wouldn't let others in. Some people sawed off a tree limb when a float ran into it. They will be addressed in the newsletter. Paul took photos of the limb being cut, which he will forward to Mary for the newsletter. It was suggested that we meet with the Hundred Oaks neighborhood leaders to discuss parade problems and solutions. A city permit is needed so we should talk with the permitting office about how high and how fast the floats should go.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Fontenot, Secretary

