

Garden District Civic Association

Baton Rouge

President Tim Page called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. at the home of Sandi Lucas. Board members present were Sandi Lucas, Alex Tucker, Ellen Alderman, Anna Hanks, Greta Corona, Paul Miller and Sonya Pickens. Carolyn Schwarzhoff of the Advisory Board was present and Board Member MIke Schexnayder arrived presently. Tim passed out copies of the agenda and minutes from the March meeting which the membership read over and approved without discussion or dissent.

NEW BUSINESS

• Election of Officers

The first order of business was the discussion about and election of officers which Alex Tucker brought to the attention of the membership as having been overlooked at the previous meeting wherein the election of the officers should have been approved according to the bylaws. Discussion involved some history of the bylaws and it was pointed out that membership on the board is not readily sought after and moreover that specific offices of the board can be hard to fill, accounting for the apparent backward posting of positions. New membership is elected every two years but the board officers are chosen before the new members are instated. It was generally agreed that the bylaws were due for review. A motion was called and approved unanimously to accept the membership and officers as they are.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

• Security

In the absence of Security Chairman Ray Mack, discussion was entertained about the current security awareness due to the report of someone being mugged in broad daylight and the ensuing special meeting of the Security Committee and subsequent public meeting of the general association at City Park.

Tim noted that the public meeting covered the possibility of creating a tax district in the neighborhood, entertained discussion from our Corporal Stone of the Baton Rouge Police Department involving basic safety measures, and a disappointing discussion by another police officer about the Neighborhood Watch system. The membership discussed the concern over safety and the racial overtones of some of the public discussion and generally decided that the board had a responsibility to try to appease restless members with a show of support in the form of additional security patrol hours. Dissenting discussion from Paul Miller noted the extra hours may not produce any real increase in the actual security of the neighborhood. The general membership felt that the appearance of additional security was important to keep members from quitting the association which would result in the loss of funds. Treasurer Sonya Pickens reminded the board that some years ago a surplus of between \$30,000 and \$40,000 was realized which has been holding in the boards bank accounts presumably to be used in the event that the board became involved in a legal proceeding. Sonya also pointed out that there was a \$6,000 surplus in last year's membership drive funds (the previous two years we actually spent more than we brought in) and that we were on course this year to have a similar surplus. The general membership felt that tangible benefits in security do result with increased patrol hours, and that the appearance of additional security was important. A motion was called to raise the security hours from 90 to 110 per month for the next four

months and review the situation at the following board meeting. The motion was passed with only Paul against it.

Sonya discussed incidentally about an earlier idea to allow members to send additional funds in with their membership and earmark them for security purposes. A motion was made and passed to allow for that through whatever means was available (web, mail, etc.).

More incidental discussion was entertained about the “electronic age” and paperless world wherein most members believe the addition of electronic payments via PayPal through the Cox website with a 2.9% fee on transactions was acceptable. The membership generally accepted the idea and Paul asked Mike if we could get or start to compile statistics on the actual use of the website by members of the association.

Final incidental discussion was entertained from Tim about the Neighborhood Watch Program. Tim found it particularly interesting that great support of the NWP comes through civic association activities wherein neighbors get to know each other. He also related comments from police officers at the City Park meeting that the Garden District has become known as friendly to panhandlers which effectively causes them to come more. A variety of stories were offered about ‘helping’ indigents and the result being subsequent abuse of one form or another. It was suggested that a general policy of ‘just say no to the homeless’ should be instituted across the neighborhood to reverse the trend.

• **Beautification**

Incidental discussion from Sonya asked the Board to provide Mary Fontenot a \$500 advance to cover monies she pays for the board in advance of her payments. Discussion was raised about the possibility of making Mary a signer on the GDCA bank account. The board agreed to give Mary either one she liked at her discretion.

Sandi remarked that the City had been out on her street that afternoon cutting limbs from oak trees - carefully and conscientiously. And that they were grinding the limbs after the cut them down. The neighborhood has been asking for this service without avail for many years.

Tree follow up: Unfortunately, the cutting of tree limbs was not being done by the city. It was done by the new owners of the former drug house at 2171 Cherokee who are putting a lot of time and energy into fixing up the house. They were cutting off all the dead limbs and the tree looks great now - oh well.

• **Social Events**

Sonya explained that Social Events were headed off by Vice President Heather Westra. Sonya would particularly like to see a parade of dogs (not a dog parade) for the opening of the new dog park on Park Blvd. It was suggested that a 4th of July neighborhood party be orchestrated with Heather’s help. Ellen offered to provide notices to members of the dog park opening via the listserv.

Incidental discussion from Carolyn was entertained about attachments to listserv emails. She recalls that they were discontinued previously because of the possibility of viruses and lack of virus software. She explained that presently virus software is more prevalent and the risk is reduced enough that there is little concern remaining. She continued that allowing attachments would make it possible for people to get information out more quickly in the form of photographs where necessary (lost dogs, missing persons). The board was agreeable to allow attachments.

• **Special Events**

Sandi explained that ‘Special Events’ means ‘Tour of Homes’ and said she would be getting things together in the near future. Greta and Sandi agreed to meet in the next couple of weeks so that Greta could hand over all the documentation she had for the Tour of Homes.

- **Mid-City Roundtable**

Tim discussed some minutes of the recent meeting saying that other neighborhoods in town are acting to raise taxes through an act of the state legislature and we should keep an eye out for the results.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Bulk-Mailing**

Two members of the board had to leave at 8:30 p.m. leaving the meeting without a quorum and the ability to vote, but discussion continued. Alex Tucker suggested that it might be possible to avoid mailing expenses entirely by using fliers with a delivery service and yard signs to let association members know when it was time to pay dues. Members pointed out that the second round of mailings was reduced to only those members that don’t pay on the first round and that the bulk mailing required a minimum of 250 pieces and a \$175.00 up front fee. With two additional mailings typically being required it was agreed that the savings would still be realized on the mailing even if the first was delivered by hand.

Discussion continued that flyers are sometimes not read and that the letter is more ‘official.’ Paul noted that we might realize a significant drop in the response to the flyer and want to move back to the mailing if that was the case. Concern that the signs would be up year round was raised, but Sonya noted that only a handful of residents pay quarterly and that the signs could be used for a brief period once a year.

It was decided to continue discussion through email and come to a voting decision on the bulk-mailing matter so that we can finally take it off the agenda!

- **Statement of Policy**

Paul agreed to continue work on a statement of policy for the GDCA regarding our mailing list and its use by outside entities.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul Miller