

# Garden District Civic Association

## Baton Rouge

September 12, 2007

The GDCA Board meeting was brought to order by President Randy Nichols at 7 p.m. at the home of Greta Corona. Attending the meeting were Tim Page, Mike Schexnayder, Martha Soloman, Ana Forbes, Becky Lane, Randy Nichols, Greta Corona, Pam Rice, and Mary Fontenot. The July minutes were accepted as posted on the website. Reports were given. Since Sonya Pickens, the Treasurer is sometimes unable to attend due to her work schedule, Greta offered to act as her liaison and update the board on finances in the future. There have been security problems lately with cars being vandalized. Mike said that there are two numbers given to reach the security patrol, but only one works. He is going to look into a better method. Mary is holding off on the newsletter for now. It is time to start thinking about the Christmas Tree Lighting Contest. Mike is going to speak to Cindy Elliott, Judy Atkinson, and Heather Westra to see if any of them would like to continue organizing it. Peggy Hilz is still handling the new neighbor packets. It seems that she learns about the new neighbors through word of mouth. The Fall Picnic is usually either one of the last two Sundays in October or the first Sunday in November. Sometimes it depends on ball game schedules. Mike mentioned a lecture that he went to at the monthly meeting of the Greater Baton Rouge Federation of Civic Associations where liability was discussed. He suggested we make sure there are safe conditions wherever we have social events and that homeowners have insurance. Board members made suggestions for a location for the Fall Picnic. Becky said that she would drive around and scout out some possibilities.

Ana brought up Harmony's group home on Camelia. She spoke with Ann Williamson, with the Dept. of Social Services. D.S.S. has been following up with regular inspections and has consistently found the place okay. There is a new manager, which may be the difference. Ana told Ann that it might be nice if someone from D.S.S. spoke to us because of the house's past problems. Mike spoke with an elderly lady across the street who said that there have been no problems lately. There is a group home for developmentally disabled adults in the 1900 block of Government, run by Harmony that seems to not be a burden to the neighbors.

There was a discussion about the dog park with a chain-link fence that is going up in City Park. If a Children's Museum eventually is built in the park as Colis Temple and others are hoping, Martha suggested we watch the parking lot so it doesn't take all the green space. Randy asked if we want to have a candidate forum, since Michael Jackson has asked to come to our meetings a few times. Ideas were hashed around until it was decided that they would each be invited to post a 200-word statement on the list-serve.

At 7:30 p.m. members of the committee that took on the job of re-writing the historic guidelines joined the board so that together they could work on a compromising document that would be acceptable to the board and the committee. Ray Mack, Dana Gauthier, Rebecca Tucker, Sara Lynn Baird, and Gail Cooper were the committee members who attended. Randy introduced tonight's objective saying it was not to be a line-by-line edit. He was aware at the neighborhood meeting that there were two issues at stake and we needed to find a balance between them. One was the rights of property owners. The other was how to protect the historical neighborhood and maintain its character. He believes that the Zoning Commission cares more about what they pass than they did many years ago. The issue of doors became a symbol the rift. Important issues should be opposing new multi-family dwellings on Park and Government, concern over tear-downs and buildings of McMansions, and inappropriate uses of property.

Randy pointed out five highlighted points that need to be worked on.

- 1.) Setbacks: Martha suggested that the confusing paragraph about setbacks does more harm than good. She

spoke to Troy Bunch and asked him if the guidelines would be followed rather than city parish ordinances or would the city parish ordinances rule. He said the city parish ordinances would dictate the law.

2.) Should vs. shall in the first pages of the document: Pam, who is an attorney, said that “should” carries no power whatsoever. Should is not enforceable. Pam and Tim Page stated that the word “should” would have to be changed throughout the document, (not just in the definitions), to “shall” if the committee wants to make those provisions mandatory. Martha listed the things that are enforceable. Rebecca said that the shalls were things they all agreed upon while the shoulds would be reviewed by the HPC on a case-by-case basis. It was suggested that the shall and should definition be stricken and just state that, “All of these shall be evaluated when reviewing for a project...” On page 9 there is a line that states that lap siding should...” Sara suggested that it say “shall be applied horizontally when appropriate.”

3.) The historical reference section is just suggestions and not enforceable. Committee members said that they planned it that way. Architects, builders, homeowners, and contractors said that it would be very helpful to already have the research done, because most of them would not take the time to do it. One problem is that there is nothing that prohibits mobile homes and manufactured houses. These need to be addressed.

4.) Secondary structure guidelines: On the bottom of page 11, under additions it might be good to strike the sentence, “The original structure may be modified to be compatible with the addition...” That sort of situation would be handled on an individual basis by the HPC.

5.) Is there any way to protect against multi-family dwellings being built? Martha suggested that possibly a multi-family dwelling could be required to have the buffer yard requirements as if it were adjacent to areas that were A1, since that is the land use in the neighborhood. The original deed restrictions called for single-family dwellings. If the use is A1 but the zoning is not, perhaps the Zoning Commission could be asked if A1 could apply.

There was some general discussion, led by Ray that the goal in this work is to have an achievable document. Gail pointed out that anything that did not require a permit did not need to go to the HPC. Martha thought that Carol Bennett would be expecting something about doors and windows in the document so perhaps what they have written could be tweaked just a little to satisfy this need. Pages 11 and 12 were discussed concerning secondary buildings. Near the bottom of page 11 is the sentence that begins, “The original structure may be modified to be compatible with the addition...” It was suggested that this be stricken, as the HPC will make that determination on a case-by-case basis. Martha informed the group that the HPC has rethought the doors and fee rules and is in the process of legally changing them for the Drehr Place Guidelines.

It was decided that Board and committee members would meet Monday, September 17, 2007 at Becky Lane’s house at 6:30 to get the wording of the document finalized. The committee has planned open house style public forums at City Park Gallery for Thursday evening, Sept. 20 and Sunday, Sept. 23rd. Councilwoman Lorri Burgess has requested the final document to be handed in to her on September 24th.

The meeting ended at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Fontenot  
Secretary

