Garden District Civic Association Board Meeting Minutes

February 4, 2020, 7 p.m.

The meeting was held at the home of Willie and Mary Fontenot. The board members present were President Claire Pittman, Vice-president Justin Kozak, Treasurer Ted Magee, Secretary Mary Fontenot, John Williams, Michael Myers, Mike Schexnayder, Willie Fontenot, Anne Trapp and Liz Spaulding.

Ted explained the financials. Board members asked questions, which Ted answered.  our income and expenses for both 2018 and 2019 were very similar and our ’net income’ for 2019 was a bit higher.  Specifically, total income was $40 greater in 2019 while total expenses were approximately $1,700 less in 2019.

Anne has been giving welcome packets to new neighbors. Only four bags and six bottles of wine remain. Claire is going to look into ordering more bags. Anne left the packets at some front doors, but had nice visits with other new neighbors. She thought t-shirts with the magnolia logo on the front and sponsors logos on the back would be a nice addition. John suggested that the board might consider people ordering them in advance, rather than the board ordering them and being left with extras. The Board will consider that.

The Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Civic Associations and the Planning Commission have partnered to meet with interested Historic Districts and organizations to discuss short-term rentals (STR), such as AirBNB. The Board asked Martha Salomon to represent the neighborhood, but as she was out of town, Mary took her place and gave a report to the Board. Spanish Town has rules in place because they have a unique situation with unique problems. The Historic Districts could decide their own rules based on their circumstances. No areas other than Spanish Town have ordinances. No permit process or registration protocol is in place. Other cities have found problems with noise at some rental properties. California’s Sonoma County issues permits for STRs and revokes them if the police have to be called to the same residence three times in the same year. New Orleans has ordinances. An issue that could come up would be using them for human trafficking. That might be suspect if a STR is in an area that does not seem so destination desirable, but rather away from public entertainment. Historic districts or the city parish might want to adopt an ordinance that addresses the noise and safety issues. The representative of AirBNB was even in favor of developing some regulations.

Mary presented Whitney Sayal’s offer to organize a drain cleanup day if the Garden District Civic Association would like to contact DPW and ask for it. The idea is that DPW would take the lids off the storm drains, residents would clean the dirt and leaves out of the drains and then DPW would vacuum out the pipes. Justin offered to talk with Fred Raiford about it. The Board voted unanimously to go ahead with this plan.

Saturday, February 29th at Noon is the designated date and time for the Annual Meeting at the GURU. Heather Day will be asked to be in charge of food. Hamburgers and hot dogs were a hit last year, so we’ll go with them again. Claire will update the email invitation. Jason Day will be asked if he can set up his D-J equipment. People to be invited as speakers are Fred Raiford on drainage, Rowdy Gaudet on Government Street’s final details or whatever he would like to cover, Martha Salomon for Short-term-rentals (like AirBNB), Seth Gauthier on security patrols and Garrett Graves. Mary will ask Rowdy and Martha.

Claire would like to see all of Mid-City’s neighborhoods that have neighborhood garage sale days coordinate and have a Mid City Garage Sale Day. The Board agreed that this is a good idea. Claire will pursue the plan and reach out to the other neighborhoods.

John reviewed the plan details for trimming and helping a sampling of the trees in the medians to show the community what a difference proper care can make, in an effort to solicit donations to the 501(c)(3) for that cause. Claire and John will do marketing and PR for two months, so the community will know what is going to take place and why. This will require some thoughtful branding to make the execution of the project successful. Anne suggested that we try to acquire old photographs from residents of the young trees in front of their houses.

The Board wants people to be able to notice the before and after trimming differences. Ted will work on the Operations side of the activity. On May 16th, with the help of Baton Rouge Green, mulch will be dumped in the medians, near the trimmed trees, for the residents to spread under the trees. An arborist with Baton Rouge Green will show them how to mulch properly. Ted will also coordinate with David Benton with Bayou Tree Service, who will be doing the trimming and participate in mulching.

On the same afternoon as the mulching, May 16th, the Crawfish Boil will be held on Camellia St. John will get the permit to block the street. The same vendor as the past two years, True Cajun Boilers, will boil crawfish, potatoes and corn. Jambalaya will also be available.

Ari was not present, but he requested that John order doggie bags, which he will.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Fontenot