



## **Garden District Civic Association Annual Meeting**

Saturday, February 29, 2020

Guru, 1857 Government St, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

12:00 PM

## **MEETING MINUTES**

The Garden District Civic Association (GDCA) held its annual meeting at the Guru in Baton Rouge on Saturday, February 29, 2020.

Our current GDCA President, Claire Casey Pittman, welcomed the attendees and gave the GDCA's Mission Statement as follows:

- To be good stewards of the members' annual dues which are allocated for the following priorities:
  - Off-duty police security
  - Social events for the neighborhood residents. The GDCA sponsors five social events throughout the year that include:
    - Spring crawfish boil
    - Neighborhood garage sale
    - Easter egg hunt
    - Fall picnic
    - Fall champagne stroll
  - Special allocations such as "care for our live oaks" initiative
- To act as a liaison between the neighborhood and city parish and intervene in matters that affect residents of our neighborhood. To present neighborhood problems and possible solutions to various government entities. Claire cited the poor drainage and neighborhood flooding as an example.
- Advocates on the neighborhood's behalf during various city parish organizations' meetings such as The Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Civic Associations and the EBR Planning Commission
- Provide pet waste bags at various locations throughout the neighborhood

President-elect Justin Kozak then updated the group on the neighborhood drainage issues. Justin noted that stronger storms with excessive rainfall are inevitable. Even working at full capacity,



the current drains cannot handle these downpours. He stated that our industrious neighbors who got out and cleaned the drains on their streets last fall got the attention of city officials and has resulted in productive conversations between neighborhood residents and city parish officials in charge of drainage. One attendee asked that an email be sent out to residents asking those who use a lawn service to request that the company do not blow grass clippings and leaves into the street or catch basins which end up in the drainage system.

## GUEST SPEAKERS

### SECURITY

*Cpl. Seth Gauthier, Police Liaison, Baton Rouge Police Department*

Seth Gauthier, the GDCA police liaison officer, addressed the members. Officer Gauthier stated that he and 3 other Baton Rouge Police Officers patrol the Garden District. Burglaries are on an upward trend and car burglaries in particular. He again reminded the members to lock their cars, to not leave valuables in the auto, and definitely not leave firearms in the auto. He asked that we share personal security videos with the police if they would be helpful in identifying suspects. He asked that homeowners report burned out street lights to Entergy as well lit streets, alleys and yards are definitely a deterrent to crime. He stated that motion activated lighting also helps.

Officer Gauthier stated that if a homeowner is going to be out of town and has no one to watch their house, they can notify the GDCA Board through email at [GDCABR@gmail.com](mailto:GDCABR@gmail.com). A board member will notify Officer Gauthier and he will have his officers make deliberate passes by the residence while the homeowner is away.

Officer Gauthier stated that EBR is in the process of setting up a "crime sitter" which will provide real time advanced surveillance in order to send police units to locations of criminal activity. They are in the process of staffing this department.

Finally, Officer Gauthier said that homeowners should use the following phone number for non-emergency calls: 389-2000.



## CITY

*Kelvin Hill, Assistant Chief Administrative Office, City of Baton Rouge Mayor's Office*

Our second guest speaker was Kevin Hill, with Mayor Broome's office. Mr. Hill updated the members on the MoveBR initiative which will encompass many projects. The first 40 priority projects have a budget of 600 million dollars. The second set of projects will cover enhancements to existing roads, sidewalks and will include bike paths. The budget for this phase will be 300 million dollars. Signalization and other traffic flow enhancements will be included in the projects.

Complete streets project will include pedestrian ways, buffer zones, green infrastructure and storm water management. He said that plans included new bike paths but that maintenance of the old bike paths are not included in the budget.

Mr. Hill stated that the website [MoveBR.BRLA.gov](http://MoveBR.BRLA.gov) contains an enormous amount of information and includes interactive maps, design and layouts of sidewalks and bike paths. He encouraged everyone to visit the site and become familiar with the numerous projects being undertaken with this initiative.

Mr. Hill briefly touched on the LSU lakes project that will see dredging of the lakes and other beautification enhancements to the lakes.

*Leanne Jones, Project Manager, Barber Brothers*

Our third guest speaker was Leanne Jones, Project Manager with Barber Brothers Construction for the Government Street project. She stated that the tentative completion date is late 2020. She stated that progress is being made but there have been many changes made to the original plans and that these changes are taking time. Some of the changes noted were irrigation installation in all of the planting beds along Government and also pouring all concrete sidewalks, curbs and driveways along the corridor. She stated that Government Street in front of the neighborhood is not complete and that an additional layer of asphalt is still to be laid.

*Representative Garrett Graves, United States Congress, 6th District of Louisiana*

U.S. Congressman Garrett Graves addressed the members regarding numerous topics. He said that the new Terrace St. exit is now opened on I-10 but they are still trying to work out the



Washington St. exit issues. He reported that 3 billion dollars has been issued for flood relief. The city of Baton Rouge will receive 255 million for flood control. Some of these funds will be used for work on five major drainage canals. Additionally, EBR parish will receive 112 million dollars for flood control work.

The Comite River Diversion project is finally under construction and has been given 392 million dollars to complete the project.

14 million dollars in grant money has been awarded to local police, the District Attorney's office, the EBR Sheriff's Office and the court system for enhancing crime fighting technology.

Congressman Graves took questions from the members regarding the corona virus, food safety, ride sharing promotions, a new Mississippi River bridge and reopening the Amtrak train route between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

### *Martha Salomon, former GDCA board member and current GDCA Short-Term Rental Liaison*

Our final guest speaker was Martha Soloman who told the members about the short-term rental ordinance proposal that will be discussed in future city council meetings. The Baton Rouge Federation of Civic Associations has completed a survey and asked that neighborhood associations complete the survey as well. Martha handed out surveys to the members in attendance. The city council will take these surveys into consideration when formulating an ordinance that will govern short-term rentals such as Air BnBs.

John Williams, GDCA board member, reported several upcoming activities in the neighborhood. These include:

## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

### **TREE MULCHING DAY**

Tree mulching day to be held the morning of May 16. Mulch is being donated to the neighborhood as part of the Care For Our Live Oaks initiative that the association has undertaken. We are asking that neighbors come out on the 16th and helped spread mulch beneath designated



trees that will be pruned at a later date. More information on this initiative will be included in the newsletter.

## **GARAGE SALE**

The annual neighborhood garage sale is being done in conjunction with other Mid-City neighborhoods on May 2.

## **CRAWFISH BOIL**

The annual crawfish boil will be held on the afternoon of May 16, same day that we will mulch the trees.

## **BOARD ELECTIONS**

The following individuals volunteered to become board members and were confirmed by a majority vote:

Mike Helms

Babeth Schpegep

Neill Terry

## **CLOSING**

The GDCA board members would to thank Ms. Sydney Coffee for hosting our annual meeting at the Guru, her lovely event facility. Also a big thank you to Daniel Pittman, sous chef of the day. Thank you for grilling the delicious burgers.

## **HAMBURGERS & MINGLING**