

## Garden District Civic Association Board Meeting

November 9, 2021, 7 p.m.

In attendance: Claire Pittman, Justin Kozak, Babeth Schliegel , Anne Trapp, Mike Schexnayder, Kimberly Coffee, Michael Myers, Heather Day and Willie and Mary Fontenot. It was held in Justin's lovely patio.

The first topic discussed was burned out street lights. All the lights on Tulip St. between Camellia and Park Blvd. are burned out. The board will ask residents via the newsletter and Nextdoor.com to check their block and report lights that aren't working. A street light or security light that is out can be reported at <https://www.myenergy.com/s/reportoutagenow>.

**Oak Tree Report:** Kimberly Coffee reported that her block of Park Blvd. between Terrace and Perkins Rd. has committed \$8,200 to getting the nine oak trees trimmed and cared for. There are eleven trees, but one is not a live oak and has two trucks and one is very small. Kimberly will speak to Bayou Trees about a price and possibly cutting down the non-live oak if it is a "trash tree" that might fall down, like a water oak. The Board is behind this project, but details need to be finalized. If a little money is needed to help finance the total project, it will not be taken from funds that are dedicated to other specific medians, just general funds. There are 501(c)(3) funds for the trees that are tax deductible and GDCA Civic Association funds that are not.

There is also a mini median on Park Blvd. between Perkins and Myrtle with only three trees on it. The Board agreed that Kimberly should ask Bayou Trees how much it would cost to take care of these trees with the others. Park Blvd. will need to be blocked when tree trimming happens, so it makes sense to do this at the same time. The Garden District residents are aware of the high winds during Ida, so this is probably good timing to trim vulnerable trees. None of the trees that were trimmed by Bayou Trees lost limbs during Ida, so this is a safety issue. One Board member was told that one large limb can weigh 10,000 pounds.

Kimberly reported on lessons that were learned as her block tried to get support for this project. Essentially, a group of neighbors got together, talked to each other and made it happen. It was that block, not the Board that did it. Important lessons:

- 1) Weak limbs are a safety hazard.
- 2) It helps that people can pledge funds and come to the Board with a proposal rather than have to donate funds and hope that their median is chosen.
- 3) It might be easier to get pledges from owner occupied houses rather than rentals.
- 4) Kleinert might be a promising street to approach.
- 5) The block committee wrote a letter and delivered it to each house on the block. Then a representative from the block (Clayton Fields) who knows all of the neighbors went door-to-

door and spoke with them. He talked to all of them. They “planted the seed with the letter and Clayton watered it.” Have someone who knows everyone do the talking.

6) The *Under the Oaks Picnic Fundraiser* got people excited. We should use more events or all the events to motivate people, especially on blocks that need tree work.

Claire said that the first event was for awareness. Some Board members attended virtual workshops which earned us grant money that paid for the informational materials such as median signs, yard signs, stickers, etc. The Board agreed that we should make tree update announcements at each event.

**New Board Member:** The Board unanimously approved of inviting Kimberly Coffee to join the Board. Kimberly accepted.

**5G Cell Tower Report:** Mary said that no companies have new permit requests in at this time for 5G towers. The Federation of Greater Baton Rouge Civic Association suggests that neighborhoods put in requests for where they want the towers or the companies will put them anywhere. The companies can put them wherever they want, but it wouldn't be with the forethought regarding aesthetics that we would consider. Engineers would probably look at a map and pick spots that way. The companies do make an effort to put them in the right-of-way between houses rather than directly in front of a house. The Board voted unanimously to request that the City consider putting the 5G Cell Towers in the alleys of the Garden District whenever possible.

**Holiday Lighting:** The Board proposed that we have a lighting contest, but no categories. After a December 15<sup>th</sup> deadline, Heather and Justin will narrow down the contestants to about five. An online survey will ask residents of the Garden District to vote for their favorite house from the top chosen. This way, the neighborhood will decide who wins first, second and third place. Claire will put it in the newsletter and do the graphics. Mary will advertise it on Nextdoor.com. Babeth's husband, Robert, will take photos of the winner. He took excellent photos last year.

**Alley Update:** So far, ten letters have been sent to owners who have overgrown vegetation in the alley behind their property asking them to trim the alley so emergency vehicles can have a clear pathway. Photos of the problems were in the letters. No responses have been received.

**The Board's Christmas Get-Together:** Heather offered to host the Board's party at her house with the tentative date of Thursday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. The date will depend upon her work schedule.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Fontenot  
Nov. 10, 2021