

OANA General Meeting Minutes — 4/13/2016

Around 35 people attended the meeting, which was held in the cafeteria at the Maumus Center.

Mike Pechon led the Pledge of Allegiance before introducing the main speaker, newly-elected Parish President Guy McInnis.

McInnis began by saying he wouldn't talk about all that has happened since he took office (laughter), but that one of his administration's main goals is to "put a new face on St. Bernard". This involves getting people to change their set ways and be more accountable.

Since no one else was available to talk about the streets projects, McInnis spoke to the issue himself. The St. Claude streetscape project is ready to start, but is now waiting on insurance to cover work done close to the railroad. The work on Friscoville has to be finished by the end of the year. Some of the delay is due to the high river level, which makes it impossible to work too close to the levee; the contractors want to complete the job all at once, so are waiting until they can do so.

Various problems with the contractors (drain protection, services being cut off without notifying residents, holes left in the streets) are being addressed thanks to the work of Councilman Gillis McCloskey. McInnis assured the audience that the streets projects will all get done "in due time".

The parish is also focusing on some long-term quality of life projects, since a lot of new folks are moving here. Other parishes have better trash pickup, and we could get a recycling drop-off trailer from the current company, so the administration is negotiating with the contractor and investigating other companies as well. Recreational opportunities for children and adults are also on the agenda. The parish recently became aware of a \$400,000 marketing account, and is planning to use that over a 4-year period to promote St. Bernard.

McInnis then answered several questions from the attendees:

- Yes, the streets will eventually be resurfaced with concrete.
- The brown color in our water is from cast-iron pipes, which are gradually being replaced. Persistent problems can be reported to the Department of Public Works.
- Blight is slowly being addressed; the legal dept. has changed, but the same person is working on the problem. There are risks involved, and it is costly — the parish needs a permanent source of funding — but the administration is determined to make progress on this issue. Residents should report addresses of concern.
- New flood maps will be published soon. For most of us there should be no change.
- The "Submerged Roads Program" work on Angela, Friscoville & Mehle should be finished by Sept/Oct.

- The work further down on St. Claude is to install new curbing and designate a bike lane. The contractors are working on that while waiting for the river to go down.
- The back entrance to Domino's project may be tied into negotiations on another project on Florida Avenue.
- We should get better customer service from the Sewer & Water division.

Newly-elected councilman Gillis McCloskey then took the floor. He first thanked McInnis for the good rapport being fostered between the administration and the Council. He has been constantly fielding complaints from residents regarding the street work, and is threatening not to pay the contractor until the issues are resolved.

On a different note, he reported on several exciting neighborhood events: 35 homeowners from over the bridge came on the bus to our last Sippin' in the Sunset; Studio Inferno is hosting another opening on Saturday; a series of "Dinner and a Movie" events is being planned for the summer at Carolyn Park; and 40 Arpent Brewery is celebrating its 2 year anniversary on Friday evening. He thanked our members and the neighborhood for making all these things possible.

The streets work contractor must keep refilling the sand in the streets until they're repaved. A resident reported a sign down instructing trucks to use Aycok. Guy McInnis remarked that the administration now has much better cooperation and help from people working in the background in government. Past Councilman Ray Lauga commented that it's due to better leadership, which will bring more activity to Arabi.

Mike Pechon announced the OANA logo contest, which will have a prize of \$100. Further details will be sent via email, but meanwhile everyone can start thinking & drawing.

The next Sippin' in the Sunset will be May 5th, Cinco de Mayo, with extended hours of 6-9 p.m. There will be Margaritas and themed food offerings, and music by the Cypress Pop Trio.

Mitchell Gaudet's Seven Deadly Sins opening is Saturday, 6-10 p.m.; the new Studio Arabi will be open for attendees to tour.

Another event, Sippin' on the Bayou, organized by Kerri Callais, is scheduled for April 21 at the Islenos Museum complex.

The Board has been discussing some ideas for going forward, and will soon be picking a few to adopt and ask for volunteers from the membership.

The next General Meeting is scheduled for June 8.