

NFB--NEIGHBORS FIRST FOR BYWATER

Minutes of board meeting on 10 February 2015

Present: Kim Bellinger, Brian Lockett, Beverly Andrews, John Andrews, Julie Jones, Harold Gee, Rick Prince, Mark Gonzalez, Anthony Eschmann, Rhonda Findley, Charles Miller

Julie Jones introduced Sean Cummings who had asked to address the group. He is a developer in this area and other parts of the city. He thanked us for meeting with him stating that he was concerned that there is not a lot of thoughtful and considerate conversation that would be good for the neighborhood. He asked to know some of our concerns.

Julie Jones brought up the CZO (Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance) process and how our input was ignored. In particular she cited the height along the riverfront and the changes to what all restaurants are allowed. Brian Lockett added that we do not know what will happen with the "gateways" along the river, the former Navy terminal and the potential cruise ship terminal.

Mr. C agreed that the CZO is far from perfect and is in need of major revision. He also brought up the fact that the population in Bywater and Marigny has decreased since the 1960's and suggested that increased supply of residential units would decrease the price of the units and thus draw greater population density.

Mr. C initiated a discussion in relation to the Riverfront Overlay of the 50' vs 75' limit, the FAR (Floor to Area Ratio) and the possibility of an average height of 50' with the taller sections of the buildings near the floodwall and a lower section closer to Chartres St. Mr. C stated that he felt that the 50' limit was a myth, because it is not a convenient height for building, given the demands of the building code and FEMA. According to him, a 50' limit would, in fact, cap out at about 35'. His own answer is to allow developers in the riverfront overlay (he himself owns a 2-acre lot in that area) to build by right to 75', with a FAR (Floor Area Ratio, referring to a building's density) of 3.0 without the need of a Conditional Use process. (The draft CZO suggests that, via a C.U. process in most instances—it does mention exceptions—a building might get a "bonus" of 25', bringing height to 75' and a density bonus that would bring the FAR to 3.5; the height on the river in the current, soon to be replaced, CZO is 75' for industrial and commercial, with a FAR of 1.0, which effectively limits the height to single-standing towers or to smoke stacks, since the floor area is so low.)

Kim Bellinger suggested that the 50' limit may be a myth to Mr. C but it is real to many people; the word "bonus" in the CZO puts people on guard, and he asked if it might be possible to build to 50' and still have a profit. Mr. C responded that at current prices that could not be done, that an additional \$100 per square foot would be necessary.

Beverly Andrews asked Mr. C if he had a plan for his property on Chartres St., commonly known as the Brickyard. It would involve 230-240 lofts—both apartments and condos—at an average of 1,200 sq ft, with 1:1 parking; the parking area would be hidden underneath a public green space the size of a football field which, at 25' high, would provide a view of the river. Heights would be staggered from 75' on the side by the river to as low as 35' on the street side. Both Kim Bellinger and Harold Gee suggested that still might well leave the public with a wall at the street level. (Much of the argument for increased heights mentions the horror of a 50' tall box.) Mr. C has not developed a full plan at this point because of the cost.

John Andrews asked how close to the floodwall one could drive pilings. Mr. C did not know but mentioned that servitude is 15'.

At some point, Mr. C commented that a cruise ship terminal would be very harmful to the neighborhood, and he offered to help the opposition fund efforts to fight it.

At 7:45 Mr. C thanked us for speaking with him, and we thanked him for his time.

Lisa Suarez and Nick Lambert, who were attending the meeting as observers, passed out fliers supporting a "Plan B" related to the Riverfront Overlay. The Board decided that this should be part of the work of the Riverfront Alliance and referred it to Mark Gonzalez.

The minutes of the previous meeting were passed out and approved without correction.

As there are only 12 nominated to the board which has a maximum of 12 the election will be by acclamation; no vote will be necessary in our March meeting.

Harold Gee, who is in charge of membership, announced the latest figures: 114 paid-up members, 265 on a phone list and 205 on our e-mail list.

Possible speakers for the next meeting are: someone from the port regarding the cruise ship terminal; someone from Robert's Grocery, Robert Armbruster (the developer of 3900 and 4000 Burgundy Street, lake side), who will have had his second meeting with the Architecture Review Committee of the HDLC the day before.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15.

Anthony Eschmann,

Secretary

Julie Jones,

President