

Minutes, general meeting 3 June 2015

President Julie Jones opened the meeting with the following announcements:

- 1) The boutique hotel that had been proposed for 618 Independence St has not been included in the CZO.
- 2) The NPP for 916-18 Louisa St was held. Very little information was obtained. (A report has been sent to you.)
- 3) Mr. Graham Hurley has purchased the Quonset hut at 631 Desire. He plans to live there and would like to run a legal B&B in his home. There is an NPP scheduled there at 6 pm on Friday, 5 June. (A report will follow.)
- 4) The Louisiana Landmark Society has declared the riverfront from Poland Ave. to Jackson Ave. one of the 9 most endangered historical sites in New Orleans.

She then introduced Keith Twitchel from the Council for a better New Orleans. He discussed the idea of Comprehensive Citizen Participation. The first step is the Neighborhood Participation Program (NPP) which requires a meeting of neighbors within a certain radius of proposed changes in use of a building or construction of new buildings. Neighborhood organizations should be informed that there will be an NPP (but the program does not make it clear that, when there is more than one neighborhood organization in an area, all should be informed. A notice of five days must be sent and a written report must be submitted to the CPC. Any Councilmember can approve such a proposal, eliminating the requirement for an NPP.

Next Meg Lousteau, Executive Director of VCPORA (Vieux Carré Property Owners, Resident and Associates) discussed illegal short-term rentals. She described a number of ill effects: the loss of a sense of neighborhood when whole blocks become short-term rentals; the noise that many places—rented out as week-end “party houses”—engender, especially when—and this is often the case—they are not owner occupied (in fact, often the owners live in other parts of the country); the fact that these houses are not insured for short-term rentals and are, thus, a hazard to neighboring houses, the loss of rental space for regular residents, and the skewing of property values. Individuals purchase homes in “trendy” neighborhoods with the specific purpose of running illegal short-term rentals. As this is more profitable than simply renting out an apartment they are willing to pay more; when someone wants to buy a house to live in the price is negatively impacted by that inflated purchase. While we have no statistics for New Orleans, a study conducted in San Francisco found that 30-40% of the properties in The Castro and Mission District are used as airbnb. Meg distinguished between illegal short-term rentals (such as airbnb’s) and legal bed & breakfast establishments. The latter are limited to one per block, must be owner-occupied, pay taxes and have appropriate insurance.

Sgt. Franklin of the 5th District and Charmaine Marchand talked about a program called Cops5. This is designed to purchase equipment for officers that the city does not provide. Officer Franklin stated that currently the 5th district needs bikes and reflective vests. They will provide us with more information soon.

Next Brian Luckett spoke about what passed and did not pass in the CZO. “We won’t know exactly what it is until next year.”

The decision to require one thousand square feet of lot per dwelling unit will allow doubles to be cut up into triples but will not allow for many four-plexes. Considering the cost of International Building Code requirements that come in—even with a triple--the cost of conversion might prove prohibitive.

In the RDO (Residential Diversity Overlay) area houses that at some point served as businesses (often a corner building with a diagonal cut) may be returned to commerce; they can become, among other things, “specialty restaurants” (don’t serve a whole meal), but not “standard restaurants” (do). These specialty restaurants cannot serve alcohol; however,

they can have live music. They must close their doors and stop the music at 10:00 every night.

On blocks zoned commercial (the 3200 blocks of Dauphine and Burgundy, for example) restaurants can serve alcohol without going through the Conditional Use process that was required in the old ordinance; they can also have live music. They are expected to close their doors at 10:00 Sunday –Wednesday and 12:00 Thursday – Saturday.

He also gave us the news that in the Riverfront Overlay (from Piety Street to Elysian Fields), on the river side of Chartres) the base zoning height has been raised to 55 feet. The “bonus” height is an additional 25 feet and the “bonus” density is a FAR (Floor Area Ratio) of 4. The Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association (FMIA) has filed a lawsuit on the grounds that the amendments added at the last minute did not go through the proper process to allow for citizen input and that the CZO violates the Master Plan’s requirement to retain the historic character of the city.

Anthony Eschmann,

Secretary

20 May 2015

Report on Neighborhood Participation Program Presentation

916-918 Louisa St.

The meeting was opened by a man who introduced himself as Patrick. He did not give his surname. He said that he is a friend of Robert Myers, the owner of the property.

He was asked why the meeting was scheduled at such an inconvenient time for working neighbors. The response was that it is within the allowable hours and this was convenient for him.

An explanation was given that Robert had cut a door between the two sides of his house so his mother could stay with him. He cut off the back portion (with the kitchen and bath) and this is where Patrick said that he lived. As his mother has since died he would like to make that apartment (without a kitchen and bath) a “corporate” rental. When asked what exactly he meant by that Patrick explained it would be a rental to a corporation for more than 30 days, hopefully.

He admitted that Robert had been cited by the CPC for running an airbnb (illegal) for the last few years. He also admitted that in the past 5 years that he had not purchased the proper insurance in that time.

Someone asked Patrick how they could rent an apartment with no kitchen or bath. He replied that this was the reason for going a corporate rental.

There were many questions to which there were no answers. At one point Patrick admitted that he really doesn’t live in the back of 918 as he previously said, but that he uses it as his mailing address.

One of the audience members asked for a show of hands regarding the proposal for property, which Patrick did not want to do. Of the 17 people present 14 were opposed to his plan to convert the building into a legal B&B or what he terms a “corporate rental” (the city does not use this definition for any sort of rental).

Although anyone holding an NPP is required to submit a report to the CPC, in which he/she refers to questions asked by the neighbors, nobody was taking notes. (There was a lady at the door who made sure everybody signed in, but she did not take notes.)

In summary, we learned nothing about the proposal and were unable to determine what the plan is for that space.

Anthony Eschmann

Secretary