

## Neighbors First Bywater

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Wednesday April 6<sup>th</sup>

Meeting called to order at 7:15

Attendance: 20 people including speakers.

Truck Farm question – no information. Just that a request for a zoning change is applied for. Board of zoning adjustments this coming Monday at 11am at City Council Chambers.

Guests #1:

Nora Ann Winbush – neighborhood engagement liaison

Information about the upcoming ballot – April 9<sup>th</sup>

Chief (Superintendent) Tim McConnell from the Fire Department

- Last five years, more spending for public safety. The city has tried to raise revenue.
- Dedicated to police and fire only.
- We have to ask the entire state for tax raises – because Orleans Parish and City are the same. 2 city-wide elections to make the tax happen in past.
- 100 million dollars over budget when Landrieu took over, more efficiency and transparency effort made under the mayor. 20% furlough for city workers instituted.
- 12 year deadline – tax will go away automatically.
- Police: Money would go to
  - Recruitment and hiring. Past 12 months, first time they have hired more officers than they have lost. 15% pay raise this year. Top of the southern average. Goal is 1600 officers (studies suggest this is the right number for New Orleans).
  - Equipment: cameras, tasers, etc.
  - Helping us get in line with the consent decree.
  - When Landrieu assumed office, it took 18 months to hire a police officer. Now down to 3 months. (they go face to face on references to check up.)
- Fire: Money would go to
  - pension issues. The firefighters had a board to control the pension fund that was made up almost entirely of firemen; now it's a better mixture of people. "Fire-fighters should not control investments". Deal with the mayor has solved all the long-standing problems. Millage will fund the pension only. Free up money to settle the longevity lawsuit.

- Fire-fighters get paid \$15 an hour (after the first year)

Roads: Bond rating has improved under Landrieu, so the rate is less. The money—this is a separate millage--will go to fixing the “rest” of street construction. FEMA agreed to pay for certain parts of the work (which has been done) the city will use the money to finish the job.

Questions:

1. Supporting comments for the first responders – clarifying the amount to the police and the amount to the fire-department. Regarding the police, no officers were hired for the first three years of Landrieu – losing an officer every three days. Why not hire for three years? (despite surplus).

Response: when I have less people to hire – I use more money on overtime. Moratorium on hiring was across the board. Not just police. All the money that is going to be spent – you can see it published online.

Question #2:

I’m concerned; I think the fire fighters have been screwed for many years. But what about the mismanagement of funding by the city.

Response:

Tax-collection rate is up. Before Landrieu was around 90%. Now it’s 98%. This **only** refers to sales taxes. Non-profits pay no tax. Police and Fire are joined because in 1994 it was passed as a single-issue millage.

Question #3:

Homestead exemption does not count – but what about our neighbors that can’t afford this.

Response: everyone should pay for public safety. 5 mils for police. 2.5 for fire.

Question #4:

1994 ? They were joined? No other way to separate from the police. . . ? People have two different viewpoints of the departments. . .

Response: Thanks.

Roads and other infrastructure:

We have to vote to approve use of money for this, but this is money we already have—i.e. it doesn’t involve a new millage.

Chief Harrison (police) will be at the St. Roch Market (rear) at 5:30 tomorrow (Thursday, April 6) to answer questions. All are invited to come. And the director of Code Enforcement.

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Julie:

Brief Reminder – “Posh-tel” the hostel on Mazant. City Planning Commission denied the proposal (7-0) – so it will go to the City Council. Please write to city council members!

Refer to it as “zoning docket ZD-017/16” “600 to 626 Mazant St.”

Deadline for letters: not clear. Goes to the council tomorrow. Will be considered / voted later, April 21<sup>st</sup> – Latest, June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

4.8 times larger than permitted! Historic Marigny / Treme / Bywater Commercial 2 (HMC-2) – greatest area could be is 10,000 sq. feet. They want 48,000 sq. feet.

“Free hand hostel in Miami” is the model for this project.

Money to be made on liquor? 22 parking spots.

Project will contribute to “increasingly transient nature of Bywater”

Impact on services provided to the posh-tell – all the deliveries.

Our streets are narrower in Bywater – impact on roads... and residents.

Brian Lockett:

Bob Rivers – Director of City Planning Commission – Master Plan amendment process has started. First phase was 3 months (end of March).

April 1<sup>st</sup> – you can submit amendments to the master plan – deadline is end of June; however, there may be fees (running from \$1,000 to \$4,000) on some types of amendment.

City-Charter views the Master Plan as the overarching idea and gives one section of it the “force of law.” CZO – items must fall within the parameters of the Master Plan. The City Council is trying to use even that section of the M.P. as only a rough guide. Currently there is a lawsuit attempting to hold the City Council to the Master Plan regarding a hotel in the French Quarter (i.e. insisting that the section of the M.P. that has “force of law” is obeyed).

Two things needed:

What kind of amendments desired? Brian would like to see a clearer definition of what is meant by "tout ensemble," referring to the overall character of a neighborhood. Lately, developers are using 1 or 2 taller buildings as a precedent to justify their own projects for tall buildings even if the over-all height of a neighborhood is low.

- Be vigilant about what amendments are proposed that could affect us.

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Introduction of new board members

8:26pm. Meeting concluded.