

NEIGHBORS FIRST FOR BYWATER

Minutes for General Meeting held Wednesday, April 5, 2017

Meeting started at 7:11PM

A representative from the RTA and a member of their consulting team spoke about the beginning phases of their 20 year strategic plan, or "Strategic Mobility Plan". They handed out a survey and are looking for "initial feedback and comments". More info can be found as things develop at www.norta.com/about/strategicplan or by contacting them at strategicplan@norta.com or (504)288-2626. The next public meeting is scheduled for June. The presentation was short and then went to questions and comments.

One question was whether they planned a way to make busses run on time, which they say is part of what they are looking into. A new GPS system is part of their plan. Funding is not set aside for improvements yet since they do not yet know what those improvements will be exactly. A suggestion was made for the RTA to pursue clear communication with the Army Corps of Engineers regarding impacts on their service by the possible Industrial Canal lock expansion project.

Beth Butler and Debra Campbell from A Community Voice spoke about their efforts and reasons to oppose the Industrial Canal lock expansion. Among the concerns are increased traffic of hazardous materials through the canals, environmental impact of dredging, damage to flood protection structures, and multiple issues caused by years of construction including traffic and impacts on businesses and nearby residents. Larger barges could mean both the St. Claude Ave. and Claiborne Ave. bridges would be up at the same time. Two homes they know of will have to be vacated for construction, which—according to the Corps—will take at least 13 years. St. Claude could be a dead end at the canal for a number of these years, which would cause traffic issues and have a negative effect on businesses along St. Claude Ave. They say it is difficult to get straight answers from the Corps of Engineers, and have suggested the barge traffic be re-routed to a non-populated area in lower St Bernard Parish. Meetings by the Corps have been held in The Upper 9th Ward, Lower 9th Ward, and St. Bernard. St. Bernard elected officials seem to be opposed to the project. Since it is a federal project they urged everyone to write or call local representatives and the governor with comments or concerns. Mark Lahare from the Corps is taking comments until April 7th at (504)862-1344. A Community Voice is planning a protest at the St. Claude bridge April 24th at 10AM. [Later Mr. Lahare said only written comments (email or otherwise) would be accepted.]

Next we heard from Martin Rolston (aka Quintron) and Panacea Theriac (aka Miss Pussycat) about their hopes of making their home and clubhouse (The Spellcaster Lounge) at 3052 St. Claude Ave. (between Sugar Park and Red's Chinese) into a legitimate small capacity bar and performance venue, with a focus on experimental sounds, jazz, and puppetry. They have lived on the property 20+ years and will continue to do so. The lounge space is already thoroughly soundproofed. The 100 person 9th Ward Marching Band has rehearsed there since 1997 with no complaints. They plan to host an NPP soon. The response from NFB members was favorable.

Rick Prince gave a brief comment on the low voter turnout for the March 25 local judicial primary election and encouraged early voting for the April 29 general election.

The meeting ended at 8:23PM.