

OANA General Meeting Minutes 01-17-2023

The January 2023 General Meeting was held at the Maumus Center, 721 Friscoville Ave., and was called to order at approximately 6:10 pm. Just over 45 people were in attendance. The agenda was presented on a slideshow.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, President Alison Barrios welcomed the first guest speaker, Councilman Gillis McCloskey, who discussed a proposal for the block of land bordered by N. Peters, Aycock, Pontalba & Hernandez, newly back on the market. He pointed out that this is the only undeveloped single city block along the river, and provides a unique opportunity for the Parish and our neighborhood. He then introduced Bryce French, representing the property owners, who suggest that if the Parish would purchase the property, the 3.47 acres could be developed into an entertainment park. French showed a video of a project being built near Birmingham, Alabama, in partnership with Festival Productions (JazzFest and others nationwide), with food & drink outlets, various amenities, and a large multi-purpose amphitheater. Gillis pointed out that of course a vision would have to come from what this neighborhood wants, and a business plan would need to be adopted. Parish President Guy McInnis and the Parish Council will investigate the feasibility of purchasing and using the land. A member from the audience pointed out that a traffic study would be needed for any new development.

The next item on the agenda was an overview of the upcoming May OANA Elections, when all board positions are open for election or re-election. President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and 3-5 Board of Directors slots will be filled for two year terms. All Active Members (2023 dues paid) may nominate, run for office, and vote. Nominations must be submitted in writing by April 30th, and dues must be current to vote. Duties of officers and board were outlined (see slideshow). Anyone interested in serving on the board is invited to the February 2nd Board Meeting.

OANA always invites participation on committees, and would especially welcome help on two new ones, namely Festival Planning (for Sippin' in the Sunset and Sugar Fest) and Event Planning (Member Socials). A quick 4-question survey was passed out and collected at the end of the meeting for input on 1) major issues facing Old Arabi; 2) suggested speakers; 3) interest in joining a committee; 4) interest in a member directory.

A list of upcoming events followed, with dates for Board and General Meetings (see slideshow), and 2023 social happenings:

- Member Social & Membership Drive — Jan. 27th, 6:30-8:30pm @ Pirogue's Whiskey Bayou
- Lundi Gras Walking Parade — Feb. 20th, 2pm starting @ St. Claude Arts Park
- Sippin' in the Sunset — March 30th & May 25th @ Aycock Barn
- Sugar Fest — October 7th @ Aycock Barn

2022 Holiday Donations:

- \$5000 to Arabi Elementary families

- November Sippin' tips of \$300 to the Community Center of St. Bernard
- \$300 to Sama Yoga Studio for their fundraiser
- 30 pairs of new headphones to the Arabi Elementary Chorus

Thanks to:

- The Kitchen Table Cafe for hosting the OANA holiday party
- members & friends who decorated the St. Claude neutral ground for the holidays
- the Old Arabi Christmas Carolers for spreading cheer in the neighborhood
- everyone who donated throughout the year for making our holiday giving possible

Neighborhood Happenings:

- there's a new covered bus stop in front of St. Claude Arts, finally!
- a new Brazilian restaurant is opening soon in Arabi Plaza
- a zoning change request has been made by the owner of 6729 Bienvenue to increase the number of units allowed from 2 to 4; concerned residents were invited to attend the Planning Commission meeting on Jan. 24th
- at least 2 properties on N. Peters by the river have recently changed hands, and permitting for single-family homes is underway; attendees were reminded that a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Old Arabi Historical Commission is required for all new construction and for many renovations of existing structures

Members' News & Notables:

- congratulations to Gino and Sarah Paretto on the birth of their son Ronin
- and to Katherine Lemoine for being sworn in for her third term on the St. Bernard Parish School Board
- condolences to Kevin Hoffman, his family and the Arabi Food Store family, for the loss of Kevin's brother Al Hoffman

Announcements & Introductions:

- Associate Member Michelle Huffaker is still working on 648 Mehle, despite many delays
- several unlocked cars in the neighborhood have been ransacked recently; of course the perpetrators are looking for guns, and seem to be taking baby items lately

Door prizes were awarded, attendees were reminded of the next Board Meeting on February 2nd and the next General Meeting on March 15th, and the meeting was adjourned around 7:25 pm.