

OANA General Meeting Minutes 07-19-2023

The July 2023 General Meeting was held at the Maumus Center, 721 Friscoville Ave., and was called to order just after 6 pm. Around 45 people were in attendance. The agenda was presented on a slideshow.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the evening's first guest speaker was introduced. Dana Eness, Executive Director of The Urban Conservancy, explained that one of the organization's primary focuses is living with water sustainably, including dealing with standing water and excessive paving, which also helps with drought and stormwater storage. She presented one of the organization's main projects, a "Guide to Green Infrastructure And the Front Yard Initiative". Several solutions to urban flooding were shown, such as rain gardens, permeable walkways and driveways, French drains, and rain barrels (which can be acquired through Green Light New Orleans). More information can be found on their website, www.urbanconservancy.org, and on Facebook and Instagram. See slideshow.

The second guest speaker for the evening was Dennis Bradley, Stormwater Inspector for the Parish Public Works Dept. His job is to monitor canals and construction sites, and to educate the public about problems with the stormwater being pumped into our marshes. There are two sources of water that go into the marshes: sewer water, which is treated, and stormwater, which is not. We need to help clean up the stormwater by not letting litter or other contaminants (grass, paint, oil, etc.) get into the storm drains. Bradley mentioned several ways individuals can help, e.g. "paint a drain" with a slogan, clean storm drains & keep them unblocked, adopt-a-drain or canal. Eco-tours can show people where the runoff goes, door hangers can explain the problems, educational programs can get kids involved, litter and canal cleanups can be organized. Someone in the audience asked how to dispose of unused paint, which is not supposed to go into the regular trash, though if it's dry it's OK to toss; if not, put kitty litter in it to make it solid. The dump might take it where they accept oil. Bradley can be reached to report problem areas.

When he arrived, a special thank you was given to Ray Lauga for his service on the Board of Directors from 2017 to 2023, with apologies for neglecting to mention him previously as an outgoing Board Member.

A list of upcoming OANA events began with the Old Arabi Sugar Fest on Saturday, October 14th. Information on ways to get involved in planning mentioned that some good ideas for kids activities have been proposed, and the music lineup will be finalized soon. Other dates to save were: a Summer Social Series, the "Old Arabi Pub Sprawl", with stops at three neighborhood watering holes over the next month; the next General Meeting, September 20th, where District A and parish-wide candidates will be invited to speak; the member Fall Social/Night Out Against Crime on October 17th; and the OANA Members' Holiday Party on December 6th, venue TBD.

There will be no Fall Sippin' in the Sunsets, due to a shortage of volunteers to help plan & organize. The focus will be on Sugar Fest instead.

In news from around the neighborhood:

- There's a new dog park, next to the Jail on Hernandez St., soon to be completed
- A new retail development, "Arabi Commons", is planned for 6930 St. Claude at Aycock St.
- Regarding Short Term Rentals, a Community Development proposal approved by the Parish Council will limit STRs to commercially zoned areas only, with no new permits issued in R-2 areas of Old Arabi. Existing STR permits will be grandfathered in until property is sold or transferred
- Zoning hearing coming up for the property on the corner of Friscoville & Bienvenue is a request to consolidate several lots into one

From our neighborhood businesses (see slideshow & visit their web and Facebook pages for details):

- OAB on the River is back, with live music, bingo and karaoke
- Old Arabi Marketplace is throwing a Christmas in July party on July 27th
- Old Arabi Lighthouse Records & Books features interesting live performances
- PWB has karaoke, trivia and live music
- Zeitgeist Theatre & Lounge has a full calendar of events
- Arabi Visual Arts puts on various shows

And furthermore:

- a "meet the candidates" event will be held at Clay & Marie Cossé's house on Monday, 8/7 (with a disclaimer that OANA does not endorse any candidates)
- Community Center of St. Bernard is partnering with Nunez CC for a job fair and education expo tomorrow
- The Arabi Amblers will participate in the "Fearless 5K" on September 9th at Jackson Barracks during Suicide Prevention Month

Around the Parish:

- The Knights of Nemesis Luau is August 19th
- The St. Bernard Chamber is holding its 2023 Legislative Breakfast for Chamber Members
- the Battle for the Bayou gala on 8/25 is welcoming sponsors & silent auction items

Member Highlights/Announcements

- July's Old Arabi Yard of the Month award went to member Jerabelle Smith for her hard work keeping up the garden at the Aycock Barn
- Member Brandon Adler asked for input for her Master's Degree project on traffic patterns in the neighborhood
- Intro from Bert Dejoie, who runs the soccer program at Community Park. Soccer scholarships are available at thousands of US universities, and this program is connected to some of the best youth development clubs in the world. The focus is on individual player development
- Barry Lemoine is the new director for the Maumus Center, in charge of facility use except for the Science programs. OANA might be able to get involved through the Beautification Committee (making rain barrels e.g.)

Future Board and General Meeting dates were reviewed, door prizes were awarded, attendees were thanked for coming, and the meeting was adjourned at around 7:30 pm.