

OANA General Meeting Minutes 01-22-2020

The first meeting of 2020 well-attended, with over 40 people present, and began just after 6 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members from 2019 and years past had been asked to renew their memberships at this meeting. Quite a few did, and all were reminded that annual \$20/household dues can now be paid online as well, at oldarabi.org/membership.

The traditional year-in-review slideshow came next, starting with OANA sponsored events.

Though we had planned four Sippin' in the Sunset gatherings for 2019, weather-related vendor cancellations forced us to call off one in the Spring and another in the Fall. Once again we're hoping to hold 2 Spring and 2 Fall Sippin's in 2020, with the first two dates set for Thursdays, March 19th (Spring-themed & St. Joseph Day) and May 7th (teacher appreciation), 6-9 p.m. at the Aycock Barn. In case of inclement weather, we're looking at possible rain dates, and also at how we might provide some food & music to avoid having to cancel.

The 11th annual Sugar Fest was a sweet as ever, and once again LSU was undefeated when playing during that event! We'll probably consider an earlier end time this year, since the crowd thinned out quite a bit during the last hour or two. Otherwise attendance was great, and we believe the addition of the Sugar Soirée, a Patron & Volunteer recognition party, has helped lure more sponsors.

The presentation next highlighted OANA's community impact.

Neighbors gathered for Night Out Against Crime at the Old Courthouse & Jail, for refreshments and to meet with Sheriff Pohlmann and several Deputies. It's always a good opportunity to ask questions of our law enforcement officers, and for neighbors to get to know each other.

For the second year, we generated a Halloween Trick-or-Treat map and issued flashing lights to participating houses, providing a guide to families masking in the neighborhood.

The "totem pole" by the Barn came crashing down, but has since been re-mounted on a new, sturdier pole, thanks to the hard work of one of our members. And at long last, we have a lovely big blue trash can on the levee, at the Mehle St. gate! Thanks to member neighbors who have volunteered to empty it regularly.

Holiday donations at the end of 2019 totaled \$6100. As in years past OANA adopted 10 needy families from Arabi Elementary, each of which received a \$200 gift card from Canseco's and a \$300 Walmart gift card. We also contributed \$300 towards new shirts for the school's performing groups. In addition, we gave \$300 to the Community Center's Backpack Program, which provides food to kids in need, and pledged \$500 to the Chalmette High Key Club for its continuing help at Sugar Fest.

The Beautification Committee made some holiday magic, lighting up a strip of the neutral ground on St. Claude by the Welcome to the Parish sign. The colorful display was mounted in time for the first Shop Small Holiday Popup Market at the St. Claude Arts building. OANA also provided drinks for sale at the festive event.

OANA's two annual Socials were mentioned — the Night Out Against Crime in October, and our Christmas Holiday Party, once again held at The Kitchen Table Café. At the latter, Friends of Old Arabi awards were given to the two long-time organizers of Sippin' in the Sunset (with a hearty "Sip Sip Hooray"), and to two Board Members for their commitment over the years.

Financially speaking, we began 2019 with almost \$27,500 and ended with \$21,000. Figures for the operating account, scholarship fund, beautification budget, and profits from Sippin' and Sugar Fest were shared (see slide show for details). Membership has decreased slightly over the past 3 years, and we will be focusing on increasing participation in the near future.

Board members were thanked for their many efforts and volunteer time invested, and the member recipient of the OANA Leadership St. Bernard scholarship was introduced.

Upcoming event dates were reviewed:

- Sippin' in the Sunset will take place on March 19th and May 7th
- the Old Arabi Lundi Gras Walking Parade will once again stroll through the neighborhood on Feb. 24th, meeting at the 40 Arpent Tap Room at 2:30 p.m., making various stops and ending by the Mehle St. levee gate to toast the sunset — tickets are \$10
- this Saturday is the Nunez Foundation Gala "Pelicans & Pearls", benefitting the Foundation's scholarship program, 5-8 p.m. at Docville Farm

Some of our neighborhood members are collecting items to send to U.S. troops overseas. A list of desired items, drop-off locations and contact info is on the slide show; the collection will be ongoing through February.

Door prizes were awarded, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:25. The short film "Locked", about the history of shipping in the area and the long-running plan to enlarge the industrial canal lock, was shown for those who wished to stay.