

# *River Oaks Council of Co-Owners*

## **Board Meeting Minutes**

**January 28, 2016**

Guest Speaker & Introduction of **Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Cohen, from District C:** Lyla Gillaspie (Board President) at approximately 6:35 p.m. in the security office, located on the property, introduced the guest speaker Pro Tem Ellen Cohen to the Homeowners in attendance and advised she will update the community on issues at City Hall, and answer questions for 5-10 minutes. At this time Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Cohen advised the homeowners she was glad to be there and thanked the Association for inviting her. She advised she had been in meetings with Mayor Sylvester Turner and his senior staff earlier in the day, and they had been going over agenda items for the big council meeting next week. She stated she had served previously on the council (not in this capacity), but now fully understands better the process since she's now been in two different positions. She advised at this time she would give an overview of City Council, who they are, how they run the council, and bring everybody up to date on a couple of "pot hole" issues and answer any questions about the completion of S. Shepherd. Ellen advised the City council is made up of 16 council members. There are 11 District members (of which she is one), 5 At Large members, and the Mayor.

As everybody knows the City council does not run as Republicans or democrats. There are 17 members sitting around at what they refer to as the "Horseshoe". They meet every Tuesday afternoon for public comments and Wednesday morning do the business of the City. Public comment means if you have anything you want to talk about or announce, or something going on that you want the community to know about, you can sign up and come and speak before City council and you will generally have 3 minutes, 2 minutes or 1 minute. All meetings are open, they have no Executive session. Wednesday morning is when the council votes on ordinances and issues that affect you. If you can't make it to the City council meeting, the meeting can also be viewed on TV. So those 2 meetings are set every week.

Then there are also committee meetings, and the committee she was asked to chair is called "Quality of Life". This committee meets once a month, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month. You can also go on the city's website and the times are listed for all the committees. These committee meetings are also open meetings. She then explained if you want to submit your email that you can be included to get the email from her office that goes out every Friday afternoon. She explained it is not long, it is about 3 paragraphs, and the purpose is to let you know what is going on in District C. They find it's the best way to get their information out there to you. A list was passed around for homeowners to include their email address to receive this weekly information via email. She went on to say they are there to serve you, that's their job, and they are there to answer your questions. District C starts at Meyerland, goes along Braeswood, through Rice University, through Montrose, includes Memorial Park, encompasses where we are now, goes up through Shepherd, Oak Forest, and extends to Tidwell/290. There is 215,000 people just in District C, and there are also 72 Civic Clubs. Most districts have only have 20, and some have 6 or 8 Civic Clubs, but District C has the most, and actually a little over, and that keeps her and her staff of 4 very busy. The idea is to get to as many of the Civic Clubs as they possibly can. At that time she advised they also have what's called a CAP ambassador. This means someone from the Civic Club agrees to be their "ambassador" because they can't get to the Civic club meeting every time we have a meeting, so they need someone to be their "eyes

and ears". It doesn't mean you have any more meetings, it just means you communicate with Valerie or another staff member and advise them that at the meeting "such and such came up". Or "I was talking to some of my neighbors, and they were concerned about this"-whatever the case may be. The CAP members meet maybe 2-3 times a year. They also keep the CAP members notified so they can come back to the Civic Club to advise the members of what's going on, and they also have the CAP members ask the Civic Club their opinion on certain items also. Her office has actually closed 12,000 cases of people calling them with issues in the last year, and they get approximately 250 requests a month. Lyla (Board President) advised that our issue with the City drains being cleaned out had actually just been solved.

One big issue for District C is pot holes. Based on calls they have received, the City has already filled 280 pot holes. A few years ago the big issue was public safety. But in the last year or two it's been pot holes, and she is glad the Mayor is addressing that issue. She explained there are some potholes that are outside of the 5x5 consideration of pot holes, and the bigger ones -the street themselves are going to have to be repaired.

The next big issue that people have talked to them about is the Budget. She advised the City is looking at a \$156,000,000 deficit. They have been saying \$126,000,000 but they just had a meeting with the Mayor and a couple additional items have come up, and one of those items is the Pensions. She also feels this Council that she is sitting on, is one of the most fiscally conservative councils that she has sat on in her last 4 years, and there is no more "kicking the can down the road", and the Mayor is absolutely adamant about this. So they are going to deal with the Pension issue, don't want to end up like Detroit (she stated please don't take offense), and all the council members feel the same way about this very important issue. She went on to explain that each one of the council member's has only one vote, including the Mayor. But what he does have is the strongest form of mayoral government in the country. By that she means he gets to decide what goes on the agenda for the council to vote on. If he doesn't want something on the agenda, then they don't vote on it. But once on the agenda, his vote is the same as everyone's vote.

We have council district service funds that we have gotten in the last year, and that is taken out of the general fund (not new money). But each District council member has a District Service Fund of \$1,000,000. Now that sounds like a lot, but when you start putting in speed cushions and fixing other issues, you can go through a million dollars quickly. For District C this last year we spent \$535,000 on Neighborhood Traffic Management Programs. That is how to keep people from "whipping through" neighborhoods. That's why speed cushions are installed, because that is one way to slow down some of the traffic, and you have to realize 215,000 people -that's a big "neighborhood" to take care of.

We spent \$200,000 on overtime for HPD officers in areas that were experiencing higher crime rates. We spent \$130,000 on District C park and lighting upgrades, and \$100,000 on spay and neuter programs at BARC. So that's where the money was spent last year. Ellen stated now that we will be cutting down, she is not sure they will even get a \$1,000,000 next year, because everything is going to have to be "cut". As the Mayor said "absolutely everything is on the table right now" as far as cuts in the budget are concerned. Finally Shepherd-the latest that she has heard is "substantial completion is to be March 2016". They know the completion has taken longer than planned, but there have been several problems like tremendous storms, they found some things underground they didn't know they would find, but it's really close to being

completed. So that's where they are as far as Shepherd. She then advised she has enough time to take questions for about 5 minutes.

The question was asked as to how long the budget cuts will be in place for? For example the Pensions? Ellen advised they have to have a balanced budget every year, so it's year to year, and the Budget year begins July 1<sup>st</sup>. So right now they are beginning the discussions on the Budget. One of the things they have talked about is looking at a zero based budget, but it won't go into affect for this next budget coming up.

The question was asked as to how hard is it to get speed bumps installed on Peden? Ellen asked is it due to the construction on Shepherd? The homeowners stated no, this was happening before the construction even started. Valerie (Ellen's staff member) advised if someone emails her, she will send information on the Neighborhood Traffic Management program, what it entails is the Traffic Operations Division comes out and speaks to the people as a community. Ellen stated it has to be "community generated", and then they will come out and do a "traffic study".

The question was asked was there language when you voted about "Rebuild Houston"- that you would only be charged a certain amount, and in fact you were charged another number? This issue is still in the courts right now Ellen stated.

She stated she happens to be a proponent of Rebuild Houston. They were borrowing and borrowing for what they needed to pay for the infrastructure, and our City is old, and therefore has a lot of infrastructure problems. For example, they dug up a pipe a couple years ago in the Heights area that was wooden.

The question was asked about the tax reinvestment for upper Montrose, what's going to happen to that? Ellen stated yes, the TIRZ money (tax increment reinvestment zones) there is a lot of zones in District C. Upper Kirby is a perfect example, and some of the work you have seen on Westheimer that is Upper Kirby TIRZ, some of the work on Bissonnet is Upper Kirby TIRZ. What TIRZ is is money that is generated from businesses over and above what the amount of taxes are that goes to the City. Montrose does have a TIRZ now, but its going to take any number of years before a substantial amount of money is there to actually be able to do what needs to be done. She then advised River Oaks Gardens is not in the Montrose TIRZ, but is outside of the boundary.

The question was asked if the City is going to repave Vermont like they did San Felipe due to the pot holes? Ellen explained if the 5x5 pot holes are the problem, and they have been called in, those will be fixed, but if bigger than that the whole street would have to be repaved, and that money would come out of the Capital Improvement program. It really depends on how the roads are evaluated by the City.

The question was asked that there is an area on Haddon that has been filled many times, and keeps sinking due to a structural issue, how do we find out if that is already on the radar to be repaired? Valerie stated there is an interactive map on the Rebuild Houston website that shows the priorities for a specific street, and it will tell you if it's a future project, or the status. Ellen stated if it's not on the interactive map, they can see what they can do to get it added on.

The question was asked that the ROG property is surrounded by apartment complexes "vertical" living. The homeowner feels that this puts a big strain on the infrastructure.

When those buildings are permitted to go up, are they given any financial responsibility for improving the infrastructure? Ellen answered for the most part- No, as there is no zoning. She stated what's interesting is people want to live right here in this area-in vertical living. When Steven Pineberg, (the professor that did the study 2 or 3 years ago), his study showed that young people particularly wanted to live outside the Houston area, in a nice big home, with a big yard. Recently when he's done that study they want a smaller footprint, they want to live inside the loop, they want to be able to walk around the corner to the grocery store, they want to be able to walk their children to the neighborhood school, and that's one of the reasons it's such a desirable place. There are approximately 10,000 people a month moving in this area, even with the price of gas.

A statement was made by a homeowner that we need recycling for multi family complexes, especially given what was just said about people moving in, and were willing to work with City council on this issue and be a guinea pig if we need to be. Ellen stated she really didn't know what the answer is, and she is not trying to shrug this off, but this is something that should be shared with David Robinson who is an "at large" council member. Because what is being asked is not unique to District C, this is something the City could be involved in, and that's where the "at larges" should be active. Ellen then mentioned Eleanor Tinsley and how she was the one who raised the proposal for no smoking in public buildings, it took her 6 years, and she was almost laughed out of council. She was also the one responsible for the billboards not being everywhere, and now when people drive into town, it looks nice. What it boils down to is she believes in recycling, this has recently been brought to her attention, and she will talk to David Robinson about it.

The Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Cohen then had to leave to go to another Civic club meeting, but advised that Valerie (a member of her staff) would stay for another 10 minutes to answer any questions that any one else had.

At that time Lyla asked the homeowner's in attendance don't you feel you're more connected to the City now? Lyla also advised how their office really helped with the drain issues we were having, we now have a "friend" at City council and can stay connected. Lyla also volunteered to become a part of keeping the Association connected to the City by going to the monthly meetings held by the Mayor for HOA Presidents.

### **Call Meeting to Order**

The River Oaks Gardens board meeting was then called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Lyla Gillaspie, the Board President.

### **Board Members Present:**

- Lyla Gillaspie Board President
- Neil Goldstein Vice President
- Steven Young Secretary
- Alice Bragg Treasurer
- Mike Olsen Member at Large

### Recording Secretary & Property Manager:

- Therese Morales

Waive the Reading & Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (November 19, 2015): A motion was made, seconded and all approved the General Board Meeting Minutes.

### Financial Report-Therese Morales:

Financials:

	1/28/16
Operating Account:	\$ 8,144.43
Money Market Accounts:	
Insurance Reserves	\$27,121.22
Replacement Reserves	\$375,059.09
Total Money Market	\$402,180.31
Total Cash	\$410,324.74

Therese also advised for the coming year, the Association is saving \$20,000.00 on the insurance premium, due to the amount of properties that KRJ manages, and this savings reflects that. She also stated if anyone wants a copy of the budget before the March Annual Meeting, it can easily be emailed to them.

### Old Business:

- Increased lighting inside complex-Lyla explained there are some areas that are really dark at night, it's dangerous, and there is always a chance of falling. Therese is looking into additional lighting, as the poles are not that expensive. The expensive part is connecting the poles to a "power source". The board will revisit this issue and make sure the additional pole lights are strategically placed in the community.

### New Business:

- **Roofing Repairs/Evaluation Complete** - Lyla explained that an evaluation was done of the roofs (including the order they should be repaired in), and the flat roofs (which are a Modified Bitumen type roof) are in good shape. Not only was an evaluation done, but drawings, specs, and information on the chimneys was also submitted. What this evaluation showed was the Mansard roofs, and the flashing/edge metal is the area where the problems are, and where the significant leaking is occurring, including the chimneys. Therese then explained the process about the Hydro-stop product that is now being used on chimney's for leaking, and it can even be colored to match the color of brick as close as possible. She went on to explain the roofing specs will be given to 3-4 roofing contractors to bid on, along with the drawings for the Hydro-stop waterproofing for the chimneys.
- **Better lighting on Peden & motion light above bike rack in front of security office** - Lyla advised she's not sure if anyone has heard, but there has been some crime on the property lately. There have been several bicycles stolen, one from right in front of the security office, one vehicle was stolen, and two cars have been broken into right out on Peden. The Association is not responsible for cars on Peden but guests should have some assumption that their vehicles are safe. Lyla advised she talked to a friend of hers on HPD and he said there are 2 reasons for the crime on this

particular street. We are close to Shepherd which gives people easy access, and we have poor lighting on Peden. She remembered that years ago, there was lighting on Peden. So Therese had Manic Electric come out to check the lights in this area, and sure enough all the lights are still there, they have never been maintained, some of them shine up to the sky, some had broken covers, and some of them had 40 watt bulbs in them. He replaced bulbs and covers which was a nominal cost. Her HPD friend also said the sad thing is if they have escalated just breaking your window and breaking into your car, the next step is car jacking's or muggings, because it's dimly lit and there is a lot of coming and going. So were hoping with the new bright light bulbs, this will be a deterrent.

- **Gate Code Issue** - Mike Olsen at that time stated we had previously decided to change the gate code, notices even went out to the homeowners, and then there was a mishap. The code that was chosen had 2 of the same numbers, and with our gates, numbers can't be repeated, and our gate man never advised the board of this. We have since gotten a new gate company, he does a once a month gate inspection, and another issue that has been resolved is at Drive gate 1, which is right in front of the security office. Dorman mentioned the key pad dialer hadn't worked in years (for delivery drivers delivering packages). So our new gate man tracked down the Sentex part, installed it, and now drivers are able to call from the call box to the security office with no static on the line.
- **Security Camera Co.** – Lyla stated the security cameras are all at the top of our list because of all the things that have been happening. She was told when she was first elected its impossible to fix it, its old, the wiring is bad and everything is bad on the cameras. Therese, (at 2 other properties she manages), has a security camera company owned by an ex-police officer that has submitted a bid with a couple different options, has great recommendations, and goes to different colleges and venues to give security talks. We were previously told that all the cabling in the ground was bad. This same contractor found that a lot of the cabling was above ground and not in bad condition. Lyla also mentioned that “way back” a contract was signed with a company that performs maintenance on the cameras. That company is charging \$978.00 a month, but they haven't been on the property since August 2013, and we have continued to pay this contract, and it's not over yet. The maintenance contract will end in October of this year. The maintenance representative had told Therese “you have outdated cameras anyway, so there is really nothing we can do”. Another issue with the cameras we have now is what poor quality they are. Lyla advised she looked at the surveillance tape when one of the bikes was stolen with the guard. The cameras are so bad the person who stole the bike, looked right into the camera, and the face could not even be made out. Lyla said her HPD friend also stated that we should install signs that advise “you're being recorded”, this seems to deter criminal activity also. A homeowner then asked if this camera contractor could come talk to us before the March Annual Meeting in regards to cameras and security for the property?
- **Sample of new gate signs** - Lyla advised the wooden gate signs at each gate have deteriorated very badly and several homeowners have advised her they are even embarrassing. She presented a sample of a sign that could be installed on top of the wooden sign (after its painted black). The material is treated and has been tested for 12-15 years, and the signs would be screen printed. The new signage would be

\$49.00 each, the business is owned by a woman (Budget sign), and she gave us an excellent price to install all 30 of them -\$160.00.

She also stated she would like the board to vote to move forward. The board at that time voted unanimously to approve the new gate signs, and to purchase 2 extra for "just in case".

- **Large Oak trees & Sick Oak at Building Q** - Lyla explained we have had trouble with some of the large oak trees. An arborist came out and looked at them, and as everyone knows the oak tree is our symbol. Three of them have perked up due to the recent rains, but one of them at the end of Building Q, the Arborist said is very sick and in a very serious condition. We don't want to lose it, and he is suggesting trimming it a little bit and applying some fertilizer pods down deep around it, and that's going to cost us \$800-\$900. We don't really need to vote on this because this would be considered a maintenance item, but we need to do this before the summer drought gets here. The homeowners agreed that the sick trees need to be treated, and no one wants to lose any of them.
- **Drains on Peden** - The City drains on Peden were cleaned out by the City, and Lyla thanked the homeowners for making the calls because the squeaky wheel gets the grease. The drain that is the Association's responsibility was also at the same time jetted out by Walk Gate 2 by American Hydrajet. (this drain was not installed by the City and therefore the City will not perform maintenance to it). One of the contractors that met Therese at the property also gave a bid to install another drain on the other side of the fire-hydrant, and it would be connected to the City's pipe. Neil explained the problem is with the street, and the slope of the street itself. Lyla mentioned since the drains had been cleaned, we should go through one more heavy rain to see if a drain in fact is still needed in this area, get Shepherd finished and see if a drain is still needed. A homeowner mentioned at that time that he looked on some old topographical maps and Peden use to be a creek, so that explains it.
- **Increased security incidents (bike theft, car vandalism, etc.)** - Lyla advised security had been talked about a lot tonight, and explained security will be talked about & evaluated during the Executive Session, and we really need to look at this issue from the bottom up, and she's not really sure what the cost is for other companies. She went on to explain the issues really appear to be during the night time shift, but are occurring during the day time shift as well. For example when she got to the security office to set up for the meeting, the guard was on his cell phone and not watching the cameras. She stated she did question the guard on this, and he advised he was watching the cameras, but she had Therese call the Supervisor at Star Security to report this. Once this was reported, Eric Dorman was sent back to the property within 20 minutes. She went on to say that everyday it seems like somebody has a complaint on Star Security, and Star really needs to "step up their game", and pay attention. A homeowner at that point stated in her personal opinion she always gets what she pays for in business and her personal life and when she gets a discount, she is always suspicious of what she is going to get. Lyla stated the man who makes the deliveries at her flower shop earns more than Star

pays their guards. Michael Olsen explained we actually pay more, but the guards don't get the money, Star Security gets a big percentage of the money. A homeowner stated if you look at the budget, security is one of the biggest budget items we have, and since we're spending so much, we should get what it is we want in a guard service. Lyla then talked about Officer Gooch, and how he has given his notice and will be leaving for another security company, and if we had wanted to end the contract with Star Security we should have given notice on January 1<sup>st</sup>. We didn't find out until after this dead line that Officer Gooch planned to leave River Oaks Gardens. Now we're on an automatic renewal and unless Star doesn't provide what we need, we're locked in the contract until next year.

Lyla at that point asked all homeowners present that if they witness something Star is not doing "performance wise", to please email this information to Therese because this might be the only way to get out of the contract with them, and Therese will accumulate a file with non-performance items.

- **Bid to repair concrete footings at (160) carport support posts** - Therese read the specifications for the repair, and Lyla explained the concrete is chipping out around the bottoms of the carport posts, and the bids received were quite expensive and the board would investigate this issue further.
- **Wrought Iron Fence Paint & Repair** - Lyla advised that Mike Olsen had noticed our wrought iron fences everywhere are starting to rust, and if we let this go too long, the rust will start to make holes in the wrought iron. Therese advised that so far she only has one bid, but will be receiving additional bids from contractors that have already looked at it.
- **Next Meeting will be the Annual Meeting-March 9, 2016** - Lyla explained our next meeting will be the Annual Meeting, and we will elect 3 new directors to the Board, and if anyone wants to send a resume to please do so. The time limit of the annual meeting notice was discussed, and the timeline as to when resumes need to be received, so they could be mailed out with the notice. The Board members who will be coming off the board are Alice Bragg, Steven Young, and Mike Olsen.

**Maintenance Issues in progress/completed-Therese to give details:**

- **Pool red tagged** - Therese advised the pool was red tagged due to the new City of Houston rule that the gate mechanism has to be at least 60" off the ground, the pool net had to be changed to fiberglass, one of the wrought iron pickets had too much of a gap in it, and there was too much space underneath one section of the wrought iron fencing. She explained that RA Cummins made all the wrought iron repairs, installed a new gate latch, and Southern Pool already brought us the proper net.
- **Tree trimming letters** - Therese explained that some homeowners should have received letters advising them to trim the trees on their patios, and in the letter there were 3 contractor's names to choose from. Some homeowners have already trimmed their trees, and some have not, but the trees are damaging the buildings by rubbing up against them, and this work needs to get completed. Therese asked



homeowners that have not had this done to please call her, so this issue can be discussed on what the next step is.

- **Roof Repairs** - Several units had loose mansard shingles that were repaired.
- **Drive gate 3 that was leaning & walk gate repairs** - The post was repaired on Drive gate 3, there were several walk gate repairs i.e. walk gates 2 & 3 had to have the closures replaced, WG 4B had to have the bolt replaced, and WG 5 had to be lubricated.
- **Plumbing Repairs** - #142 Common, Bldg. K there was a shut off valve problem, Bldg. C Units 153-258-had a common stoppage,
- **Lighting** – Haddon carport lights went out, and tree lights –this was due to a tripped breaker feeding Bldg. K, N & the SE carport, a large flood light was installed to illuminate the pool,
- **Security office** – a new shelf was purchased for holding packages.
- **Exterior Repairs** – The balcony replacement at #239 was finished, #207-rotten trim was replaced on the chimney, #21 had pickets replaced, and #41 had a gutter repair.
- **Sprinkler repairs at the corner of S. Shepherd & Peden** - The City of Houston made the repairs to the corner where the landscaping had been torn up, but I had to contact them because the sprinklers and certain items were not repaired correctly according to VF Landscape.
- **Interior drains along the S. Shepherd brick wall (from units 175-178)** - The groundcover was removed from around the drains to allow for better drainage.
- **Responsibility Matrix** – Therese left copies with the guard in case anyone wants to verify what the Homeowner versus the Association is responsible for.

#### **Homeowner Forum:**

A homeowner inquired as to what type of insurance they need to have for their unit. They were advised the Association is responsible for the exterior of the unit, and they would need to have insurance for their personal contents.

A homeowner inquired as to who would be responsible for cleaning the exterior of their second story windows. They were advised it is the responsibility of the homeowner, not the Association.

A homeowner advised when they use their gate opener, that sometimes it is so sensitive, it will open the gate on Peden.

A homeowner stated a Recycling Program should be looked into again.

Owners that don't "pick up" after their dogs was discussed in detail. Therese advised that when dog waste is not picked up, this dog waste attracts rats, who love to eat it.

**Adjournment:**

*Being no further business to discuss the general meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:30.*