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Delachaise residents grapple with blight, Cohen High parking and parade Port-o-lets

Posted by UptownMessenger.com at 12:50 pm

blight and demolition, community meetings, Mardi Gras, schools



The current Cohen High School building will be demolished in February, officials say. (Robert Morris, Uptown Messenger file photo)

By Sue Strachan, Uptown Messenger

With the Uptown Carnival parades three weeks away, the new ordinances governing parades was one of the central topics at the monthly Delachaise Neighborhood Association meeting, Tuesday (Jan. 21) at Martin Wine Cellar.

Other items on the agenda included updates on a new security district, Cohen High School demolition and parking, and blight.

Milan resident Helene Barnett gave an update on the demolition and rebuilding of Walter L. Cohen College Prep High School, 3520 Dryades St. The demolition is scheduled for February, but the parking variance was still a major consideration: Cohen originally had 25 parking spots. Current regulations require the rebuild to have 154 parking spaces and two loading docks, while the plans for the new school building have 40 parking spaces and one loading dock, according to an Uptown Messenger article.

Developers have not yet filed a variance for parking, according to an association member, so residents were encouraged to send the City Council their thoughts on it. Another concern would be whether the existing Cohen parking lot would be open for people to park in for parades.

More neighborhood development was discussed when Jason Riggs announced that the property, containing six shotgun homes, he was developing at 3400 S. Liberty Street, is ready to begin renovations after two years of getting permits and approvals.

The houses will be converted into 11 rental units with renovation starting after Mardi Gras, to be completed by end of the year. Riggs also said he had been trying to keep squatters from accessing a home on LaSalle Street from his property, adding that he has seen some progress on the property, which may mean the squatters are gone.

As neighborhood blight is an ongoing concern board member Beth Robinson asked members

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to be on the lookout and report it. She also presented a “DNA Blight Naughty and Nice” list of properties in the association’s boundaries, with a few described as being abandoned since Hurricane Katrina.

Blight of another sort – port-o-lets on trucks parked on streets throughout the parade season – was one of the Mardi Gras issues Jenna Burke, director of land use for District B Councilman Jay Banks discussed with the association.

The ordinances and existing rules were set up due to “Homeland Security issues,” stated Burke.

Amendment to 154-985 through 154-1030, will create a new section of the City Code, which “Prohibits parking of ‘box truck, cargo van, truck with port-a-let (sic), camper, recreational vehicle, or trailer’ within two blocks of a parade route between four hours before and four hours after a parade.’ ”

This is a huge concern for residents of Constantinople Street off St. Charles Avenue, which has become ground central for parade parties, in which a U-Haul or flatbed truck with a port-o-let is parked on the street for both Carnival parade weekends. Couches are often off-loaded as well, creating an unwanted mini-party, and resulting waste, in front of a resident’s house.

While association members were in favor of the prohibition, a few asked how it would be enforced. Burke said that the offending vehicle would be ticketed or towing, though many were skeptical about that even happening based on previous experiences with the New Orleans Police Department and the city.

“Please email your support of the ordinance to all City Council members,” recommended Burke, who earlier said that Mid-City residents had voiced that they were not in favor of the new ordinance during the Endymion parade

Other ordinances up for consideration are: No more than one element (such as a marching band, dance troupe or walking club) can be between each float; parade participants cannot throw boxes, plastic bags meant for throw packing (such as bags of beads), or paper streamers; and only paper that is biodegradable can be thrown.

The City Council is scheduled to vote on the new ordinances at a meeting on Jan. 30. The city has a [website](#) for current Mardi Gras information that includes parades information, as well as what you can and cannot do on the parade route, and what you need permits for.

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