



# BONNABEL BULLETIN

October 2023 Volume 34, Issue 3

P.O. Box 55224 ▪ Metairie, LA 70055 ▪ [www.bonnabel.org](http://www.bonnabel.org)

**ELECTION DAY  
OCTOBER 14**



**1-800-883-2805**

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## COUNCIL CANDIDATES SPAR ON ISSUES

### Focus on Development, Drainage, Haynes Tract, Zoning, Code Enforcement & Green Infrastructure

The Bonnabel Civic Association joined adjacent neighbor associations to co-sponsor three candidate forums for District 5 and two “At-Large” seats on the Jefferson Parish Council. All forums were moderated by retired Judge Franz Zibilich.

At stake in this election are numerous issues including the controversial sale of the Haynes Academy site, skyrocketing insurance rates, neighborhood zoning and ordinances, walking paths and bike lanes, a potential Center for Entrepreneurship in Bucktown, expansion of tree protection, and implementation of the Green Infrastructure Plan.

**Vying for District 5 are candidates Melinda Bourgeois and Hans Liljeberg.** On Sept. 28, the candidates



*Melinda Bourgeois Hans Liljeberg  
Candidates for Jefferson Parish District 5*

responded to questions related to streets, drainage, residential and commercial development, green space and tree protection. Cordial throughout the evening, candidates addressed a current hot topic by pledging to support the continuation of residential (R1-A or R1-B) zoning for the 8.3 acre Haynes Academy site and were emphatic opposing commercial development. With Louisiana in the top three states nationwide experiencing an exodus of young people from the state, Bourgeois believes this is the greatest challenge facing the parish and supports

workforce and economic development to improve opportunity. Challenger Liljeberg listed his priorities as support for the Sherriff’s Office (JPSO) through expanded use of cameras, fighting blight that draws criminal activity, enforcing current parish codes, reducing homelessness, and improvement of the 17th Street Canal. Both candidates vowed to support more green infrastructure, codifying the Green Infrastructure Plan, and reducing variances that allow developers to minimize green space.

The second in the series of the three forums was on October 2 and featured **At-Large Division B candidate and incumbent councilman Scott Walker against Dominick Impastato** who is term-limited out of his current District 4 seat (Kenner). Walker, a business owner and former reporter, mentioned three ‘pillars of success’ as early childhood education, public safety, and economic development. Challenges are people leaving the parish for more affordable housing and employment. He would like to see continued development and revitalization of mixed-use areas that provide opportunity for both. Impastato stated the biggest challenge is neighboring Orleans parish that doesn’t have their act together. He complimented JPSO but thinks crime is a challenge as we struggle to keep the criminals and homeless out of the parish. He suggested enhancing block cameras saying Kenner has 3 times the number as Metairie. Walker has the endorsement of Sheriff Lopinto and has worked to have traffic cameras

networked with law enforcement. Both expressed concerns about the bike lane design on Severn Avenue but disagreed on the Bonnabel bike path with Walker in favor and Impastato believing it is not necessary.

Impastato said that the At-Large council members should be ‘the quarterbacks for the council’ and doesn’t believe it impacts the role of the President or other council members other than “having a similarly aggressive leader on the council side”. He said At-Large council members should “direct the traffic” to make decisions on parish and district priorities as well as advise other council members on proper priorities. Walker believes that the district council members work collaboratively with At-Large members and effective leadership is more important than trying to change

*(continued on page 2 –Candidates)*

**Thursday  
October**

**12**

**GENERAL MEETING**  
Lakeshore Playground  
1125 Rosa Avenue ▪ 7:00 p.m.

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**SPEAKERS**

**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN**  
Bess Martin, Director  
Jefferson Parish Planning Department  
**STATE UPDATE**  
State Representative Laurie Schlegel

**Other Business**

**AFTER MEETING RECEPTION**  
**Meet the Candidates**  
8:00 to 8:30

*Bonnabel Civic Association does not endorse any political candidates but provide members as much information as possible to assist in their voting decisions.*

Candidates Spar — (continued from Page 1)

the balance of power on the council. He believes the individual district council members are closest to the district and should maintain their current roles. Walker said “Why would Jefferson Parish want to be like Kenner?” explaining he was referencing



Scott Walker  
Candidates for Jefferson Parish Council At-Large, Division B

Dominick Impastato  
Candidates for Jefferson Parish Council At-Large, Division B

Kenner’s poor political leadership and citing his opponent’s failure to address empty storefronts, Kenner’s need for a sound economic development engine, and people leaving

Kenner at the 6th highest rate in the country. Walker said bringing that track record to Metairie would be a mistake & Jefferson Parish deserves better. On the **Haynes property**, candidates agree on limiting use to residential R1-A or R1-B, but disagreed on what could be done now. Walker said until there is a new owner, the council is limited on actions they can take. Impastato believes the council can get started right now to study uses for the property so they are in a position to act quickly when it is sold. Both candidates voted in favor of the study.

Walker asked why voters should believe Impastato is working for them when he has sued the parish, JPSO, and the patrons of Lafreniere Park. He said his opponent is more about self-service than public service. Impastato said he has never earned a nickel from serving the parish and due to a successful law practice, gives back every penny to charity. He also accused Walker of voting for variances to help his clients without recusing himself. He denied suing Lafreniere Park but left unanswered the lawsuits against the parish and JPSO. He accused Walker of authorizing the lawsuit against Lafrenier. Impastato went on to take credit for the fly-over ramp to the airport and said he has never charged the parish for travel contrary to his opponent. Walker rebutted statements accusing him of conflicts saying he recused himself on every known conflict leaving votes to other council members who voted in favor of all by a vote of 6-0.

Impastato questioned Walker telling a resident of the district that he would support a commercial development on the Haynes tract. Walker said that was “100% absolutely false”. Further disagreement occurred between Walker and the resident who was in the audience when she stood up to confront him. Walker said she had multiple Impastato signs in her yard and he “never, never, ever stated he would support commercial use”. In closing, Walker emphasized he lives in Metairie and has been reachable and responsive during his term. He said Impastato doesn’t know Metairie but pretends to have all the answers and will spend anything to get elected. He emphasized his priorities on economic development, public safety, and early education. He asked for the audience’ vote and reminded them he is their neighbor and will always be honest.

Impastato closed by admitting he has put \$600,000 of his money in his campaign and said he wants the job that bad because there is no limit to what he is willing to do to serve the community and there is a better way to serve in the At-Large seat. He said Walker has been “quiet as a church mouse” and plays a passive role contrary to his own aggressive style and asked the audience to vote for him.

The final forum on October 4 featured **At-Large Division A candidates Jennifer Van Vrancken and Frankie Hyers running against incumbent Ricky Templet**. Templet said he represents six cities and over 400,000 people. He focuses on family and keeping young people in the parish. VanVrancken reviewed her background as former reporter, lawyer, and former



Jennifer Van Vrancken Frankie Hyers Ricky Templet  
Candidates for Jefferson Parish At-Large, Division A

Chief Administrative Officer for the parish before being elected to District 5. Her focus has been on making the district Cleaner, Safer, and a Better

Place to live. Both candidates agree that bringing down skyrocketing **insurance rates is our biggest challenge**. Van Vrancken believes one way is to assure we are building to new resilience standards that resist storm impacts. She also mentioned lowering crime stating, “if we don’t have safety, nothing else matters” and vowed to continue to work with JPSO and Orleans police so problems don’t bleed over into the parish. She sees drainage as the third biggest challenge. Templet listed three challenges; crime, education and insurance. Insurance rates are driving young people and our seniors to leave the parish because they can’t afford to stay in their homes. Templet is working with the legislature and a consultant to create solutions that get companies to insure Louisiana homes.

Templet said the **biggest reforms needed** are strategies to keep youth people in the parish including jobs and revitalizing housing stock. Van Vrancken said

Continued on Page 3—Challenges



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### Challenges—Continued from Page 2

the parish is well run but we should beef up our Code Department which is short-staffed. She sees one the biggest needed reforms needed is our state Bid Law that requires taking the lowest bid regardless of past performance.

Both candidates agree on the use of cameras to **fight crime**. Van Vrancken has installed those cameras, implemented a matching 50-50 funds neighborhood program to install block cameras, and has worked with Judge Scott Schlegel to fund a re-entry program giving inmates skills to lower recidivism. Templet cited his work with Sheriff Lopinto to create a Major Crimes Taskforce, a multi-jurisdictional police force with a 92% conviction rate and the ability to work across parish lines to fight crime.

The candidates talked about the **At-Large role** with Templet saying At-Large seats have minimal funds which must be used for economic development. He has learned to work with his district council colleagues and taken initiative to be sure dollars are being spread across the districts properly. Van Vrancken said if a project is within the district, it is a district issue but if it's an issue that cuts across districts, like insurance, it's an at-large responsibility. She also sees the role to take on these bigger issues and to share knowledge and best practices across the parish.

**Discretionary funds** were explained as coming from hotel/motel taxes, gaming, & riverboats. According to Van Vrancken, they are a good thing. She gave examples of district improvements like the Canal Street park and drainage project & buying the Metairie Park located at Metairie Rd & Labarre St. She explained Metairie gets more funding because we are 100% unincorporated while other districts, like Kenner, have other funding sources from municipal taxes and fees. Templet said all districts have priorities and we have to work together as a team in how funds are spent in the districts so they can better serve the constituents as a whole. Templet wants more check and balances. Van Vrancken said Metairie should not get less as Lakeside Mall generates 5% of sales tax, Metairie is the economic engine of the parish, pays the most tax, and generates the most funding.

The candidates agreed we should **assist neighboring cities** and, in times of emergency, must step in but we should consider how efficiencies can be found. Examples discussed were Lafitte and Grand Isle which are outside the levee system. Templet said residents there didn't choose the location of the levee which was placed there as the cheapest option. Both agreed as they are our first line of defense, they need our support and went on to support resilient building solutions and to consider if it makes sense for smaller communities to join in the unincorporated parish.

The moderator announced the **Haynes appraisal** had come in at \$12 million. Both candidates agreed that, if confirmed, it made a parish purchase possible. Templet said he is not beholden to any contractor or sales person, has listened & suggested possible R1-B zoning or greenspace options in addition to R1-A. He mentioned a June 4th Times Picayune article quoting Van Vrancken as "not having a problem with commercial use". He said he will stand by his word to support what the residents want and joined

Impastato in passing a resolution for a study to determine best uses. Van Vrancken said she has set aside \$10 million for the project and put her commitment in a flyer she distributed to the audience. She said her opponent has not committed any dollars and suggested he put his 'money where his mouth is'. She also reminded her opponent that she asked the resolution be amended to limit consideration to only residential options.

Discussion on **west bank issues** received agreement on their need to be present, visible and to listen to the residents. They also agreed economic development incentives can drive improvements for businesses and major thoroughfares like Manhattan Blvd. Templet said that the federal government needs to increase assistance for rebuilding Grand Isle where 700 homes were destroyed in Ida but Van Vrancken reminded her opponent that FEMA will not provide funding to rebuild in some zones. One fishing pier has been rebuilt and another is scheduled for rebuilding to standards that provide more protection. Van Vrancken said rental housing is badly needed to attract workers for the businesses in lower parish.

Other topics discussed included the status of salt water intrusion, the need for improvements under the West Bank Expressway, outreach to the entire parish, and zoning variances granted to the future Chick-Fil-A site.

In closing, Frankie Hyers was provided an opportunity to address the audience and spoke about the difficulty of At-Large candidates being able to represent such a large parish citing inefficiencies and the unconstitutionality of council apportionment. He believes the districts need to be redrawn to provide more fair representation for residents throughout the parish and cited Districts 2, 3 and 4 as under-represented.

Van Vrancken closed by reminding the audience that she and her family live here and she does things by the rules. Every time there has been a conflict, she has recused herself. She said she has been here for us and will continue to be there as she has done in District 5 and would appreciate their vote.

Templet closed by questioning the Times Picayune endorsement of Van Vrancken since she has repeatedly pointed out erroneous reporting on her stances. He said he is from Jefferson Parish and while we are not right on everything, crime rates are not perfect, and we need more Economic Development, over 75% in the parish love the direction we are going. He wants to continue his work by earning our vote.

## FIND OUT MORE

**Melinda Bourgeois** <https://www.melinda-bourgeois.com/about>

**Hans Liljeborg** <https://www.voteliljeborg.com/about>

**Scott Walker** <https://scottwalkerip.com/>

**Dominick Impastato** <https://www.voteimpastato.com>

**Jennifer Van Vrancken** <https://www.jennvanv.com>

**Ricky Templet** <https://www.rickytemplet.com/>

**Frankie Hyers** <http://getfrankietoo.com> **NOT A SECURE SITE**

*Bonnabel Civic Association does not endorse candidates. Frankie Hyers was given the opportunity to address the audience for 5 minutes but only candidates polling over 10% participated in the Q&A.*

## OCTOBER 12 MEETING SPEAKERS

Join us to learn more about the recently adopted



Green Infrastructure Plan where our speaker will be **Bessie Martin, Director of Planning for Jefferson Parish.** Her presentation will provide an overview of the Plan, why it is important, and what residents can do to support green infrastructure on their properties.

Bessie has 15 years experience working for the parish dating back to 2008 as a Planner II. She graduated from UNO with a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning. In 2012, she moved to the parish Attorney's Office while attending Loyola Law School. Bessie worked in private practice for a year before accepting an assistant parish attorney position in 2019 and was offered the position of Planning Director in 2021. She specializes in land use law and uses both her legal and urban planning background to assure the well planned development of Jefferson Parish. She is an avid reader and loves spending time with her husband and 10 month old son as well as their two dogs.



**The Honorable Laurie Schlegel,** Louisiana State Representative, District 82 will also address the membership with an update on legislation. Laurie was elected to the Louisiana House of Representatives in 2021 in a special election succeeding Charles Henry. She serves on the Ways and Means, Health and Welfare, Labor and Industrial, and Joint Committee on Capital Outlays committees. She is dedicated to enacting legislation that addresses critical areas such as education, literacy, mental health, crime, public safety, lower taxes and protection of women and children. Laurie is a licensed marriage and family counselor with Lighthouse Counseling Center holding a B.S. in psychology from LSU and a M.A. in marriage and family counseling from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

## New Board Members Elected at July Meeting 2023

Elections for new officers and board members were held at the July 19 meeting.

Terry Almon, previously on the board as Newsletter Editor was elected to the position of President. New to the board is Shelley Ferro, who will serve as Vice President and over see the Membership & Green Infrastructure Committees. Continuing as Secretary is Marilyn Malone who has served in this role for many years. Aimee Kitchen, previously served as Treasurer and was re-elected to this position. Bob Evans,

who has shepherded the association from it's inception continues on the board as Past President in an advisory role. Re-elected were Byron Almquist who will oversee events; Jennifer Duplantis-Thibodeaux who will continue to oversee Zoning/Code Enforcement; Jackie Graff will continue to work on the Membership Committee. Steve Quaintance, a former president of the association returns to the board and will assist with Communications. Bonnabel Civic Association is managed by and for the benefit of our community.

**2023-2024  
BCA Officers**

PRESIDENT  
Terry Almon

VICE PRESIDENT  
Shelley Ferro

SECRETARY  
Marilyn Malone

TREASURER  
Aimee Kitchen

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Byron Almquist  
Bob Evans  
Jennifer Duplantis Thibodeaux  
Jacqueline Graff  
Steven Quaintance



**2023 MEETINGS**  
**BONNABEL CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

**7:00 PM**

January 12, 2023    July 19, 2023  
April 19, 2023    October 12, 2023

**Check payable to and mail:**  
Bonnabel Civic Association  
P.O. Box 55224  
Metairie, LA 70055-5224

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION AND INFORMATION

[www.bonnabel.org](http://www.bonnabel.org)

#### 2023 Annual Dues (January 1—December 31, 2023)

Family Household or Individual : \$15.00/yr      Sponsor\*: \$100.00/yr

Business : \$25.00 /year

New Member:     or Renewal:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate if any interest in helping the Bonnabel Civic Association (check all that apply).

- Zoning     Socials     Newsletters     Membership     Website     Social Media

Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

All memberships are annual and are non-refundable nor pro-rated. Dues are due on January 1st of each year.

\*Sponsors are non-voting. Sponsorship benefits consist of ad insertions in all BCA Newsletters, on the website, and your business logo on meeting posters.