St. Bernard Jurors Seek to Save Historic Trees

Expropriation of Land Is Urged at Meeting

The St. Bernard Parish Police Jury, at an emergency meeting Thursday morning, passed resolutions to try to save the de la Ronde Oaks from being overtaken by commercial property.

Representatives from many organizations appeared at the meeting and asked the police jury to do all in its power to save the historical trees.

John Metzler, Ward Three juror, authored a resolution passed unanimously that the police jury request District Attorney Leander H. Perez Jr. to prepare the necessary papers, documents, petitions and suits toward the expropriation of the property owned by the affiliates of the Southern Railway System for the use of the citizens as a public playground and recreation center.

A second resolution was offered by Louis P. Munster, Ward Three juror, asking that the police jury authorize the application to the U.S. Department of the Interior for a 50 percent matching grant for recreational sites.


N. S. Cusimano, also a Ward Three juror, offered a resolution asking that the jury write to the Southern Railway System, offering to purchase the land in question for a sum of $1. This resolution was also passed unanimously.

Cusimano also had a second resolution unanimously passed that the Southern Railway System remove the tons of iron that it has allegedly dumped at the root of one of the large oak trees.

The emergency meeting was called because the New Orleans Terminal Co., which is an affiliate of the Southern Railway System, sent a letter to the police jury on Tuesday terminating its lease within 30 days. The jury had leases for $1 a year since 1960 on the de la Ronde Oaks and other recreational areas.

The purpose of Thursday’s meeting, therefore, was an attempt to prevent the destruction or ruining of the Oaks and other recreational sections that would be enjoyed by generations to come.

Joseph V. Papania, police jury president, said that the de la Ronde Oaks “are one of the biggest tourist attractions that our parish has. To destroy the oaks would be like destroying something from our historic past,” he added.