

DDD Commission Meeting
August 11, 2020, 8:00 a.m.
Capitol Park Museum, 660 N. 4th Street

Attending: Scott Hensgens, Prescott Bailey, Eric Dexter, Jude Melville, Melanie Montanaro, Erin Monroe Wesley

Absent: Madeline Brown

Others in Attendance: Rafa Amaya, Copper Alvarez, Karon Alford, James Avault, Renee Chatelain, Rudy Comeaux, Jamey Crump, Judy Foust, Jay Gaudet, Rosehn Gipe, Brooke Goodrich, Blaine Grimes, Rodneya Hart, Hank Hengan, Taylor Jacobsen, Dr. Pamela Jones, , Aaron Molcoe, , Laura Nicholson, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Mary Jane Marcantel, , Serena Pandos, David Rhymes, Davis Rhorer, Rhonda Ruffino, Daniel Stetson, Casey Tate, Gabe Vicknair, Jennifer Whittington, Samaer Zaitoon

1. Mr. Scott Hensgens called the meeting to order.
2. Mr. Scott Hensgens declared a quorum.
3. Mrs. Melanie Montanaro moved to approve the agenda Mr. Eric Dexter seconded and the agenda was approved.
4. Mr. Jude Melville moved to approve the July 14th, 2020 minutes, Mrs. Erin Monroe Wesley seconded and the minutes were approved.

Mr. Scott Hensgens thanked Capitol Park Museum for hosting the DDD meeting and introduced Ms. Rodenya Hart, Executive Director to the commission. Ms. Rodenya Hart informed the commission that the museum has been open and practicing social distancing and cleaning guidelines. She welcomed everyone to enjoy a tour of the Louisiana exhibits as well as the Fonville Winans photograph exhibit currently on display.

5. Board Action – There was no board action.

6. Governmental Issues – Current COVID Orders – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, an image of Phase Two updated guidelines. Phase Two COVID-19 guidelines have been extended to August 28th and include a mask mandate and closing bars. Mr. Rhorer informed the commission that downtown has approximately 10 bars impacted by the closures. Restaurants and businesses remain at 50% occupancy and groups of more than 50 should be avoided. Live music and other entertainment venues remain closed.

Main Street Recovery Program - The Commission viewed, via Powerpoint, an image of the Main Street Recovery initiative. Mr. Gabe Vicknair briefed the Commission on the program's COVID relief funds available for small businesses. Minority owned businesses and businesses not receiving prior assistance were prioritized for the first round of grants. Most expenses/losses outside of profit loss are eligible for a grant up to \$15,000. Applications are being accepted until November 4th. The DDD continues to update the downtown businesses about grant opportunities.

7. Update from Previous Board Meeting – There was no information to report.

8. Development Initiatives – Developments Underway – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, videos and photographs of current projects. Mr. Rhorer briefed the Commission on the following projects:

River Center Library – The Commission viewed via Powerpoint, images of the River Center Library. Mr. Rhorer highlighted the library’s amenities including the large outdoor screen facing Galvez Plaza. The DDD will be working with the library to coordinate images and programs displayed on the Town Square media beacon.

Elysian III - The Commission viewed via Powerpoint, images of the Elysian III development. Mr. Rhorer informed the commission that the project is in Downtown East and will have 42 residential units. The units are mixed income and complement the housing opportunities available downtown. Mr. Rhorer highlighted the importance of connecting these developments to downtown’s amenities.

St. James Episcopal Church Renovation – The Commission viewed, via Powerpoint, images of the interior renovations at St. James Episcopal Church. Renovations include new floors and organ in the sanctuary.

USS KIDD Renovation – The Commission viewed, via Powerpoint, images of the renovations of the USS KIDD theatre/event space. Ms. Rosehn Gipe highlighted the renovations and invited all to view when it is completed. It is expected to be complete in September.

Charles W. Lamar YMCA – The Commission viewed, via Powerpoint, an image of the YMCA exterior on Third Street. Mr. Rhorer indicated that the YMCA has extended its hours to Monday and Wednesdays from 6am – 2pm and 4pm – 7pm as well as Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 6am – 2pm.

Chase South Tower – The Commission viewed, via Powerpoint, plans and renderings of the Chase South Tower. Mr. Rhorer briefed the commission on the plans for the building including retail space, 144 residential units, exterior plazas, and pool. Mr. Wampold, local developer of the property, is excited about the project and plans to update the commission as the project progresses.

861 Main Street – The Commission viewed, via Powerpoint, plans and renderings of a proposed office building at 861 Main Street. Mr. Davis Rhorer briefed the commission on the 3-story building proposed by the Louisiana Relator’s Association. The organization is seeking tenants for the office space before beginning construction.

Water Campus Update – Water Street – Mr. Rhorer reviewed the current photographs of the 20 residential unit complex under construction at the Water Campus, 200 Water Street and the main square. Both are expected to be complete in September.

The completed office complex 1200 Brickyard Lane has the following tenants, LA Cyber Coordination Center, Stantec, and Lemoine Companies.

River Center Theatre & Plaza – The Commission viewed via PowerPoint, photographs of the exterior of the theatre. Ms. Davis Rhorer briefed the Commission on the proposed renovations including an 8,000 sq. ft. lobby area that will also function as a reception hall. The project is expected to be complete in the first quarter of 2021.

The exterior plaza, known as Mestrovic Court, is expected to be reconfigured and to include the existing Mestrovic sculptures. The DDD is working with the architect on the final plans for the plaza.

Mayor's Homelessness Prevention Coalition – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of the mission, structure, and strategy of the mayor's new homeless coalition. Dr. Pamela Ravare Jones, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer of the Mayor's Office, briefed the commission on the coalition's efforts. The coalition is a collaboration of several organizations and groups assisting those experiencing homelessness. The goal of the coalition is to prevent and eradicate homelessness.

DDD COVID Response Initiative – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, an image of the DDD's COVID-19 Business and Community Resources webpage and email announcements. The DDD continues to update the website, including financial and community resources, as well as sending emails to promote businesses and attractions in the downtown area. Everyone was encouraged to visit the DDD web page for updated COVID 19 information.

Hospitality Recovery Task Force – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, an image of night life on the corner of Third Street and Florida Street. Ms. Karon Alford of Visit Baton Rouge informed the Commission that a task force formed by Visit Baton Rouge continues to study recovery marketing initiatives that can assist the city's hospitality industry. Initiatives related to the task force are expected within a few weeks. Mr. Paul Arrigho, President and CEO of Visit Baton Rouge has recently partnered with Billy Nungesser, Lieutenant Governor, to market the Baton Rouge area. Riverboats are anticipated to return this fall.

Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, an aerial image and rendering of the new Arts Council headquarters. Ms. Renee Chatelain indicated that demolition has begun on the triangle building. Several community organizations have partnered to bring the project to reality including, the Mayor's Office, Capital Area Finance Authority, Shell, and several other private donors. The project is part of a concentrated cultural hub in the heart of downtown and is meant to be a meeting place for collaborative creativity in the Baton Rouge area. The renovation is expected in the summer of 2021. She encouraged everyone to participate in an online auction supporting the project.

Mr. Rhorer highlighted the importance of incorporating bicycle and pedestrian opportunities in the area to connect its cultural assets.

Town Square Programming – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, photograph of the North Blvd. Town Square engaged in yoga exercise. Mr. Casey Tate informed the Commission that the DDD is coordinating with local instructors and trainers to provide exercise opportunities, with social distancing, when appropriate. The DDD is also working with groups to coordinate small gatherings/outdoor events.

Mr. Rhorer informed the commission that the DDD is working with Opera Louisiane to feature a small opera event on the amphitheater in Riverfront Plaza.

Busking on Third – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, the Busking on Third program logo. Mr. Gabe Vicknair briefed the commission on an outside live music initiative the DDD is exploring. The initiative will include individual acoustic artists performing on the streetscape during the weekdays. It is expected to begin in August and will be marketed via social media.

Riverfront Plaza Phase II - The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of Riverfront Plaza. Mr. Rhorer highlighted the different phases of construction. The plans were completed by CARBO Landscape Architecture and the first phase has been completed. Plans for phase two are being finalized and construction is expected to begin soon.

South Boulevard Trailhead Improvements- The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, and aerial of the South Boulevard Trailhead. Mr. Rhorer highlighted the available public parking under the I-10 bridge and the importance of connecting bicyclists and pedestrians from the parking areas to the levee trailhead.

Downtown Greenway / Public Parking – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, photographs of the Downtown Greenway and the wayfinding signage plan. Mr. Rhorer informed the Commission that phase one of the wayfinding installations has been completed. The signage will direct bicyclists and pedestrians to downtown and the surrounding area’s amenities. Phase two of signage installation is current under design.

Mr. Rhorer also reviewed images of the proposed bike lanes on 5th & 6th Street from North Blvd. to Spanish Town Rd. The bike lanes would link the Spanish Town neighborhood and into Beauregard Town neighborhoods and provide access to the Capitol Park lakes and Memorial Stadium. The DDD has contacted the nearby property owners and informed them that no on-street parking has been removed as part of the plans. The DDD is working with the City-Parish Traffic and Engineering Division to implement the project.

Mr. Rhorer also highlighted the public parking available under Interstate 110. The City-Parish has recently cleaned the area and the DDD is working with the Traffic and Engineering Division to include public parking directional signage. Mr. Rhorer informed the commission that 440 free public parking spaces are available. He also indicated the importance of connecting the parking to downtown’s assets with safe bicycle and pedestrian opportunities as well as energizing the space with lighting and other amenities.

New Business – Chow Main – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, an image of the interior space of Chow Main at 5th Street and Main Street. The business has recently modified its menu and extended its hours to M-F 10:30 am – 7pm.

9. Events - The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images for the following events. Each Commissioner received flyers on the events. Mr. Casey Tate briefed the Commission on the following events.

- B.R Arts Market
- Preserve Louisiana / Old Governor’s Mansion – 42nd Annual Preservation Awards
- Manship Theatre – FRIDA
- LSU MOA – Conspicuous: Satirical Works by Caroline Durieux
- Capitol Park Museum – Fonville Winans’ Exhibition
- Old State Capitol – George Washington: The Myths and the Man
- River Center Events – Cody Johnston rescheduled to January 8, 2021
- LASM – Frank Hayden: Lift Every Voice
- USS KIDD – Featured on Greyhound movie. Field Day / Volunteer opportunities

10. Ongoing Projects – Mrs. Copper Alvarez thanked the DDD for their continued support and marketing of the Farmers Market. She encouraged everyone to shop the Main Street Market, Red Stick Farmers Market, and the annual Farm Fete auction. The auction is online and will be held on August 26th and 27th.

11. Correspondence – There was no information to report

12. Public Comment – Ms. Mary Jane Marcantel highlighted the book that she and Rannah Gray wrote entitled *Familiar Evil*, highlighting the story of Scott Rogers, a Baton Rouge TV host. Investigation discovery is airing the story and is titled *Lying King: The Scott Rogers Story*. She encouraged everyone to watch on August 19th at 8pm.

Mr. Jay Gaudet reintroduced himself to the commission and indicated his candidacy for the District 10 council seat. He indicated his appreciation of downtown's redevelopment and his wish to serve and continue the progress. He invited anyone with questions or wishing to speak with him to connect with him after the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned – Mrs. Melanie Montanaro moved to adjourn the meeting, Mrs. Erin Monroe Wesley seconded and the meeting was adjourned.