

DDD Commission Meeting  
November 10, 2020, 8:00 a.m.  
LABI, 500 Main Street

Attending: Scott Hensgens, Melanie Montanaro, Eric Dexter, Erin Monroe Wesley, Prescott Bailey, Madeline Brown

Absent: Jude Melville

Others in Attendance: Davis Rhorer, Holly Duchmann, Jay Gaudet, Carolyn R. Coleman, Mary Jane Marcantel, Officer TC Laim, Officer Eddie Beraud, Kelly Lee, Elizabeth Walker, Carolyn R. Coleman, Karron Alford, Lauren Lambert-Tompkins, Tim Boone, Anita Hebert, Mary Durusau, Elizabeth Walker, Gary Black, Joey Furr, Carmen Coetzee, David Rhymes, Virgil Smothers, Landon Delaune, Rebekah Rainey, Bradley Bates, Ben Taylor, Aaron Wallace, Darlene Rowland, Judy Faust, James Avault, Annette Leon, Casey Tate, Gabe Vicknair, Ryan Benton, Ute Cress

1. Mr. Scott Hensgens called the meeting to order.
2. Mr. Scott Hensgens declared a quorum.
3. Ms. Maddie Brown made a motion to approve the agenda and the October 13, 2020 minutes, Ms. Melanie Montanaro seconded the motion and the agenda & the minutes were approved.

Mr. Davis Rhorer introduced Mr. Steven Waguespack President and CEO of Louisiana Association of Business and Industry (LABI). Mr. Waguespack welcomed the DDD Commission to the newly renovated downtown LABI headquarters and thanked everyone involved with the beautiful renovation. The building houses conference rooms and office space for individuals who are looking for work or meeting space while in town.

**4. Board Action –2021 DDD Budget -** Mr. Davis Rhorer presented the Commission the DDD 2021 Budget Request, including Goals and Objectives which was introduced to the Commission in October. Mr. Rhorer stated there are currently over 40 projects in line for 2021, evenly distributed between both public and private sector. Stability and predictability are important for the private sector to invest; DDD works on public initiatives with the private sector in order to help them achieve their goals. The 2021 budget is \$812,230 in addition to a budget supplement of \$100,000 for the design and construction various projects including the Riverfront Plaza Visitor Amenities, Downtown Interstate Gateway Enhancements, River Road Pedestrian Improvements, and the Arts and Entertainment Beautification and Streetscape Improvements. A motion was made by Ms. Melanie Montanaro to approve the DDD 2021 Budget and seconded by Ms. Maddie Brown.

**5. Governmental Issues:**

- **Current COVID 19 Orders** – Currently Baton Rouge is at Phase III with bars allowing to open at a 25% capacity limit indoors (or up to 50 people, whichever is less), tableside service only, an outdoor capacity of 50 people, alcohol sales ending at 11:00 p.m., and a ban on live music. Live music and other entertainment venues remain closed.
- **Scooter Ordinance.** Mr. Davis Rhorer stated that the Scooter Ordinance regulating electric scooters/share mobility devices was approved by the Metropolitan Council last Wednesday, October 28<sup>th</sup>; this is a Parish wide ordinance. The ordinance will allow licensing for up to two companies for three years. The devices will not be allowed on

sidewalks and parking “corrals” may be defined in certain areas. The devices will only be allowed on streets, bicycle paths and the top of the levee. The intent of the ordinance is to keep the public safe and the public realm uncluttered.

**6. Update from Previous Board Meeting** – Mr. Davis Rhorer stated the DDD Tax Renewal passed and was fortunate enough to get a 78% approval from the voters in the Downtown area. There were many residents and property owners who put a lot of hard work into this project and DDD is very appreciative of their efforts. A video was shown recapping five years of recent activities and developments since 2015 that were made possible by the many downtown stakeholders and supporters; Mr. Rhorer stated the next five years will be just as or more exciting.

Mr. Rhorer recognized both Ms. Carolyn Coleman and Mr. Jay Gaudet who are in attendance and are in a runoff in the District 10 Council Seat to replace Councilwoman Tara Wicker. Mr. Rhorer congratulated them both and stated he was looking forward to working with them.

## **7. Development Initiatives and Developments Underway**

**A. Travel and Tourism** – Karron Alford with Visit Baton Rouge (VBR) updated the Commission on tourism and travel facts for Louisiana. VBR follows a research company, “Destination Analyst”, who does a weekly survey to monitor and track travel, in which VBR participates. The most recent findings show Americans are feeling somewhat hopeful about the pandemic and travel, but due to the surge of COVID19 cases and the election, travel has diminished. This information is being monitored closely because this summer when Louisiana experienced a resurgence of COVID19 cases, the travel sentiment quickly changed. They also are looking at how face masks are viewed in travel and tourism as determined from the most recent research. There is a positive perception by individuals who see masks as a desired protocol for travel. Recent data travel for larger live events, such as conventions, suggests it will probably be closer to the third quarter of 2021 before anyone will travel; there is much hesitation for this type of travel.

**B. Mayor’s Homelessness Prevention Coalition (HPC)** – Dr. Pamela Ravare-Jones, the Mayor’s Assistant Chief Administrator Officer showed the Commission a PowerPoint presentation on an update of the Coalition’s Strategic Blueprint on ending homelessness. The Coalition’s mission is to educate, prevent, bring awareness, collaborate and seek to eradicate homelessness in Baton Rouge. She stated she speaks on a weekly/biweekly basis with over 85 constituents, which represent 66 non-profit organizations. Some of the actions that have occurred to date are:

- Working closely Louisiana Housing Commission (LHC) and Franklin and Associates to get those individuals who were placed in 3 hotels at the beginning of the Pandemic, into permanent shelter.
- Mayor’s Office is partnering with United Way, DPW and the State DOTD to develop signage for public roadways regarding littering and to eradicate panhandling.
- The Mayor’s Office has been granted use of the “211” number by the Capital Area United Way to help with calls from homeless individuals.

- The Mayor's office along with DPW has established a contract with Uplifted to successfully employ the homeless who have a desire to work.
- HPC in addition to DPW, Faith-Based Outreach Teams, and the Sheriff's Office continue to work with litter crews to address encampment and reported areas of clean-up along roadways.
- The Mayor's office has collaborated to provide HMIS access to Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless (CAAH), BRPD, EBR Sheriff, Coroner and Crisis Outreach Teams.
- New procedures for an afterhours hotline number for sheltering at St. Vincent de Paul, to be used only by BRPD.
- The Mayor's Office is working with Behavioral Health Institutions, CAHS and the Bridge Center to detox those individuals and get them into treatment.
- Establish a partnership between Law Enforcement and Behavioral Health Specialists addressing homelessness along public roadways.
- Work with several agencies to address littering, loitering, crime and panhandling in major areas of the city, i.e., Florida Blvd and Reiger Road.
- Establish a Panhandling Taskforce to address concerns near EBR main intersections and Downtown Baton Rouge to investigate encampments.

Dr. Jones presented to the Commission a recap of the Coalitions final goals:

- Capacity Database Inventory
- Outreach and Case Management
- Transitional and Permanent Affordable Housing
- Community Homelessness Education Campaign
- Addressing Formerly Incarcerated Persons
- Behavioral Health Training for Public Entities and Groups
- Creation of a Panhandling Taskforce
- Establish a Peer to Peer Homelessness Mentoring Program

Dr. Jones stated that The Bridge Center for Hope will be opening in December of this year and will provide health services to people in crisis who have a mental illness and/or addiction.

**C. River View Condominiums, River Road** – Annette Foshee Leon, Realtor with Tiger Town Realty presented the Commission a PowerPoint presentation on the renovations and updates on 40 units of 107 units at the Riverview Condominiums. Ms. Leon stated only 4 out of the 40 renovated units are unoccupied. They have a solid property management in place, a balanced budget and a homeowner's association. The entire exterior has been renovated due to water issues, the roof was replaced and the interior of the building has been renovated in addition to the fence, pool and clubhouse. Mr. Rhorer informed the Commission this development is north of Hollywood Casino, right next to River Palms Apartments. Mr. Rhorer stated the DDD has a grant application with Recreational Trails to extend the multi-use path from Hollywood all the way to this development. The purpose of this path is to pull these residents in to make it easier for

them to come into the downtown area to utilize the attractions and restaurants by bike or walking.

- D. River Center Theatre** – Mr. Davis Rhorer informed the Commission on the completion date of the renovations to the River Center Theatre. The work is scheduled to be complete on March 3, 2021, and a punch list will be prepared and completed before the official opening. Mr. Rhorer showed images of improvements planned of the Plaza area outside highlighting the four Mestrovic sculptures. Images were shown of the lobby area which is about 8,000 square feet which can be utilized for other events.
- E. Water Campus on Oklahoma Street** – Mr. Davis Rhorer showed the Commission, via PowerPoint, photographs of the near completion of the Water Campus on Oklahoma Street which has been closed for some time and will be opening very soon. Mr. Rhorer showed images of Terrace Street which is being redone and stretches from Nicholson to River Road, this will open up the east/west corridor. Images were shown of 200 Water Street the residential development, the 24 units are scheduled to open in November 2020 and the Main Square showing a water feature with a seating area with water flowing designed for children to play in.
- F. The Elysian III Apartments, Spanish Town Road** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint images of the Elysian III development. These are residential apartments under construction, with a total of 42 units in the Downtown East area which fronts on North Street. These will be a mixture of workforce housing and market rent, Gulf Coast Housing Partnership is the developer for this project.
- G. MLK Sculpture Restoration** – Mr. Davis Rhorer updated the Commission on the renovations of the MLK Sculpture. This is a joint venture between the Baton Rouge Area Foundation approached the Arts Council which will be going to Council at the end of November. Mr. Davis stated he is involved and has presented the Master Plan to The Art in Public Places Advisory Committee (APPAC) which will be a renovation and also a reshaping which calls for more green area and shade for a reflective space. The Committee raises funds and will work with the Arts Council to oversee the maintenance and restoration of the MLK sculpture..
- H. 333 Third Street – Rio Tacos and Tequila**– Mr. Davis Rhorer briefed the Commission on the progress of the Mexican restaurant Rio Tacos and Tequila. A sign has been installed and Mr. Chad Hughes, owner states it will be opening soon, sometime this month.
- I. River Park Property** – Mr. Davis Rhorer updated the Commission on the status on 24 acres of the Pete Clements property which is going up for auction on November 15, 2020. It directly abuts the Hollywood Casino property which will be undergoing approximately \$25 million worth of renovations and additions for landside improvements. Mr. Rhorer stated this is an incredible piece of property, prime for development, which does not flood and has a slight bluff above the river. In addition, many years ago a \$14 million four lane underpass was built; the cost was split by the Clements development and Hollywood Casino. .
- J. Downtown Parking Meters** – Mr. Davis Rhorer updated the Commission on the status of the Downtown parking meters. He stated he and Ben Taylor were on a Committee to select the group to handle this project. The management company is in the process of inventorying all the meters and stations, and is currently negotiating the contract. It has not been announced publically who was awarded the contract, but the City will announce

this shortly. Mr. Rhorer stated he wants this to be an affordable, easy, positive experience for visitors, property owners, residents and those who work in the downtown area.

**K. Nicholson Drive Pedestrian Improvements** – The Commission viewed via PowerPoint, images of improvements to Nicholson Drive. Mr. Davis Rhorer informed the Commission the project is being presented to Council today to authorize the State to utilize the Right-Of-Way in order to make these improvements. The improvements include a multi-use lane for bicycles and pedestrians which will connect LSU to the downtown area. The Bus Rapid Transit is also going to Council today and has this same route, which will connect North Baton Rouge via Plank Road, Downtown and LSU which will have limited stops. This is important corridor which will be a quicker access than the levy.

**L. Move BR North Boulevard** - The Commission viewed via PowerPoint, images of improvements on North Boulevard, from I-110 east to BRCC at Foster Drive which will include bike lanes and sidewalks and/or multi-use lanes, linking the downtown area to BR Community College.

**M. Spanish Town Multi-Family, N. Seventh Street** - The Commission viewed via PowerPoint, images of a multi-family development by Tommy Spinoso who has been meeting with the Spanish Town area residents. A site plan has been filed with the Planning Commission for 30 units and the neighborhood is very pleased.

**N. Valencia Park Apartments** – Mr. Davis Rhorer showed the Commission images, via PowerPoint, of the new Valencia Park Apartments/ Valencia has been approved and permitted and they plan on breaking ground after the first of the year. It is a 122 unit located off of Spanish Town Road in Downtown East. The development will consist of 62 1-bedroom, 54 2-bedroom and 6 3-bedroom apartments, of which 80% of the units will be Government assisted.

**O. Restaurant Recovery Docuseries – Poor Boy Lloyd’s Renovations** – The Commission viewed images, via PowerPoint, of a two day renovation to the interior and exterior of Poor Boy Lloyd’s Restaurant which was done by Raising Cane’s founder Todd Graves for his new docuseries, Restaurant Recovery. They did not release any information which network will air the show or series.

**Downtown Programming** – Mr. Casey Tate updated the Commission on the progress of work and activity in downtown area. The Commission viewed images of individuals engaged in a Pop-up Barre class, groups such as this have been reaching out to utilize the green spaces. Adjacent businesses are working with these groups, opening up early and accommodating them with early brunch specials and such. Happy’s Running Club continues to meet every Tuesday at 6:15 PM and have been meeting in Town Square to order keep the social distancing. Another weekly event is the Jolie Pearl Yoga Club who meets on Thursday evenings at 6:30 in Town Square.

Mr. Tate informed the Commission that the DDD has been working on marketing, tools one of which is a magnet with QR codes linking you to the DDD website. Each QR links you to either an interactive map of events taking place, places to visit or dining in the downtown area; the magnet can be placed on a refrigerator making it an easy way for residents and businesses to look up this information.

James Curtis with Outside Stimuli has leased the old DDD Office at 227 Florida Street. He is working with various groups to make a “Makers Space Pop-up” this Christmas season, opening in December. Approximately 50% of the proceeds of the sales will be donated to the African American History Museum on South Boulevard. They have renovated the two front windows to be utilized as transaction counters to allow it to be a touchless interaction, without customers having to go into the store.

**8. Events** – Mr. Casey Tate showed the Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images for the following events. Mr. Casey Tate briefed the Commission and stated events are returning to the downtown area.

- Restaurant Week – November 2 -14
- Sunday in the Park – Live Music through November 15
- Capitol Park Museum – Lunchtime Lagniappe and Movies After Five through November 22
- Festival of Lights –Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony (scaled down) December 4<sup>th</sup>, 6PM
- Preserve Louisiana / Old Governor’s Mansion-Heritage Lecture - Our Changing Climate: The Impact on Louisiana Tribes – Virtual Event, Thursday, November 12
- Manship Theatre – Private Movie Parties: Up to 50 people \$500 – Pick your movie
- LSU MOA –Free First Sundays and Gallery Talk and Photo Walk: Sunday, December 6 – 1:00 PM
- Old State Capitol – Louisiana’s Lionhearted Ladies: Championing the Right to Vote and “In Celebration of Women”: Contemporary Fiber Artists of Louisiana - both through December 18
- River Center Events – Ice Skating: Tickets on sale now from November 20 – January 3
- LASM – Introducing LASM 360: Available at [virtual-lasm.org/lasm-360](http://virtual-lasm.org/lasm-360)
- LASM – Movie now playing in Pennington Planetarium: In Saturn’s Rings
- USS KIDD – The Ship and Museum are open daily 9:30am-3:30pm
- USS Kidd - Warrior Yoga: Yoga with Veterans, Wednesday November 11 at 6:30 pm

Mr. Davis Rhorer introduced and welcomed Downtown Development’s new employee, Mr. Ryan Benton.

**9. Ongoing Projects** – Ms. Darlene Adams Roland with BREADA briefed the Commission on what BREADA does for the community. BREADA is a nonprofit agency which does three main things: support and sustain small family farmers; connect the community with healthy food choices and foster stewardship of land and community. The two most visible projects are the Red Stick Farmers Market and Main Street Market. There are 4 locations during the week for the Farmers Market; the largest and most notable is on Saturday mornings at Main Street Market. The Farmers Market never closed down during COVID, they even had a drive through at one point and is now open with some COVID modifications. BREADA just celebrated its 24<sup>th</sup> year in the Baton Rouge area this past Saturday and is proud to support and sustain these local farmers. Ms. Roland stated that BREADA has a video on a YouTube channel – BREADA which outlines the response from the farmers on what affect and impact the Farmers Market has made by remaining open.

Ms. Lauren Lambert Thompkins, Director at the Downtown Business Association (DBA) briefed the Commission on a few programs they have had and have going on. First was Downtown Sounds, a virtual concert series, immediately after COVID they began filming several bands and singer/songwriters throughout several spaces in the downtown area to showcase spaces and support the artists. The videos are available on their website at [downtownbr.org](http://downtownbr.org). The next programing was “Movies After Five” showing family friendly movies outside at the Capital Park Museum lawn on Sundays. An hour or so before the movies begin, live music is played on the lawn. The movies have been showing for the past five weeks and there are two more movies to be shown before the fall season ends. They have had a great response to this and would like to have this programing again. The next programing they have scheduled is for 2021, creating

packages for visitors and “staycations” for locals to experience the downtown area restaurants, bars, museums, and hotels.

Ms. Thompkins stated the DBA is a membership driven organization for downtown businesses and organizations, beginning in January, 2021 there will hold a membership campaign. During 2020, there were no Live After Five series due to COVID however, the DBA is ready to officially announce they plan to have Live After Five concert series beginning in Spring of 2021. Being an outdoor activity, the DBA feels they can hold this event safely and will be announcing the line up soon. The DBA is partnering with other organizations that are planning on bringing back outdoor music including the Baton Rouge Blues Festival, the Crawfish King Cook-Off and the Oyster Festival.

**10. Correspondence** – There was no information to report.

**11. Public Comment** –Mr. Jay Gaudet and Ms. Carolyn Coleman introduced themselves as candidates in a runoff for the District 10 Council Seat to replace Councilwoman Tara Wicker.

**Meeting Adjourned** – Mr. Scott Hensgens moved to adjourn the meeting, Mrs. Melanie Montanaro seconded and the meeting was adjourned.