

DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

August 9, 2022 8:00 a.m.

Capitol Park Museum, 660 North 4th Street

Board Members in Attendance: Ms. Melanie Montanaro-Chairwoman, Mr. Eric Dexter-Vice Chairman, Mr. Prescott Bailey-Secretary, Ms. Erin Monroe-Wesley, Mr. Scott Hensgens

Absent: Mr. Jude Melville-Treasurer and Mr. Patrick Michaels

Others in Attendance were Karron Alford, Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman, David Jacobs, Luke Lognion, David Kors, Malorey Uzee, Bruce Woods, John Kelton, Sarah Nichols, Sarah Gardner, Debra Kastner, Marty Enquist, Kelvin Hill, Anne Mahoney, Leslie Thompson, Adrienne Kors, Luke St. John McKnight, Darlene Rowland, Paul Arrigo, Judy Foust, Chris Chandler, Nedra Hains, Rosehn Gipe, Caroline Byrne, Justin Lemoine, Donald Leonard, Jaynie Collier, Joseph Butler, Jason Langlois, Rafa Amay, Madison Foust, Caress Vanduzee, Megan Sykes, Dillion Teal, Jon Phelps, Jill Inchausty, Rachael Lambert, Karon Alford, Samantha Custer, Sarah Amacker, Jarrett Cohen, Mary Jane Marcantel, M.G. Bailey, Casey Tate, Ute Cress

1. Mrs. Whitney Hoffman Sayal, DDD Executive Director, welcomed everyone to the DDD Commission meeting and thanked Rodney Hart, Museum Division Director of the Capitol Park Museum for hosting the DDD meeting.

Ms. Hart addressed the audience and welcomed the DDD and guests to the museum. Ms. Hart gave an overview of several programs and exhibits at the museum and stated on the first Sunday of the month admission is free to the museum.

2. Ms. Melanie Montanaro called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.

Ms. Erin Monroe Wesley made a motion to approve the agenda and the minutes from the February 8th and May 11th meetings, Mr. Eric Dexter seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

3. Update from previous Board meeting: Ms. Melanie Montanaro gave an overview of the search process for the DDD Executive Director. A Search Committee was formed and worked with the consulting firm, Emergent Method, to find an Executive Director. Whitney Hoffman Sayal was hired after a nationwide search. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal previously worked as a Project Development Director at the DDD for 8 years. Ms. Montanaro introduced Whitney Hoffman Sayal as the DDD Executive Director and welcomed her back. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal stated she is excited to be back at the DDD and is thrilled to be working to move downtown forward after the last couple of arduous years.

4. Board Action: Ms. Montanaro stated the DDD 2023 Budget was previously presented to the DDD Commission members for their review. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal gave an overview of the budget. DDD has several employee vacancies and will be staffing back up; Casey Tate has been promoted to Assistant Executive Director, two regular full-time positions will be filled in addition to a student intern. Supplies were increased to include some project management software; the travel and training line item was increased due to certification requirements and for conferences including education credits which were sidelined during COVID. Professional Services was increased to accommodate all downtown projects being worked on including riverfront enhancements and wayfinding signage.

A motion was made by Eric Dexter to approve the DDD 2023 Budget, seconded by Erin Monroe Wesley, and the motion was approved.

5. Governmental Issues: Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on a proposed “camping” ordinance to ban camping on public property to incentivize people to seek services to get them into beds and off of the street. The Council deferred the item for thirty days to the August 24th Council meeting.

6. Development Initiatives:

A. Energy Solutions – Jon Phelps, Project Director, and Meagan Sykes, Marketing Manager, of Energy Solutions for Entergy Louisiana, introduced to the Commission a pilot program called “New Construction” which is being utilized across the state. Entergy Solutions offers programs for Entergy Louisiana residential & commercial customers to save energy and money by reducing the up-front cost of energy efficiency upgrades. Louisiana Entergy Solutions works with business owners, facility managers, and trade ally contractors to identify opportunities and provide cash incentives for completing eligible upgrades with proven energy savings. Energy-efficient upgrades can help your business by providing cash incentives for completing eligible upgrades with proven energy savings.

B. Visit Baton Rouge – Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced Paul Arrigo, President & CEO of Visit Baton Rouge. He announced his retirement in December 2020 and will be retiring at the end of September 2021. Mr. Arrigo announced that Visit Baton Rouge launched its tourism survey this year from January – April through destinationNEXT to evaluate Baton Rouge as a tourist destination. The survey helped determine opportunities for potential amenities, programs, products, and experiences that would benefit the tourism industry in Baton Rouge as part of their 5-year strategic plan. It will allow VBR to have a better idea of what the city needs to do to become more attractive to visitors.

Mr. Arrigo introduced to the Commission the new President & CEO of Visit Baton Rouge, Jill Kidder. The Visit Baton Rouge Board of Commissioners unanimously selected Ms. Kidder for the job after a search by an Executive Committee. For the past 5 years, Ms. Kidder served as President/CEO of Louisiana Travel Association and has more than 37 years of hospitality, tourism, marketing, management, and economic development experience. She has plenty of CVB, convention center, and downtown development experience.

- C. Hilton, The Tunnel** – Ms. Leslie Thompson, Director of Sales & Marketing, Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol, showed the Commission images of the Tunnel under the Hilton Hotel, which was recently renovated and re-opened. The tunnel runs under Lafayette Street. It was built in 1931 to connect the Heidelberg Hotel (Hilton) with the King Hotel (Indigo) across the street. Ms. Thompson stated the Tunnel has now opened as an exclusive private event and dining space, with room for 30 to 35 guests. The space was closed because there was a problem with water getting into the property. For more than a decade, the space had been used as storage, but the hotel’s owners decided to fix the problems and waterproof the tunnel, allowing it to open once again.
- D. The Residences at Rivermark** – Ms. Samantha Custer, Property Manager showed the Commission a video of the Residences at Rivermark. After the video, Ms. Jill Inchausty, Regional Property Manager at Wampold Companies stated anyone interested in seeing the condos, please contact Samantha or herself to schedule a tour. The condos are 1, 2, and 3 bedroom open floor plans that feature high-end finishes and details such as quartz countertops and exposed concrete ceilings, and balconies with breathtaking Mississippi River views.
- E. BRAF Public Art Restoration** – The Commission viewed images, via PowerPoint, of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation’s public art restoration. Ms. Sarah Gardner with Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAAF) project manager of civic leadership initiatives at the foundation gave a status of the public art restoration being done to the sculptures in the downtown area. The "Marcha de Galvez" fountain in downtown Baton Rouge's Galvez Plaza is the fourth of the Baton Rouge Area Foundation's public art restoration projects. In early May, Susie Anders, owner of Anders Art Conservation, began working on the fountain's restoration; cleaning water mineral deposits and other environmental elements from the bronze, then applying wax to restore the patina. The fountain was created by Baton Rouge sculptor Frank Hayden, who also created the Oliver Pollock sculpture on the opposite side of Galvez Plaza. The Pollock monument was restored in March and the Hebe statue on North Boulevard was restored in May. The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in City Plaza was the project's first monument Ms. Anders restored in 2021. Restoration of the Mestrovic sculptures is to begin in the fall.
- F. Commerce Building** – Ms. Hoffman Sayal mentioned the sale of the Commerce Building and stated Jennifer Spiers, Director of Property Management for the Commerce Building was not able to attend the meeting today but will keep us updated on plans for the building.

G. Parking Meters – Mr. Kelvin Hill, City-Parish Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, updated the Commission on the downtown parking meters. Mr. Hill stated this project has been in development for six-plus years. The city currently has 839 parking meters in the downtown area, the majority of them are double-headed meters. The meters are being replaced with multi-space kiosk/parking meters by the Flowbird Group. The meters are self-contained with solar power, battery backup and a charging system. 100 kiosk meters will be installed and each kiosk will handle up to 10 spaces per vehicle. The kiosk meters feature card readers and include technology allowing for mobile payments through a cellphone app tied to a vehicle's license plate. Enforcement will be done by the Baton Rouge Police Department using license plate readers. The hours for the meters will remain the same, Monday-Friday 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM, on-street parking will be free after 6:00 PM, and on the weekends. Ms. Hoffman Sayal announced the DDD and City-Parish offices are scheduling a public meeting next week.

7. Events - Mr. Casey Tate updated the Commission on the following downtown events:

- Live After Five Concert Line-up – Fridays, September 16 – October 28
- Jolie Pearl Summer Jam – North Boulevard Town Square August 12
- Ryan’s Run 5K – Sickle Cell Run, North Boulevard Town Square September 3
- Manship Theatre – Beausoleil with Michael Doucet, April 18, 7:30 PM
- LSU MOA – Blurring Boundaries: The Woman of American Artists, now through October 23
- Capital Park Museum – Letitia Huckaby & Katrin Andry exhibit now through September 17
- Old State Capitol – Who Gets to Vote? & Visual Perspectives of Louisiana
- River Center – Ice Hockey Tickets on sale, December 8, 15 & January 2
- LASM - 2022 Gala & Ticket Giveaway, September 30
- USS Kidd – Open Daily for Tours 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM
- BREADA – National Farmers Market week, August 7th – 13th; Back to School Bash, August 13th; Oh-My-Okra, August 20th; Positively Peppery, August 27th

8. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- Ms. Hoffman Sayal announced the passing of Mr. Buddy Leach. He was instrumental in the development of downtown with the construction of the Indigo Hotel and the Kress-Levy building and also was involved in legislative efforts across the state.
- Ms. Melanie Montanaro stated she is the DDD representative for Beauregard Town. Beauregard Town applied for a local historic designation and was approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. It will be presented to the Planning Commission on August 15.

10. Public Comment:

- Ms. Darlene Roland, BREADA, announced the Farm Fête fundraiser, September 29th, River Center Library Terrace, an evening celebrating local food & farms with festive drinks and food pairings by local chefs. Tickets are \$100.00 and can be purchased at <https://www.farmfete.org/>.
- Mr. John Kelton announced his Enjoy Baton Rouge Walking Tours will be relocating in September, however, he and his wife are going to try to continue the walking tours downtown Baton Rouge.
- Anne Mahoney, Curator of the Capitol Park Museum is looking for volunteers for their walking tours, all research and training will be provided. If anyone would like to receive the newsletter, please place a star next to your name on the sign-in sheet.
- Mr. Luke Longnion, owner of BRASS souvenir shop announced they have been open for 9 months and have their new sign up. They have added additional vendors and now have over 55 local artists/makers. For football season, they have ordered Southern and LSU merchandise.
- Nedra Hains, Deputy Director of the LSU Museum of Art stated they are working on the four closed galleries that were flooded on July 12, however, 6 galleries are open. Viking cruise lines will be visiting the museum and the Capitol Park Museum on the 19th with 320 Viking passengers. Mr. Daniel Stetson, Executive Director, has retired and the museum will begin a national search to replace him.
- Jarrett Cohen, JECohen, New Orleans announced he and his partner have purchased the State National Life Building. They will be selling a portion of the property across from the Hilton Hotel but will be keeping and renovating the main 7-story building. Currently, they do not have a tenant but are working on renovations and renderings.
- Ms. Hoffman Sayal wanted to acknowledge and thank BRPD for attending the meeting. The DDD and BRPD have set up some regularly scheduled meetings between the two offices to be kept abreast of what's going on downtown. Ms. Hoffman Sayal also acknowledges Councilwoman Coleman and thanked her for attending the meeting.
- Ms. Montanaro wanted to thank Casey Tate and Ute Cress for their hard work during the past year and a half and that it is appreciated. Also, Ms. Montanaro welcomed Ms. Hoffman Sayal as the DDD Director and stated she is looking forward to working with her.

11. Meeting Adjourned – Ms. Erin Monroe-Wesley moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Eric Dexter seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.