

## DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

April 17, 2024

USS Kidd Veterans Museum, 305 S. River Road

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mr. Eric Dexter-Chairman, Mr. Prescott Bailey-Vice Chairman, Mr. Patrick Michaels-Treasurer, Mr. Gary Jupiter, Mr. Joshua Hollins, Mr. Philip Jordan

**Absent:** Ms. Tara Titone

**Others in Attendance:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Casey Tate, Iboro Udoh, Schuyler Olson, Ute Cress, Amanda Richter, Carolyn Castel, David Kors, Luke Lognion, David Kors, Jordan Arcenaux, Mary Jane Marcantel, Eric Piazza, Landon Hester, Field Meng, Samantha Morgan, Judy Foust, Adrienne Kors, Tracey Barhorst, Colleen Rials, Taylor Thompson, Fredrick Sargent, Mark Martin, Parks Stephenson, Sarah Noles, Frederic Sargent, Landon Hester, Mark Tullos, Kim Szuszka, Mary Darusau, Dwight Green, Todd Maulding.

Whitney Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone to the USS Kidd and thanked everyone for attending. Ms. Hoffman Sayal thanked Parks Stephenson, Executive Director of the USS Kidd Baton Rouge Museum for hosting the meeting.

1. Eric Dexter called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.
2. Gary Jupiter made a motion to approve the agenda, Philip Jordan seconded, and the motion was approved.
3. Philip Jordan made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 20, 2024 meeting, Gary Jupiter seconded, and the motion was approved.

#### 4. Governmental Issues:

- **USS Kidd Departure** – Parks Stephenson, Executive Director, updated the Commission on the departure of the USS Kidd. Mr. Stephenson stated the USS Kidd is being sent to a shipyard for an overhaul. The last time the ship was overhauled was in 1962. During the past year, the drought conditions due to El Nino caused lower river levels. The river levels are too low to float the ship, therefore, an alternate plan to lift the ship out of the cradle is being worked on now. The river is about to experience one of its highest water events for our best chance of getting the ship out, however, there is no exact date. It will take approximately three days to tow the ship to a shipyard in Houma, LA. The city of Baton Rouge is planning a departure ceremony and will invite the Lt. Governor & Governor's offices to attend. A Zoom meeting is held every Friday with the Mayor's Chief of Staff and others involved in the ship's departure. Once a date is

established, Whitney Hoffman Sayal will be notified so an announcement through the DDD can be made to other city agencies and the public.

- **HB699** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on House Bill 699 the State Capitol Complex Neighborhood Improvements Council (creating a new district within downtown) for certain matters relative to the Capitol complex, including the following:
  1. Enhancing security.
  2. Providing for improvements.
  3. Providing generally for the betterment of its residents and visitors.

After conversations with the Representative who proposed the bill, logistics have worked out and the bill will not likely move forward. However, the DDD will continue to monitor it.

- **Historic Preservation Committee-3-24 (103 France Street)** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. The HPC has a public hearing scheduled on May 8, 2024, for the demolition of 103 France Street.
- **Parking Meters** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the new parking meters. The parking meters are now fully functioning and the Mayor’s office issued a statement regarding the enforcement beginning on April 29.  
Parking regulations are in effect from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, free after 6 p.m. and on weekends and holidays. The cost is 25 cents per 15 minutes with a two-hour limit. Additional information on parking can be located at the DDD’s website at <https://downtownbatonrouge.org/>
- **DDD Design & Marketing Coordinator**-Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced DDD’s new Design and Marketing Coordinator, Schuyler Olson. Schuyler recently graduated from LSU in Mass Communications with a Business Administration minor and was the LSU Tiger Band Color Guard Captain.
- **IDA Capitol Fly-in**-Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated she attended the International Downtown Association Capitol Hill Fly-In last week. Downtown leaders from around the country come in to advocate for bills that help downtowns on a federal level. Some issues highlighted with Congressmen and Senators were grants helping with public safety initiatives, homelessness assistance, and an office conversion tax credit, which has not been fully formed but will probably be drafted and put to vote this year. Baton Rouge and New Orleans Development Districts participated together.
- **River Center Update** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on an ordinance in March that the Metro Council approved to limit the size of events at the River Center The Mayor’s office released the Proposed Next Steps for River Center and Headquarters Hotel Strategy. The Commission viewed PowerPoint slides on the Mayor’s Strategic Plan Request.
  - The Metro Council authorized the Mayor-President to identify strategies for developing additional convention capacity and soliciting a developer to redevelop the arena for conventions to develop a convention hotel and to provide her recommendations to the Metro Council for review, comment, and approval.

- The mayor has identified the public-private partnership to work with a private “River Center Developer” for design and renovations and lease of City-Parish property to the “Hotel Developer” for a private-public partnership to design, build, and finance the Headquarters Hotel. The developers could be on the same team.
- Summary of Proposed Planning Process;
  1. Council plan approval and form Project Oversight Committee
  2. Select the owner’s project manager team
  3. Issue RFQ/RFP for developers
  4. Select developers and ensure project oversight
- The Metro Council will assemble a Project Oversight Committee to study and make recommendations to the Council for approval.
- The Mayor-President proposes an 11-member Project Oversight Committee from different organizations, which includes the Downtown Development District, selected and approved by the Metro Council to study and make recommendations to the Council.
- Proposed launch timeline for the River Center from week 1 through week 40
- List of potential project funding sources
- List of potential project local incentives, including the River Center Economic Development District concept.

#### 5. Update from the Previous Board Meeting

- **Louisiana/Eddie Robinson, Sr. Drive Street Project** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. The second phase of the Louisiana & 14th Street improvements for handicap ramps and crosswalks has been ongoing and the project is approximately 85% complete. On Eddie Robinson and Louisiana Avenue, ramps, sidewalks, and wayfinding signs will finalize the connection between the end of the Government Street Bike Lanes and the Downtown Greenway at T.J. Jemison.
- **Ai Update – Event Data** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on downtown event data with Placer.ai, a program DDD has been using to determine how many people are visiting downtown during certain times. The DDD tracked the event data for the number of visitors in the Arts and Entertainment District during the Spring Live After Five. Approximately 13,000 people attended the Live After Five held Friday night, April 12<sup>th</sup>, the average age is 33 and the median income is \$61,000 – higher than the state average.

#### 6. Development Initiatives:

- **Riverfront Study** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission. The LSU Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture fourth-year students did a series of designs on how to enhance the riverfront. Each student took a portion of the river and developed some designs. One of the students, Ethan Bergeron, is an intern with the DDD. He has taken those designs and assembled them in a comprehensive plan, from the Water Campus to River Park, which will be printed and is approximately 9 feet long. The DDD will host an open house to highlight the students’ ideas on how to enhance the riverfront as a major regional attraction. The public will be able to view the plan and can start envisioning what the riverfront could become in tandem with the River Center. The DDD will announce the date once it is confirmed.

- **Louisiana Downtowns Forum** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on a forum held last week with the Downtown Development Districts from New Orleans and Lafayette. It’s an opportunity to get together to discuss what’s going on in each of the downtowns, what the priorities are, talking about the federal advocacy efforts, and how to unite state advocacy efforts in the future.
- **Downtown Tree Replacement** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on a budget supplement funding, received from the Mayor-President, to replace 22 trees downtown. An inventory of the tree wells downtown was conducted and over 100 trees need replacement, exasperated by the drought last summer. Work has started on replacing the 22 trees selected, hopefully, additional funding will be allocated for other trees to be replaced.
- **Streetscape Maintenance** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on streetscape maintenance by EDS/Uplifted, contracted with the City-Parish Maintenance Department. Casey Tate with DDD is working with the crews to determine which beds need weeding and mulching. DDD partners with Visit Baton Rouge to maintain the plant containers on Third Street with flowers and plants.
- **New Businesses:**
  - Digital Knomad, 227 Florida Street – The owner Kahil offers a shared workspace for artists, a contracting room, a green room, and a podcast studio. Current art exhibit, “The Art Attack”, April 12 – 20.
  - Okki Tokki, 549 Main Street. Okki Tokki is a Korean kitchen located in the Galvez garage, open Monday – Saturday, 10:30 AM – 3:30 PM
  - The 121, 121 Convention – The 121 is a special events venue next to the Hilton on Convention Street. The 121 Venue is now under the management of the Hilton Capitol Center. Stayed tuned for special events like “dueling pianos”.
  - Lockett Portrait Studio, 207 Florida Street – A new portrait studio on Florida Street next to Poboy Lloyds.
- **Lincon Theatre Groundbreaking** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the Lincoln Theatre. The DDD participated in the groundbreaking last month of the Louisiana Black History Hall of Fame and Cultural Center at the Lincoln Theater, located at 1305 Myrtle Street.
- **Downtown East Social Ride** – Samantha Morgan started the Downtown East Social Ride about 5 years ago. Downtown East is between downtown proper and Mid City, full of history that’s been long forgotten. Ms. Morgan is a former journalist who has been researching the history; the rides explore the reasons why. May will be the 5th anniversary of the rides and they will be celebrating each Monday during the month. They meet at the Electric Depot every Monday at 6:00 PM. On the first Monday in May, they will ride to Spoke and Hub, a bike-themed restaurant on Government Street, and back to the Electric Depot. On the last Saturday in May, on the 25<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 PM, they will have the last celebration at Spoke and Hub. Go to <https://www.downtowneastsocialride.com> for additional information on the weekly rides.

## 8. Events -

Casey Tate updated the Commission and thanked the Live After Five Board, the Department of Public Works, and the Mayor's Office for helping put together a great spring Live After Five season.

- Live After Five – Fridays @ 5:00 PM through May 24<sup>th</sup> @ Rhorer Plaza
- Sunday in the Park – Sundays 2:00 – 5:00 PM through April 28
- Baton Rouge Blues Festival – Friday, April 19 – Sunday, April 21; 4 stages from Convention to Rhorer Plaza
- Crawfish King Cook-Off – Friday, May 10; gates open at 4:00 PM @ Rhorer Plaza
- Manship Theatre – Movies, Music & more for April – June
- Manship Theatre – Louisiana Smart Growth Summit, April 25 & 26 begins @ 8:00 AM
- LSU MOA – Fierce Planets and Interior Space Exhibition Opening, Thursday, April 18 @ 6:00 PM
- LSU MOA – Art at Lunch: The Power of Digital Storytelling, LSU Professor Dr. Tyrslai M. Williams-Carter, Wednesday, April 24 from 12:00 – 1:00 PM
- Capitol Park Museum – Unexpected Modernism: The Wiener Brothers Story film screening, Thursday, April 18, 5:00 – 8:00 PM
- Old State Capitol –
  - Looking Up, Find Your Something, Tuesday, April 30 @ 6:00 PM
  - Louisiana World Exposition, Tuesday, January 23 – Friday, December 20
  - Patient No More: People with Disabilities Securing Civil Rights - Sunday, March 2 – Saturday, May 25
- Raising Canes River Center – April and May Events, Harlem Globetrotters, Disney On Ice, Casting Crowns, Monster Truck Nitro Tour, and more!
- LASM – Highlighted Galleries
- USS Kidd – Veterans Museum Open Daily from 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM
  - Strong and Calm Warrior Yoga, Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 – 9:00 AM
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – First Saturday of the month, Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 AM – 12:00
- Red Stick Farmer's Market – Every Saturday 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM
  - April 27 – Glass Recycling Drop Off, Glassroots Initiative
  - Pennington Biomedical Yoga at the Market – Third Thursday of every month, May 16 from 9:00 AM – 10:00
  - Bike Fresh Bike Local – Saturday, May 25 from 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Darlene Rowland, BREADA Executive Director, stated they have partnered with Glassroots out of New Orleans for glass recycling converting them into sand for coastal restoration and protection. The collection is every fourth Saturday of the month, make sure the glass is washed out and without lids or corks.

## 9. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- None

## 10. Public Comment:

- Mark Martin, Bike Baton Rouge, announced that May is declared as “Bike Month”, so before it gets too hot, go for a ride!
- Luke Lognion, BRASS, stated Live After Five had a great season with a new tradition, a second-line parade down Third Street ending at Boudreaux and Thibodeaux's. Baton Rouge Blues Fest is April 19-21. VIP passes are available at [www.brblues.org](http://www.brblues.org) to enjoy complimentary food and

beverages all weekend, private restrooms, and exclusive viewing areas. This weekend at the Arts Market, Peter Simone will be singing, he is the lead singer for Minus the Saint.

- Taylor Thompson, Special Events Manager – Hilton Capital Center, gave an update on The 121 Event Venue. It still is a private event venue, however, they are hosting other events such as Dueling Pianos and the Lazy Louisiana Brunch. Tickets can be purchased through Eventbrite.
- Landon Hester with CPEX announced the 18<sup>th</sup> Smart Growth Summit begins next week, April 25 and 26 at the Manship Theatre. They will be discussing the many challenges facing Louisiana communities, from population movement, extreme heat, and environmental risks, but also the opportunities such as solar, off-shore wind, etc. The keynote speaker will be Kona Gray who currently serves as President-Elect of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). The Smart Growth Summit offers continuing education credits for a variety of professional fields. Additional information can be found at [www.summit.cpe.org](http://www.summit.cpe.org)
- Frederick Sargent, Electronic Media - Walking Billboards, is licensed with the city and can be used on any city street and in the downtown area, promoting business and events.
- Kim Szuszka with Okki Tokki, thank you for the support received from downtown for her Korean restaurant. She's very excited to be part of the downtown community and bring Korean food to downtown.
- Eric Dexter announced the Baton Rouge Area Chamber hosting the third annual YP Summit being held at the Hilton Capital Center on Thursday, April 25 from 9:00 to 5:00, presented by Vist Baton Rouge. Register at [www.brac.org](http://www.brac.org)

**11. Meeting Adjourned** – Eric Dexter moved to adjourn the meeting, Gary Jupiter seconded and the meeting was adjourned.