

DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

August 8, 2023, 8:00 AM

Capitol Park Museum, 660 N. 4th Street

Board Members in Attendance: Mr. Eric Dexter-Chairman, Mr. Prescott Bailey-Treasurer, Mr. Patrick Michaels-Secretary, Mr. Gary Jupiter, Mr. Scott Hensgens

Absent: Mr. Jude Melville-Vice Chairman, Ms. Melanie Montanaro

Others in Attendance: Jill Kidder, Marty Enquist, Luke Lognion, Serena Pandos, Landon Hester, Charles Daniel, Sarah Nichols, Paige Gagliano, David Jacobs, Pam Bordelon, Chaunda Mitchell, Caress Vanduzee, Darlene Rowland, Anna Gasperecz, Anthony Kimble, Dana Brown, Bridget Goffney, Caroline Byrne, Justin Lemoine, Elisabeth McKinley, Lauren Leist, Mark Tullos, Mary Jane Marcantel, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Morgan Lewis, Casey Tate, Ute Cress, Caroline Robertson.

1. Eric Dexter called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.
2. Mr. Gary Jupiter made a motion to approve the agenda, Patrick Michaels seconded, and the motion was approved.
3. Prescott Bailey made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 11, 2023 meeting, Gary Jupiter seconded, and the motion was approved.

4. Board Action:

- **2024 DDD Budget** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the status of the 2024 DDD Budget. Similar to last year's budget, there is a projected revenue of \$865,620.00. There is a slight increase in the subscription services line, due to the project management software we have been using, and also in advertising. These slight increases are balanced by the communications line decreasing, due to a new City Parish phone system. As per usual, after expenses are paid, the remaining money is placed into Professional Services, which will be utilized in our quality-of-life programs introduced in our strategic plan. The strategic plan will be submitted to the Commission in either September or October. Prescott Bailey made a motion to approve the budget, Gary Jupiter seconded and the motion was approved.

5. Governmental Issues:

- **DDD Supplemental Budget Request** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on a budget supplement request of \$200,000 for quality-of-life improvements dedicated to replacing empty tree wells, repairing wayfinding signage, and streetscape improvements on 3rd Street. This will be introduced to the Metro Council at a public hearing to be held on August 23rd.

- **Lincoln Theatre Rezoning** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the rezoning of the Lincoln Theatre from light industrial to light commercial. The application submitted to the Planning Commission mentioned that rezoning was needed for some improvements. Ms. Sayal stated the DDD is excited about seeing this project move forward as it is a historic landmark in our community.

6. Development Initiatives:

- **Storefront Initiative** – Josuha Combs with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) updated the Commission on a partnership with BRAC and the DDD to identify vacant storefronts that could be filled with businesses, retail, and restaurants. Mr. Combs stated he researched, visited new downtown business owners, and attended the Inaugural 225 Festival. Downtown is viable and lively, with people visiting from the local communities and visitors who attend events such as LSU and Southern football games, and other events such as Live After Five. The next step is recruiting local restaurants and businesses to open downtown. Mr. Combs stated they are focusing on local, minority, and women-owned businesses to be sure that downtown is not only thriving but inclusive as well. Recruiting starts this fall, and hopefully be completed in the first quarter of next year with some signed lease agreements.
- **Town Square Pizza** – Dana Brown, owner, and Elisabeth McKinley, General Manager, updated the Commission on the opening of Town Square Pizza. Mr. Brown stated the opening was delayed due to construction issues and plans on having a soft opening next week. Town Square Pizza will serve pizzas and salads and everything in the restaurant will be square including the pizza. Elizabeth McKinley has been in the industry for 15 years in Baton Rouge however, this will be her first venture in the downtown area. She is looking forward to becoming involved and being a part of the downtown community. They plan on being open at lunch during the week and nights during the weekends and for special events and festivals. They will also offer delivery and online orders for the downtown residents. The hours are Monday through Thursday for lunch from 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM; and Friday & Saturday from 11:00 AM – 8:00 PM however, the hours will change based on events being held downtown. When the hockey games begin, they will be open on Thursday nights for those home games.
- **One Eleven Apts./Mother’s Lounge** – The Commission viewed a picture, via PowerPoint, of a new patio and outdoor seating for One Eleven and Mother’s Lounge. The space near the Shaw Center was previously an open space. It has been split into two different sections, a patio for the residents of One Eleven and an outdoor seating area for patrons of Mother’s Lounge. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal stated this beautiful outdoor space adds to the streetscape of Third Street.
- **Downtown Greenway/Louisiana Avenue** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the progress of the Louisiana Connector that connects the Government Street bike lanes to the Downtown Greenway at T.J. Jemison and East Boulevard. The project is under construction and plans for pouring the colored concrete are scheduled this week. The construction is scheduled to be completed by sometime in September with a ribbon cutting scheduled soon after.

- **LSU/MOA Director** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced Mark Tullos, the newly appointed MOA/Executive Director of the LSU Museum of Art. Mr. Tullos stated he’s a Baton Rouge native and that he’s proud to be back home. Mr. Tullos recently served as the president and CEO of the Mississippi Arts & Entertainment Experience (THE MAX) in Meridian, Mississippi. He has been the Assistant Secretary for the Louisiana Office of State Museum, and Director of the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana. Mr. Tullos said his hopes are to elevate the museum to become one of the premier university museums in the country, in partnership with the DDD and the other museums downtown.
- **Downtown YMCA** – Christian Engle, YMCA President & CEO, briefed the Commission on the improvements to the capital area downtown YMCA. In the past year, they have done about half a million dollars in renovation to the facility, new locker rooms, flooring, and new equipment. One of the highlights is the addition of the “E Gym” (electronic gym). Mr. Engle stated the downtown YMCA will soon be operating 24 hours a day, hopefully in the next week or so.
- **African American Veteran Monument** – Dr. Chaunda Mitchell, Deputy Chief of State for Programs and Planning, and Lauren Leist, Communications Director for Gov. Edwards briefed the Commission on the Louisiana Heritage Monument at Veterans Memorial Park (former Old Arsenal Park). Dr. Mitchell stated there was a ribbon cutting about two weeks ago unveiling the Louisiana Heritage Monument on the state Capitol grounds honoring the service of African-American veterans, including formerly enslaved soldiers who fought in the Siege at Port Hudson. The monument stands more than 9 feet high by 12 feet wide, is cast in bronze, and rests on limestone. It features a cast of military heroes, beginning with America’s Revolutionary War and moving forward through time to America’s newest military branch, the United States Space Force. Sheleen Jones from New Orleans is the artist/sculptor of the monument. The monument is to honor all the sacrifices and contributions of black military service men and women and pay tribute to their bravery in protecting our state and nation. The monument has a bronze plaque with a QR Code on it that will link you to the official Louisiana Heritage website. The website is meant to be a living monument where you can read about the profiles of those who are on the monument and will also have profiles of other African American veterans, in partnership with WW11 Museum in New Orleans.
- **Parking Day** – Landon Hester with CPEX briefed the Commission on Park(ing) Day an annual, global event where artists, activists, and ordinary citizens transform parking spaces into temporary public parks—small park spaces that fit into the space of a parking spot—or parklets. CPEX, BREADA and other businesses and organizations, will participate in Park(ing) Day on September 15 from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Curbside parking spaces along N 5th at Main and North Boulevard will be converted into miniature parks and social spaces. Park(ing) installations encourage people to rethink how we utilize public areas, sparking conversations about the importance of accessible green spaces, alternative modes of transportation, public art, and social gatherings. Mr. Hester encouraged everyone to get involved and participate or

just enjoy the installations; CPEX is looking to fill about 26 spots. Any business or organizations interested in participating can contact CPEX or DDD for any additional information

7. Events -

Casey Tate updated the Commission on the following events:

- Manship Theatre –
 - Family Dinner Improv Comedy – August 18th, 7:30 PM
 - Southern Avenue – August 25th, 7:30 PM
- LSU MOA – Reclaiming African American Traditions in the Decorative Arts with Dr. Lauren Cross, Tuesday, August 20th, 2023
- Capitol Park Museum –
 - Lunchtime Lagniappe – August 9th from 12:00-1:00 PM
 - Free First Sundays – August 6th
- Old State Capitol –
 - Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School stories June 16 – August 12
 - Jazz Age Juxtaposition: Prohibition Era in Louisiana, until August 19th
 - Political Parties and the Culture of Conventions, until December 15
- River Center –
 - Desi Banks - August 18th, 7:30 PM
 - Summer Block Party Presents Jodeci – August 24th, 7:30 PM
 - Koe Wetzel – August 26th, 7:30 PM
- LASM –
 - BASF’s Kids’ Lab – Throughout July
 - Studio Saturdays, Printmaking on Fabric – every Saturday
 - Planetarium Don Lighting and the Grand Opening, coming in October 2023
- USS. Kidd – Open Daily 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM
- Red Stick Farmer’s Market – Every Saturday 8:00-12:00 on the Corner of 5th and Main Streets
 - 5th Annual Farm Fete – Thursday, September 28th
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – Every First Saturday of the Month, August 5th

At this point, Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced Rodneya Hart, Director of the Capitol Park Museum, and thanked her for hosting the DDD Commission meeting; Ms. Hart welcomed everyone to the museum. Ms. Hart stated there are many projects, programs, and initiatives, at the museum and invites everyone to come back to view the exhibits. Ms. Hart said the Capitol Park Museum loves to partner with the community and stated if you have a need for a meeting space, or a venue for a project, looking to partner with an institution, contact her at the Capitol Park Museum or through social media. Louisiana’s historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) officially opened a new exhibit at the Capitol Park Museum celebrating their unique history and contributions to postsecondary education.

8. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- None

9. Public Comment:

- Darlene Rowland, BREADA, announced special events being held during the summer every Saturday at the Farmer’s Market such as live music and kid’s activities. There will be a Back-to-School bash this Saturday, Friends from the Library and Book Mobile will be there, and there will be giveaways for the kids. Tickets are on sale for Farm Fete, Thursday, September 28 from 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM and will be held at the Library Terrace at the River Center Branch Library. Additional information can be found at www.farmfete.org
- Luke Lognion, BRASS, said not to forget about the everyday Work Downtown, Play Downtown. Daily discounts are given to downtown workers by participating bars and restaurants on Monday – Friday from 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM. Visit www.workplaybr.com for participating businesses and discounts. Don’t forget to shop local!
- Pam Bordelon with the Arts Council announced a special performance in the Jazz Listening Room with New York City-based guitarist/composer Charlie Rauh on Aug. 10 at 7:30 PM at the Cary Saurage Community Arts Center. In October the Louisiana Statewide Arts Summit is a three-day event that offers artists, arts organizations, educators, business leaders, and community members opportunities for discussion, networking, and professional development. This year’s summit takes place at the Cary Saurage Community Arts Center in Baton Rouge from Oct. 4-6. 2023. Sunday in the Park also begins in October.
- Paige Gagliano, Director of Development at the Manship Theatre. The theatre is going through a renovation after 18 years, all seats have been removed and will be replaced with new seats and cup holders. A local artist is designing a new carpet which will be installed very soon. Ms. Gagliano announced Southern Avenue (headlined the Blues Fest) will be performing on August 25 in the Hartley Vey Theatre. The opening of the Manship Theatre will be on September 28 with Tab Benoit. The Manship Theatre is having a “Sponsor a Seat Campaign”. A personalized engraved brass plaque will be attached to the seat of your choice (subject to availability) for a tax-deductible donation of \$1,000. Each personalized nameplate has space for 2 lines with a maximum of 30 characters.
- Charles Daniel, Geaux Ride, Glow the Dark Bikes, announced they have sponsored with Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome's Summer of Hope initiative. Every Sunday in September, between 7:30 PM – 9:30 PM, we offer free 30-minute rentals to everyone who registers online at www.GeauxRide.org. This free bike rental will give you a health and wellness break everyone deserves to jump-start their week right in beautiful downtown Baton Rouge. In addition, Geaux Ride will also partner with Mary Bird Perkins for a fundraiser in October.

10. Meeting Adjourned – Gary Jupiter moved to adjourn the meeting, Prescott Bailey seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.