

## **DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES**

December 12, 2023, 8:00 AM

Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center, Heidelberg Room, 200 Lafayette Street

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mr. Eric Dexter-Chairman, Mr. Prescott Bailey-Vice Chairman Mr. Patrick Michaels-Treasurer, Ms. Tara Titone, Mr. Joshua Hollins

**Absent:** Mr. Gary Jupiter-Secretary, Mr. Philip Jordan

**Others in Attendance:** Mary Jane Marcantel, David Kors, Holly Duchmann, Elise Tauzin, Bridget Gaffney, Brook Goodrich, Marty Enquist, Collin Lindew, Jason Langlois, Darlene Rowland, Jeffery Leuenberger, Major Jones, Tom Mackey, Mary Durusau, Danny McGlynn, Daniel Unda, Tat-Chi Lam, Jill Kidder, Robert Kidder, Dwight Green, Allie Schleter, Charles Daniel, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Morgan Lewis, Casey Tate

Whitney Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone and thanked everyone for attending. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal introduced Leslie Thompson, Hilton Director of Sales, welcomed everyone, and announced the Hilton's Santa Jingle Bell Brunch on Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup> from 11 AM - 2 PM. The Hilton Capitol Center is set to host a New Year's Eve party like none other, complete with Gatsby-esque glamour including photo ops with a 1935 Rolls Royce tickets are still available for both events.

1. Eric Dexter called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.
2. Joshua Hollins made a motion to approve the agenda, Tara Titone seconded, and the motion was approved.
3. Prescott Bailey motioned to approve the minutes from the November 14, 2023 meeting, Patrick Michaels seconded, and the motion was approved.

#### **4. Board Action:**

- **DDD Commission Meeting Cadence** – Eric Dexter stated the Commission will need to approve the meeting cadence for 2024. Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission stating this was part of the Strategic Plan and the DDD bylaws state a minimum of 4 meetings are required per year. DDD has been holding the meetings monthly, however, the Strategic Plan recommends spacing the meetings to hold Committee Meetings with DDD Commissioners and other organizations. Tara Titone motioned to approve the 2024 DDD Commission meeting cadence as presented, Joshua Hollins seconded, and the motion was adopted.

## 5. Governmental Issues:

- **Metro Council 2024 City-Parish Budget Approval** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission stating the City-Parish Annual Budget will be approved at a special meeting tonight, December 12, by the Metro Council.
- **MyBR App** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal announced the City of Baton Rouge has developed & launched the MyBR App. The app's focus is making city-parish services and information more readily available to residents of the city parish, including information like events, services, road closures, crime statistics, childcare & elderly services, online bill payments, and more.

## 6. Update from the Previous Board Meeting

- **Festival of Lights and Christmas Parade** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission. The Festival of Lights was held on Friday, December 1, and was well attended with Santa Claus, fireworks, activities for children, and the lighting of the Christmas Tree. The Christmas Parade was held on Saturday, December 9, in addition to a hockey game that night, so downtown was bustling with activity.
- **Downtown Retail Survey** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the Downtown Retail Survey which has been open for about a month and will close on Monday, December 18, and encouraged everyone to take the survey if you haven't taken it yet. About 325 responses to the survey have been received, she expects to review the full results at next month's DDD meeting. So far there is a large demand for more fine dining options downtown, and she is looking forward to seeing the rest of the results.

## 7. Development Initiatives:

- **LSU Landscape Architecture Riverfront Study** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, plans and renderings of the LSU Landscape Architecture Riverfront Study. Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated they have been working closely with LSU's Architectural Landscape Department and the 5th-year class did a study on the Downtown Baton Rouge Riverfront. The students studied the DDD's Riverfront Master Plans recommendations and used those recommendations to develop their own plans. A lot of the focus was on redefining these spaces making them more accessible, breaking the barriers to accessing the levee, and updating the design intent. They were divided into three groups, the southern portion where the Water Campus is located, the Riverfront Plaza, and the northern boundary near The Queen Casino. The DDD has these plans in the office if anyone is interested in looking at them.
- **Placer.ai** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal stated the DDD just recently secured a license to Placer.ai, a software company that she believes will help recruit businesses to locate downtown. The software uses cellphone data to understand pedestrian movement in a geographical location. The DDD will be able to have more defined event attendance and understand how many people are attending events, as well as general activity and destinations within downtown.

- **IDA Value Report** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the International Downtown Association (IDA) Value Report which was executed earlier this year. The IDA places downtowns into three categories, established, growing, and emerging. Downtown Baton Rouge is considered an “emerging downtown” however, has made a lot of progress but has room to grow. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal said Baton Rouge is comparable to Birmingham, Tulsa, and Cleveland’s downtown districts. One item from the study talked about the growing residential population downtown, and the DDD has been talking about the demand for living downtown being strong with new residential development in the Central Business District. Additional data from the report will be presented in the January or February meeting.
- **BRAAM Mural** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the Baton Rouge African American Museum now located at 805 St. Louis, which was once the recycling center. The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, pictures of wayfinding signage and murals painted on the side of the building to which DDD helped contribute.
- **Manship Theatre Executive Director** – Mrs. Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced Jason Langlois, as the new Executive Director of the Manship Theatre. Mr. Langlois stated they are going through transitions at the theatre and he will officially assume responsibility as the Executive Director in January. He has been with the Manship Theatre in different roles over the past 18 years and is looking forward to working with all the downtown neighbors.
- **Somewhere Neighborhood Bar** – Daniel Unda, owner, briefed the Commission on the opening of the Somewhere Neighborhood Bar, located in the former Boudreaux & Thibodeaux’s on Third Street. Mr. Unda said he has been part of downtown for the past 20 years, professionally and personally. He said the space will have a welcoming environment and fair prices and plans on opening on January 15, 2024.

## 8. Events -

Casey Tate updated the Commission on the following events:

- Red Stick Revelry – December 31<sup>st</sup> from 8:00 p.m. to Midnight
- Manship Theatre – Holiday Events
  - The Grinch Film Screening, December 21, 2:00 p.m.
  - Improve Comedy Night, December 22<sup>nd</sup> @ 7:30 p.m. @ Hartley Vey Theater
  - It’s a Wonderful Life Film, December 22<sup>nd</sup> @ 7:00 p.m.
- LSU MOA –
  - Andy Warhol “Friends & Frenemies” Pop Party, January 18<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 p.m.
- Capitol Park Museum – Film Screening: Tambou, December 14<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Old State Capitol –
  - Iconic JFK Moments – Through the Lens of Jacques Lowe, October 31<sup>st</sup> -December 21<sup>st</sup>
  - Political Parties and the Culture of Conventions, January 27<sup>th</sup> – December 15<sup>th</sup>
- River Center –
  - Last Baton Rouge Zydeco Hockey games this year, December 13 & 14 @ 7:30 p.m.
  - Ice Skating on the River, December 18 – December 31
- LASM – James Hood’s Beautifica, December 23 & 30 @ 5:30 p.m., 6:45 p.m., & 8:00 p.m.
- USS Kidd – Open Daily 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – First Saturdays of the month
- Red Stick Farmer’s Market – Every Saturday 8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated Main Street Market is undergoing renovations, however, the markets will continue to be held outdoors and in the Galvez Parking Garage.

#### **9. Commission Announcements & Updates:**

- Eric Dexter welcomed Jason Langlois as the Executive Director of the Manship Theatre. Mr. Dexter stated that as a past Board Member of the Theatre, he knows how hard he has worked over the years. He said he will do a great job as Executive Director and the community will benefit from his expertise. Mr. Dexter acknowledged and commended Melanie Couvillion, who was not present, for her years of service as the Executive Director since 2017. She will stay on as an advisor and assist with programming.

#### **10. Public Comment:**

- Tom Mackey with Cortana Kiwanis Club announced the 73<sup>rd</sup> annual Kiwanis Christmas Parade was held on December 9 in Downtown Baton Rouge. He would like everyone to direct any comments regarding the parade to him at [tmackey1@gmail.com](mailto:tmackey1@gmail.com). Mr. Mackey stated he would be meeting with the DDD Executive Director, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, in January 2024 to recap the parade, anything that needs to be addressed, any changes recommended, and work together to ensure Baton Rouge has the reputation for the best Christmas Parade in Louisiana.
- Mary Durusau, Director of the Old State Capitol, announced Christmas shopping at the Old State Capitol gift shop and at BRASS. Mrs. Durusau encouraged everyone to do some Christmas shopping downtown. She acknowledged Jill Kidder and Visit Baton Rouge for their success at the Travel South International trade show in Memphis. The Old State Capitol, Visit Baton Rouge, the Rural Life Museum, and several other attractions were able to attend. Baton Rouge was highlighted and sought after as a popular tourist destination by many of the attendees from around the world.
- Darlene Rowland wanted to confirm the Farmers and Arts Market will be open every Saturday in December for holiday shopping for Christmas and New Year. In the event of rain, the markets will move indoors to the Galvez parking garage.

**11. Meeting Adjourned** –Gary Jupiter moved to adjourn the meeting, Joshua Hollins seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.