

## **DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES**

December 13, 2022, 8:00 a.m.

Hilton Capitol Center, Heidelberg Ballroom

**Board Members in Attendance:** Ms. Melanie Montanaro-Chairwoman, Mr. Eric Dexter-Vice Chairman, Mr. Prescott Bailey-Secretary, Mr. Patrick Michaels

**Absent:** Mr. Jude Melville-Treasurer, Ms. Erin Monroe-Wesley, Mr. Scott Hensgens

**Others in Attendance:** Malorey Cutrer, David Kors, Rannha Gray, Debra Kastner, Karron Alford, James Taylor, Cindy Verdin, Colleen Rials, Caress Vanbuzee, Chris Chandler, Judy Foust, Chuck Booksh, Jeffery Leuenberger, Brian Ott, Marty Engquist, Sherri Lebds, Bradley Aldrich, Jill Kidder, Collin Lindrew, Anna Gasperecz, Caroline Byrne, Brandon Songy, Mary Durusau, Carolyn Coleman, T.C. Lam, Sarah Amacker, Brandon Weber, Rylea Deshautel, Stacy Simon, Nedra Harris, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Casey Tate, Ute Cress, Houston Tullis

Ms. Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone to the DDD Commission meeting and thanked, Leslie Director of Sales Marketing at Hilton Baton Rouge Capitol Center for hosting the meeting.

Ms. Thompson greeted and welcomed the Commission members and the audience to the Heidelberg Ballroom. She announced that after the DDD meeting, she will be conducting tours of the Tunnel which was currently renovated and it connects Hilton to the Indigo Hotel, previously the King Hotel. The Hilton will be hosting their first New Year's Eve event with a big band upstairs - Gatsby style and a DJ in the ballroom. They will also have a Jingle Bell Brunch with Santa on December 22 and next year they will be hosting a Murder Mysteries event.

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

2. Eric Dexter made a motion to approve the agenda, Prescott Bailey seconded and the motion was approved.

3. Eric Dexter made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, Patrick Michaels seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

#### **4. Updates from previous Board meeting:**

- **Sunken Ferry Model** - Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated Joey Coco, CEO, of Forte & Tablada attended last month's meeting and announced his firm was working to take a series of photographs and laser scans to create a 3-D model to provide a virtual experience that can now be viewed online at <https://forteandtablada.com/shipwreck>

- **Festival of Lights** – The Festival of Lights was held Friday, December 3 with ice skating, snow, music, vendors, and fireworks. Last Saturday the Kiwanis Club held their annual Christmas Parade downtown. Ms. Hoffman Sayal stated she was honored to be asked to be on the Mayor-President’s float and was a great family-oriented event.
- **Work Downtown, Play Downtown** – - Luke Lognion, BRASS by Circa 1857, updated the Commission on “Work Downtown, Play Downtown”. The program is to entice downtown workers to stay downtown after 5:00 PM by offering a special happy hour menu at participating bars, restaurants, and hotels along with a coupon to use the next day at a participating business that is not open at night. The happy hour menus are from 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM Monday through Friday. Two weeks ago, they placed posters in buildings and sandwich boards downtown with QR codes you can scan to find out the specials. They have had a total of 333 unique scans and 350 total, meaning some are scanning the QR codes twice. If all goes well, Mr. Lognion would like to extend the promotion to downtown residents. Additional information can be found at [workplaybr.com](http://workplaybr.com). Ms. Hoffman Sayal stated they have been working with the State to get more posters in State office buildings and is looking forward to having a working relationship with the State.

**5. Board Action:** Melanie Montanaro stated per the DDD bylaws the officers on the DDD Commission can only serve for two consecutive terms. Ms. Montanaro moved to appoint a nominating committee to select officers for the next year. They will be nominated and voted on at the January meeting and actually take office at that meeting. Ms. Montanaro moved to appoint, Eric Dexter, Prescott Bailey and Jude Melville to the nominating committee. They will meet, make selections and present the nominations to the board at the January meeting. Patrick Michaels seconded the motion, there was no opposition and the motion was approved.

**6. Governmental Issues:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission.

- **Town Square Media Beacon Funds Approved** – Funds were approved for the Town Square Media Beacon by the Metro Council. The beacon is a focal point of our Central Greenway and the North Boulevard Town Square. It is often used to play movies, football games, make announcements and promote other events. The beacon has not been working for a while, the screens are 10 years old and will be updated with better technology and resolution.
- **Short-Term Rental Ordinance** – The ordinance regarding short-term rentals has been approved by Metro Council. The ordinance states registration is required with the Parish for sales and occupancy taxes. There is a provision if there are three or more reported violations in a year, the owners could potentially lose their ability to rent. The section regarding whole-house conditional use permits was removed from the ordinance.
- **Spanish Town Condominiums** – The Historic Preservation approved the Certificate of Appropriateness for the planned 45-unit condo development. The next step will be to submit plans to the Permit Office.

- **Nightlife Noise** – Recently there have been some concerns regarding the nightlife noise downtown. Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated complaints are not unusual in downtown areas with multiple land uses in the area. The DDD is meeting and working with stakeholders and researching the best practices to mitigate the issues.

## 7. Development Initiatives:

- A. HNTB Downtown Office:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal announced that HNTB will be moving downtown to the River Mark Centre II on the twelfth floor occupying about 9,000 square feet. Bryan Jones with HNTB will attend a meeting in the near future.
- B. VBR Partnership:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission regarding the partnership with Visit Baton Rouge. The DDD and VBR are working to refurbish the concrete flower pots located on Third Street and Florida. The DDD is installing new plantings, soil, and mulch and VBR will help with the maintenance of the pots. Also, during the Fall, VBR had 9 buskers on Third in front of Starbucks on Friday afternoons; they will continue having the buskers in the Spring for 9 Fridays. DDD and VBR will continue to partner on other projects.
- C. I-10 Expansion** – The Commission viewed slides via PowerPoint of the construction of the I-10 expansion. James Taylor with Franklin Associates updated the Commission on the status of the project. DOTD has expanded Segment 1 of the I-10 Improvements to include the Acadian Thruway interchange. This expansion is estimated to save \$50 million for the project and shave off four years from the overall timeline. Once completed, there will be four travel lanes in each direction from the I-10/I-110 split to Acadian. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2023 with major lane restrictions beginning in 2024. The work on this first segment of the widening project will include reducing I-10 to two travel lanes in each direction for an estimated total of one year during the planned four-year construction of Segment 1 between the I-10/I-110 split to Acadian beginning in 2024. DOTD is working to mitigate the traffic issues resulting from the two-lane phasing of this segment by implementing projects on surface streets, such as restriping and signal modifications, and active signal management in the surrounding areas. DOTD will also be working with area industry, state agencies, and other businesses to determine a plan that will assist in alleviating high traffic volumes during peak hours such as flexible work schedules, rerouting traffic, and expanding Motorist Assistance Patrol coverage. Encourage State Agencies to message their employees to shop and dine locally. Additional information can be found on the project website at <https://i10br.com>. Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated the DDD office is working closely to help mitigate any impact on downtown. Alternate routes DOTD will be providing will be the surface streets. The DDD will be messaging that information on how to get downtown without using the interstate from various parts of the Parish. The DDD will also help with the messaging of shop local, dine local, and working to create a list of downtown restaurants that are interested in catering to state offices working downtown. One of the recommendations of

the original Down Greenway was the connection of the I-10 Greenway that will link the existing Downtown Greenway pedestrian and bicycle paths network to the soon-to-be improved bicycle and pedestrian pathways around the University Lakes.

**D. Street Closures** - Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the following street closures:

- 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Florida and Laurel Streets 12-14 thru 1-8 for demolition of the existing skylight.
- Lafayette Street – North Boulevard and Convention Street for storm drain repairs on 1-3-22.
- MOVEBR Florida Street ADA Compliance project notice to proceed issued on January 3.

Rannah Gray stated Triumph Construction will try to sequence the work with all the Mardi Gras parade routes and other events so those won't be disrupted. There will be some inconveniences with the sidewalk improvements that will affect entrances to garages and driveways. Please contact her if there are any issues that need to be addressed.

**E. Canvas Trip Followup** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the BRAC Canvas trip to Greenville, SC. Many participants of the trip reconvened after Thanksgiving to discuss moving forward and what was learned from the trip. Ms. Hoffman Sayal stated there were four topic tables, one of which she was pleased to facilitate, The Downtown Development and Planning table. The other tables were: Inclusive Redevelopment and Affordable Quality Housing, Workforce Development, Education and Talent Support, and a Quality of Life Investment. Emergent Method will be combining all the conversations and put out the learning objectives from those discussions.

**F. Red Stick Revelry** – Rannah Gray announced the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Red Stick Revelry New Year's Eve Celebration sponsored by BankPlus for the past two years.

The schedule for the evening is as follows:

Red Stick Rising 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. in Town Square

A New Year's tradition for children of all ages, art activities, stilt walker - the Amazing Bacon, community sing-along of Auld Lang Syne when the Red Stick is raised at noon to 60 feet above Town Square. At 8:00 p.m. live music on the Crest Stage by Shaun Ward Xperience; at 9:30 p.m. Phat Hat till Midnight.

Additional information can be found at [redstickrevelry.com](http://redstickrevelry.com) and at [visitbatonrouge.com](http://visitbatonrouge.com)

**8. Events -**

Mr. Tate updated the Commission on the following downtown events:

- Red Stick Revelry – 10<sup>th</sup> Annual NYE Celebration, January 31<sup>st</sup>
- MPAC – Cary Saurage Center for the Arts, January 12<sup>th</sup>
- Manship Theatre – The Hillbenders, January 6<sup>th</sup>
- LSU MOA – Art at Lunch, December 13<sup>th</sup>

- Capital Park Museum – First Sunday of the Month – Free Administration, January 1st
- Old State Capitol – The Boggs Family Legacy through December 13
- River Center – Ice Hockey Returns December 15<sup>th</sup> and January 2<sup>nd</sup>
- River Center – Ice Skating on the River, December 16<sup>th</sup> – January 3<sup>rd</sup>
- River Center Events – The Nutcracker – A Tale from the Bayou, December 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>
- River Center Events – Cirque Musica – Holiday Wonderland, December 29<sup>th</sup>
- LASM – Mesmerica
- USS Kidd – Fur, Feathers, and Fidelity: Military Mascots Open Daily 9:30 AM-3:30 PM
- Red Stick Farmer’ Market – Every Saturday, Corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Main Streets
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – Every First Saturday in December, Corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Main Streets

Malorey with the Red Stick Farmers Market announced this next Saturday will be the last Saturday of the year for the Farmers Market & Arts Market. They will be closed on December 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. To compensate for that they are ramping up the Thursday Markets on December 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

**9. Commission Announcements & Updates:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced and welcomed the DDD’s student Intern, Houston Tullis.

- Melanie Montanaro stated she is the DDD’s representative for Beauregard Town and wanted to point out an interesting article that was in the Advocate regarding Beauregard Town’s neighborhood history and the history of the diagonal streets. If you are interested in reading the article it was in the Advocate on November 13<sup>th</sup> by staff writer George Morris.
- Eric Dexter mentioned in January the DDD Commission will have a nominating committee to elect new officers and wanted to thank Melanie Montanaro for leading the Commission for the past two years. The DDD Commission has been through some tough times with the passing of Davis Rhorer and a search for a new DDD Executive Director and Melanie led them through it.

**10. Public Comment:**

- Ben Taylor addressed the subject of the State employees working from home and not contributing to the downtown economy. Ms. Hoffman Sayal stated downtowns around the country are feeling the struggle of work-at-home employees. The DDD has been in conversation with the State and figuring out how to mitigate any impact of that on downtown.
- Luke Longion wanted to reiterate the point made regarding the 1-10 expansion about shopping locally. There are many places to shop downtown such as the gift shops at the museums and local gift shops such as Brass which supports the local Baton Rouge economy.

- Chris Chandler with American Millennium Project announced he does local history tours of downtown Baton Rouge – The Seven Wonders of Downtown Baton Rouge. He is working with the school system to provide the tours if anyone would like to sponsor any of the schools.
- Whitney Hoffman Sayal acknowledged and welcomed Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman and the Baton Rouge Police Department to the DDD meeting.

**11. Meeting Adjourned** – Eric Dexter moved to adjourn the meeting, Prescott Bailey seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.