

DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

January 10, 2023, 8:00 AM

Louisiana Association Business & Industry (LABI), 500 Main Street

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

Absent: Ms. Melanie Montanaro-Chairwoman, Mr. Jude Melville-Treasurer

Others in Attendance: Wayne Hodes, Rannah Gray, Officer Brandon Blust, Willie Turner, David Kors, Marie Constantin, Estuardo Silva, Chris Chandler, Mary Durusau, Keith Horn, Jacob Haynes, Chuck Booksh, Gary Jupiter, Marty Engquist, Justin Lemoine, Nedra Hains, Charles Daniel, Luke Lognion, Glenn Curtis, Adrienne Kors Horn, Kevin Broussard, Jeffery Leuenberger, Colleen Rials, Devon Harris, Danielle Harris, Greg Langley, Jake Polansky, Judy Foust, Sarah Nichols, Pam Bordelon, Leslie Ricard Chambers, Laurie Mitchell, Darlene Rowland, Mark Armstrong, Samantha Custer, Stephen Waguespack, Casey Tate, Ute Cress, Morgan Lewis

Whitney Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone to the DDD Commission meeting and thanked LABI for hosting the meeting.

1. Eric Dexter called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.
2. Patrick Michaels made a motion to approve the agenda, Prescott Bailey seconded and the motion was approved.
3. Prescott Bailey made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 13, 2022 meeting, Patrick Michaels seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

Ms. Hoffman Sayal introduced Mayor Broome's newly appointed CAO, Glenn Curtis. Mr. Curtis greeted the Commission and the audience. He stated the Mayor's priorities are his priorities and that he and Whitney have had some discussions regarding the DDD and how important the downtown is to the economic development of Baton Rouge; his purpose is to try and solve problems and make them better. Mr. Curtis stated if you need him, call his office to set up an appointment, he is willing to meet with anyone on any subject

4. Updates from previous Board meeting:

- **Red Stick Revelry Recap** – Rannah Gray briefed the Commission on the 10th Annual Red Stick Revelry, the New Year's Eve event. It was a well-attended, safe, family-friendly event. Red Stick Rising was held in Town Square, a New Year's tradition for children of all ages, the Red Stick was raised at noon to 60 feet above Town Square. The River Branch Library had art activities, there

was a stilt walker - the Amazing Bacon, and a community sing-along of Auld Lang Syne. At 8:00 p.m. live music on the Crest Stage by Shaun Ward Xperience and at 9:30 p.m. and Phat Hat till Midnight. At midnight the Red Stick Ball was dropped followed by fireworks over the Mississippi River.

5. Board Action: Eric Dexter presented the nomination of the 2023 DDD Officers: Eric Dexter-Chairman, Jude Melville – Vice Chair, Prescott Bailey-Treasurer, Patrick Michaels-Secretary. A motion was made by Scott Hensgens to approve the slate of officers, Prescott Bailey seconded the motion, there was no opposition and the motion was approved.

6. Governmental Issues: None

7. Development Initiatives:

- A. 2022 DDD Yearbook:** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, an image of the DDD’S 2022 Yearbook. Ms. Hoffman Sayal stated the 2022 Yearbook has been completed and each Commissioner has received a copy. The yearbook will be placed on the DDD website and an email will be sent out this week so it can be viewed digitally. The yearbook format has changed a bit, highlighting the 2022 projects that have been going on, a new business highlight, future projects, and some of the things the DDD is working on. In addition, the boundaries of the DDD are in the yearbook for context, and a timeline of the DDD showing how it has transitioned from when it was established to the present. Everyone was encouraged to view the yearbook on the DDD web page.
- B. DDD Strategic Plan:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the DDD Strategic Plan. The DDD Strategic Plan is a 5-year strategic planning process to begin in February. The DDD has contracted with LaFargue, LLC a local planning consultant. The goal is to have a collaborative effort with input from the stakeholders so the strategic plan is community driven. Committees will be formed with stakeholder groups for discussion and a survey will be sent out for public input, in addition, all the past DDD master plans will be reviewed for the status of the projects. The difference between the master and strategic plans is, a master plan is a blueprint for specific projects that are recommended and a strategic plan directs the office.
- C. BRAC Economic Outlook 2023** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, slides of the 2023 BRAC Economic Outlook. Jake Polansky, Manager of Economic Policy with BRAC gave a summary of BRAC’S Economic Outlook for 2023. The construction sector is poised for a big comeback next year, an expected industrial expansion has engineering firms busy with front-end project work and construction firms swamped by bid-prep demands, workforce needs are expected to be of greatest importance to business owners heading into 2023. There is an increase in population growth and a steady increase is expected through 2025, however, the region saw a net loss of residents aged 25-34. Growing higher education enrollment, along with rising wages and abundant job openings, presents opportunities to retain young talent. The region continues to add jobs, though it remains short of pre-pandemic levels. However, more people are working, in part because of an increase in self-employment,

and the unemployment rate is historically low. Ms. Hoffman Sayal stated downtown is a critical piece of retaining our young talent.

At this point, Ms. Hoffman Sayal introduced Mr. Stephen Waguespack, CEO of LABI. Mr. Waguespack welcomed everyone to LABI and thanked the DDD for hosting the meeting at their building. Mr. Waguespack stated they have been downtown now for three years and have loved every minute of it and thanked those that have made downtown the welcoming place that it is. LABI hosts many events and have gotten great feedback regarding the downtown experience. If there is any way LABI can be a helpful partner to promote downtown, they are willing to help.

- D. Capitol Lakes Cleanup** - Mr. Keith Horn, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, briefed the Commission on the Capitol Lakes Cleanup project. The lakes have long been contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls or PCBs — toxic chemicals. EPA contractors collected sediment and fish samples from the lakes indicating the presence of PCBs at concentrations above the human food chain cancer risk benchmark. Signs were posted around the lakes warning against any consumption of fish from the lakes or any contact with the waters or sediments. The EPA notified LDEQ that the preliminary Hazard Ranking System Score for the Capitol Lakes site was enough to qualify it for inclusion on the National Priorities List. Gov. John Bel Edwards sent a letter to the EPA to classify Capitol Lakes as a Superfund site to make them eligible for federal cleanup, oversight, and funding. Mr. Horn stated that this process could take years.
- E. Origin Hotel** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, of a rendering of the Origin Hotel. Ms. Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the status of the proposed construction of the former Holiday Inn Express located at the corner of St. Ferdinand and North Boulevard. Construction will be soon with an anticipated opening date in the third quarter of this year. The hotel will be an upscale boutique-style hotel. The developer, Trash Group, plans on having a representative available to speak at the next meeting to give a more detailed update.
- F. River Center Update** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, slides of updates to the River Center, Mr. Wayne Hodes, General Manager, updated the Commission. Mr. Hodes stated the River Center is offering a diverse slate of programming to help attract visitors. In addition to these events, the River Center will be hosting 11 Mardi Gras balls beginning this month through February. The three hockey games that were held in December and January were a huge success with over 21,000 attendees. The River Center is in discussions with the hockey league and team, to potentially bring a hockey franchise to Baton Rouge; having a team would bring in 30 full-time jobs, part-time jobs, and additional tax revenue. In October, the EBR Metro Council approved \$2.3 million for capital improvements to the River Center. Mr. Hodes stated these funds are going towards upgrading the facility including upgrades on security, new LED scoreboard lights, infrastructure updates such as video cameras, a new basketball court, and updating the locker shower rooms, all of which will enhance the sporting events; these items are in the bidding process. Other items have been completed such as deep cleaning and power

washing, new arena stair railings, and restroom upgrades. In progress are the arena/ballroom roofing project, new arena entry doors, ballroom carpet, and new softer seating. A facility market study is underway to determine what additional improvements need to be made to attract more trade shows and conferences.

- G. Capitol Grocery Update** – Devon Harris, new owner, briefed the Commission on acquiring the Capitol Grocery located at Spanish Town Road. Mr. Harris stated he was the chef for about 4 months prior to purchasing the building. Plans are to paint the building and upgrade and enhance the outside in keeping with Spanish Town regulations. His goal is to bring another full-service grocery store downtown and looking forward to enhancing downtown.

8. Events -

Casey Tate commended Rannah Gray on all her hard work and the success of Red Stick Revelry. Mr. Tate updated the Commission on the following downtown events:

- MPAC, Arts Council of Greater Baton Rouge – January 12, 7:00-10:00 PM
- Live After Five Lagniappe – Rhorer Plaza, January 13-14, 5:00 -7:00 PM
- Louisiana Marathon Weekend – January 13-15, Finish Fest-AZ Young Park
- Life March South– State Capitol to Town Square, January 21 @ 10:00 AM
- Manship Theatre – Hair Band Ball featuring Mullett, Thursday, February 2
- LSU MOA – Art at Lunch: The Historic European Grand Tour Tradition, January 24 @ 12 PM
- LSU MOA – Artist Talk with Kevin Benham, Friday, January 27
- Capital Park Museum – Lunchtime Lagniappe: South Baton Rouge, Consent in the Presence of Force, Sensory Friendly Mardi Gras Celebration, Discover Day-MLK Day
- Old State Capitol – Will Reopen Tuesday, January 27
- River Center – Earthquake-Comedian -, January 24
- River Center – Shen Yun Performing Arts, January 21
- LASM – Mesmerica, January 7, 14 and 28
- 2023 Baton Rouge Mardi Gras Parades:
 - CAAWS Mystic Krewe of Mutts – Sunday, February 5
 - Krewe of Artemis – Friday, February 20
 - Krewe of Mystique de la Capitale – Saturday, February 11
 - Krewe of Orion – Saturday, February 11
 - Spanish Town – Saturday, February 18
- USS Kidd – Open Daily 9:30 AM-3:30 PM
- Red Stick Farmer’s Market – Every Saturday, Corner of 5th and Main Streets
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – Every First Saturday of the Month, Corner of 5th and Main Streets

9. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- Ms. Hoffman Sayal acknowledged Commissioner Erin Monroe Wesley for her 3 years of service to the Commission; Ms. Wesley’s term will end this month. Ms. Hoffman Sayal presented Ms. Wesley with a plaque for her term years and thanked her for her dedication and support.

10. Public Comment:

- Mr. Luke Lognion, BRASS, updated the Commission on Work Downtown, Play Downtown. Mr. Lognion is working with Visit Baton Rouge to expand the program to anyone attending conventions downtown, they just need to show their conference credentials to be able to get the discounts. Plans are to expand the program soon to downtown residents, providing proof of residence or possibly a Work Downtown, Play Downtown card. The first conference able to utilize the program is the Louisiana Marathon.
- Marie Constantin, Stormwater Coalition, spoke on behalf of the Capitol Lakes project. She stated don't be alarmed that it is being deemed a Superfund site. Capitol Lakes is perhaps one of the most stunning real estate properties in the city. Think of the project in two parts; Part A is the city's untreated storm drains that are delivering 41 bags of litter onto the shores of the lake and Part B is what DEQ will be doing on the bottom of the lake with the PCB's. Presently we are doing our winter cleanup and have picked up over 2000 bags of litter, 344 tires, a couch, and two toilets. She expressed support for the Capitol Lakes projects, recognizing that the projects will take time and effort.
Ms. Hoffman Sayal recognized Ms. Constantin for her work with the Stormwater Coalition and all the clean-up work she has done around the Capitol Lakes.
- Rannah Gray gave an update on the Florida Street ADA improvements, a MOVEBR project, to improve access to Florida Street downtown, which will have some bus rapid transit bus stops. The ADA improvements are primarily sidewalks, crossings, etc. A notice to proceed was issued on January 3 to Triumph Construction. Work is getting underway and they are working with them to sequence the work. Work is starting on the east side at the Convention and 7th Street intersection. Next week sidewalks will be removed and work will continue on down to 6th and 5th Streets, hopefully avoiding any problems with the parade routes. If there are any problems or issues, they can be reached through the MOVEBR website <https://movebr.brla.gov/>, please leave your comments and you will be contacted.
- Nedra Hains, Deputy Director, LSUMOA updated the Commission on the Executive Director search. They have a Search Committee, the position has been posted, and applications are being received. If anyone knows of a museum professional please direct them to LSU.edu. Human Resources, job applications.

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