

# DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

January 9th, 2024

The Estuary at the Water Campus

**Board Members in Attendance:** Mr. Eric Dexter-Chairman, Mr. Patrick Michaels-Treasurer, Mr. Gary Jupiter, Ms. Tara Titone, Mr. Joshua Hollins, Mr. Philip Jordan

**Absent:** Mr. Prescott Bailey – Vice Chairman

**Others in Attendance:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Casey Tate, Morgan Lewis, Ute Cress, Tim Boone, Mary Jane Marcantel, Luke Lognion, Colleen Rials, Judy Foust, Angela deGraveles, MaKenzie Brown, Brooke Goodrich, Landon Hester, Gary Black, Bridget Gaffney, Samantha Morgan, Laurie Mitchell, Anthony Kimble, Beaux Jones, Jill Kidd, Edwin Beraud, Tat Chi Lam, Asa Faulkner, Chuck Booksh, Caroline Cassagne, Collin Lindrew, Jeffery Leuenberger, Anne Mahoney, Jason Langlois, Pam Bordelon, Charles Daniel, Allie Schleter, Kendra Hendricks, Barbara Freiberg, Jake Loach

Whitney Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone to the Water Campus Estuary Room and thanked everyone for attending.

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. Joshua Hollins motioned to approve the minutes from the December 12, 2023 meeting, Gary Jupiter seconded, and the motion was approved.

#### 4. Board Action:

- **DDD Commission Nominating Committee** – Eric Dexter presented the DDD Commission Nominating Committee for this year's officers and Board members. Mr. Dexter nominated the following, Chairman, Eric Dexter; Vice Chairman, Prescott Bailey and Treasurer, Patrick Michaels. A motion was made by Joshua Hollins and seconded by Gary Jupiter to approve the nominating committee and the motion was approved.

#### 5. Governmental Issues:

- **Metro Council 2024 City-Parish Budget Approval** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission stating the City-Parish Annual Budget was approved at a special meeting on December 12, 2023, by the Metro Council.

## 6. Update from the Previous Board Meeting

- **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 will help recruit businesses to locate downtown. The software uses cellphone data to understand pedestrian movement in a geographical location. The DDD will also have more defined event attendance and understand how many people are attending events, as well as general activity and destinations within downtown. The program can distinguish different groups such as residents, visitors, and workers. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal showed a slide, via PowerPoint, of data for the number of unique visitors visiting downtown for the following events:
  - Festival of Lights – 48.2K (11.9K in Town Square and River Center Areas)
  - Christmas Parade – 51.8K
  - Red Stick Revelry – 49.5K

The median time of stay during these events is 2.5 hours and more than half of the visitors are coming from their homes.

- **617 North Boulevard** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the demolition of a former bank building located at 617 North Boulevard. Demolition is ongoing and Key Real Estate and John O. Hearin, plan on building a six-story apartment building with approximately 200 units, dubbed the Heron II. The development may include a retail component such as units that serve as a live-work space.

## 7. Development Initiatives:

- **2023 Downtown Development Yearbook** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal presented the Commissioners with the 2023 Downtown Development Yearbook for their review. The following are some of the highlights of 2023:
  - The Queen Baton Rouge – Completed in Fall 2023, \$85 million investment
  - The Belle of Baton Rouge – Approval to move the casino land-side, \$100 million renovation
  - Lincoln Theatre – Construction plans completed by Frank Lassiter, Architect
  - Rivermark Centre – Rivermark I (Mixed-Use) and Rivermark II (Office Space)
  - Heron II – 625 Convention Street
  - Hotel Indigo Renovations – Completion date is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2024
  - Origin Hotel - \$10 million renovation; to be completed the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2024
  - Manship Theatre Renovations – Updated carpet and seating in the main stage area
  - LASM Dome Lighting – 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fundraising Campaign for dome
  - Louisiana Avenue Connector – New signage, ADA and bicycle access
  - ADA Improvements – Part of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects. Upgrading curb ramps and audible crosswalks to stops along the route at Convention & Florida.
  - Baton Rouge African American Museum – Moved to a new location at the old recycling center at 805 St. Louis. The Walls Project painted a mural and wayfinding on the new facility, which the DDD contributed.

The 2023 Yearbook also includes upcoming 2024 projects and plans as well as other DDD initiatives such as highlights of the Strategic Plan and some of the recognitions DDD received. The yearbook can be viewed online at <https://downtownbatonrouge.org/about-ddd/projects-news-room/2024/2023-development-yearbook>.

- **Retail Survey Results** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the downtown retail survey; approximately 500 responses were received. The survey identified workers, residents, or a combination of both. The following breaks down the results:
  - Frequent Matherne’s Market on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street - 49.3% of residents more than once a week; 28% of workers frequent one to two times per month.
  - Dining frequency of sit-down, full-service dining downtown – 44.4% of residents - one to two times per month, and 41% of workers - one to two times per month.
  - Meals to go – 30.6% of residents, one to two times per month. 26% of workers – one to two times a month.
  - Frequent times to eat/order – 66.7% of residents after 4 PM; 62% of workers from noon to 4 PM and 68% of visitors after 4 PM
  - Frequented businesses – Nighttime bar or lounge – 40.35% of residents one to two times per month; 42% of workers one to two times per month
  - Which business would you patronize:
    - Fine dining restaurant
    - International Cuisine
    - Bakery
    - Clothing Store
    - Healthy Food Restaurant
    - Ice cream/yogurt shop
    - Family Entertainment
- **Third Street Lighting Upgrades** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the lighting upgrades. Part of the strategic plan was to upgrade the lighting downtown. The City-Parish in conjunction with Entergy upgraded the lights on Third Street to LED fixtures from North Boulevard to North Street.
- **Town Square Landscape Refurbishment** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. The Department of Maintenance and Building and Grounds recently refurbished the landscaping of Galvez Plaza, North Boulevard, and Town Square, the spaces were created in 2012 and needed landscape refurbishment.
- **Louisiana Avenue/14<sup>th</sup> Street Improvements** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission. The second phase of the Louisiana & 14<sup>th</sup> Street improvements for handicap ramps and crosswalks has begun and we expect the project to be completed soon.
- **Water Institute President & CEO** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal introduced Beaux Jones, the newly appointed President and CEO of the Water Institute of the Gulf. Mr. Jones welcomed everyone to the DDD meeting and the Estuary Room at the Water Campus. They currently have 35

employees working there, however, approximately 80 employees work in 17 states across the country, due to COVID. The goals of the Water Institute are:

- a. Improve our collective understanding of natural and Human aspects of coastal, riverine, and urban water management systems.
- b. Develop methods, models, and tools to aid in the restoration of communities and ecosystems.
- c. Reduce the risk for habitats, people, and infrastructure.

One of the challenges to figure out is “compound flooding” due to storm surge, a high water table, and a heavy rain event. The city of Jacksonville, Florida reached out to the Water Institute to help adequately prepare for current and future flood challenges. The Water Institute with partners Deltares, Halff, UCF Coastal, and Princeton University are developing a probabilistic compound flood modeling framework specifically tailored to Jacksonville’s flood rivers and its natural and built environment. Once they can figure it out in Jacksonville, they plan on bringing it to Louisiana.

## 8. New Businesses:

- **The Garden House** – The Garden House, located at 705 St. Joseph Street is a new event venue in the heart of Beauregard Town. The Garden House was a 1940s grocery store that has been renovated for work/living space short-term rentals and events.
- **121 Convention** – The Hilton Capitol Center recently acquired 121 Convention a new event venue adjacent to the Hilton hotel.

## 8. Events -

Casey Tate updated the Commission on the following events:

- MPAC – Thursday, January 11 @ 7 PM, Cary Saurage Community Arts Center
- Louisiana Marathon – Saturday, January 13 – Sunday, January 14
- Right to Life March – Saturday, January 20, 10:00 AM – Capitol Grounds to Town Square
- Mardi Gras Parades
  - CAAWS Mystic Krewe of Mutts, January 28, 2:00 PM
  - Krewe of Artemis, February 2, 2024, 7:00 PM
  - Krewe of Mystique De La Capitale, February 3, 2:00 PM
  - Krewe of Orion, February 3, 6:30 PM
  - Krewe of Spanish Town, February 10, 12:00 PM
  - Baton Rouge Mardi Gras Festival, February 10, 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Manship Theatre – Born to Fly (LSU Athlete Mondo Duplantis) January 25, 7:30 PM
- LSU MOA – Andy Warhol's “Friends & Frenemies” Pop Party
- Capitol Park Museum
  - Lunchtime Lagniappe, January 10
  - After Hours Lecture Series: Spanish Town History, January 23 & 24
- Old State Capitol – Closed for cyclical maintenance December 23 – January 15
- River Center
  - El Debarge & Friends, February 14, 7:30 PM
  - Cirque Du Soleil Corteo, February 22-25, 7:30 PM
  - Celtic Woman, February 24, 7:30 PM
  - Come From Away, February 25, 7:00 PM

- Zydeco Hockey, February 29, 7:30 PM
- LASM – “The Seed” Grand Opening, Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 AM
- USS Kidd – Veterans Museum Open Daily from 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.

**9. Commission Announcements & Updates:** Eric Dexter recognized Renee Chatelain, former President/CEO at the Arts Council of Baton Rouge, for her years of service. She has been a dedicated servant to Downtown Baton Rouge, the Arts Council, and the Manship Theatre.

**10. Public Comment:**

- Pam Bordelon with the Arts Council announced the MPAC Gala this Thursday, January 11, 7:00 PM, at the Cary Saurage Community Arts Center. The event will be a Met Gala, honoring Tina Turner. Today only, tickets are buy one get one free and can be purchased at their website, <https://www.artsbr.org/mpac>  
Ms. Bordelon introduced Luke Lognion of BRASS, who will be the new managing Director of the Baton Rouge Arts Market, (BRAM). Mr. Lognion stated that BRAM has been around for 20+ years and he is excited to take it over and make some changes. Beginning in February, there will be an artist's hospitality tent, a high school artist area for students, a consistent live music component, and lastly a kid’s crafting table.
- Asa Faulkner, Director of the Louisiana Sportsman Show, announced the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Louisiana Sportsman Show on March 1-3 at the River Center, the largest hunting and fishing show in the south. They have partnered with the Zydeco Hockey team and they will be wearing camouflage jerseys for their games that weekend. Additional information can be found at <https://www.louisianasportsmanshow.com>

Eric Dexter acknowledged Representative Freiberg in attendance.

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