

DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

July 11, 2023, 8:00 AM

Kean Miller, 400 Convention Street, Ste 700

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

Absent: Mr. Jude Melville-Vice Chairman, Mr. Scott Hensgens

Others in Attendance: Carmen McLain, Luke Lognion, Jason Crain, Mayor Sharon Weston Broome, Fred Raiford, Andrian Owen Jones, Sarah Nicholls, Jacob Loveland, Cheri Soileau, Malorey Uzee Cutrer, Colleen Rials, Serena Pandos, Charles Daniel, Councilwoman Carolyn R. Coleman, Mike Bruce, Sarah Amacker, Darlene Rowland, Wayne Hodes, Liz Fussell, Joshua Frederick, Mack Gregorie, Chuck Booksh, Mary Jane Marcantel, Anne Mahoney, Alex Ruch, Steve Bontwell, Kay Harris, Deanna Wallace, Timothy Moore, John Snow, Kenny Nguyen, Spencer Evans, Rannah Gray, Anna Gasperez Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Morgan Lewis, Casey Tate, Ute Cress.

1. Eric Dexter called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.

Mr. Dexter introduced Mack Gregorie with Kean Miller. Mr. Gregorie greeted everyone and stated Kean Miller is pleased to host the DDD meeting. Kean Miller opened their offices in downtown Baton Rouge and has grown to seven offices in two states. Mr. Gregoire stated this office will always be their flagship with 250 employees, supporting downtown, the DDD, and everyone attending.

2. Mr. Gary Jupiter made a motion to approve the agenda Melanie Montanaro seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

3. Melanie Montanaro made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 9 meeting, Gary Jupiter seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

4. Updates from previous Board meeting:

- **Strategic Plan** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the status of the DDD Strategic Plan. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal stated they have just completed the final workshop and will be working on the draft plan with the goal of the plan being presented to the DDD Commission for approval in September.
- **Storefront Initiative** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on a partnership the DDD has with the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC). Mrs. Hoffman Sayal stated the contract has been finalized, the project has started and the DDD is working with Joshua Combs from BRAC. BRAC is collecting an inventory of the downtown vacant storefronts. They will be putting together roundtable discussions regarding the issues related to this, and develop

strategies to overcome these barriers. They will then actively recruit some businesses to come downtown for retail.

5. Governmental Issues:

- **HSR1 – Representative Barbara Freiberg** – Whitney Hoffman updated the Commission on a request presented by Representative Freiberg to the House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs. The request is for a study of the prevalence of remote work among state employees and to investigate the impact of such work on the local economy then report its findings to the House of Representatives before the end of January 2024.
- **HB483** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on HB483 presented by Representatives Magee and Knox to amend the rehabilitation tax credit of historic structures. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal stated the Kress Building was one of the structures to utilize this tax credit, which was very influential in turning around downtown. The tax credit was extended to January 2029 and the tax credit increased from 20% to 25%.

6. Development Initiatives:

- **2023 Development Toolkit** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal presented the 2023 Development Toolkit to the Commission Board members. The toolkit is used by developers, business owners, and anyone interested in knowing what’s happening downtown and the data around it. The Development Toolkit is available to view online at www.downtownbatonrouge.org. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal pointed out some highlights in the toolkit, via a PowerPoint presentation:
 - Investment continues with 29 active projects, an increase in residential projects
 - Map showing the major development projects
 - Chart showing the downtown construction activity from in 2017-2022
 - Downtown commercial activity continues to increase with a total of 671 businesses
 - Worker profile of the 30,384 daily workers, earnings, and education
 - Increase of office space, cost of square foot, and occupancy
 - Demand for living downtown continues with increased investment in residential
 - Chart showing the age, race, and household earnings
 - Map highlighting & describing downtown character areas and neighborhoods
 - Downtown has seven hotels, 1178 rooms, and \$117 million in hotel investment since 2010
 - Raising Cane’s River Center, activities, events attendees, and sales tax collected 2018-2022
 - Other resources for those interested in locating, living, or working downtown: economic incentives, development partners and contacts, Planning Commission, permitting & building codes, project appendix, and DDD reference maps
- **Raising Canes River Center** – Wayne Hodes, General Manager, briefed the Commission on the River Center’s upcoming events & on approved Capital Projects. Mr. Hodes announced several upcoming events for July – October. The “Capital Classic” when LSU plays Grambling and

Southern plays Jackson State is being held on September 9. The River Center has 4 different genres of bands in two weeks to help ultimately promote that week leading up to the football games. Fall is when events typically ramp up; there will be several additional announcements for events to be held at the River Center Theatre as well as in the Arena. Mr. Hodes pointed out that in October the Hardy and Lainey Wilson concert is currently a sold-out event, however, they plan on releasing additional tickets. The new hockey team will host its first game on October 26.

Mr. Hodes stated the Metro Council has approved funding for upgrades in 2024 to the River Center. Currently, a new scoreboard is being installed by the funding approved last year. The scoreboard will be utilized by hockey games, basketball games, gymnastics meets, wrestling competitions, all sporting events, concerts, and comedy events. Additional upgrades include retractable telescopic seating, kitchen equipment, portable bars, banquet equipment, ballroom painting & portable dance floor, a new exterior digital sign on St. Louis Street, a new area sound mixer, repair electrical floor boxes in the exhibition hall, and ballroom, dedicated emergency generator, handrails for arena 100 level, and a hockey penalty box, benches, and a coaches walk. Mr. Hodes presented the hockey schedule, beginning October 26 through April 13; the vast majority of the home games will fall on the weekends. Mr. Hodes announced there will be a press release later this week to announce the name of the hockey team and logo.

- **Assembly Required** – The Commission viewed a PowerPoint presentation by Kenny Nguyen, Curator of Assembly Required, on the event and introduced Adrian Jones, Co-Curator. Assembly Required is a non-profit conference series in Baton Rouge that brings together diverse communities over topics that can transform the city. Mr. Nguyen stated the first event of the year was “Creative Capital” and said he believes Baton Rouge can become the creative capital of the south. Baton Rouge has all the right pieces, institutions, people, food, and culture if only we work on them together. The second event held was “The Future of Talent”, it brought together people talking about the area's most precious resource, our talent. Based on BRAF stats, 51% of parents want their children to leave East Baton Rouge, up 2% from previous years. Imagine where Baton Rouge can be if we kept our best and brightest and recruit the right people within our city. Mr. Nguyen showed a Business Report article on what Tulsa, Oklahoma is doing to attract and retain talent. In 2018, Tulsa Remote, with backing from a local foundation, began offering \$10,000 grants to selected remote workers who commit to moving to Tulsa for a least a year. A thriving downtown is the epicenter of a city, a place where bridges are met and where all the different communities can come together. That’s where innovation happens, that’s why it is so important to invest in downtown. Mr. Nguyen’s main message is “Why not us”, we have the ingredients, all the pieces and parts to assemble to make this city great. The next Assembly Required event is on September 21st, “How to Build an Uncommon Brand”.

Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated she does believe downtown is the bridge to bring all people together, we have what it takes to get there, especially with the creative talent we have. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal welcomed Mayor Sharon Weston Broome to the meeting. Mayor Broome will

be speaking on MOVEBR and will hold a ribbon cutting after the meeting at one of the completed intersections nearby, making downtown more accessible.

- **Downtown Greenway/Louisiana Avenue** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the Louisiana Connector that connects the Government Street bike lanes to the Downtown Greenway at T.J. Jemison. Mrs. Hoffman Sayal showed a slide, via PowerPoint, of the ongoing construction and stated concrete will be poured very soon, and the project is to be completed by the end of August.
- **Royal Engineering** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the relocation of Royal Engineering’s offices to North Boulevard bringing approximately 15-20 employees downtown. The office will become the primary hub of its coastal science services.
- **Recent Opening** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on several new business openings downtown.
 - Belli Café & Grocery (formerly Capitol Grocery) located at 701 Spanish Town Road, will hold its grand opening on July 15.
 - Dark30 a bar serving craft cocktails opened at 151 Third Street. Wine, beer, and liquor options were selected with the idea of giving back to the community.
 - Mother’s Lounge, (former Roux House) at 143 Third Street has undergone a complete transformation. Patrons will be able to sample craft cocktails, light bites, and an array of entertainment.
- **MOVEBR Enhancements** - Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the MOVEBR ADA Compliance project. Previous enhancements were completed on Convention and Florida with more enhancements to come. Mayor Sharon Weston Broome announced the completion of the 14th MOVEBR project in Downtown Baton Rouge. The Florida Street ADA compliance project has brought significant improvements to sections of Florida Street, 4th Street, 5th Street, and Convention Street. Mayor Broome stated, that not only has it enhanced accessibility in the downtown area, but it also has made the future Bus Rapid Transit stop locations more accessible for all individuals wishing to utilize their service. The enhancements include improved sidewalks, properly sloped driveways, new ramps, crosswalks, and more accessible push buttons and audible pedestrian signals. Mayor Broome thanked the contractor, Triumph Construction, for their collaboration in ensuring minimal disruption with all the downtown businesses and events held downtown, and also thanked Fred Raiford for his leadership. Mayor Broome also acknowledged Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman, the councilperson of District 10. Mayor Broome invited everyone after the meeting to attend the ribbon cutting on North Boulevard and 5th Street to celebrate the completion of this project.

7. Events -

Casey Tate updated the Commission on the following events:

- Restaurant Week – July 24 – 29 - Stroubes, Cecelia Creole Bistro, The Gregory, Capital City Grill
- Pottery Pedal Party – July 29, 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM, includes Pottery & Pedal Pub
- Wine Walk Wednesday – July 19, 5:30 PM-11:30 PM
- Art of Wine – Half Price Wine & Art at Blend, Thursday, July 13

- Manship Theatre – Arrested Development, July 13, Gary Vider – Comedy, July 28
- LSU MOA –
 - African American Masterworks Paul R Jones Collection
 - Free Reception & Concert by Chloe Marie, Thursday, August 3rd, 6:00 PM – 8 PM
- Capital Park Museum –
 - Lunchtime Lagniappe – July 12
 - Baton Rouge’s Troubled Waters Screening & Panel Discussion – July 12
 - Free First Sundays – August 6
- Old State Capitol –
 - Panel Talk: The History Culture & Language in Louisiana, July 11, 6 PM
 - 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 – Bayou Motor Fest, July 15; Foghat, July 14
- LASM –
 - BASF’s Kids’ Lab – Throughout July
 - Studio Saturdays, Printmaking on Fabric – every Saturday
 - Family Hour Stargazing – Every Saturday at 10:00 AM
- 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
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – Every First Saturday of the Month, August 5

8. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- None

9. Public Comment:

- Luke Lognion, BRASS, mentioned the Art of Wine event and the Pottery Pedal Party, and 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.
- 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. The Farmer’s Market is having a canning contest which wraps up at the beginning of August, additional information can be found at www.BREADA.org
- Councilwoman Coleman acknowledged and thanked Mary Jane Marcantel who helped a family get back home via the bus program, and thanked Gary Jupiter who provided a room at the Marriot for a vision-impaired, senior citizen who had no electricity at her home. Councilwoman Coleman is also very thankful for the children who helped clean up Madison Street.

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