

DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES

November 8, 2022, 8:00 a.m.

Raising Canes' River Center, Meeting Rooms 9 & 10

Board Members in Attendance: Ms. Melanie Montanaro-Chairwoman, Mr. Eric Dexter-Vice Chairman, Mr. Jude Melville-Treasurer, Mr. Patrick Michaels, Ms. Erin Monroe-Wesley, and Mr. Scott Hensgens

Absent: Mr. Prescott Bailey-Secretary

Others in Attendance: Jill Kidder, Wayne Hodes, T.C. Lam, Malorey Uzee, Landon Hester, Paul Arrigo, David Jacobs, Matt Shehadi, Sasha Hyderkhan, Colleen Rials, Barbara Freiberg, Brian Goad, Pam Bordelon, Adam Knapp, Luke Lognion, Samantha Morgan, Rannah Gray, Bobbie Carey, David Kors, Tony Clayton, Andrew Baque, Mary Jane Marcantel, Charles Daniel, Darlene Rowland, Joey Coe, Edwin Beraud, Debra Kastner, Bradley Aldrich, John Kaufman, Anna Gasperez, Serena Pandos, Joey Furr, Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Casey Tate, Ute Cress, Houston Tullis

Ms. Hoffman Sayal welcomed everyone to the DDD Commission meeting and thanked Wayne Hodes, River Center Manager, for hosting the meeting on such short notice.

Mr. Hodes announced the City Council approved the \$2.3 million for improvements at the River Center. The improvements will help the facility host three hockey games in December and January, which could enhance the possibility of a minor hockey league move to Baton Rouge. Improvements include a new LED scoreboard, a Zamboni (ice resurfacer), and a basketball court in addition to other items.

Mr. Hodes thanked Whitney Hoffman Sayal, Jill Kidder, and Paul Arrigo for their help and assistance and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

- 1.** Melanie Montanaro called the meeting to order and declared a quorum
- 2.** Erin Monroe Wesley made a motion to approve the agenda, Eric Dexter approved and the motion was adopted.
- 3.** Erin Monroe Wesley made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 11th meeting, Eric Dexter seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

4. Update from previous Board meeting: None

5. Board Action: None

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

- **River Center Improvements** - Whitney Hoffman Sayal announced the Metro Council approved the \$2.3 million improvements to the River Center as Mr. Hodes previously stated. Purchase your hockey tickets for one of the three games slated in December & January.
- **Louisiana Avenue Connection** - DOTD bid the project out for the Louisiana Avenue Connection, this project connects the Government Street bike lanes to the Downtown Greenway under Interstate 110. The Metro Council also approved the funding commitment to DOTD. The project will be moving forward and hopefully will be breaking ground soon.
- **Short-Term Rental Ordinance** – The ordinance regarding short-term rentals has been deferred to the November 16th Metro Council Zoning meeting.

7. Development Initiatives:

- A. Hollywood Casino Update:** The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of the \$80 million construction progress and renovations of the Hollywood Casino. Mr. Matt Shehadi, General Manager, stated Hollywood’s new facility, which is expected to open in the third quarter of next year, will increase its footprint to 100,000 square feet. Plans include a DraftKings Sportsbook, over 800 slots, 20 table games, a smoking patio, a full-service 300-seat restaurant, Shaquille O’Neal’s Big Chicken restaurant, grab and go sandwich and coffee shop, and a 3 Woks Noodle Bar.
- B. Belle of BR Properties:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal briefed the Commission on the sale of two historic Catfish Town properties for \$5 million dollars and a total of 56,000 square feet.
- C. Roumain Building Update** – Mr. Tony Clayton, owner of the Roumain Building, updated the Commission on the status of the renovations. Mr. Clayton hired two structural engineers who determined the building structure was in good condition. Mr. Clayton stated he is spending \$100,000 to renovate and upgrade the exterior of the building. Mr. Clayton voiced concern about crowds gathering during the evenings at nightclubs on Third Street and potentially causing problems. Several attendees defended the importance of downtown nightlife and stated that downtown has the lowest crime rates in the city.
- D. Spanish Town Condominiums:** The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, renderings of a proposed 24-building, 45-unit condo development in Spanish Town. Mr. Andrew Baqué, Architect, briefed the Commission on the proposed project which is located on the north side of Lakeland Drive, east of North 7th. The development will include a public promenade along capitol Lake with gazebos on either end, a community center, and 85 parking spaces. Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated the proposed development is being reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission during their meeting on Wednesday, November 9th.

- E. Walls Project Art Donation Box:** Samantha Morgan, The Walls Project, briefed the Commission on a new project. They have placed a Little Art Library outside of its office at 458 America Street that provides free art books, supplies, and craft kits for caregivers, teachers, and artists of all ages in the area. Patrons are encouraged to take what they want and drop off what they don't need anymore. The goal is to provide a sustainable way for artists to try new things and create without financial limitations. In addition, plans are being made to expand the Little Art Library into other districts that lack easy access to affordable art supplies.
- F. Work Downtown, Play Downtown** - Luke Lognion, BRASS by Circa 1857, announced they are working with the Downtown Business Association and the DDD to start a campaign called "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 downtown employees show a downtown business card, LA State, or City-Parish badge to any of the participating businesses to receive the happy hour menu from 4:00-7:00 PM, and will receive a coupon to redeem the next day from the weekly sponsor. If all goes well, Mr. Lognion would like to extend the promotion to downtown residents. Additional information can be found at workplaybr.com
- G. 2022 Canvas Trip** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of the BRAC Canvas trip to Greenville, South Carolina. Ms. Hoffman Sayal stated she and Commission members Eric Dexter and Scott Hensgens attended the BRAC Canvas trip. A big take away was the focus on the importance of downtown. Mr. Eric Dexter said he has attended several of the trips over the years to Orlando, Phoenix, Tuscon, and Cincinnati and this is the first one post-pandemic. Greenville focused on the downtown, which includes a natural waterfall they built around, and created affordable lease spaces for retail, art shops, and restaurants. Mr. Dexter stated we do have a lot of positive momentum going on and need to celebrate and be proud of Baton Rouge and what we have. Mr. Scott Hensgens echoed Mr. Dexter's comments and stated that focusing on the downtown will radiate outwards towards the rest of Baton Rouge. Downtown's success is not just about downtown, but also the entire Baton Rouge community. Ms. Hoffman Sayal said we should celebrate the success and implementation of Plan Baton Rouge 2 and continue the progress, work is never done in a downtown. Ms. Hoffman Sayal stated another important item would be figuring out how we move forward with a Plan Baton Rouge 3 and looking at the connectivity of downtown to the surrounding areas.
- H. Sunken Ferry Model** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of the sunken Brookhill Ferry shipwreck. The shipwreck was recently discovered due to the Mississippi River's record low levels. The Brookhill is a double-hulled ferry, 100 feet long and 30-40 feet wide. The ferry was in operation on the Mississippi River from 1896-1915. Joey CoCo, CEO, Forte & Tablada announced his firm worked with the Louisiana Division of Archeology

to take a series of photographs and laser scans to create a 3-D model to provide a virtual experience that can be viewed online at <https://forteandtablada.com/shipwreck>

- I. **2022 Smart Growth Summit** – Mr. Landon Hester, Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX), announced this year’s Center for Planning Excellence’s 17th Annual Growth Summit will be held at the Manship Theatre on December 7th & 8th. There will be twenty workshops/sessions/presentations led by over 50 international experts on policy, planning, and implementation, tackling a lot of the challenges facing Louisiana communities and developing solutions. The Smart Growth Summit offers continuing education credits for a variety of professional fields.

Registration can be done online at summit.cpex.org/registration before December 7th and 8th. On-site registration will also be available.

8. Events - Mr. Casey Tate thanked the Downtown Business Association for hosting another great Live After Five season and Visit Baton Rouge for sponsoring the busking on Third Street every gameday Friday outside the Starbucks. The live music was enjoyed and appreciated by everyone who passed by.

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

Festival of Lights – North Boulevard Town Square, Friday, December 2nd 4:00-8:00 PM

- Christmas Parade – Downtown Baton Rouge, Saturday, December 10th 5:30 PM
- Manship Theatre – Cool Winter Nights and Hot Jazz, November 29th and 30th
- LSU MOA – Annual Holiday Shopping Event: LSU Museum Store, Friday, December 3rd
- Capital Park Museum – Lunchtime Lagniappe: Charles Quarters, Wednesday, November 9th
- Old State Capitol – Who Gets to Vote? “Voices and Votes” through December 10th
- River Center – RESPECT, November 11th
- LASM – Mesmerica, November 19, 20, 25, 26 and 27
- USS Kidd – Fur, Feathers, and Fidelity: Military Mascots
- Red Stick Arts Market – Every Saturday, Corner of 5th and Main Streets
- Red Stick Farmer’s Market – Every First Saturday, Corner of 5th and Main Streets

9. Commission Announcements & Updates:

- Whitney Hoffman Sayal thanked the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC) for hosting the Canvas Tour to Greenville, South Carolina

10. Public Comment:

- Adam Knapp, BRAC President & CEO, announced BRAC had 115 individuals attend the Canvas Tour and spent 3 wonderful days touring and visiting Greenville, SC. Mr. Knapp stated that Greenville is a city that is similar in size to Baton Rouge. The city has earned a reputation for being a great place to live and visit. Greenville did a downtown development plan around the same time Plan Baton Rouge was done in the 90’s and

they stuck with it year after year with passion and urgency to get things done. Local leaders came away with new ideas on how to revitalize Downtown Baton Rouge and ways to try and retain young adults. The downtown is an anchor that attracts young professionals. Mr. Knapp says a top goal after this trip is to try and bring more retail shops downtown and add more affordable places where people can live there. There's also a new revived discussion to create a master plan to continue developing Downtown Baton Rouge.

- Bobbie Carey with St. Joseph's Cathedral announced an after-mass neighborhood event party/reception at the Cathedral. This is a free event and will be held on November 12 at 5:00 after the 4:00 PM mass.
- Darlene Rowland, BREADA, announced BREADA is celebrating its 26th anniversary this past Saturday, November 6th making it the second oldest farmers market organizer in Louisiana. Due to the heavy rain, the celebration is being postponed to December 3, the first Saturday in December. Since 1996, BREADA has operated a direct-to-consumer market space for farmers, ranchers, and agricultural businesses. Today, over 50 vendors from 14 different parishes rely on the Red Stick Farmers Market to maintain their businesses. These markets are essential to preserving local traditions of growing local and giving back, as well as promoting a healthy and connected Baton Rouge community. BREADA operates weekly locations of the Red Stick Farmers Market in different areas of the city. Visit us on Saturdays at the Main Street Market at 5th and Main on Thursdays, Pennington Biomedical Research Center, from 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM, and at the Goodwood Library on Tuesday afternoons from 3:00 PM-6:00 PM
- Rannah Gray gave an update on the MOVEBR ADA project to upgrade sidewalks and the signals on Florida Street. A contract was issued yesterday to Triumph Construction and a Notice to Proceed will be issued, work should take 5-6 months.
- Whitney Hoffman Sayal acknowledged and welcomed Representative Barbara Freiberg and the Baton Rouge Police Department to the DDD meeting.

11. Meeting Adjourned – Erin Monroe Wesley moved to adjourn the meeting, Prescott Bailey seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.