

## **DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES**

September 13, 2022 8:00 a.m.

The Estuary at the Water Campus, 1110 S. River Road

**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** were Lauralyn Maranto, Luke Lognion, Wayne Hodes, Tim Rance, Gilles Morin, Jason Crain, Todd Sterling, Brandon Songy, Cheri Soileau, Darlene Rowland, Justin Lemoine, Jacob Haynes, Ryan Holcomb, Collin Lindrew, Dr. Lucas Fry, T.C. Lam, Eddie Beraud, Rannah Gray, Anna Gasperecz, Serena Pandos, Preston Castille, Colleen Rials, Chris Chandler, Mike Bruce, Gary Black, Judy Foust, Chuck Booksh, Debra Kastner, Sarah Nicols, David Jacob, Chastity George, Lauree Roberson, Darmar Francois, Malorey Uzee, Sarah Amacker, Brad Gordon, Rachael Lambert, Casey Tate, Ute Cress

1. Whitney Hoffman Sayal, DDD Executive Director, welcomed everyone to the DDD Commission meeting and thanked Tina Rance with Commercial Properties Realty Trust for hosting the DDD meeting at the Estuary at the Water Campus. Ms. Rance addressed the audience and welcomed the DDD and guests to the Water Campus.

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

3. Eric Dexter made a motion to approve the agenda, Jude Melville seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

4. Eric Dexter made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 9, 2022 meeting, Jude Melville seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

**5. Update from previous Board meeting:** Whitney Sayal Hoffman informed the Commission about the parking meter open house which was held on August 17 at the Downtown Development District office. Employees of the City-Parish Traffic Engineering office were in attendance to answer questions. The DDD and Traffic Engineering will be working together to identify locations where the parking meters will be located. There will be parking meters on most corners in the central business district. The parking meters will still accept coins, in addition to paying by a credit card through an app or at the machine. The DDD is working with downtown businesses that have valet services, such as hotels, to coordinate the meters with those spaces. Any questions can be directed to the DDD office or Traffic Engineering.

**6. Board Action:** Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the proposed camping ordinance, which was adopted last month with some amendments to the original proposal. Police enforcement will be able to cite individuals who are camping on public property and offer services for shelter beds; if beds are available and the services are refused, they can be cited with a fine or community service.

## **7. Governmental Issues:**

- **Spanish Town Parking Permits:** Cyndy Pennington, Traffic Engineer updated the Commission on the Spanish Town parking permits. The Traffic Engineering offices will be relocating to the Emergency Operation Center at 3773 Harding Boulevard. Beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>, parking permits will only be available on Thursdays due to staffing shortages. At the beginning of the next year, permits for parking passes are planned to be obtained online and mailed out. The Traffic Engineering department is working with the Police Department to mitigate any ticketing issues caused.
- **Short Term Rentals:** Gilles Morin, Assistant Planning Director briefed the Commission on the status of short-term rentals regulations. The Planning Commission is working with the Greater Baton Rouge Civic Associations, Greater Baton Rouge Realtors, and other stakeholders, to study and establish guidelines and policies governing short-term rentals, which are currently not being regulated. The Planning Commission defines a short-term rental as having an occupancy duration of 30 days or less, the staff has identified 460 short-term rental properties in East Baton Rouge Parish.

The study established two categories, owner-occupied short-term rentals, and non-owner-occupied short-term rentals. The proposed regulations would allow owner-occupied, short-term rentals on a limited basis in all single-family residential zoning districts. They must register to pay taxes, set aside one bedroom for the owner, and be owner-occupied. Non-owner-occupied short-term rentals would be allowed on a conditional use, requiring approval from Planning Commission, must acquire a permit for continuous operation, maximum occupancy of two persons per bedroom plus two, and one additional parking space provided for each bedroom used as a short-term rental. In addition, the permits will be revoked if there are three substantiated complaints.

The proposed ordinance is on the Planning Commission's agenda on Monday and if approved will be presented to the Metro Council on October 12th, the effective date would be nine months from the date of adoption.

## **8. Development Initiatives:**

- A. Spanish Town Grant** – Collin Lindrew, Planner with the Planning Commission, briefed the Commission on a grant the Planning Commission received. The Planning Commission has

received a \$13,500 preservation grant for Spanish Town from the Louisiana State Historic Preservation. The grant will update the Spanish Town standing structure survey and the 1978 Spanish Town National Historic Register District. A digital storyboard and walking and biking event are also planned.

- B. River Center Events** – Wayne Hodes, General Manager, showed the Commission a PowerPoint presentation of the upcoming events and current projects currently underway at the River Center. The River Center has recently held various concerts, such as R&B, country, and classic rock, and plans to coordinate the types of concerts and activities with LSU. Mr. Hodes stated the River Center, beginning in December, will be hosting 3 professional ice hockey games. In anticipation of the hockey games, the River Center is looking at getting a new LED scoreboard and digital signage. The EBR Metro Council will consider setting aside \$2.3 million for improvements. Mr. Hodes stated this would go towards helping them with their upcoming hockey games, getting a new scoreboard, infrastructure updates like video cameras, and a new basketball court.

Mr. Hodes stated the contract should be awarded in the next few weeks for a venue feasibility study of the facility, being paid by Visit Baton Rouge. The contract calls for the work to be done in six months. The study will review how the River Center fits in with future LSU improvement plans and the feasibility of building a headquarters hotel, possibly connected to the arena. The main focus of the study will be what needs to be done to improve the arena and make it more competitive. Mr. Hodes stated he hopes the study will recommend adding about 4,000 seats to the River Center, which would open the door to getting bigger-named entertainers.

- C. MOVEBR Florida Street** – The Commission viewed slides, via PowerPoint, of an overview of the MOVEBR Florida Street ADA compliance project. Jason Crain, Deputy Program Manager, updated the Commission on the project. The City-Parish hired a consultant to develop an ADA self-elevation and transition plan; the plan identified a need to address the deficiencies. MOVEBR tax proposition dedicated \$10 million to the ADA improvements. The repairs include removal and replacement of sidewalks and driveways to provide proper slopes, corner bulb-outs at some intersections, ADA ramps, crosswalks, height adjustment of existing pedestrian push buttons, replacement of some push buttons with audible buttons, and some minor tree trimming. The project area was chosen based on the proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Route. The route runs west on Florida Street, turns south on 4<sup>th</sup> Street, and continues to Nicholson. The construction is scheduled for mid-October and will take 4-5 months to complete.

Rannah Gray and Todd Stirling will be working together with the program managers to keep the businesses informed of the construction. A dedicated number 225-399-3123 is being provided for businesses only to report construction-related issues. Residents and non-urgent calls can be reported by calling 311.

- D. Louisiana Avenue Connection** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the status of the Louisiana Avenue Connection. DOTD will be opening the bids tomorrow, Wednesday, September 14. This project will connect the Government Street bike lanes to the Downtown Greenway at East Boulevard/TJ Jemison. Currently, there is a gap between these two systems with unsafe on and off ramps to cross under the interstate at Government. The connection will bring people up to Eddie Robinson and then on to Louisiana Avenue, which has much less traffic flow.
- E. Origin Hotel** – The Commission viewed images, via PowerPoint, of the renovations for the Origin Hotel, formerly the Holiday Inn Express on St. Ferdinand @ North Boulevard. Whitney Hoffman Sayal stated the DDD and Thrash Development Group have been having conversations regarding the concept of making it more of a unique boutique hotel. A representative with Thrash Development will be invited to give updates on the renovations as they proceed further along.
- F. Helix Schools Expansion** – Mr. Preston Castille, CEO, updated the Commission on the expansion of Helix Community School. Mr. Castille introduced Ms. Chasity George as the founding Principal of Helix Legal Academy. Helix Legal Academy plans to move into the former Raising Cane’s on Third Street in downtown Baton Rouge. The school originally began at the Helix Mentorship STEAM Academy on Florida Street but outgrew the space.
- G. Main Street Market Renovation** – Darlene Rowland, BREADA Executive Director, briefed the Commission on the renovations for the Main Street Market. The State of Louisiana which owns the Galvez parking garage where the market is located has allocated \$1 million for much-needed improvements to the space. Construction is anticipated to start in February 2023. BREADA will continue to host and operate the Red Stick Farmers Market on Saturdays, along with the other markets hosted during the week throughout the Baton Rouge community. However, the Main Street Market facility will be closed during the renovation period, which is anticipated to take six to nine months to complete.
- H. South 14<sup>th</sup> Building Renovation** – Whitney Hoffman Sayal updated the Commission on the status of the building renovation. Mr. Anthony Kimble, Kimble Properties, purchased the building in April 2020 and has been working to assemble parking on the neighboring lot. The concept is going to be called “The Valley House” and will feature a book store, coffee shop, event space, office space, and a bar/lounge area.
- I. New Businesses**
- **Louisiana Film Channel** – Dr. Lucas Frey, President of the Louisiana Film Channel, briefed the Commission. Dr. Frey stated he is opening a retail shop at the company’s headquarters on Third Street in downtown Baton Rouge. The retail store will offer thousands of posters, photos, and other Louisiana Film memorabilia. The collection ranges from new materials to more than a century old, including memorabilia from the first Tarzan movie, filmed in Morgan City in 1917. The store supports the Louisiana Film Makers and will be open seven days a week from 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM.

- **Oxbow Run Distillery** – Three Roll Estate has officially changed its name to Oxbow Rum Distillery. They are rebranding to redefine Louisiana Rum.

**9. Events** - Mr. Casey Tate updated the Commission on the following downtown events:

- Live After Five – Fridays September 16 -October 28, 2022
- Sunday in the Park – Jonathon Boogie Long, October 2, 2022
- Manship Theatre – Tip Jars to Chart Toppers, September 15, 7:30 PM
- LSU MOA – Artist Talk – Malaika Favorite, September 20, 12:00 PM
- Capital Park Museum – Letitia Huckaby & Katrina Andry tandem exhibit thru September 17
- Old State Capitol – Book Club discussions October 2 and 29: Who gets to Vote?  
Visual Perspectives of Louisiana thru Oct. 16
- River Center – Gary Allen, September 23, 2022
- LASM – 2022 Gala & Ticket Giveaway, September 30, 2022
- USS Kidd – Fur, Feathers, and Fidelity: Military Mascots now on display
- Baton Rouge Arts Market – First Saturday of the month, October 1, 2022
- Red Stick Farmer’s Market – Farm Fete, September 29, 2022

Ms. Darlene Roland, BREADA, announced the Farm Fête fundraiser, on September 29<sup>th</sup>, River Center Library Terrace, an evening celebrating local food & farms with festive drinks and food pairings by local chefs. Tickets are \$100.00 and can be purchased at <https://www.farmfete.org/>.

**10. Commission Announcements & Updates:**

- Whitney Hoffman Sayal announced the DDD has updated the Development Project Director job description and has submitted a requisition for the job vacancy which should be posted this Friday.

**11. Public Comment:**

- Serena Pandos, LASM Director, announced the LASM’S 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 2022 Gala: Diamonds of History. Tickets are officially on sale for LASM's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala: Diamonds of History. The annual fundraiser will take place on Friday, September 30, 2022, from 7 PM to 11 PM at the museum in downtown Baton Rouge. Tickets can be purchased through the Qtego Gala site. The Gala will feature a variety of entertainment, a silent auction, a raffle for diamond earrings donated by Lee Michaels Fine Jewelry, and gourmet food and spirits. All funds raised by the Gala will support the renovation of LASM’s hands-on children’s galleries into The Seed, an innovative space where young artists and scientists will grow through the hands-on exploration of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics).
- Mr. Chris Chandler, founder, and CEO of the American Millennium Project (AMP) introduced the AMP, a program that aims to educate area residents on their local

history and culture. He moved the headquarters from Shreveport to downtown Baton Rouge. He is hosting public tours, all tours have seven stops around different areas of a city, the 7 wonders of downtown Baton Rouge.

- Brandon Songy with CATS, announced Touchdown TRAX is operating for all LSU home games. The cost of the tickets is \$10.00 for one (1) game and \$60.00 for a seven (7) game pass. The Touchdown TRAX locations are Lafayette Street at Convention Street (Hotel Indigo) and Florida Street at I -110 (under the interstate). Touchdown TRAX begins taking fans to campus three hours prior to kick-off. Touchdown TRAX passengers will be dropped off on campus near the LSU softball fields. After the game, fans can return to the drop-off location to reload the bus and return to their place of origin, with return trips running until one hour after the game ends.
- Visit [www.brcats.com/touchdown](http://www.brcats.com/touchdown) or call 225-389-8282 for more information on routes and schedules.

The Downtown Circulator is operating Monday – Friday, 10:30 AM – 3:30 PM, and is free to ride. Please contact CATS with any feedback regarding the times and where the bus is picking up and dropping off.

**12. Meeting Adjourned** – Patrick Michaels moved to adjourn the meeting, Jude Melville seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.