

## **DDD COMMISSION MEETING, MINUTES**

April 12, 2022 8:00 a.m.

Downtown Development District, 247 Florida Street

**Board Members in Attendance:** Ms. Melanie Montanaro-Chairwoman, Mr. Eric Dexter-Vice Chairman, Mr. Prescott Bailey-Secretary, Mr. Jude Melville-Treasurer, Mr. Patrick Michaels, Mr. Scott Hensgens

**Absent:** Ms. Erin Monroe-Wesley

**Others in Attendance** Marty Enquist, Brandon Songy, Amy Thibodeaux, Mary Jane Marcantel, John Snow, Rachel Carroccio, Hannah Walters, Jason Langlois, Anna Gasperecz, Jourdan Mackey, Rex Cabaniss, Landon Hester, Caroline Byrne, Julia Evans, T.C. Lam, Gordon Leblanc, Brad Bates, Brandon Weber, Justin Lemoine, John Kelton, Daniel Stetson, Tim Boone, Casey Tate, Ute Cress

1. Ms. Melanie Montanaro called the meeting to order and declared a quorum.
2. Mr. Eric Dexter made a motion to approve the agenda, Mr. Prescott Bailey seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.
3. Mr. Jude Melville made a motion to approve the minutes from February 8, 2022, Mr. Patrick Michaels seconded the motion, there was no opposition and the minutes were approved.
4. **Board Action:** None
5. **Governmental Issues:** None
6. **Update from previous Board meeting – Executive Director Search** - Ms. Melanie Montanaro updated the Commission on the Executive Director search by Emergent Method. Emergent Method opened and advertised the position on Thursday, February 3, for 45 days until March 20. Over 70 applications were received and were screened according to the qualifications, job specifications, and description. The search committee interviewed the top nine candidates via zoom and each candidate was asked the same questions. Immediately following this meeting, the committee will vote on and select the top three candidates. The top three candidates will be brought in at a later date to be interviewed in person by the search committee.
7. **Development Initiatives:**
  - A. **Capital Improvement Projects** – Casey Tate briefed the Commission on the following DDD projects.

- **Downtown Greenway** - The Louisiana Avenue Connection under I-110 Bridge for bike and pedestrian access is awaiting clearance from the Environmental Department.
  - **Gateway Lighting** - WHLC Architects is in the final design of the enhanced lighting project under the I-110 bridge on North Boulevard for parking and additional security.
  - **River Road Improvements** – The Levee District has issued a permit for the final design for a streetscape improvement project and has been submitted to the state for approval. This project is for an east-side multi-use bike and pedestrian path with plantings for access heading north along River Road.
  - **Riverfront Plaza Landing Repairs** - The area beneath the landing has structural issues underneath the deck. The deck is 40-plus years old and rests on the side of the levee. The Army Corp and city inspectors have temporarily closed the landing until repairs are done. The main problem with the landing being closed is it blocks the pedestrian bridge for crossing over the railroad tracks when there is a train stopped. The time period for the repairs is 8-12 months, however, consideration is being given to keeping the pedestrian crossing open during the repairs.
- B. Outdoor Dining Grant** – Five applicants have been approved for the grant and are applying for sidewalk café permits. Additional money is available for this grant if any other businesses are interested in applying.
- C. AARP Challenge Grant** – Four decorative crosswalks have been completed at Main, Laurel, Florida, and Convention Streets by a grant from AARP. These painted crosswalks help increase safety, visibility, and walkability. A community walk will be scheduled to showcase these crosswalks.
- D. Property Acquisitions:**
- **Holiday Inn Express** – The Trash Group of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, a company that specializes in high-end boutique hotels has purchased the Holiday Inn on North Boulevard. They plan on spending \$10 million renovating and part of the work will add another floor, rooftop seating, more meeting space, and a restaurant.
  - **The Hive, formerly River Palms Apartments** – A. C. Lewis Management bought the River Palms Apartments on North Third Street for \$7.9 million. Plans are to do some renovations and change the name to The Hive.
  - **Saltz Building** – Commercial Properties Realty Trust purchase the Saltz building on North Boulevard and has requested a demolition permit.
  - **Roumain Building** – The Roumain building went to Sheriff’s sale with an appraisal and there were no bids. It will be re-bid in two weeks without an appraisal.
- E. New Businesses:**
- **Social Coffee** – Social Coffee at 521 N. Third Street is open selling pastries and serving small-batch coffees and specialty drinks.

- **Blues Café** – The new Blues Café on Third Street will have jazz and blues music, serve Southern cuisine, and specialty brunch cocktails when it opens later this spring.

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

- Live After Five - April 22 -Kenny Neal, April 29 & May 6th
- Baton Rouge Blues Fest - North Boulevard Town Square, April 23 & 24
- Sunday in the Park - North Boulevard Town Square, April 24
- Sunday in the Park - Shaw Center Plaza, May 1 & 8
- Crawfish King Cookoff - Rhorer Plaza, Friday, May 6
- Manship Theatre - Toad the Wet Sprocket, April 29 7:30 PM
- LSU MOA - Eugene Martin: The Creative Act now through October 2
- Capitol Park Museum - Blues Lagniappe Program (Women in the Blues) April 21
- Old State Capitol - Louisiana, "Through the Painter's Lens"  
Closing Reception April 21, 5:30 PM
- River Center Events - A Night of Song & Praise – Tamela Mann, April 16
- LASM - Stargazing in the Planetarium, every Saturday at 10:00 AM
- USS Kidd - Warrior yoga Program, Saturday, May 7
- Baton Rouge Arts Market - Saturday, May 7
- Red Stick Farmers Market – Saturday, April 16

**9. Ongoing Projects:**

- **DBA** – None
- **BREADA** – None

**10. Public Comment:** Marty Engquist, a downtown resident, stated the debris and trash around the city dock and the downtown levee is an eyesore for tourists visiting the city. She would like a litter campaign with "No Littering" signs installed to address the trash issue. Casey Tate stated the DDD will install more anti-letter signs on the levee, in addition, work with the city to have the area cleaned more frequently.

Mr. Brandon Songy with CATS wanted to drop off some Downtown Circulator brochures that have the times and a map of the two new electric buses running downtown from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. every 15 minutes free of charge. CATS would like to have feedback from the public regarding the days and times the buses are running.

**11. Meeting Adjourned** – Mr. Eric Dexter moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Scott Hensgens seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.