

DDD Commission Meeting
September 14, 2021 8:00 a.m.
LABI Offices, 500 Main Street

Attending: Ms. Melanie Montanaro-Chairwoman, Mr. Eric Dexter-Vice Chairman, Mr. Patrick Michaels, Mr. Scott Hensgens

Absent: Mr. Prescott Bailey-Secretary, Mr. Jude Melville-Treasurer, Ms. Erin Monroe-Wesley

Others in Attendance: Karron Alford, Mary Jane Marcantel, Mary Durusau, Chris Chandler, Justin Lemoine, Aaron Moll, Darlene Rowland, Julia Claire Evans, Tim Boone, Rosehn Gipe, Paul Arrigo, Mysti Byrnes, Mary Jane Marcantel, Steven Waguespack, Anna Gasperez, Theo Richards, Jay Gaudet, Clay Young, Grant Miller, David Remmetter, Aaron Scruggs, Rodneya Hart, Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman, Caroline Byrne, Melanie Couvillion. David Rhymes, Landon Hester, Judy Foust, Gabe Vicknair, Casey Tate, Ryan Benton, Ute Cress

1. Ms. Melanie Montanaro called the meeting to order.
2. Ms. Melanie Montanaro stated the Board is waiting on one more board member for a quorum. The meeting will go forward with the informational part of the agenda then take any board action at the end of the meeting when there is a quorum.

Ms. Melanie Montanaro thanked Steven Waguespack, President of LABI for hosting the September meeting. Mr. Waguespack greeted everyone and stated they were happy to be able to host the meeting today. LABI opened its offices about a year and half ago, says the decision to relocate was promoted by the desire to be downtown, closer to other LABI members and near the heart of state government. One of the first places Mr. Waguespack visited was the DDD office to meet with Davis Rhorer and his staff. The staff helped him with locations and a road map to get this project going but also with belief, vision and confidence that the move was good for the organization and the community.

4. Governmental Issues – Mr. Gabe Vicknair briefed the Commission on the current Covid-19 orders. Governor John Bel Edwards, extended the statewide mask mandate until September 29, 2021. The mask mandate applies to anyone age 5 or older in all public places statewide.

5. Update from previous Board meeting - None

6. Development Initiatives

A. Developments Underway:

- **Water Campus** – The Water Street and River Road intersection is now officially open.
- **Downtown East Housing** - The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, a map outlaying the housing developments in the Downtown East area and images of the ongoing construction

and a proposed bike connection. Mr. Gabe Vicknair updated the Commission on the status of the following housing projects in Downtown East, where there are over 400 units currently under construction:

- a. **Elysian II & III, North Street** – Construction is completed and they are now leasing. These are residential apartments, with a total of 42 units.
 - b. **Valencia Park, Spanish Town Road** – Construction is currently underway; the development will consist of 110 residential units of which 80% of the units will be government assisted. They are pre-leasing this fall with an opening in the spring of 2022.
 - c. **Lotus Village, Council on Aging, Spanish Town & 16th Streets** – Construction has started and is at the framing stages. The 116-unit development is a new senior housing development and is aimed at low to moderate income seniors.
- **Hollywood Casino Expansion** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of initial construction underway at the Hollywood Casino, such as land clearing and demolition.
 - **River Center Theatre** - The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of the River Center Theatre currently under construction and near completion. Mr. Gabe Vicknair informed the Commission the construction is moving along and the completion date is scheduled for October 24th. Mr. Vicknair stated he would like to possibly have a DDD meeting there and a possible tour of the new theatre.
- B. Downtown Security Cameras** – Mr. Gabe Vicknair briefed the Commission on the acquisition of cameras for the downtown area. Mr. Clay Young, Chair of the Baton Rouge Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Foundation, was scheduled to speak, but is being delayed because of the rain and traffic. Mr. Vicknair stated many of the security cameras are being replaced and new ones are being added with funds raised by the Baton Rouge Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Foundation. The nonprofit raised \$150,000 for the new cameras. 19 antiquated and damaged cameras are being replaced and 10 new additional cameras are being installed. All the high definition cameras will feed back to the Crime Center where they are able to view the footage in real time. This will improve safety on the street from large crimes to small crimes such as vandalism which will be very helpful in solving the crimes.

Mr. Vicknair informed the Commission that a former board member, Mr. Gordon (Skeet) LeBlanc, has also been very instrumental in raising funds by soliciting the downtown stakeholders. The DDD has contributed \$15,000 towards this project as well. The cameras should be installed in the next couple of months and hopefully have some additional funding raised for more cameras.

Mr. Clay Young, chair of the nonprofit, entered the meeting late and updated the Commission on the project. The Baton Rouge Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Foundation is a non-profit

made up from of all the law enforcement agencies in the parish. The board is comprised of individuals who work in the private sector and city government. The focus of the foundation is to support these agencies throughout East Baton Rouge Parish by providing critical resources in the way of equipment and technology, and to promote public safety for our community. Presently LSU and Southern are both working on research projects. LSU is looking at law enforcement leadership and Southern is looking at the police community dynamic.

The camera infrastructure downtown dates back to 2007 and is antiquated. At the time Baton Rouge did not have a real-time crime center, now we do. The agency and downtown stakeholders raised \$100,000 to replace the old cameras and another \$50,000 to add additional cameras including Convention Street, St. Louis Street and the areas around the Capitol Grounds and the Raising Cane's River Center. In addition to that, another \$60,000 will be used for cameras in the inner-city, high crime areas. The first round of cameras have been purchased and should be operational by the beginning of the football season.

- C. Cary Saurage Community Arts Center** – Ms. Mysti Byrnes, Director of Public Relations with the Arts Council, updated the Commission on the scheduled opening. The Arts Council staff has moved into the building and the Baton Rouge Symphony has also moved into the building. Everything is falling into place with just some landscaping to be completed. The building is open to the public to view the debut exhibit, *Members Only*, in the Shell Gallery from September 9-October 21, 2021. The grand opening has been moved to January 20, 2022, due to COVID restrictions.

This month is also the Ebb and Flow Festival, which normally is a 2-day event, but will be held all month highlighting eight recipients of the 2021 Ebb & Flow Festival Grants. In addition, Sunday in the Park, a series of free outdoor concerts, begins September 26th - November 14th and is held downtown Baton Rouge at the Shaw Center for the Arts Plaza.

Mr. Gabe Vicknair welcomed District 10's Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman and she greeted those in attendance.

- D. Hospitality and Tourism Update** – Mr. Paul Arrigo, President & CEO of Visit Baton Rouge (VBR), briefed the Commission on a travel survey. VBR is going to be sending out an 80-question survey the first week in January, 2022, to approximately 3000 city leaders, elected officials, boards of directors and city boards, as well as tour operators, convention planners and festival organizer to rank the city, as a whole, a visitor's destination. The survey will help determine opportunities for potential amenities, programs, products, and experiences that would benefit the tourism industry in Baton Rouge as part of their 5-year strategic plan. It will allow VBR to have a better idea of what the city needs to do to become more attractive to visitors. The survey was supposed to be sent out last year, but the pandemic delayed that. It was then supposed to be sent out during the week of Hurricane Ida, which caused another delay.

- E. Touchdown Express** – Mr. Theo Richards, Business Development Manager with Capital Area Transit System (CATS), briefed the Commission. Mr. Richards stated that CATS, after two years, is bringing back Touchdown Express Service for all LSU home games. There are two locations to pick up fans downtown to bring them to and from Tiger Stadium on home game days. The first location is I-110 on Florida Blvd., under the interstate and the second is at the Hotel Indigo. The service begins 3 hours before kick-off and lasts until one hour after the game ends. CATS will drop off and pick up the passengers at the LSU Baseball Stadium; tickets are only \$10.00 round trip. Tickets can be purchased at www.brcats.com or on gameday at each of the pickup locations. Due to COVID restrictions, face masks are required, and the busses will be limited to 15 passengers.
- F. Commercial Pedal Carriages** – Mr. Gabe Vicknair briefed the Commission on the Pedal Pub franchise. The Metro Council recently approved ordinances that regulates operating areas, routes, gathering, boarding locations, hours of operation, noise and disturbance. Commercial pedal carriages can now apply with the Baton Rouge Taxicab Control Board to offer their services to downtown patrons. The pedal carriages do not serve alcohol, passengers can bring only beer and wine in ice chests on board.
- G. Chelsea’s Live** – Co-owners, Mr. Aaron Scruggs, Mr. Dave Remmetter, and Mr. Grant Miller briefed the Commission on the opening of Chelsea’s Live. The building at 1010 Nicholson Drive was rezoned in May to turn it into a live music venue that sells alcohol. A 6,300-square-foot space featuring a state-of-the-art sound system, 30×20-foot stage, one of a kind artists greenrooms, patio, and custom bars. Chelsea’s Live will have a wide diversity of programming accommodating all genres, as well as local showcases and private events. They are currently in the demolition phase with a 90-day construction schedule. Hopefully if everything goes accordingly, plans are to be open in December.
- H. Louisiana Avenue Lighting Concepts** – The Commission viewed, via PowerPoint, images of the Louisiana Avenue gateway lighting. Mr. Gabe Vicknair stated WHLC submitted images of the colored lighting concepts for the gateways at Louisiana Avenue and North Boulevard, and security lighting under the interstate for public parking. The lighting colors can be changed based on holidays, LSU and Southern game days, or seasons. The Louisiana Avenue connection project is in DOTD’s hands and hope to be under construction in the next 6 months. It will connect T.J. Jemison Blvd./East Blvd along the Greenway, transforming it into a transportation corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists with designated paths and upgraded lighting. This portion of the Downtown Greenway will connect to the completed portions on North Boulevard and Expressway Park.

I. New Business: None

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

- Sunday in the Park/Lafayette Park – Shaw Center Plaza - September 26-November 14
- Live After Five – Stay tuned for a start date
- Movies After 5 – September 4, City Hall Plaza
- Preserve Louisiana/Old Governor’s Mansion – The First Ladies of the Old Governor’s Mansion Exhibit until January, 2022
- Manship Theatre – The Allman Betts Band, October 7, 7:30PM
- Manship Theatre – Philadanco, October 17th 2:00PM & 7:00PM
- LSU MOA – Opening Reception – Candice Lin, October 20th, 6:00PM
- LSU MOA – Free First Sundays are Back! Every First Sunday 1-5PM
- Capital Park Museum – The Negro Motorist Green Book Exhibition, August 21 – November 14
- Old State Capitol – Coney Island: Visions of an American Dreamland, September 1 – October 21
- River Center Events – Theresa Caputo Live, October 16
- LASM – Soo Sunny Park installation “Iridescence”, September 17, 5:30 PM
- LASM – Free first Sundays are back, every first Sunday 1:00PM – 5:00PM
- USS Kidd – Wheels of War Traveling Exhibit opening October 13th
- Baton Rouge Arts Market - Saturday, October 2nd

9. Ongoing Projects:

- **DBA** – Mr. Casey Tate stated Lauren Lambert with DBA wasn’t able to attend today’s meeting, but DDD is working with DBA on all their public events and with the city administration.
- **BREADA** – Darlene Rowland, Executive Director, updated the Commission on the Farm Fete fundraiser. Due to current COVID restrictions, they are going virtual with the silent auction, September 29th - September 30th. The event will offer farm and culinary-themed items and experiences. To view items and register for the auction, text “farmer” to 72727 or visit breada.home.qtego.net. On Saturday, September 25th, the Farmer Market will include festivities to celebrate and promote Farm Fête, including live music by John Gray. Some of the auction items will be on display, and there will be a wine pull. The market is open from 8 a.m. to noon at the corner of Fifth and Main Streets downtown.

Ms. Rowland stated Hurricane Ida had a significant impact on farmers in the southeast & southern areas. The Farmer Market in conjunction with Farm Fete, will have a \$10 raffle this weekend to benefit the Louisiana Small Farm Survival Fund. This was established after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to provide immediate relief funds to small, family farmers across the state who suffered damage. Tickets for the raffle can be purchased at the market or you can buy a ticket or donate to the LA Small Farm Fund online at www.breada.org

Ms. Melanie Montanaro stated there is a quorum of the board and they can now proceed with board action.

10. Mr. Scott Hensgens made a motion to approve the agenda, Mr. Patrick Michaels seconded and the agenda was approved.

11. Mr. Eric Dexter made a motion to approve the August 10, 2021 minutes, Mr. Scott Hensgens seconded and the minutes were approved.

Board Action: Executive Committee Recommendation - Ms. Melanie Montanaro updated the Commission on the Executive Director position. There was an Executive Committee meeting held on August 27th to discuss the transition and the search for the Executive Director. The Executive Committee made a recommendation to vote on a motion to the full board to hire a consulting firm to conduct the search for an Executive Director.

Ms. Montanaro put in a request for a motion to hire a consulting firm to conduct the search for an Executive Director. Mr. Scott Hensgens made the motion, Mr. Eric Dexter seconded and the motion was approved.

12. **Correspondence:** There was no information to report

13. **Public Comment** – Ms. Mary Durusau, Director, Old State Capitol, briefed the Commission on an event, the *Spirits of Louisiana*. The event will take place this year at the Louisiana Old State Capitol on Thursday October 28, 2021 beginning at 6:30 P.M. Enjoy the fine catering of Heirloom Cuisine and tastings from numerous local distilleries. Come dressed as the 'Spirit' moves you.

Ms. Rodneya Hart, Capitol Park Museum Division Director, briefed the Commission on the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service's (SITES) exhibition "The Negro Motorist Green Book". The exhibition will be on display at the Capitol Park Museum in Baton Rouge from August 21 – November 14, 2021. In addition, The Smithsonian Museum Day and Pirate Experience will be held this Saturday, September 18th from 9:00AM– 3:00PM. All ages welcome; free for those in pirate costume.

Mr. Landon Hester, Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) announced this year's Center for Planning Excellence's 16th Annual Growth Summit will again be presented virtually, November 16th -18th free to all attendees. This year's summit will focus on "Shaping Our Future." Sponsorships are open and you can register for the summit at summit.cpep.org.

14. **Meeting Adjourned** – Mr. Eric Dexter moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Patrick Michael seconded and the meeting was adjourned.