

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE
NEW ORLEANS CITY PARK IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners (the "Board") of the New Orleans City Park Improvement Association (the "NOCPIA") was called to order Tuesday, April 28, 2020, at 4 p.m. by President Larry Katz. Due to the COVID-19 virus the meeting was held via Google Meets.

PRESENT: Commissioners Arata, Arnold, Batt, Cahn, Dale, DeBlieux, Fitzpatrick, Giarrusso, Hess, Katz, LeCorgne, Leger, Lester, Masinter, McNeil, Morrell, Nosser, Savoie, Seamon, Spears, Taylor, Thorpe, and Waller

ABSENT: Commissioners Adkerson, Baker, Banks, Gardner, Hollis, King, Lupo, Pate, Pineda, and Worley

STAFF: Bob Becker, Rob DeViney, Keith Hemel, Casie Duplechain, Sarah Olivier, and Denise Joubert

COUNSEL: Henry Kinney

GUESTS: Stephanie Bell, and Steve Pettus

Larry Katz, President of the NOCPIA Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order.

Public Comment – All public comments for the meeting will be submitted by email to info@nocp.org prior to the beginning of the meeting. They will be read to the Association's members before any action on any agenda item is completed.

Becker reported on the following:

- After much effort, we determined that the Park is not eligible to receive a Payroll Protection loan under the Cares Act. We will formally submit our request for State aid for the capital budget through the Department of Culture Recreation and Tourism at the request of the Division of Administration. We have requested \$2.0 million through the end of the fiscal year and \$5.0 million for next fiscal year.
- All part-time employees have been furloughed, and today we furloughed seven full time employees. Becker mentioned that from a financial standpoint, we are in decent shape compared to where we stood after Hurricane Katrina. The governor has extended the stay at home order through May 15. On May 11, we expect to receive guidance from the governor on exactly what the phase one openings permit. We are preparing the budget for

the next fiscal year with a lot of assumptions. What we receive in the form of clarification about what the phases will look like, will have a lot to do with what we will submit.

- The State has returned \$693,000 of funds for the Splash Park project that was defunded several years ago. This will allow us to refund some of the prepaid events and activities that were cancelled. We had approximately 100 weddings and birthday parties that either cancelled or been postponed.
- We continue to reach out for support aggressively. We are in the process of launching a campaign seeking donations.
- There is a possibility that funding for infrastructure projects will be included in the next economic stimulus measure. We are preparing the projects that could be submitted for that program.
- We are working on the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the Park, and the City for the design process, maintenance and operations of the Hazard Mitigation lagoon restoration project.

In the Management Report, Chief Executive Officer Becker reported that we were ahead of budget at the end of March. However, we lost approximately \$700,000 in revenue, and we expect to lose around \$1.1 million in April. We should receive the last full payment from the slot tax at the Fairgrounds by the end of the month. Reduced expenses, fundraising, pledges from the Botanical Garden and the Friends of City Park should help extend the time necessary for restrictions to be lifted. It is important to see how the public will re-engage with the Park's facilities. Becker noted that it is a sobering reality to see your revenue decrease so precipitously and to have to take personnel actions that we would have preferred not to. Commissioner David Waller asked which facilities the park plans to reopen. Becker said that the golf course has remained open during this time. Tennis is allowed to open under the Governor's orders, however the mayor put in place her judgement that nothing can open before May 15. We may open the outdoor kitchen in the Botanical Garden for take-out orders. City Putt and various sports fields could probably reopen very soon with social distancing and other restrictions. It is unknown when the Amusement Park and Catering facilities will be allowed to open. Commissioner Susan Hess received a complaint about visitors in the Park who were not practicing social distancing. Becker stated that there are a tremendous number of people using the park at this time, and while some are not social distancing, most others are. The governor encouraged everyone to use outdoor spaces, and has made it clear that he believes being outside is safer than being inside. We placed large signs throughout the park, and instructed our police to patrol the park enforcing social distancing. We are experiencing an increase in the homeless population that has moved into the park. We have contacted NOPD for help with this matter, but we have not yet been successful.

We are exploring the possibility of having drive-in movies on Scout Island. We are working to get cost estimates to see if the plan is feasible. Rob DeViney is working with Councilmember Giarrusso about getting the approval needed to move forward with the plan. Commissioner Paul Masinter asked about the possibility of the Farmers Markets using space in the park as a pick-up point. They are currently operating virtually and making deliveries to customers at Parkway Bakery. Commissioner David Waller said that when Parkway

Bakery reopens, they will lose this space. Becker noted that he sent the information to Paul Soniat for his review.

Katz asked Councilmember Giarrusso if he had any updates on the May 15 reopening. He said that he does not have any specifics on the reopening. However, the mayor's team has responded favorably to the possibility of drive-in movies. He noted that his office is also very supportive of the concept. He said that what he heard from public health experts is that restaurants will reopen in a limited capacity. There is also a huge push for recreation and cultural events like museums to open; as well as business offices with appropriate social distancing. Commissioner Paul Masinter said that he is encouraged by his report in terms of getting the city reopened.

Katz introduced Stephanie Bell, the new Executive Director for the Friends of City Park. Bell said she is looking forward to working with everyone.

He noted that Café Du Monde will open at the end of the week for take-out orders only.

Committee Reports:

P, A&E – No Report

CITO/Special Events – Commissioner Leigh Thorpe reported that a meeting took place with Julie LaCour, Natalie Weiss, Stephanie Bell, and Andrea Lockwood, the new Special Events/Marketing Manager for Friends of City Park. They discussed the possibility of merging Lark in the Park and the Celebration in the Oaks preview party. The goal is to enhance the event and make it more of a Lark like sponsor-driven event. This would be an opportunity to not only thank the sponsors who have already donated to Lark, but also increase sponsorships for Celebration in the Oaks. It is uncertain what the event will look like, but we will begin to work on securing funding. At this time, we will depend on the board more than ever for support.

Development – Casie Duplechain reported that since the COVID quarantine, the park received \$64,000 for general support. She thanked Commissioners Richard Cahn, Larry Katz, Carro Gardner, Susan Hess, Karen DeBlieux, Paul Masinter, Byran Fitzpatrick, David Waller, and Edmund Schrenk for their support. She also thanked the Oscar J. Tolmas foundation for its pledge of \$10,000. She noted that there has been an uptick of support since the article on the Park's financial condition appeared on the front page of the Advocate. We are launching a campaign that will revolve around the wildflowers that are currently in bloom. Anyone who makes a donation will receive a pack of wildflower seeds, and we are working with Malcolm Ehrhardt on an op-ed to be published soon. Search Influence will be starting a social media campaign, and staff is working on the direct mail appeal. We are working with Friends of City Park on creating signage to place throughout the park and the community. Brianna Spruille, the grants manager, is actively searching, and applying for assistance.

Environmental Stewardship – No Report

Finance & Audit – Commissioner David Waller reported that Keith Hemel is doing a good job developing the budget for FY 20-21. There are many unknowns in the process, but we are making the best assumptions possible during these circumstances.

Friends – Commissioner Larry Dale reported that Give Nola Day is postponed until June 2. He noted that since we cannot use the Amusement Park, we are requesting four companies that would each match any donation up to \$5000.00. Lark in the Park will be held on November 20, in conjunction with Celebration in the Oaks, depending on restrictions from the City. Toast in the Oaks is canceled for 2020. Friends Fest will not be an in-person event, however, we are working in conjunction with City Park staff on ways to celebrate being a Friends member. We received \$55,000 for the payroll protection program. We have accepted the Park's request for support with the Development staff salaries. Stephanie Bell reported that Friends currently has 5418 members, which is 393 more than this time last year. The retention rate of members cumulatively is at 85%.

H&G Committee/Dog Park – No Report

Legal & Risk Management – Commissioner Paul Masinter reported that the committee is working on the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the Park, and the City for the Hazard Mitigation lagoon restoration project. He noted that it is important for the Park to keep control of the project. He mentioned that Bob Becker has agreed to stay on for another year to help the park navigate through this crisis. He noted that the park is being used more now than in the past for outdoor recreation. A big part of this is because of all the work the board and staff did post Katrina to build the trails, Big Lake, and the Festival Grounds. Commissioner Masinter commended Bob, and the park staff for all their work, and for the Park's upkeep.

Commissioner Adam McNeil reminded everyone that their Personal Financial Disclosure is due on May 15.

NOMA – No Report

Wisner Tract – Commissioner Bill LeCorgne reported that Design Workshop is working on the Master Plan that involves elements based on options 1 and 2. The process will not move forward until the Wisner Subcommittee, and the Board can give input.

Public Relations – President Katz reported that an article on the park was on the front page of the Advocate. Becker will be on the WWL morning show and on Fox8 to talk about the wildflowers, and donations. The LASPCA had seven adoptable puppies run through Storyland and City Putt. A video was made and placed on social media to encourage adoption. FOX8 is doing 360 - degree virtual tours of the park.

Nominating – No Report

Sports – No Report

Tennis – No Report

Botanical Garden Foundation –

OTHER REPORTS: President Katz asked all Commissioners to consider moving up their annual giving to the park. He also asked everyone if they have the ability to donate to the park, please consider doing so. Katz commended Becker for his skill to lead the park calmly through a crisis. He noted that he could not think of a better team to have in place during this time.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS: Commissioner JP Morrell mentioned that he is on the subcommittee of resilient Louisiana for tourism and hospitality. He noted that outdoor amusements is also a part of that committee. Commissioner Morrell said that he would try to find out what phase one reopening will look like, and asked Becker to let him know if there are any specific points that he would like addressed to the committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26, 2020, at 4 p.m.

Denise Joubert
Recording Secretary

Bryan Fitzpatrick