

## 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, March 24, 2015, at 4:00p.m. by President Susan Hess. The meeting was held in the Pavilion of Two Sisters, located in the Botanical Garden.

**PRESENT:** Commissioners Abbott, Batt, Bingler, Chase, Claverie, Fernandez, Fierke, Giffin, Guidry, Hess, Hollis, Johnson, Laborde, LaFranca, LeGrand, Masinter, McKeithen, Palumbo, Pettus, Schrenk, Seamon, Sloss, Spears, Thorpe, Tregre and Williams

**ABSENT:** Commissioners Hales, Hoffman, McKay, Payton, Powell, Sanderford, Slone, and Wisdom

**STAFF:** Bob Becker, John Hopper, Kevin Cox, Rob DeViney, George Parker, Amanda Frenz, Billy Bayle, Ginny Virgadamo, and Denise Joubert,

**GUESTS:** Henry Kinney, Casie Duplechain, Robert Lupo, and Alan Heintzen

A quorum was present and voting throughout the meeting.

The February minutes were approved.

President Hess welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. She noted a group of speakers was present and wished to address the Board about the golf course construction. She asked the CEO to put the matter in context.

Chief Executive Officer Becker read the rules for receiving public comments and asked speakers to abide by those rules.

The Board allowed speakers to make public statements. The following is a list of speakers: Chip Patterson, Jenel Hazlett, Kevin McDunn, Keanan Cole, Rebecca K, Katya Chizayeva, Laura Grannen, Twila Hoyle, Lacar Musgrave, Sarah Rose, Justin Krey, Steve Romano, Christopher Lane, Jeff Katz, Caroline Williams, Lindsey Burger, Cara Walkin, Ann Marie Caviello, Marilyn Eyer, Cynthia Scott, Andrew Labuziensi, Susan Cowsill, Mary Sandberg, Kevin O'Sullivan, and Lisa Guido

Becker thanked all the speakers for their comments and addressed issues concerning the new golf course. It's been stated that the planning process of the construction of the golf course has been opaque, which is incorrect. Beginning with the initial Master Plan hearing in 2005 and continuing with hearings in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2014, we consistently provided a forum for discussion for the future of the park and plan. Hundreds of people participated either in person, through emails or phone calls. Golf plans were a significant part of most, if not all of those

hearings. While some might disagree with the decisions that came out of the process, there is no denying the decision was open and transparent.

After hearing all the input in the original Master Plan, the Park determined it was appropriate to reduce the golf footprint to free up land for other uses and demands. The South golf course was closed prior to Katrina and was not a popular decision. In 2011, to reduce the footprint of golf, we reduced the number of courses from three courses to two courses. We eliminated golf between Harrison Avenue and Zachary Taylor, which had historically been a part of the golf course; and has exactly the same characteristics as the damaged course north of Harrison. That land will remain open.

Golf has been a part of City Park since 1901. The new City Park Course is open to all; we are not building a private country club, but rather a public golf course. It is simply another kind of recreational space in the Park. It was stated that golf is for elitists, and only for the one percenters. The golf courses offer extensive pricing packages for everyone. It was also stated that the land designated for the new course is extensively used and there is no other place in the Park providing this type of experience. There are hundreds of acres in the Park for jogging, walking, biking, and fishing. Former golf courses have been repositioned into walking and biking trails, exercise stations, and bicycles and boats rentals. The area between I-10 and Harrison, which we removed from the golf plan, is exactly the same type of experience as the area north of Harrison. Additionally, the 60 acres that confines Couturie Forest and Scout Island are the most natural areas of the Park.

It was also mentioned that some trees would be removed during construction of the golf course. Of the 110 trees schedule to be removed, half are invasive species or dead. Others, as we now know, are infested with termites and in declining health. The trees to be removed were minimized by utilizing the existing fairways. Since Katrina we planted more than 6,000 trees, three trees for each one lost during and after the storm. We also have plans to plant over 500 trees throughout the Park this year, and next. We expect to clean the lagoon shorelines, which are heavily infested with invasive tallow trees.

It was stated that it is likely the golf course will lose money. Golf, like all recreational sports, goes through its ups and downs. To protect against this downside risk, we reduced the golf footprint in half. We feel confident the two courses will be financially successful, and provide the money we desperately need for maintenance. We often hear the North Course is under-utilized. Last year, over 36,000 rounds of golf were played, far above our original estimates when it was opened in 2008. It has been very successful and produces a profit which helps other areas of the Park.

It is important for everyone to recognize that the Park must generate 85% of the annual operating budget. A new golf course will return an area of the Park to its original purpose. It creates an important new revenue source to keep places like Couturie Forest, the bike paths, and trails, to the standards we would like to have them. We have converted hundreds of golf acres into free and open recreational space. Big Lake, Festival Grounds, and the Goldring/Woldenberg Great Lawn are just some of the examples of spaces we made available for walking, jogging, exercising, and other recreational use. Hundreds of thousands of people are using these spaces,

and visitation in the Park has never been higher. The Park receives no general funds from the City or the State. The operations funding we receive from the State are from the slot machines at the Fair Grounds. Golf has always been and currently is a principal source of operational revenue for the Park. From a revenue, use, playing, and community perspective, the project makes perfect sense. We appreciate everyone who has a different opinion; we have been through a long process and have had extensive public input. We appreciate your input; and are glad to offer you the opportunity.

Hess thanked all Commissioners for being patient and listening to all the comments.

In her President's Report, Hess reported a day at the State Legislature is scheduled for May 14. We will have an exhibit in the rotunda followed by a reception.

Hess thanked everyone who attended the board retreat. Hess also thanked Becker and the staff for their participation in the retreat.

In the Management Report, Chief Executive Officer Becker reported that operating results for the month and year is ahead of plan. Strong results were achieved in Amusements mainly due to the opening of the Ladybug Roller Coaster.

Becker attended an organizational meeting of the Tri-Centennial Commission, where he will serve on the "Signature Events and Hospitality Committee."

Becker reviewed upcoming events scheduled for March and April, and noted that the Symphony is scheduled April 21 on the Goldring/Woldenberg Great Lawn.

In response to a question about the tree sitter, Becker said that he fell from the tree on the golf course and asked for medical assistance which was provided. His injuries are not life threatening.

Commissioner Errol Laborde commended Bob on his presentation and noted that the tree sitter is not a hero and his actions have hurt the park financially.

#### *Committee Reports:*

P, A&E - No Report

CITO/Special Events – Commissioner Andrea LeGrand reported that Hogs for the Cause is scheduled for March 27, 28 and 29. The Fishing Rodeo is scheduled for March 28.

Development – The Park secured sponsorship to rename the entrance of the Botanical Garden.

Finance & Audit – Commissioner Steve Pettus reported that operating results for revenues and expenses were ahead of plan. The Committee will begin working on an Endowment development strategy. Due to the golf course project, we are incurring significant security costs and would like input from the Executive Committee on ways to consider to recoup the money.

Friends – Commissioner Leigh Thorpe reported that Lark in the Park was a tremendous success. Thorpe thanked the Board for their help and support. Over 500 pounds of compost was collected at the event. Friends currently have more than 4,300 members. The Friends have secured a Subaru Cross Trek to be raffled on July 22.

H&G/Dog Park – No Report

Legal & Risk Management – Commissioner Paul Masinter reminded everyone that the Personal Financial Disclosure forms are due in Baton Rouge by May 15.

Public Relations – Commissioner Laura Claverie reported that Karen Fernandez will co-chair the committee.

Nominating – No Report

Sports- Commissioner Will Tregre reported that construction of the golf project is on schedule.

Tennis – Commissioner Errol Laborde commended the garden staff for beautiful plantings around the Tennis facility.

New Business: The Smoking resolution has been deferred to a future meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28, 2015 at 4:00p.m.

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Denise Joubert  
Recording Secretary

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Andrea LeGrand  
Secretary